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The Acquisition of Cultural Knowledge of Hierarchy by Samoan Children

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**An Abstract of a Dissertation submitted to the
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Abstract

This doctoral dissertation examines the processes of cultural learning by which Samoan children (0-12 years of age) come to understand local concepts of hierarchy, social rank and respectful behavior. This is a particularly important domain of cultural knowledge in contemporary Samoa as titular chiefs exercise wide-ranging social, political and economic powers in their families and villages, and concerns with relative rank organize social interactions between all members of society. Consequently being able to understand local models of hierarchy is an essential component of children's developing social and cultural competence.

The dissertation documents how children are socialized to use observational, imitative, and participatory learning as primary modes of social learning, as they adapt to familial demands and practices, prevailing ethnotheories of child development, and other aspects of their developmental niches. The ways in which social learning is structured in this context are compared with predictions from Vygotskian "cultural-historical" activity theory to demonstrate the analytic necessity of attending far more to the socio-cultural context in which children develop to more adequately understand the nature and full range of variation in developmental processes.

Samoan patterns of social learning also have an important influence on the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge and practice. Research findings suggest that rather than a simple replication of existing systems of inequality (i.e. with children of higher-ranking households attaining greater cultural competence than children of lower-ranking ones), an emphasis on observational learning means that endogenous factors such as the child's motivation to learn, and social factors such as positive social relationship with

one's elders moderate the importance of family rank. These findings fit a Samoan cultural emphasis on gaining competence in the chief system through long-term service to chiefs, parents, and senior members of one's descent group. The research also points to a number of different "leveling mechanisms", including the village primary school, that serve to widely disseminate opportunities to learn one's culture that undercut more restrictive forms of intergenerational transmission. The implications of the study's findings to our understanding of the complex interactions of cultural practices, social organization, and processes of human development over ontogeny are discussed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This project confronts the fundamental philosophical problem of the relationship between the individual and society by investigating the processes by which the individual becomes a culturally competent member of society. Rather than exploring the processes of socialization and cultural learning in their entirety, however, I have examined in great detail how a single yet crucial domain of cultural knowledge is acquired in a particular social, cultural and historical context. Sociocultural anthropologists have long studied social stratification and systems of inequality (Dumont 1980; Goldman 1970; Nakane 1970; Weber 1975). Less well-studied have been the processes by which people learn to recognize and use local models of hierarchy as children, adolescents, and adults (but see Brison 1999; Toren 1990 on Fiji). Rarer still has been research examining how different models of hierarchy come to be differentially distributed across a single population, despite the common ethnographic observation that cultural knowledge often is so distributed (Barth 1975; 1987; 2002; Boster 1987b; Hutchins 1995a; Schwartz 1978a; Sperber 1985; Swartz 1991), and despite the relevance of this factor for understanding the reproduction of society and systems of inequality (Bourdieu 1996; Ogbu 1981; 1982; Willis 1977).

This doctoral dissertation research project seeks to examine just these issues by investigating how Samoan children and early adolescents come to understand and use local models of hierarchy, as well as examining the nature of the models held by these individuals. More specifically, the project has four different although closely related foci. *First*, what do Samoan children know about hierarchy at different ages? *Second*, how do children in this context learn about hierarchy, and how do social and cultural processes organize these patterns of social learning? *Third*, what is the effect of this culturally-

specific pattern of social learning on individual conceptual development? And *fourth* and finally, what is the effect of this culturally-specific pattern of social learning on the differential social distribution of knowledge? In terms of differential distribution, the project focuses on two of the most relevant social categories in Samoan life – gender and the relative rank of the individual’s household – to assess their relative impact on youth’s developing conceptions of hierarchy in Samoa.

Hierarchy in Samoa

As is the case in all societies, in Samoa there are multiple forms of inequality and linear rankings of social value along which different individuals and groups are arrayed. Some of these include: age, chiefly rank, educational achievement, material wealth, relative position in the local church hierarchy, the sister’s power over her brothers, and relative “Westernization”. In Samoa - as in much of Polynesia – models of hierarchy influence the organization and structuring of privilege and authority in a wide diversity of social institutions ranging from households to village chiefly councils (*fono*), and from Women’s committees to local church congregations. Moreover, considerations of social rank have a pervasive influence on social practice, including such diverse things as the choice of phonological register, the distribution of child care roles, and seating position in the house (Duranti 1994; Howard and Kirkpatrick 1989; Ochs 1988; Shore 1982). Indeed, even the seemingly innocuous task of deciding which seat to occupy on the public bus involves properly assessing one’s position within the shifting hierarchical gradation of the other riders on the bus. Consequently, consideration of rank should be considered an omnipresent aspect of Samoan social life, a basic element of cultural and

social competence, and a fundamental aspect of how Samoans orient themselves to the social world.

The depth and breadth of the scholarly literature on Samoa permits me to restrict my study to an in-depth examination of the acquisition of only one system of hierarchy: models of chiefly rank. My choice is motivated by chiefly rank's position as the privileged and traditional system of hierarchy in Samoa. Recent historical events and processes such as colonialism and political independence have challenged this system through the introduction of alternative systems of stratification or additional routes to power, such as higher education, wage labor, and universal suffrage (Macpherson 1988; 1997; Meleisea 1987; Shore 1996a). With few exceptions, however, the *matai* system continues to "trump" all other forms of hierarchy, particularly in rural areas and more "traditional" contexts. The *matai* and the village council of chiefs (*fono*) continue to exercise considerable political, economic, legal, and social power within the household and within the boundary of the village respectively. Any substantial success along these alternative paths to rank usually elicits offers of chiefly titles, allowing the chief system to reconcile and at least partially consolidate the alternative systems. Finally, in terms of Samoan conceptualization and practice, the chiefly system of rank arguably remains the "prototype", in Rosch's (1978) terms, against which many other social institutions and social relationships are structured.

Chiefly rank is not, however, a simple nor singular concept. Earlier research suggests that Samoan models of hierarchy are plural, often ambiguous, and keyed dynamically to context (Duranti 1990; 1992b; 1994; Shore 1982; 1996a). A key source of this instability is the association of one's power and authority with one's *mana*, the

very existence of which is indexed by the successes it produces in one's concrete activities (Shore 1989). Combined with the conceptual divide between titles and the title-holders, conflicting norms and understandings of title-succession, and the unmarked nature of most rank distinctions, there is a striking degree of negotiability, ambiguity and rivalry regarding relative rank, authority and power (Goldman 1970; Shore 1982; 1996a). The child must eventually come to understand and use these complex models as he or she matures into a fully functioning member of society. This is acknowledged by the society itself in that Samoan caregivers and the wider community as a whole implicitly and explicitly socialize children to act according to these key guiding conceptions of social interaction (Mageo 1998; Ochs 1988).

For the sake of clarity, I will follow Shore (1982) in defining "rank" in terms of a graded hierarchy of social value along which persons and differential access to privilege and authority are arrayed. "Social status", on the other hand, refers to qualitative differences between contrastive social roles, such as: *ali'i* ("high chief"), *tulafale* ("orator" or "talking chief"), *pulenu'u* ("village mayor"), pastor, and brother. Finally, when I discuss "hierarchy" I am referring to the Samoan chief system, which is the focus of this research project.

Project Foci

1. *What cultural models of hierarchy do these individual possess at different ages?*

With regard to its instantiation in the minds (and bodies) of socialized Samoans, hierarchy should not be seen as a singular cognitive entity. Rather, "cultural knowledge" of hierarchy is instantiated in the mind as a collection of different, but partially overlapping

cultural models and in the world as practices and physical artifacts (Shore 1996b). I use the term “cultural model” as it is understood by cognitive anthropologists to refer to a conventionalized mental representation of some aspect of experience (D’Andrade 1995; D’Andrade and Strauss 1992; Holland and Quinn 1987; Shore 1996b; Strauss and Quinn 1997). These different cultural models are “overlapping” in that they are either thematically or functionally tied to conceptualizations and behaviors related to hierarchy in its various manifestations in social practice and in cultural meanings. Cultural models should not, however, be understood to represent purely abstract conceptualizations that can be neatly articulated in propositional form. Rather, I use the term “cultural knowledge” to describe the entire range of mental representations from the most embodied of skills and perceptual habits to the most abstracted and conceptualized of meta-representations.

The extensive ethnographic literature on Samoa suggests that there is a wide variety of different genres of cultural models that form some part of the Samoan understanding of chiefly rank. For example, there are non-verbal, kinesthetic models of physical practices such as eye gaze avoidance of high ranking persons (Duranti 1992a), and of postures and dance styles that connote respect and deference or high rank (Shore 1982, chapter 12). There are propositional, language-based models including explanations of authority, and sayings (e.g. *‘O le ala i le pule ‘o le tautua* (“The path to power is through service”)). There are “event representations” (Nelson 1986) that structure understandings of the proper sequence of events such as *fono*, *kava* ceremonies and funerals. Additionally, there are meta-models of tactics that can be employed to actively manipulate the meaning of an ongoing social interaction to increase one’s or another’s relative rank.

Parallel to the attainment of meanings, concepts and associations is the acquisition of emotional orientations to the knowledge one learns. Many researchers have noted that Samoan knowledge of chiefly rank and hierarchy is pervasively associated with an attitude of ambivalence (Mageo 1998; Shore 1996a; Wendt 1983). This ambivalence is expressed most clearly and explicitly in the very popular Samoan comedy routines called *fale aitu*, in which powerful, high ranking personages are a favorite target of satire and scathing criticism (Mageo 1998; Shore 1982). This ambivalence can also be seen implicitly in one portion of the “Mead-Freeman debate”. Mead (1973) suggested that Samoan concerns with rank were slight and that “the sanctity surrounding chiefs was minimal for the Polynesian area”, while Freeman (1983) countered that Samoans were pronouncedly respectful and deferential towards their chiefs. With ethnographic evidence to support the veracity of both descriptions, it would appear that these two authors keyed into different sides of this ambivalent orientation to hierarchy (Wendt 1983). Beyond learning about the nature of chiefly rank, children will also come to acquire affective orientations towards what they learn. This characteristic ambivalence may be an emergent property that arises out of possession of conflicting models (Nuckolls 1996), or it may be an attitude that is itself acquired. Still another possibility is that a positive, respectful attitude is the explicit socialization goal, while a resistant and challenging orientation is simultaneously and implicitly inculcated (Shore 1982:312, fn 3). My argument is that we can begin to resolve this quandary by uncovering the ontogeny of this affective orientation over developmental time.

Finally, in their discussion of the key “cultural targets” for child socialization in Polynesia, James and Jane Ritchie indicate that “contextualization is all important for

interpreting social action within Polynesian communities” and that “learning about contexts... is one of the most important lessons Polynesian children must master” (1989:103). This is due to the fact that throughout the Pacific and certainly in Samoa, context plays an enormous role in defining the nature of social interaction, and yet context is itself enormously fluid (Duranti 1992b; Shore 1982). Social contexts can be rapidly shifted through the use of different “contextualization cues” (Gumperz 1992) by the participants, which in turn alters how the ongoing action is to be interpreted and changing the possibilities for future action. With regard to hierarchy, context can serve to emphasize or de-emphasize the relevance of hierarchy for structuring social interaction. Children must thus also learn to note when rank matters and when it matters less. In summary then, this research will be focused on describing the individual’s acquisition of these very different kinds of models over developmental time as well as how these models themselves change over time.

An inquiry into the models acquired by Samoan children and adolescents should not be seen as a purely descriptive exercise. Children’s understandings are relevant for a number of reasons. First, there are a number of studies to suggest that some of children’s models may differ in significant ways from those held by adults (Brison 1999; Hirschfeld 1998; Toren 1990; 1993). The most well-known anthropological example of this is Mead’s (2001) study in Manus where explanations provided by children of untied boats floating away or the noise of wind chimes were primarily materialistic, while those of adults were largely animistic. My concern here is how do radically different models arise and how are they eventually transformed so that children can come to act in a way that is both coherent and acceptable to the adults around them? In demographically young

populations such as Samoa, where 52.3% of the population is under the age of 21 (Government of Samoa 2001), this is a crucial issue as a significant percentage of a population's social actors may be utilizing different sets of meanings.

Second, processes of socialization are not ahistorical. They may have been changed as a result of social, political or economic change rendering them different both in how they educate the young and in what messages are being transmitted (Herdt and Leavitt 1998). Alternatively, social change may have rendered the traditional knowledge and values that are taught to be inappropriate or of less utility for contemporary social life (Kulick 1992; Leavitt 1998; Watson-Gegeo 1992).

Third, there has been a historical tendency to understand leadership and hierarchy in Polynesia and in Melanesia using the ideal types ('big man' and 'chief') described in Sahlins' seminal article (1963) contrasting the two regions. More recent work has pointed to the shortcomings of a position that simply and unproblematically applies these ideal types without examining the underlying specificities of the system under examination (Douglas 1979; Marcus 1989). This study will add a further dimension to our understanding of hierarchy in Samoa (and Polynesia) by exploring how children come to learn this complex and contradictory body of cultural knowledge.

And fourth and finally, cultural models have tended to be described in fairly static and unchanging ways. With few exceptions (e.g. Hutchins 1995a; Quinn 2005b; Shore 1996b: chapters 9 & 10; Strauss and Quinn 1992), little attention has been directed at examining the developmental trajectories of cultural models and the meanings they provide over any length of developmental time. One of the contributions of this work is to argue for the validity and significance of such a developmental perspective on cultural models.

2. How is this knowledge acquired?

As I will describe in greater detail in chapter 7, it is as participants in everyday, culturally-specific practices that individuals come to learn about and understand the cultural meanings present in activity. This underlying assumption is an increasingly central one in research on socialization (Cole 1996; 1995a; Miller and Goodnow 1995b; Ochs 1988; Rogoff 1990; 2003) and in different strands of social theory more broadly (Bauman and Briggs 1990; Giddens 1984; Hanks 1996; Urban 1996). This focus on participation in culturally specific activities not only makes possible, but also virtually requires an ethnographic account of learning (Jessor, et al. 1996; Miller and Goodnow 1995a; Weisner 1996b).

The practices in which one engages change over the life course and vary by context for a variety of reasons. Cognitive development and physiological maturation may enable the individual to engage in activities previously impossible or difficult (e.g. speech and intensive agricultural labor). One may become socially legitimized to engage in different sets of practices (e.g. “school aged children” may attend school). Or one’s role in the same set of practices may change (e.g. one becomes the “leader” of their peer group, one becomes the designated caretaker to one’s younger siblings). Moreover, practices promoted or enabled in one environment (e.g. the school, peer group) may be at variance with the practices promoted in other environments (e.g. church, family). By engaging in different practices or in different roles in the same practices, one can come to learn things in markedly different ways. This means that to understand the developmental trajectories of the different cultural models of hierarchy one needs to examine the child’s different practices and roles in those practices over developmental

time, as well as the differences between the practices of various contexts at the same point in time.

Beyond simply cataloging practices, we must examine the specifics of how learning proceeds in these activities, because ultimately this is the intersection of culture and processes of human learning. Learning can occur in many different ways and in many different social configurations. Cultural and social processes will exert an impact on learning not only through the provisioning of specific patterns of activity, but also by structuring the ways in which people tend to interact (and learn) in these activities. Of crucial importance here is the fact that the nature of the interaction in which learning occurs may have an impact on how one learns and what is learned (Wentworth 1980). Consequently, we need to examine closely the particular modes of learning involved as well as the “participation framework” (Goffman 1981), which structures who is learning from whom, in what manner, and with what results.

With these in mind, there are several specific questions to ask of the cultural practices in which Samoan children are involved, including the following:

- Are novices explicitly instructed in how to act and the meanings behind these instructions, with learning proceeding via the novice internalizing the regulatory role of the expert ‘teacher’? (Wertsch and Bivens 1992; Wertsch and Stone 1985)
- Do novices learn through observation and overhearing, acting essentially as a passive audience to cultural practices? (Akhtar, et al. 2001; Bandura 1986)
- Do novices learn by engaging in imitative play or “mimesis” of the activities of adults and more competent persons around them? (Bruner, et al. 1976; Fortes 1970; Lancy 1996; Vygotsky 1967)

- Do novices learn with the assistance of more competent individuals who provide structured assistance - or “scaffolding” - allowing the novice to perform at a more advanced level than they would otherwise be able to? (Bruner 1981; Cole 1985; 1998; Rogoff 1990; 1993; 1998; Stone 1993; Vygotsky 1978; 1986; Wood, et al. 1976)
- Do novices learn as a result of the cognitive disequilibrium caused by interactions with other novices that forces them to examine and restructure their understandings? (Doise and Mackie 1981; Doise and Mugny 1984; Forman and Cazden 1985; Glachan and Light 1982; Piaget 1952; Tudge and Rogoff 1989)
- Does learning proceed through a combination of these “modes of learning”, or do different modes predominate at different periods in one’s life or in different social contexts? (Griffin and Cole 1984; Tomasello 1999a; Tomasello, et al. 1993)

While the influence of culture and the social world on the developing child has been increasingly acknowledged as important within cognitive and developmental psychology (Bronfenbrenner 1993; Bruner 1986; 1990; Gauvain 2001; Nelson 1985; 1996; Tomasello 1999a; Tudge, et al. 1996), the ways in which “culture” and “social interaction” structure and influence learning in specific contexts remain less well articulated. This study will serve as a case study of the interactions of *specific* cultural practices with human processes of learning to determine how variations in culture and social interaction have an impact on the processes of learning. As such it will contribute to a more robust understanding of cultural learning.

3. What is the effect of the Samoan patterning of social learning on individual conceptual development?

In looking at children's developing conceptions of the chief system and respectful behavior over time in a culturally specific environment, we are in the position to examine ways in which the social and cultural organization of learning can influence conceptual development. There are two issues of particular interest. First, Gregory Bateson (2000) argued that a fundamental aspect of socialization and human development is "learning to learn", or what he called "deuterolearning". He argued that over developmental time the individual comes to acquire habitual ways of attending to and orienting themselves within a culturally specific social and physical world. The focal issue here is whether the culturally-specific, habitual way of attending to the world has an appreciable impact on the individual's developing conceptions? I will examine this issue most substantially in chapter 12 where I will consider cultural learning in Samoa in terms of *cognitive heuristics* that aid and facilitate certain kinds of learning as well as *cognitive biases*, which may render certain aspects of a given phenomenon relatively more difficult to acquire over the short term.

This is an important question as it attempts to situate modes of social learning, which are often taken as universally similar across cultures, and conceptual development in a specific social, cultural, historical and domain-specific context. Much of the work to date has focused on the active societal promotion of certain kinds of learning, such as Bronfenbrenner's (1993) discussion of "developmentally instigative" aspects of the social and physical environment, and Griffin and Cole's (1984) notion of "leading activities" that provide opportunities for certain, particularly important learning to occur at various phases

of ontogenesis. Far less attention has been paid to ways by which the social and cultural context has an impact not only on processes of learning but also on the resulting conceptions themselves

Second, what are the relationships among the social and cultural environment, the organization of learning, and the motivational aspect of conceptual development?

Frequently within developmental and cognitive psychology, the question of what might be motivating children's learning is largely bracketed away or learning is assumed to be inherently motivating. Anthropology's contribution to this issue is to point to the ways in which certain kinds of knowledge are valued and promoted in certain contexts. Beyond the question of whether or not a given domain of knowledge is learnt or not, is the issue of whether or not motivation exists to develop increasingly complex and abstract meta-representations. Children can come to acquire very basic, procedural or associational representations that enable them to behave appropriately, such as sitting "properly" in a chair or the spatial associations of different parts of the Kabyle house (*akham*) with ambient light, gender and activity (Bourdieu 1977). Yet whether children will be motivated to further develop and refine these implicit, simple representations via a process of "representational redescription" (Karmiloff-Smith 1992; see also: Nelson 1996) into representations that can be mentally manipulated, verbally articulated, and consciously accessible is another question. This is a question that can be best answered not by assuming innate drives to conceptualize and understand, but rather examining the needs and demands of adapting and thriving within a particular social and cultural context.

4. *What is the effect of the Samoan pattern of social learning on the differential distribution of knowledge?*

The reality of significant levels of intra-cultural variation, even in small-scale societies, has long been acknowledged within cultural anthropology. A model of culture as differentially distributed across a population was foreshadowed in the work of Robert Lowie (1924) and Ralph Linton (1936), for example. Parallel to the development of Ruth Benedict's (1934) view of culture as a gestalt-like configuration and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown's conception of society as an organismic structure in the 1930's, Edward Sapir proposed a notion of the individual as the "distributive locus" of culture in what came to be known as the "Sapirian alternative" (Darnell 1986; Rodseth 1998). Even as Margaret Mead was pursuing Benedict's configurationalism, her work in Samoa (1973) and Manus (2001) noted variations in the individual's temperament, household organization, and elements of personal experience, and the impact such variations could have on children's development, experience, and psychosocial adjustment.

More recent research, such as the work of Barth (1975; 1987; 2002), Boster (1986; 1987b; 1989), Romney (Romney and Moore 2001; Romney, et al. 1986), Schwartz (1978a; 1978b; 1989), Sperber (1985; 1990), Swartz (1991), and others, have tried to explore this phenomenon in greater detail. I argue that one particularly promising route in doing so is to examine processes of socialization and cultural learning for the ways they may generate and promote such variation in knowledge and competence across a population.

Consequently, one larger theme will be to examine the ways in which the social and cultural organization of learning can be seen to differentially distribute disseminate opportunities to learn and motivations to do so. Such an examination is worthy in that it

has potential for pointing to ways in which the “culture” concept can be made more robust by attending to intra-cultural variation, rather than abandoning it altogether as some have suggested (e.g. Abu-Lughod 1991; Clifford 1988).

In thinking about population-level variation in cultural knowledge of hierarchy and the chief system, one aspect of this effort is explicitly hypothesis testing in nature.

Building upon the basic premise that acquisition of cultural knowledge occurs through participation in culturally-specific activities (e.g. Goodnow, et al. 1995; Miller and Goodnow 1995a; Rogoff, et al. 1995), I will test the hypothesis that differences in participation are correlated with differences in what one learns. Stated another way: variations in the cultural models held by different persons within the population can be explained by differences in which cultural practices the individual engages in, and the extent to which they engage in those practices. Differences in participation can occur as a result of many different variables, including: the child’s temperament, interests, relative abilities, family structure, parenting styles, attachment, and so on. For the sake of this project I have chosen two variables of particular salience in the social life of Samoa: gender and the relative rank of one’s family. Thus, this project will test the hypothesis that: *differences in participation that occur as a result of the person’s gender and/or the relative rank of his or her family will result in differences in the nature of the models of hierarchy acquired by that individual.* This question contributes to the literature on the reproduction of the social order and systems of inequality (Bourdieu 1996; Heath 1983; Ogbu 1981; 1982; Willis 1977). Do children of higher-ranking families experience a different pattern or level of exposure to chiefly activities that provides them with far greater level of proficiency in the chief system? Do girls exhibit higher levels of early

competency based on heightened expectations as bearers of family honor and dignity in comparison to boys, who will (somewhat ironically) disproportionately gain chiefly titles in adulthood?

Outline of the chapters

The task of this introductory chapter has been to describe the larger research problem and specific questions posed by this body of research. Chapters 2 and 3 continue in this vein by reviewing the literature on “cultural models”, a theoretical perspective which I argue is particularly well-suited for thinking about cultural learning, and by presenting an overview of the body of knowledge and practice that the chiefly system represents. Chapters 4 and 5 shift gears to provide a detailed description of the study design, methodologies and context of the research project as well as discussing the negotiation of a legitimate social role as a foreign, adult male researcher conducting work with Samoan children and families.

The remaining chapters present the findings of the research. Chapter 6 describes the proximate context of child development using the concept of the “developmental niche”, and argues for two key niche transitions that situate the processes of cultural learning in specific contexts. By doing so, chapter 6 provides a framework into which the remaining chapters can be placed. Chapter 7 focuses its attention on the household, which provides fundamental early experiences for children’s most basic developing conceptions, patterns of behavior and affective orientations towards hierarchy. Chapters 8, 9 and 10 consider children’s learning within the context of the village community including the primary school, church, and on the periphery of the village council of chiefs

(fono). The final two substantive chapters are the complement to these earlier chapters as they focus not on processes of learning, but on describing what children actually understand about the chief system at different ages (chapter 11) and on considering the impact of social and cultural organization of learning on individual conceptual development (chapter 12). A brief concluding chapter (chapter 13) summarizes the study and its results and describes the ways in which it engages larger debates in psychological anthropology, developmental psychology, and Pacific studies.

Chapter 2: Cultural knowledge and cultural models

As described in the introductory chapter, this dissertation has four focal questions: first, what do Samoan children know about hierarchy at different ages? Second, how do children in this context learn about hierarchy, and how do social and cultural processes organize these patterns of social learning? Third, what is the effect of this culturally-specific pattern of social learning on individual conceptual development? And fourth and finally, what is the relationship of the socio-cultural organization of learning and the differential social distribution of knowledge in the Samoan context? In this chapter I will focus my attention on unpacking one of the central theoretical perspective that informs these questions and the larger project - cultural models theory – a theoretical position on the nature of culture and its intersection with human cognition developed within psychological anthropology over the last three decades.

While the first focal question – what do children know about hierarchy at different ages? - is a descriptive one, its answer should also be seen as a contribution to cognitive anthropology's ongoing efforts to understand of the structure and organization of cultural knowledge. This dissertation will make use of the concept of “cultural models”¹, which has arisen as the consensus theoretical approach within cognitive and psychological anthropology on the nature of culture, and the ways in which it exists in the mind and social and physical worlds of the individual. A “cultural model” can be defined both as a mental model (i.e. a cognitive representation) that is differentially shared across a population, and as an instituted model that is at least transiently, physically instantiated

¹ In the following discussion I will refer both to “a concept of” and “the theory of” cultural models although I do so with some reluctance given that the literature actually consists of several different theoretical perspectives and accounts. Nonetheless, there is sufficient agreement in these different accounts to merit discussion of a single theoretical position. I will indicate key disagreements when necessary and relevant.

in the world (e.g. a speech register, a dance, a religious rite, a house) (Shore 1990; 1996b). Over the past twenty years, beginning perhaps with the publication of Holland and Quinn's important edited volume *Cultural models in language and thought* (1987), consensus in psychological anthropology has increasingly grown around the notion that "culture" can be most profitably defined as an extremely large set of different cultural models (D'Andrade 1995; D'Andrade and Strauss 1992; Shore 1996b; Strauss and Quinn 1994; 1997). These different models are more or less widely held across a given population of study in an epidemiological manner as has been described by Sperber (1985; 1990) among others. Some notable examples of this research tradition include: work on American folk models of the mind (D'Andrade 1987); Mexican men's and women's different perceptions of morality tales (Matthews 1992); American models of marriage (Quinn 1982; 1987; 1992; Strauss and Quinn 1997); Trobriand Islander's models of land tenure rights (Hutchins 1980); and models of moral space in Samoan villages (Shore 1996b, chapter 11).

In this chapter I will review cultural models theory, and argue that this perspective is particularly well-suited for examinations of socialization and cultural learning for a variety of reasons. Yet despite these potential strengths, only a handful of studies have attempted to do so. Thus, one contribution of this study is an attempt to fill this 'gap' in the literature with a case study of the acquisition of a fairly complex and culturally salient domain of knowledge. But I will also seek to extend cultural models theory in later chapters by arguing for a more complex process of acquisition than the simple "neo-associationist" (Quinn 2005b; Strauss and Quinn 1992; 1997) model most commonly

connected to cultural models theory. The intention of this chapter is to provide a foundation on which to build those extensions.

At this point I will begin by briefly making a case for the important role of knowledge in human cognitive processing. I will then describe the concept of cultural models as it has been used in cognitive and psychological anthropology, with particular emphasis on aspects of this framework that are particularly useful in examining processes of cultural learning.

Knowledge as mediating cognitive processes

Humans possess elaborate stores of background knowledge that are used extensively in cognition. Background knowledge exists for every part of human experience including: physical objects (e.g. animals such as dogs; artifacts such as chairs); physical settings (e.g. geographical entities such as forests; dwellings such as houses); simple actions (e.g. cutting, talking); mental states (e.g. emotions such as happiness; cognitive operations such as remembering); complex events (e.g. naturally occurring events such as storms; cultural events such as weddings); properties (e.g. physical properties such as roundness; social properties such as cooperativeness; mental properties such as intelligence); relations (e.g. spatial relations such as outside; causal relations such as intending) and so forth (Barsalou, et al. 2005).

There is extensive empirical support behind the notion that virtually all forms of cognitive processing from simple perceptual processing to complex social reasoning relies upon this body of extensive background knowledge in some way (Keil 1989; Mandler 1998; Smith and Medin 1981). In “online” cognition, this knowledge serves to

support perception and to generate inferences about the kinds of events, activities and mental states which are likely to be associated with the perceived entity, which in turn serves to facilitate processing speed. Background knowledge also aids in the construction of perceptions through various forms of perceptual inference, such as figure-ground discrimination in visual perception (Peterson and Gibson 1994). Once a phenomenon, entity or event has been perceived and categorized according to existing representations and the knowledge these bear, these representations provide the basis for a rich body of inferences to guide the individual's interactions in that particular context.

Beyond online processing, representational knowledge also serves a fundamental role in higher cognitive functions including memory, decision-making, and thought. In memory, representational knowledge provides elaborate inferences that are used in encoding, organizational structure for storage, and reconstructive inferences in retrieval (Schacter 1997; Wagner, et al. 2004). Rather than simply reacting to external and internal stimuli, which is the dominant form of cognition for most other species, representations also enable humans to systematically consider non-present situations, which supports both language and reasoning (Perner 1993; Vygotsky 1978). Knowledge also can be said to extend reasoning and categorization by providing cognitive "tools" used in decision-making and other higher cognitive processes such as memory (Clark 1997; 1998; D'Andrade 1981; 1995; Hutchins 1995a; 1999; Vygotsky and Luria 1994). In conclusion then, the larger point of this discussion is that background knowledge has a profound and undeniable impact on human cognitive processes in all of its diversity.

Mental representations and cultural models

Given the powerful role of background knowledge in human cognition, a crucial subsequent question is: how is this knowledge stored and organized in the human mind? The most succinct answer is: mental representations that are generated through a process of abstraction from repeated exposures to a given phenomenon, entity or event. The origins of the idea of mental representation can be traced back at least to Immanuel Kant, who described the schema of a dog as a mental pattern that “can delineate the figure of a four-footed animal in a general manner, without limitation to any single determinate figure as experience, or any possible image that I can represent *in concreto*” (1965[1781], as cited in D'Andrade 1995:122). While there were earlier works in psychology in the last century that have incorporated this idea, it was not until the decline of radical behaviorism and the birth of the “cognitive revolution” beginning in the 1950’s that psychology and its sister discipline of anthropology began to be fundamentally interested in issues of “meaning” and mental representations (Bruner 1990: chapter 1; D'Andrade 1995; Gardner 1989). Two of the most influential theorists to drive a representational view of cognition at this point in time were Jerome Bruner (Bruner, et al. 1956) and Jean Piaget in his varied explorations of child development (1952; 1962; Piaget and Inhelder 1969).

As a field of study, cognitive anthropology also came into being at the dawn of the “cognitive revolution” in the 1950’s and since this time researchers have been principally interested in issues of cultural meaning and their interrelations with processes of human cognition (D'Andrade 1995). One of the most prominent streams of research within cognitive anthropology has been with regard to the organization of cultural

knowledge, and it was out of this line of research that cultural models theory emerged. This perspective came to describe culture as being made up in part of a large collection of mental representations, most frequently described as “schemas”. The usage of the term schema² can be traced back to Bartlett (1932) via Minsky’s (1975) closely related notion of a “frame” that was proposed as both a psychological construct and a key operational concept in artificial intelligence.

For cognitive anthropologists, the schema could be considered “cultural” (and consequently called a “cultural model”) if there was evidence that it was substantially shared across a given cultural group (D’Andrade 1995; Holland and Quinn 1987). In this way we can delineate cultural knowledge from other forms of background knowledge used extensively in cognitive operations in terms of the extent to which they are shared. Background knowledge about invariant parts of the environment, such as gravity, diurnal cycles and “roundness” for example, are universally shared and thus cannot be considered “cultural”. On the other hand purely idiosyncratic models, which are held by only a very limited set of persons or a single individual, do not possess the distribution to be properly called “cultural”. Clearly such distinctions are quite ambiguous. Unfortunately, to introduce an arbitrary cut-off point (e.g. knowledge is “cultural” only if it is shared by a population larger than 1,000 persons) would be of little practical utility, difficult to justify logically, and likely degenerate into irresolvable debates about the smallest population unit that may be said to bear a “culture”.

² I have followed the lead of D’Andrade, Quinn, Holland and Strauss in using “schema” rather than the more widely used synonym “concept” here.

I will now turn to an extended example from Samoa regarding a simple but illustrative cultural practice – the evening meal - to illustrate what cultural models are and the role they play in human cognition and social practice.

An extended example: The Samoan evening meal

In Samoa the evening meal is widely acknowledged as the most important meal of the day in the sense that it is the meal at which all members of the household participate and the meal which is widely agreed to be the “main” one of the day³. As an event, the evening meal has a consistent structure of roles, and a predictable sequence of actions. Family members gather in the main house just prior to 6pm, when the evening prayers begin. The consistency in timing is a result of the fact that village rules dictate that family prayers be held at this time and violators (i.e. walking on the main road during prayer) will receive a small fine. Village bells are rung and conch shells blown by a group of untitled men called the “*leoleo*” to indicate the beginning of prayers and 15 minutes later to signal their end in the village.

After the conclusion of prayers, the meal begins. The participation structure for the meal includes two rough groupings of persons - essentially a senior and a junior group - defined in terms of relative rank (of which age is a key index) and status. The senior group will include the most senior members of the family, usually any titled person, their spouses, and any elder person. The exact specifics will depend upon how many persons are available to staff the junior group. The only exception to this division by age and rank are some very young children (usually “favorite” (*pele*), roughly younger

³ *To'onai* (Sunday brunch) is the most important meal of the week, but is simply a more elaborate and lengthier version of the evening meal.

than 30 months, who may sit on the lap of a senior adult – almost always a maternal grandparent - and thus are excluded from the junior group. Children younger than 4 or 5 may not actively participate in the actions of the junior group in the sense of preparing or serving the food, but will nonetheless not be allowed to join the senior group.

This division into a junior and senior group defines the responsibilities and obligations of the different persons. Junior members of the household will prepare and serve the more senior members of the household, and will only be allowed to eat once the senior members have finished. Generally, the older members of the junior group will prepare the food while the younger adolescent members will actually serve the food. Food is brought in on woven palm frond trays lined with green breadfruit or banana leaves. Meals always include some boiled or baked starch usually taro, yam, or bananas, often with salted coconut cream and frequently some protein, either fresh or tinned fish or meat. A heavily sweetened, weak tea or water are the two drinks that usually accompany these foods. The food is eaten with one's hands and for some foods with a spoon. Far more food is provided to the senior members than could reasonably be consumed in a single meal, but there is no expectation that the person will be able to finish it all.

There is usually little to no conversation during meal times and eating is generally quite quick. The needs of the senior members are to be foreseen by the junior members rather than actually expressed by verbal request (Ochs 1988). Thus, for example, if a senior member were to get close to eating all of the taro on their dining tray, more will immediately be brought rather than asking if the person desires more or waiting for them to request it. Similarly, their tea or water will be regularly refilled unless they indicate

that no more is desired either by pushing the glass or cup away or by placing one's hand over the cup when someone approaches to refill it.

A member of the junior group may sit in front of the senior member eating and will fan away any flies and call to other members to bring food if the senior member begins to finish any part of the food on their plates. Once the person is done eating, he or she will indicate this fact by pushing their food tray away from them and saying "*Ma ona*" (I am sated / full) and perhaps a very brief thank you to the junior members who have prepared the food. Their food tray will quickly be removed and replaced with a bowl of water in which to wash one's hands and a towel to dry them. These items will too be quickly removed once they are used.

Once the entire senior group has completed eating, washed their hands, all of the dining utensils have been removed, and any other request by the senior group attended to, it is considered appropriate for the junior members to begin to eat. They do not however eat in the same space occupied by the senior group, but rather most frequently in a rear cook house or in the rear part of the main house. They will eat whatever foods the senior group has not completed. As Duranti (1994) indicates, there is no expectation that the senior group should moderate their consumption of certain food such that everyone, for example, will have an equal portion of fish or meat. Rather the senior group will eat exactly what they want, and the junior group will eat what remains. In practice, this can mean that on occasion the junior group will only have the more plentiful starch available to them. It is likely that the regular experience of patiently watching food be consumed by one's superiors may leave traces of anxiety about food, hunger and impulse

satisfaction in the junior group (Shore 1982), and this may be one reason why eating and food are such powerful cultural symbols for Samoans (see also Mageo 1989).

When the junior members eat, the various foods that remain from the senior group's meal as well as the portion of the cooked foods that were not served are pooled on dishes and trays. The various junior group members often will sit in very close proximity around this central area and eat from these various dishes. This contrasts with the senior group who each have their own plates and who often sit at some distance from one another. With the exception of mothers or older siblings who will help their young children or siblings eat, no one serves another. This should not be taken to say that the meal is "egalitarian" or that all the various members are equal. Rather the senior members of this junior group (often decided on the basis of age) are afforded minimal respects, largely in that they have the choice of the remaining better protein foods left from the senior group and they are able to make greater requests of others. Once the junior group has completed their meal, some members of this group will clean the various utensils, dishes and pans used.

This general structure of the evening meal obviously can vary considerably depending on the occasion. If there are visitors, for example, there is far more emphasis on the guests and they will receive more and better portions of food as well as greater attention from the junior members of the house. Meals are an important expression of many cultural values including generosity and compassion (*talofa*), and food and its sharing is an important cultural symbol in Samoa (Mageo 1989). The same can certainly be said about other parts of Polynesia and the Pacific as a whole (e.g. Becker 1994; Chambers and Chambers 2001; Morton 1996; Toren 1990).

Understandings of the evening meal as a collection of models

Cultural models theory would suggest that the meanings of the Samoan evening meal exist as a set of interrelated mental representations held by the different individuals. It is on the basis of possession of these models that the different individuals are able to perceive, understand, and act in ways appropriate to this particular event. While there may be similarities with mealtimes in many different cultures, the particularities of this event and the extent to which these understandings are shared across the Samoan population suggest that it is a *cultural* model, rather than either a purely idiosyncratic or a phylogenetic model derived from pan-human experience.

The most basic understandings of this particular event - mealtime - includes the different roles and actions associated with the meal (e.g. junior vs. senior groups, serving, eating), goals of the actions (e.g. satiation, affiliation), and the string of events that the prototypical meal entails. These roles, actions, events and goals can be thought of as different elements, which together are associated in the form of a cultural model of mealtime. By “associated” I mean that the different elements are frequently activated as a set in cognitive processes such as memory and thought, or “primed” to be activated thus influencing perceptions and generating expectations. Thus, if the evening prayer has just concluded, a Samoan observer would expect that the members of a household group he sees gathered in a house are remaining together to eat the evening meal and not to play cards, discuss an upcoming family event, or go to sleep, for example. Similarly, if the meal served consists only of protein foods or only of drink, there will be some sense of a violation of one’s expectations and a perception that the meal is not a “real” or “proper” one.

There tends to be some level of “referential transparency” (Hutchins 1980) for many cultural models in that the persons using these different models are not always conscious of the fact that their thoughts, actions and perceptions are being mediated by these models. There may frequently be some sense that the meanings provided by the model are in some sense simply “natural” or “commonsensical”. The particular level of transparency will of course vary considerably based on the nature of the model and the extent to which alternative and conflicting models are present. My wife’s fondness for green salads as an entrée, for example, was perceived by our Samoan neighbors as quite odd and somehow inappropriate. Our neighbors’ attempts to ‘help us eat better’, by sending over taro or lamb flaps for example, eventually ended when they came to realize that we held different conceptions of proper dinner fare. This result relies on the fact that the relative transparency of these models has been reduced.

Of course, there are many mental models that are very clearly conscious to the bearer and may be explicitly open to articulation. Some of these models may even possess related meta-representational models that describe the kinds of contexts when such models should be applied. Bearers of these models may also apply these models in “strategic” ways in an attempt to influence action in others. An untitled man’s use of highly respectful and deferential language in conversation with a familiar chief so as to set the tone of an interaction in which he plans to solicit money or goods (a request the chief could not readily refuse if the relationship of chief – commoner is instantiated) would be one example of the strategic use of a cultural model (See also Duranti 1990; 1992b).

Cultural models are also intersubjectively held, meaning that the various actors involved coordinate their actions based on expectations that the other people present perceive the actions in the same way (D'Andrade 1981). The different actors, for example, do not have to explicitly ask if this is indeed “mealtime” and indicate which role it is that they are going to play. Rather in most cases, the individuals can simply act based on an expectations will also act in coordinated ways because they too perceive the events in highly similar ways. Intersubjectivity and referential transparency are linked in that models which tend to be widely perceived as “natural” or “commonsensical” (i.e. high levels of referential transparency) also tend to be more readily intersubjectively shared because there are fewer alternatives from which to choose.

A question that may come to mind is whether or not all of the various understandings described above constitute a single cultural model or a set of models. Such a question is ultimately one of the ontological status and organization of cultural models. Generally speaking, the rhetorical presentation by authors employing cultural models can be read to suggest that: (a) they can specify the explicit boundaries of a given model (i.e. which elements are included in a model and which are not)⁴, and (b) they can determine whether or not a given domain of knowledge is served by a specific number of models (i.e. one, two, three or several). There are some reasons to doubt the ability of analysts to do so unless they are faced with a very constrained domain of experience.

One key problem has to do with how mental representations are instantiated in neural networks in the brain. Neurons are massively interconnected to one another with

⁴ Analysts often rely on the existence of lexical labels to suggest the existence of a more-or-less bounded cultural model. While this may be more likely for lexical items that exist at the basic taxonomic level, it is no guarantee for more complex models that are often of greater interest to cultural anthropologists (e.g. marriage, revenge, “nerves”). Additionally, there are many cultural models that are not indexed clearly and concisely with a single lexical term.

both excitatory and inhibitory connections (Changeux 1985; Edelman 1987). It is unlikely that even with vast advances in neuroimaging technology that we will be able to locate and cleanly divide the neural network subserving the mental representation of an “apple” from a “pear”, for example. When the perception of a yellowish-green fruit is being categorized as a “pear” and not an “apple”, neurons from the network that represent the “pear” are firing to inhibit the “apple” network. In such a situation - where the “pear” and “apple” representations are well-connected and frequently fire in tandem even if it is only to inhibit the other - how can we adequately divide these two mental representations from one another with any consistency? The widespread excitatory and inhibitory neural connectivity should give us pause in attempting to cleanly delineate cultural models. It is far more likely to see the expression of analytically distinct models on the basis of different activation patterns from a single, highly connected population of neurons.

A second related problem relates to the organizational impact of contextual demands on mental representations. Barsalou (1983) has demonstrated how humans are able to rapidly and seamlessly generate *ad hoc* models in response to interviewers’ questions about novel categories (e.g. “Ways to escape being killed by the mafia”, “Things that conquerors take as plunder”, “Things that float”). He argues that the categories generated in this study are *ad hoc* in that their novelty precludes them from being pre-existing models in his subjects, and yet they demonstrate a prototypicality gradient, a classic attribute of long-held mental representations. Barsalou’s study suggests that individuals can significantly transform existing mental representations on the fly to adapt to changing contextual demands and decision-making requirements; even to the extent of generating new categories. In addition to the methodological concern that

this study raises, I read this as suggesting that mental representations are far more fluid and dynamically constituted than is typically described in the cultural models literature⁵.

This parallels the general critique raised by dynamic systems theorists, who argue that the stability of mental representations has long been overemphasized (Beer 2000; Mandler 1998; Thelen and Smith 1994).

Clearly it is important, however, not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Just because it may be problematic to consistently define all of the elements of a model, does not mean that the value of the cultural models concept as a whole is reduced. We are, for example, able to point to a collection of frequently co-occurring elements as highly likely to be included in a given model, while less frequently co-occurring elements may not be. Naomi Quinn's (1987; 1992; Strauss and Quinn 1997) intensive analysis of Southern men and women's discourse on marriage has shown the regular co-occurrence (or co-activation) of a small set of elements over the course of these lengthy interviews, which strongly suggests that these different elements exist as parts of the same model.

Similarly, the analysts' relative inability to specifically indicate where one cultural model ends and where the next begins should not however be taken as a critical failing of the enterprise as a whole. There are, for example, far more abstract and artificial constructs in cognitive psychology or evolutionary psychology that posit the existence of various "modules", "processors", and "detectors" without being able to explicitly indicate the ontological status of these entities in the mind of the person. It is more useful to suggest that cultural knowledge is organized *in general* in terms of

⁵ Strauss and Quinn (1997:83,86), for example, contrast stable mental schemas and the meanings that emerge in a context of use as one way to acknowledge both stability and contextual change. Yet how do we know that the emergent meanings do not actually reflect the deeper structure of the models? And if the stable mental schemas do not react to contexts of use, then how do they change over time?

cultural models that have specific attributes, than to reject the idea because we are not yet able to specify the exact layout of these different models. And in the instance in which the specifics of a given cultural model is especially crucial to analysis, a more intensive and lengthy analysis as done by Quinn with regard to American marriage may enable us to make fairly educated guesses about the different elements that make up a given cultural model.

A more relevant issue is the relative organization and associations of cultural models. It does seem clear that different mental representations / cultural models are not simply associated with one another in a random way, but rather are frequently associated in a hierarchical fashion where some models address more concrete and specific phenomenon which are then tied into ever more increasingly abstract and higher level models. Thus, for example, a model of the “mealtime” event might be decomposed into separable actor, event and goal models, which themselves could be further decomposed into increasingly more specific and constrained models. Some have argued that the hierarchical organization of these models provides the “thematicity” frequently attributed by ethnographers to cultural understandings (Shore 1996b; Strauss and Quinn 1997).

The relative association of different cultural models is also of profound importance for anthropologists. Indeed, much of the task of ethnographers seeking to make the lifeworlds of others meaningful to others is describing the associations between different cultural models apparent. For example, Eric Silverman’s (2001) work on the associations of two countervailing views of the body as either “moral” or “grotesque” with conceptions of motherhood among the Iatmul of New Guinea demonstrates the important ways in which superficially unrelated cultural models (e.g. gender, the body,

moral behavior) might be related in highly meaningful and culturally relevant ways. Likewise, Shore's (1996b, see especially chapter 11) discussion of the ways in which norms of moral behavior are mapped in a gradient onto village spatial organization is another example of an association of great importance for understanding Samoan social behavior. The actual number of models involved is largely inconsequential.

Types of models

That some proportion of culture is structured in proposition form is readily apparent in a culture such as Samoan, where proverbs, stories (e.g. *fagogo*), myths, ceremonial village addresses (*fa'alupega*), and more recently biblical quotations are widely considered to be an important aspect of culture. For example, there is a belief in the notion of proverbs as encapsulations of important aspects of Samoan culture. My inquiries about certain beliefs and practices were frequently answered in the forms of variety of proverbs by a wide range of persons. An example would be "*o le ala i le pule o le tautua*" (The path to power is through service), which almost possesses the status of a national motto in the Samoan context. Their status as frequently used proverbs was often taken by Samoans as a demonstration in itself of the validity and irrefutability of the statements contained in the proverbs.

It is also true, however, that a significant number of cultural models cannot be said to be represented solely in propositional or even in linguistic form. Patterned ways of sitting cross-legged, the active eye gaze avoidance of chiefs in the meeting house, the patterned intonation contours associated with various different speech events, contrastive dance styles of orators and high chiefs to provide several examples (Duranti 1992a; 1994;

Shore 1982) are all clearly important and basic aspects of Samoan culture and yet are profoundly difficult if not impossible to represent in propositional forms. Indeed, cognitive psychologists have moved significantly away from theories of representation that privilege propositional structures in mental representations (Mandler 1998)⁶.

The earliest attempts to define the types of cultural models (e.g. Quinn and Holland 1987) focused their attention largely on propositional models that could be derived from discourse and “image schematic models”; two types of models proposed by the cognitive linguistics of George Lakoff (1987; Lakoff and Johnson 1980). More recent work has increasingly pointed to a far larger diversity of possible types. The most notable proponent of this diversity is Shore (1996b), who points to a wide diversity of kinds of models defined in terms of the cognitive and social functions they serve. A select few of the numerous possibilities he mentions include: taxonomies, narratives, verbal formulas, olfactory models, spatial models, social orientation models, checklists, rhythmic models, ludic models, and theories. Shore’s larger point seems to be that there is no definitive list of possible models that can be readily or productively elucidated. Rather we must only be cognizant of the general ability of humans to “schematize” experience in a variety of functional, organizational, and perceptual ways.

To point to some examples of diverse types of models from the example of the evening meal, we might first point to the most general model of the evening meal as an “event model” (Nelson 1986) that schematizes the relationship of events, actors and goals. There are “social orientational models” to decide which household members are included in either the senior and junior groupings, as well as how those two different

⁶ Note the continuing disagreement regarding visual representations / mental imagery involving Steven Kosslyn and Z. Pylyshyn as an examples that there is still debate about the nature of representation.

groups are themselves internally ranked. There are important spatial models guiding both the junior and senior groups' use of interpersonal space as they sit and eat as a group; the former very close, intimate and oriented about the food itself, the latter very distant and oriented to the dimensions of the house and important meanings associated with the use of space (on these spatial meanings see especially Duranti 1992a; Shore 1982). There are verbal formulas of how to indicate that one is sated and far more elaborate ones for visitors to give thanks for the food served. And there are kinesthetic schemas of bodily posture and seating that are associated with mealtime (which are quite difficult to consistently follow if one does not have years of experience sitting cross-legged on concrete or coral rock floors).

Cultural models and affect

There has been a tendency for some to think of cultural models strictly in the sense of knowledge structures devoid of affective content or association. Certainly part of this conception may be traced to some of the topical matter that cognitive anthropologists have examined, which tend to be domains where emotion and affect is of little apparent consequence. Hutchins' work on legal reasoning in New Guinea (1980), and on the distributed cognition of shipboard navigation (1995a) is certainly an example of this tendency. Other researchers may have followed the lead of cognitive science and cognitive psychology in trying to bracket emotion aside as an unnecessary complication in examining cognitive processes (Davidson 2000; Davidson and Irwin 1999). Another possible obstacle in incorporating considerations of emotion is that these fleeting bodily states tend to remain immensely difficult to quantify and present in the form of

monographs and articles. This strict separation of affect and cognition does not, however, accurately portray either how cultural models (and mental representations in general) are currently conceptualized, or how the human cognitive system actually functions.

There is a clear acknowledgement in the cultural models literature of the importance of emotions in any account of human cognition. In her introduction to the *Human motives and cultural models* edited volume (D'Andrade and Strauss 1992), Strauss specifies that cognitive anthropologists "do not believe cognition is a realm that is separate from affect. When we speak of 'mind' or 'cognitive representations' we refer to psychic processes and states in which thought and feeling are linked" (Strauss 1992a). Such a statement, however, includes little mention as to why emotion and cognition need necessarily be linked other than the seemingly general observation that feelings and emotions play a significant role in our mental life.

There is increasingly strong evidence from neuroscience to suggest the necessity of considering affective states and emotions as an integral part of all mental representations. A substantial body of research shows that the neuroanatomical areas supporting higher cognitive functioning, such as decision-making, and emotion are not segregated as had historically been supposed. The idea that the "limbic system" supported emotion and higher cognition resided solely in the outer cortex, has yielded to a diversity of research demonstrating that subcortical structures assumed to be part of the limbic system are critical for certain cognitive processes, while cortical regions once thought to be the exclusive province of complex thought are now known to be intimately involved in emotion as well (Bechara, et al. 2000; Damasio 1996; Damasio and Damasio

1994; Davidson 2000). Thus, for example, the amygdala is a limbic brain region that has been demonstrated to play a central role in fear (LeDoux 1996) and possibly other emotions associated with novelty (Whalen 1998). Anatomical studies have shown there to be extensive and widespread projections from the amygdala to early stages of sensory and perceptual processing (Amaral, et al. 1992), which provide the means by which the amygdala can bias sensory and perceptual function as well as serve a role in selective attention (Davidson 2000). Similarly, studies using a diverse range of methods including the analysis of patients with discrete prefrontal lesions, electrophysiological studies in normal subjects and patients with mood and anxiety disorders, and neuroimaging studies using positron emission tomography (PET) and functional magnetic resonance (fMRI) in both normal and patients have consistently identified various sectors of the prefrontal cortex as playing a crucial role in emotion (Davidson 2000; Davidson and Irwin 1999).

The larger point of this discussion is that affective states and emotions are indeed part and parcel of human cognition, and our conceptualization of cultural models ought to reflect this reality. This point and the most focused discussion of the ties of emotion to cultural models can be found in chapter 7, when I discuss the ontogeny of the complex emotional associations tied to Samoan conceptions of authority and autonomy.

My discussion of cultural models has been necessarily brief. The interested reader is directed to read the primary literature on cognitive anthropology and cultural models, and especially the work of Roy D'Andrade (1987; 1989; 1995; D'Andrade and Strauss 1992), Edwin Hutchins (1980; 1995a), Naomi Quinn (Holland and Quinn 1987; Quinn 1987; 1991; 2005a; 2005b), Bradd Shore (1990; 1996b; 2002), and Claudia Strauss (1990; 1992a; 1992b; Strauss and Quinn 1992; 1994; 1997).

In the next section I will briefly turn to three specific reasons why the cultural models framework is of particular utility for researchers looking at the acquisition of culture. First, cultural models theory includes an explicit theoretical split between culture in the world and in the mind, which provides a particularly important tool in describing children's transition to cultural competence via participation in cultural practices and living in a culturally organized environment. The second and third reasons both flow from the fact that cultural models provides a "unit" of culture. A unit of culture allows us to look at process of learning as differentially distributing cultural models across a population. And third and finally, a unit of culture provides us a way to talk about the differential salience of a model across a population. This is an important aspect of intracultural variation in that it allows us to describe how a specific cultural meaning can be highly salient and personally motivating for one person, but only an empty cliché for another.

Instituted and mental models: Culture in the mind and in the world

The first reason why the cultural models framework is of particular interest for scholars examining enculturation and cultural learning is that it makes an explicit distinction between mental models (in the brain) and instituted models (in the world). This conceptual division relates to a very basic question in anthropology as to whether culture is exclusively a mental or a material phenomenon. Is the cooked food served on the woven mats, the practices of sitting cross-legged inside the home, the lava rock floors of the traditional Samoan home, the physical movements of the junior group's dutiful and efficient service of the senior group, and the other constellation of practices and physical

artifacts not to be considered part of Samoan “culture”? Are the material expressions of mental representations simply subsidiary physical manifestations of little analytic importance? Or are the material artifacts, symbols and practices the true and legitimate site of culture, with human cognition a virtual “black box” impenetrable to anthropological inquiry? Or alternatively, can the relationship between the material and the mental, the external and the internal be productively reconciled?

Historically, the location of culture (in the mind and / or in the world) has been an important question in anthropology because the past half century has witnessed at least two very different answers. Ward Goodenough’s (1973a) initial rallying call in cognitive anthropology was for a purely mentalist conception of culture, in which culture was defined as what one had to *know* to behave properly in a given society. The alternative was articulated most forcefully by Clifford Geertz (1973a; 2000), who argued against what he called Goodenough’s “privacy model of culture” and pushed (quite successfully from the mid-1970s on) for a view of culture as consisting purely of public events and artifacts. More recently, however, a number of different scholars have pointed out the flaws in Geertz’ position (e.g. Roseberry 1989; Shore 1996b; Strauss and Quinn 1997), and to my knowledge, few if any more recent works have seriously pursued Goodenough’s position because of the very real and obvious limitations of a purely mentalist view of culture

Contemporary positions tend to avoid these two extreme positions, and many steer a middle path with regard to human cognitive processes, acknowledging that the inner mind / brain and outer world of persons, practices and artifacts are intricately and inextricably bound. An extensive body of work, principally from cognitive science,

supports the assertion that human cognition is substantially extended and in some significant sense constituted by its interaction with the physical and social world. Examples include research conducted on the role of language in cognitive processes (Clark 1998; Fauconnier and Turner 2002; Lakoff 1987; Lucy 1992a; 1992b; Nelson 1996), the cognitive contributions of physical artifacts (e.g. astrolabes, abacuses, written notations, “speed bugs” in airplane cockpits) and interactions with other persons (i.e. “socially distributed cognition”) (Hutchins 1995a; 1995b; 1999; Olson 1994; Salomon 1993). Work on “embodied” or “situated” cognition (e.g. Barsalou, et al. 2003; Clark 1997; Johnson 1987; Prinz and Barsalou 2000; Varela, et al. 1992) also points to the profound ways in which cognitive processes are significantly grounded in the phenomenology and physicality of the human body and its interactions with the world.

Similarly, the last three decades has seen increasing consensus regarding the role of the external environment, and particularly the social world, with regard to learning and the acquisition of culture. There are many different threads to such a perspective. Certainly, in recent years the banner has come to be most strongly associated with the work of Lev S. Vygotsky and his collaborators Alexander R. Luria and Alexei Leont’ev. There are, however, many parallel contributors to be found in education, psychology and philosophy, including George Herbert Mead, James Mark Baldwin, and Pierre Janet (Valsiner and Van der Veer 2000). Vygotsky himself was greatly influenced by the work of Janet, who proposed many of the general principles and perspectives with which Vygotsky has come to be associated in recent years (Valsiner and Van der Veer 2000; Van der Veer and Valsiner 1994).

Vygotsky never produced a cohesive conceptual framework during his short lifetime and much of his writings were sufficiently abstract and brief as to allow multiple divergent interpretations (Valsiner and Van der Veer 1993; 2000; Van der Veer and Valsiner 1994). Contemporary interpretations suggest, however, that he denied a useful separation of the individual and the social, and rather attempted to show them as “mutually constitutive elements of a simple interacting system; cognitive development is treated as a process of acquiring culture” (Cole 1985; see the related position of Rogoff 1990; 1998). The general thrust of his theoretical position can be seen in what has come to be known as his “general law of cultural development”, which argues that:

Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first *between* people (*interpsychological*), and then *inside* the child (*intrapsychological*). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All higher [psychological] functions originate as actual relations between human individuals. (Vygotsky 1978:57, italics in original)

More recent work has tried to refine the mechanism(s) implicit in Vygotsky’s account of internalization. Within the cultural-historical literature on cognitive development and socialization of greatest utility for anthropologists⁷, consensus has crystallized around the notion that enculturation occurs through the child’s increasing participation in everyday, culturally specific activities (Bugenthal and Goodnow 1998;

⁷ Vygotsky’s influence within developmental psychology and education has been enormous, but much of this work pays little attention to cultural variations, or is narrowly focused on learning in classroom settings, both of which are of limited relevance for anthropologists.

Cole 1996; Goodnow, et al. 1995; Miller and Goodnow 1995a; Rogoff 1990; 1998; Rogoff, et al. 1995). The logic of this “participatory learning” perspective is that the child begins to learn as they begin to participate on the periphery of the action; or what Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as “legitimate peripheral participation”. Frequently, the activities of this initial peripheral role are merely observational. There is no presumption that this initial peripheral participation means that the child understands the nature of the activity or even its larger goals. Thus, for example, to return to our earlier example, the young child may be largely unaware of how to serve and underlying logic behind the patterns of service (e.g. senior group precedes junior group, senior *matai* precedes junior *matai*). But he or she may simply observe or help in small ways, and this provides the opportunity to build a framework of understanding of the larger goals, roles and activities included within a specific activity.

As the novice young child continues to observe the actions of the more experienced participants, imitates their actions, and possibly receives advice or correction from more experienced others, he or she will begin to adjust and refine his actions and understandings. The child may begin to notice that person being served first tends to be both older and male. With further experience he or she may be able to eventually realize that neither gender, nor relative age is a definitive factor, but rather that these two factors are fairly reliable indices of chiefly status as most chiefs are older males and chiefs are served first. Over longer periods of time and as their abilities and understandings grow, the child will begin to participate more fully in the activity. According to this position, as their participation grows so does their understanding until their skills and conceptions

approximate those of the more expert participants (Goodnow, et al. 1995; Rogoff 1990; 1993; Rogoff, et al. 1995).

According to the cultural models terminology, this account suggests that the child initial participation is with the instituted models of mealtime. It is on this material basis that their understandings (i.e. mental models) are constructed. As the child's facility and experience interacting with and producing elements of the instituted model themselves, their mental models develop and enable more competent levels of participation in the practices or event in question. When the distinction is cast in such terms it is obvious that the distinction between mental and instituted models is absolutely crucial to our understanding of how children and novices of all varieties can come to acquire a culture's meanings via learning. A purely mentalist conception provides no account for how the child comes to acquire such mental representations, as there is no material basis of activity upon which children and novices can use to scaffold their emerging skills and understandings (for a related argument see D'Andrade 2001). Similarly a purely materialist account provides little space in which to understand the child's development of understandings as a matter of increasing participation in a specific sociocultural context.

Of course, participation over time in an instituted model should not be taken to mean that the child will automatically acquire a mental model identical with all other persons who have ever participated in comparable practices. There is no one-to-one correspondence between the instituted model in the world and the mental model that enables one to understand and act in conjunction with the constituted model; a position that Claudia Strauss has referred to as the "fax model of socialization" (Strauss 1992a).

Rather it is a matter of “meaning construction” (Shore 1996b) that is inherently individual and potentially idiosyncratic. Commonalities of experience across a population, redundancy in the ‘messages’ inculcated by diverse processes of socialization, reliance of coordinated action on some measure of shared understandings, and the difficulties in generating completely novel interpretations, however, all mitigate against the generation of substantial idiosyncratic understandings (D’Andrade 1995; Shore 1996b).

Cultural models as a unit of culture: Differential distribution and salience

The second and third reason why the cultural models framework is of particular interest for scholars examining enculturation and cultural learning both emerge from the fact that cultural models provide a unit of culture. By this I mean that rather than adopting a view of culture as a coherent and discrete set of practices, beliefs and values, cultural models provide a way to talk about culture as made up of an immensely large collection of mental and instituted models. Such a possibility provides two important analytic possibilities. First, it not only allows us to compare and contrast cultural differences between populations (intercultural variation), but it also enables us to ask about the differential distribution of elements of culture within a population (intracultural variation). And second, it enables us to talk about differences in the degree to which a cultural model is “cognitively salient” to use Spiro’s (1987) terminology.

While historically anthropology’s primary task has been to promote sensitivity to population-level variations in practice, belief and value, the reality of significant levels of *intracultural* variation has been a common ethnographic observation (Barth 1975; 1987;

Boster 1987b; Mandelbaum 1985; Mead 1973; 2001; Roberts 1951; Schwartz 1978a; 1978b; Swartz 1982; 1991). A number of researchers have also explicitly focused their attention on intracultural variation, and traced the implication of such variation in terms of health outcomes (Dressler and Bindon 2000; Dressler, et al. 1995; Garro 1986; 1988; Wright, et al. 1993), the nature and transmission of cultural knowledge (Boster 1985; 1986; 1987a; Boster, et al. 1986; Boster and Johnson 1989), and the replication of systems of inequality via schooling (Bourdieu 1996; Willis 1977), to give but a few examples.

I would argue that a particularly illuminating way to understand the nature of the differential distribution of cultural knowledge and practice is by looking at processes of socialization and the development of the enculturated individual. By examining mechanisms of cultural learning, with a sensitivity to the ways in which these mechanisms differentially expose individual children to diverse opportunities to learn and / or differentially canalize the development of their knowledge and skills, much can be learnt about intracultural variation. Yet the only way to fully take advantage of such a perspective is with the use of a unit of culture⁸ that would enable the analyst to chart the distribution and dissemination of different aspects of culture (i.e. beliefs, values, practices) across a given population. The alternative – using more holistic and discrete conceptualizations of culture (e.g. “dominant culture” and “subculture”) – cannot come close to adequately describing the extent of intracultural variation.

⁸ There have been a large number of alternative units of culture proposed, including: ideas, beliefs, values, symbols, concepts, “culturgens” (Lumsden & Wilson 1981), “stable behavioral dispositions” (Boyd and Richerson 19856), and “memes” (Dawkins 1976). I will not explicitly compare the value of each - my opinion should be obvious - and instead direct the interested reader to the May 2001 issue of *Cross-Cultural Research* for an introduction to the debates regarding units of culture.

A third and final benefit of cultural models theory for studies of enculturation is that individual cultural models may vary from person to person in terms of their relative *cognitive salience*. I define “cognitive salience” as the degree to which a specific cultural model contributes to the bearer’s perception and conceptualization of a given phenomenon, person, or activity in a specific context. For example, in a given discussion of a young, unmarried woman’s pregnancy, one individual may conceptualize the event in terms of the “sin” of premarital sex, another thinks in terms of the failure of personal responsibility, and a third thinks in terms of the positive benefits of having a young child while the mother is still young herself. These contrastive opinions can represent different cultural models all known to each of these different individuals. But the different individual models (i.e. sin of premarital sex, failed personal responsibility, youthful mother), which is actually applied by these three different persons, is the model with the greatest cognitive salience for them. As with the differential social distribution of cultural models, the analyst’s ability to talk about a particular cultural model’s differential cognitive salience is made possible by the fact that cultural models provides a unit of culture whose characteristics may vary across a population.

My inspiration for the concept of salience derives from Spiro’s (1987) discussion of the salience of particular religious belief⁹, yet I have tried to generalize his concept in

⁹ Spiro (1987) delineates a hierarchy of five levels of cultural salience: (a) The actors *learn about* the doctrines, as Bertrand Russell would say, they acquire an “acquaintance” with them; (b) the actors not only learn about the doctrines, but they also *understand* their traditional meanings as they are interpreted in authoritative texts, for example, or by recognized specialists; (c) the actors not only understand the traditional meanings of the doctrines, but understanding them, they *believe* that the doctrine so defined are true, correct, or right. That actors hold a doctrine to be true does not in itself, however, indicate that it importantly effects the manner in which they conduct their lives. Hence (d) at the fourth level of cognitive salience, cultural doctrines are not only held to be true, but they inform the behavioral environment of social actors, serving to structure their perceptual worlds, and consequently, to *guide* their actions. When cultural doctrines are acquired at this level we may say that they are genuine beliefs, rather than cultural clichés; (e) As genuine beliefs the doctrines not only guide, but they also serve to *instigate* action; they

order to render it more broadly applicable. Beyond simply applying his concept to non-religious concepts as well, Spiro's model needs to be revised to address and include more tacitly-held cultural models as well. From Spiro's perspective, increases in a model's cognitive salience are driven by increases in conceptual development, conscious accessibility and individual meaning. Yet it is important to keep in mind that models can be highly salient - in the sense that I have defined "salience" as the degree to which the model contributes to an individual's perception or conceptualization - without being consciously accessible and open to verbal articulation. In Samoa a model that directs the individual to quickly take a seat and remain seated in the presence of social superiors is both tacitly held, highly salient and readily motivates behavior. Samoan adults also have a tacitly-held model of shaking hands upon meeting new acquaintances, which is far less likely to motivate specific actions as the practice itself is less common, less culturally marked, and less cognitively salient. Thinking about tacitly held models in terms of their relative cognitive salience is also important as it provides some way to qualify the relative impact of these tacitly held models. Otherwise we are left with the notion that all tacitly held models are equally motivating, which is clearly not the case.

In thinking about a model's relative cognitive salience, the analyst is asked to determine which aspects of the individual's experience and life history have led that model to bear the particular salience that it does. As Worthman (1998) has argued with reference to adolescence, deviations in the individual's life history and differences in the

possess motivational as well as cognitive properties. Thus, one who has acquired, for example, the doctrine of hell at this - the fifth - level of cognitive salience, not only incorporates this doctrine as part of his cosmography, but he also incorporates it as part of his motivational system; it arouses strong affect (anxiety) which, in turn, motivates him to action whose purpose is the avoidance of hell (1987: 163-4; italics in original).

timing, quality, and quantity of key developmental experiences can contribute to sometimes profound differences in the developmental trajectories a given child will follow. Certainly one way in which these differences are realized, is in terms of differential cognitive salience of particular mental representations available to a given population.

Conclusion: A cultural models perspective on the development of knowledge

While I have argued that the cultural models approach is of particular analytic utility with regard to examinations of cultural learning, there has been only very few examples of such research in the field, with the exception of Shore's (1996b, chapters 9 and 10) examination of Murngin age-grade rites and Strauss and Quinn's (1992) preliminary examination of children's developing understanding of marriage. Part of the problem is surely the relatively meager interest in childhood and youth as a topic of study in cultural anthropology (Gottlieb 2000; Hirschfeld 2002).

But we might also point to an assumption that the acquisition of cultural models is a fairly simple and straightforward process. With regard to the acquisition of cultural models, the position is one of "neo-associationist" (Quinn 2005b; Strauss and Quinn 1992; 1997), which involves the gradual strengthening of associations between different elements over repeated exposures to a given phenomenon. This stance is largely inspired by the connectionist or "parallel distributed processing" (PDP) underpinning of Quinn and Strauss' work. In essence, the novice or child's model is simply an underdeveloped form of the adult or expert's, lacking as of yet necessary experience to completely refine the various connections and associations. While connectionist networks can exhibit not

only simple associationist learning but also far more radical structural reorganization (Elman, et al. 1996), there has been a tendency to overlook such possibilities when talking about cultural models.

While there is considerable empirical support for such a simple form of conceptual change, I will argue in later chapters that there may also be far more profound transformations in cultural models over time as well that defy such a simple explanatory framework. And that we may be able to connect such patterns of conceptual change to external social and cultural processes. Such a point is not completely novel. Both Strauss and Quinn (2005b; Strauss and Quinn 1997) and Shore (1996b: especially chapters 9 & 10), for example, make such a point in their respective discussion of the internalization of cultural knowledge. And developmental psychologists have long pointed to the dramatic transformations that occur in a child's understandings over longer stretches of developmental time, particularly in the move through infancy and middle childhood. Rapid increases in language proficiency and profound changes in social cognitive skills (e.g. theory of mind, social referencing) in the first five years of life provides the basis for truly dramatic changes in the child's understandings of the social and physical world as well as their sense of self (Nelson 1996; Rochat 2001; Tomasello 1999a). My larger point is to try and engage cognitive anthropology and developmental psychology in a closer and hopefully more productive conversation about the nature of knowledge, as well as promoting a developmental approach to cultural knowledge that acknowledges more profound changes over ontogenetic time.

Chapter 3: The Heart of Hierarchy in Samoa: The *Matai* System

The task of this chapter is to provide background information on the *matai* system, the chiefly system of hierarchy, which is the focus of this dissertation. I will begin by providing an overview of Samoan chieftainship, including issues such as the rights and obligations of the chief in relation to their descent group and the larger village, the conceptual divide between title and titleholder, and norms of title succession. I will then turn to discuss two different topics of interest and particular relevance for this research project. First, I will argue that a key dynamic of Samoan political organization can be found in Goldman's (1955; 1970) notion of "status rivalry", which he used to explore processes of social and political evolution across Polynesia. Second, I will review the important argument put forth by Shore (1996a) on the "structural ambiguity" of the Samoan chief system as well as the pervasive ambivalence towards authority and authority figures. I include these two phenomena not only to situate Samoan chieftainship comparatively within the larger context of Polynesian political organization, but also because they represent very basic and essential aspects of the system and its "ethos" (Bateson 1936). Children's emerging competence and knowledge of the chief system includes far more than understanding the categories, practices and concepts of that system. As I discussed in the previous chapter, it also includes acquiring the basic motivational and affective orientation to that system of knowledge and practice. Additionally, while status ambiguity and rivalry can be explained in purely structural terms, I would argue that models incorporating developmental perspectives are far more robust. Rather than a static model suggesting that ambivalence towards authority figures is to be expected of persons occupying subordinate social ranks, for example, we can

examine ontogeny for instances in which particular attitudes and affective states towards authority figures might have been inculcated in patterned ways.

My investigation of children's encounter with and developing conceptions of the chief system was very much made possible by the long tradition of research on Samoan chieftainship (e.g. Davidson 1967; Duranti 1981; 1994; Freeman 1964; Gilson 1970; Keesing and Keesing 1956; Kraemer 1902-3; Macpherson 1988; 1997; Mead 1969; Meleisea 1987; O'Meara 1990; Shore 1982; 1996a; Tcherkezoff 2000; Tiffany 1975b) and political organization in the Pacific more broadly (e.g. Biersack 1991; Bott 1981; Burrows 1939a; Douglas 1979; Feinberg 1996; Feinberg and Watson-Gegeo 1996; Firth 1936; Goldman 1970; Howard 1985; Kaeppler 1971; Keating 1998; Kirch 1984; Linnekin 1990; Marcus 1980; 1989; Sahlins 1958; 1963; Shore 1989; Strathern 1971; Toren 1990; White and Lindstrom 1997). The existence of this body of work allowed me to spend relatively little research time devoted to examining this complex social and political system, and far more focused on children's developing understandings of it. Consequently, this work very much stands on the shoulders of an extensive and excellent body of work produced by a large number of different scholars. As this dissertation is not strictly one of political organization *per se*, the following description will not provide exhaustive description of chieftainship, nor portray the various important debates within this wide-ranging literature.

The *Matai*

Put most simply, a *matai* is an individual who bears a chiefly title, the possession of which grants him or her authority as the leader of a specific dispersed descent group

(*'aiga*). The *matai* possesses a broad array of social, economic and political powers over the land, resources, and persons of the descent group. The titleholder is obligated to lead and direct the activities of the descent group, and to protect and promote its interests in the village and beyond. The *matai* also functions explicitly as the 'public face' of the descent group in the village, church and larger society, and represents their interests in these public domains. As such he or she is a physical embodiment of the dignity of the particular descent group that has bestowed a title on that person as well as the title itself. By virtue of their membership in the village council of chiefs (*fono*), the titleholder also has authority in the village with which the title is affiliated. The *fono* possesses wide-ranging powers and is a primary forum for village-level dispute resolution. While titleholders will be afforded some measure of respect anywhere in Samoa, their authority is limited to the village with which the title is associated. The most highly ranked chiefs, however, will be afforded some measure of status and rank throughout the island.

There are two types of chiefs in Samoa: high chiefs (*ali'i*) and orators or talking chiefs (*tulafale*) with very different social roles, associated conceptions of authority and power, and patterns of behavioral practices in ritual events (see Shore 1982, especially chapter 12). These differences are, however, only of real relevance on the level of the larger village. Within a given household or descent group, the title holder is simply a *matai*, whether he or she is actually an *ali'i* or a *tulafale*. Titles are bestowed by the collective descent group (*'aiga potopoto*), based on a complex and occasionally contradictory set of norms of succession, including genealogical relatedness and a history of service to the descent group and previous title-holder. While both males and females may be awarded a title and there have been increasing numbers of women awarded titles

over the past few decades, the majority of title holders are still men. Females account for perhaps 10% of the titles throughout Samoa (Meleisea 1987), but some hold prominent titles, including in the village in which I conducted research.

The title and the person

There is a clear conceptual division between the person holding the title (*tagata*) and the dignity of the title (*afio*) (Shore 1982:82-3). The title, which is the source of dignity and authority, is conceptualized as historically enduring, while the person is only one in a long line of temporary titleholders. This division is indexed referentially in speech with the use of so-called “dual pronouns”, which refers to two persons or entities, and which is one of Malayo-Polynesian languages unique grammatical features (Lynch 1998). Use of these pronouns allows the speaker to refer simultaneously to both the title and titleholder.

Despite substantial societal change and the introduction of new social hierarchies (i.e. relative Westernization, education, wage labor and material wealth), the *matai* system is the marked and predominant social hierarchy in contemporary Samoa. As Shore describes it: “Without a title, many talented and otherwise distinguished Samoans have discovered, one is – in an important sense – nobody. With it, even the most unprepossessing person is imbued with the dignity and distinction of his office” (1982:69). Comparing such a statement with Mead’s (1969) pronouncement, based on fieldwork conducted fifty years earlier, that one will “live and die unrecognized” without a chiefly title and control over land demonstrates the historical continuity of the importance of this particular social hierarchy.

While possession of the title is the ultimate source of one's authority, the individual's attributes, skills and history can serve to enhance or detract from the reputation and position of the title. Two examples from Silafaga can illustrate this. The first is that of Fetu, who held a title of only moderate importance in the village, which should have relegated him to the periphery of most village events. Fetu had been involved, however, in a range of community and church activities for a lengthy period of time. He was one of two *a'oa'ofesoasoani*¹⁰ (lay preacher) in the local Congregational Christian church as well as a Sunday school teacher. When the village chose to increase the power and scope of the village's disciplinary committee during the second half of my fieldwork, he was readily elected to be the "secretary" of this now prominent and powerful local organization. This history of community service coupled with a popular perception of his wisdom, skill and good humor has certainly elevated his relative authority and influence in the village vis-à-vis the other five co-titleholders and against the relative valuation of his title in the village as a whole.

The opposite case would be that of Mafui'e, who had lengthy overseas experience, a history of well-paid employment as a welder, and who had previously served as an effective *pulenu'u* (town mayor)¹¹ for several years. While many of these attributes could have conferred effectively elevated his standing, Mafui'e's behavior had also become increasingly erratic as his involvement with drugs and alcohol increased steadily over the past few years. Initially, he merely seemed to be acting in ways that

¹⁰ The *a'oa'ofesoasoani* or "lay preacher" receives some formal training at a school of theology, and may substitute for the pastor in conducting church services in his absence.

¹¹ The *pulenu'u* is the federal government's paid representative in the village. Their role is primarily to represent the village in bureaucratic meetings of village mayors and to publicize governmental policy in the village. These positions are filled by *matai* who serve multi-year terms and are elected by a group of their peers in the village.

were seen as degrading to his status as a *matai*, including things such as public drunkenness, and wearing clothes in the village not felt to be appropriate for a *matai*¹². But then his status in the village was profoundly damaged, when he swore at the highly respected Congregational church pastor while intoxicated. Such an action is a serious violation of village social conduct, as norms dictate that all pastors and priests – as essentially the highest ranking individuals in the village - should be shown utmost respect and deference at all times. Over the short-term his punishment included being banished from the village for over a year and was forced to pay what was perceived to be a large yet appropriate fine. Over the long-term, a few informants argued, he had done enormous harm to the title he bears and his actions may have lowered the title's relative importance in the village well beyond his lifetime.

The ability of enterprising individuals to elevate their influence and relative standing in the village is an important aspect of Samoan chieftainship, as it means that the social hierarchy of chiefly titles is far from a static structure. Contra Sahlins' (1963) argument that Polynesian chiefly status is essentially a matter of ascription and noble birth, Samoan chiefs have considerable opportunity to enhance (or degrade) their social standing through individual achievement and machination (or failing) (Douglas 1979; O'Meara 1990). This is, however, a point of contrast with many other Polynesian systems such as Tonga, where political, economic and religious changes in the 19th and 20th centuries modified the traditional system of socio-political organization so that locally-based political authority in the form of titles and *ha'a* has been essentially

¹² All women are required to wear a *lavalava* (sarong) in the village or they will be fined. Men are permitted to wear shorts in certain contexts (e.g. in the plantations, rugby), but *matai* are expected to show greater dignity and wear *lavalava* on all occasions in the village as well. Mafui'e would frequently walk through the center of the village and past the church wearing shorts, which was perceived to be disrespectful.

replaced by a system of social classes of nobility and commoners (Bott 1981; Kaeppler 1971; Korn 1974; Marcus 1980). In such a system, there is essentially little opportunity for social mobility.

Title divisions

In Samoan thought, both the person and the title can be divided into a number of different parts or “sides” (*itu*) (Shore 1982:82). A single title can be divided into a number of different title divisions, each of which can be held by a different titleholder. Such divisions are created for a number of different reasons; including succession conflicts and provisioning an increasingly large descent group with a greater number of leadership positions. One family I knew quite well held a prominent *tulafale* title in a village on the north coast of Savai’i. On his deathbed, the title-holder directed that his single, undivided title be split among each of children. Currently, there are fourteen divisions of this single title with the majority of the titleholders in the village and an additional two in New Zealand.

Title divisions have also occurred in response to the increasingly large Samoan migrant population in New Zealand, Australia and the U.S. In this case, one or more title-holders serve in the village, while migrant Samoans are awarded titles as a reward and incentive for continued financial and material support for the descent group (O’Meara 1990). These titles can prove to elevate one’s social status in the overseas migrant community, and provide the individual with resources, land and social standing if he or she decides to return to Samoa after years abroad.

There were also substantial title divisions made in an attempt to manipulate the electoral system in the 1970s and 1980s (Meleisea 1987; Powles 1986). At that time electoral law stipulated that only registered *matai* could vote, and so enormous numbers of new *matai* (commonly referred to as “*matai palota*” (voting *matai*)) were simply created to generate loyal voting blocks. Once the frivolous creation of new titles was limited by a 1969 amendment, Samoans began to split titles with the same purpose (Macpherson 1997; Powles 1986). By the mid-1980s, analysis of title registry at the Court of Lands and Titles showed that there were 155 titles split between 10 and 20 times, and 51 titles split between 20 and 70 times (Meleisea 1987:202-5). While electoral law was changed to allow for universal suffrage in 1990 (in great part to remove incentives to split titles for electoral advantage), there is considerable inertia to these structural changes that have preserved both a large number of existing title divisions and a willingness to tolerate such divisions (Macpherson 1997:41).

As there is little to no formalized distinction between different co-titleholders (e.g. junior vs. senior) and as they are each endowed with the same measure and scope of authority, there can be considerable potential for conflict between the different titleholders depending upon their history, pattern of residence, and circumstances (Shore 1982:84-5). Given this potential for conflicts (that increases as the power, prestige and resources of the title increase) and a generalized “dilution” of power with title divisions, it is very uncommon for the most important titles to be divided. When titles are divided, respect for age and experience usually provides at least some expectation that a senior co-titleholder has the greatest authority but this is far from certain.

In the family with 14 division of a *tulafale* title mentioned above, the two eldest male siblings were generally recognized to be the most senior titleholders and key authority figures. There was also a younger, well-educated titleholder, who possessed considerable business sophistication and managerial skill, and who regularly provided considerable advice and leadership on decisions where these skills were felt to be particularly useful. Perhaps more importantly, many of the other, younger titleholders generally left the decision-making process to these three. Despite an ethos of consensus, however, one could see that such a balance of authority was something that had to be regularly maintained.

Just as each title may have a number of title-holders, each person may potentially have a number of different “sides”, each of which is associated with a different title. It is not uncommon for chiefs to have two different chiefly titles, and a small minority may have three or more. Given the additional responsibilities and obligations that accrue with each title it is unlikely, however, that any single individual would be motivated to accumulate a large number of different titles. When attending a given *fa’alavelave*, chiefs with multiple titles may be asked to identify the particular title they are using in that specific context, so that all present can be aware of their position and the most contextually salient relationships in the specific social landscape (Shore 1982:138).

Such fragmentation of chiefly titles into different titleholders is completely consonant with the cognatic or nonunilinear principles of descent group formation found in Samoa (Shore 1982:307-8, fn3; Tiffany 1975a; Tiffany and Tiffany 1978) and throughout Polynesia (Davenport 1959; Feinberg 1981; Firth 1957; 1963; Goodenough 1955; Hanson 1971; Howard 1963; Howard and Kirkpatrick 1989; Keesing 1968). In

such a system, individuals can be connected to diverse social groups through various genealogical linkages, which are activated by extragenealogical factors such as context and activity. Similarly, conceptions of the different “sides” of the individual as capable of bearing different chiefly titles is fully consistent with the Samoan conception of personhood as multiple and inextricably contextualized (Mageo 1998; Shore 1982: chapter 8; on Pacific ethnopsychologies more broadly, see White and Kirkpatrick 1985).

Complexities of a gendered social role

While it is factually correct to specify that both men and women may hold chiefly titles, such a statement should not be taken to imply that the role does not possess important gendered associations. Strictly speaking, a *matai* is traditionally a social role held by males. Females traditionally possessed considerable rank as sisters and daughters in their natal villages as the embodiment of their descent group’s dignity (*mamalu*) (Schoeffel 1978; Shore 1981). When married and outside of their natal village, women take the rank of their husband. If he happens to bear an important chiefly title, she will also be afforded influence and may possess a comparable leadership role in the Women’s Committee. So in terms of “traditional” social practice, women’s positions were as daughter, sister, and wife, rather than as *matai* (Schoeffel 1978; Shore 1981).

To add yet another layer of complexity, there are also contrastive gendered associations for the two different types of chiefs as well. Considered in relationship to one another, the high chief or *ali’i* has certain gendered associations of femininity, while the talking chief or *tulafale* has those of masculinity. The *ali’i* must demonstrate all of the behavioral restraint and dignified control of the daughter and sister as they are also

the embodiment of dignity and seat of power and authority. The *tulafale*, like the brother, is the executor of that authority and consequently is associated with activity, agency, and vigor in the implementation and political maneuvering of his role (Shore 1982:241-6).

A third and final factor is that in the Samoan context it is far less important that the “correct” person fill a particular social or ritual role, than it is that all the roles are filled. For example, if the village *taupo* (“ceremonial village princess”), an important social role with ceremonial responsibilities in the meetings of village chiefs, is unavailable another person - male or female - will simply take her place. With such a focus it is far less problematic for a female to serve as a *matai*, even though there are some expectations that the more typical role of the female is as wife (as well as sister and daughter). Yet there were several female *matai* in the village, including one of great prominence, and a small number of women were awarded chiefly titles over the course of the fieldwork period in Silafaga and a neighboring village.

The *matai* as leader of a descent group

Authority over land

A fundamental source of the power of the *matai* is their control over the descent group’s assorted land holdings, including both agricultural lands, forested areas on the periphery of the village, and various house sites within the village. For high ranking *ali’i*, there is a special house site and chiefly residence (*maota*) attached to the title. These houses are traditionally located on the edge of the ceremonial center of the village (*malae*) to which they are associated, and they bear a traditional name. In Silafaga, the most important of the village’s three *malae* is located immediately adjacent to the highest

ranking *ali'i*'s chiefly residence. High ranking orators may also a special house site called a *laoa*, but it is neither associated with a *malae* nor does it possess a special name (Shore 1982).

Principles of the customary land tenure system in Samoa invested complete and total authority for the different parcels of land owned by a given descent group in the hands of the descent group's *matai* (Meleisea 1987; O'Meara 1990). Per traditional norms, the title-holder has complete authority to direct the lands' use and distribution, with the possible exception of selling the land. The extended family group ('*aiga*') acts as a corporate group with the *matai* as its head, owning land in perpetuity. While different family members may be assigned specific portions of land to farm and otherwise develop, traditionally there was no right of inheritance and the land remained in the hands of the descent group. Beginning in the 1940's, however, an alternative pattern of individual land tenure developed, which allowed for transmission of land to one's immediate heirs. This individual land tenure system has developed to the point where "villagers now control the majority of their lands as individuals, rather than as extended families" (O'Meara 1990:129). O'Meara (1990) suggests that individual tenure has developed to reduce the insecurity in land tenure and allow for valuable investments made in developing cash-crop lands and house sites¹³ to be inherited by an individual's children.

Despite this shift in principles of tenure, the *matai* retains an important role in representing the individual landholder in disputes over boundary lines and land usage. While everyday management, profitability, and maintenance of a parcel of land may now be the responsibility of the individual who clears and develops the land, in times of

¹³ The official house sites associated with chiefly titles, however, is an exception to this shift in tenure. Due to its symbolic and ritual importance, this home site is always controlled and inhabited by the titleholder.

conflict the *matai* typically steps in as symbolic authority and designated representative of the descent group to diligently protect and to vigorously pursue a resolution at the village level and - if necessary - in the federal Court of Lands and Titles. This obligation can be an onerous one. During my time in the village, it was rare that some group in the village was not embroiled in some dispute over the boundaries and disposition of land. Boundaries between tracts of land seem to be frequently breached by others as lands were planted, homes built and resources harvested.

Authority over persons

Coupled with control over the land, the *matai* possesses authority over the different members of the descent group, both those who live in the village, in other parts of Samoa, and (to a far more limited extent) even overseas. Much of this authority is couched in terms of the expectation that each member of the descent group has to serve the descent group, its interests, and the *matai*. The scope of the chief's authority over persons is broad and diverse, and runs the gambit from everyday subsistence activities and housekeeping task to major life decisions such as education, employment and residence. Members of the descent group, usually adult and adolescent males, will care for, plant and harvest agricultural products for consumption and occasionally for sale. Women may be asked to produce fine mats, care for children, and assorted household chores. Members of the descent group who live nearer to secondary schools (usually close to or within the urban areas) are often asked to foster students who are to attend those schools. Members of the descent group with a higher level of education or ability – increasingly female in contemporary Samoa - may be directed to obtain employment in

the city or occasionally sent overseas (typically Australia or New Zealand) for some period of time to send remittances back to their relatives in Samoa, and some relations may be directed to care for aged parents. One middle-aged woman in the village, who had lived and worked for over a decade in Auckland, returned to care for her ailing father, the titleholder of her particular descent group. In conversations about her return to Samoa, she stressed that the expectations of service to her father and to her descent group provided her with little possibility of remaining in New Zealand, although she hoped to return some day.

Obligations of the matai to the descent group

It is important to note that the *matai* maintains his position only with the continued support of the *'aiga*, who can revoke – at least in theory - the title if the titleholder does not or cannot fulfill these obligations. Given the profound power differential between the chief and the descent group, I personally find it difficult to imagine what set of factors would be needed for a group of untitled descent groups members to successfully challenge their chief, but a few of my informants did echo Shore's (1982) assertion of such a possibility. Nonetheless, such an occurrence must be rare as none of these informants could recall such a thing actually occurring in any village of which they were aware. Even in the case of Mafui'e, whose alcoholism and drug-use were corrosive to the dignity of his title and whose gross violations of social norms led to his banishment from the village for over a year, did not lose his chiefly title.

Coupled with the extensive authority and powers wielded by the *matai*, there are broad and weighty obligations of essentially two varieties: representation and leadership.

A central responsibility of the *matai* is that he or she will represent the larger descent group and all of its members on the village level. The most prototypical domain in which this representation is to occur is at the village council of chiefs (*fono*). In this context, the *matai* promotes and pursues the interests, needs and wishes of his or her descent group in all manner of issues and conflicts including land disputes, the violation of village rules, and the organization of village events. With regard to very minor issues, such as small fines relating to the break of village curfew for example, the individual may be held individually responsible for his or her actions. With regard to more significant issues, however, the *matai* will be expected to represent the members of his or her ‘*aiga* and to take responsibility for their actions. In more serious instances the *matai* may be required to perform a ritualized apology on behalf of the wrong-doers from their family, in what is called an *ifoga* (Macpherson and Macpherson 2005; Shore 1982).

I had the opportunity to witness several *ifoga* in the village over the course of my fieldwork, and their general pattern is illustrative of the chief’s representative role. One instance involved a fight in a neighboring village, which resulted in the son of one of my informants being badly beaten. The *matai* of the attackers presented themselves at the house of the *matai*¹⁴ of the boy who had been beaten. They draped a single large ‘*ie toga* (fine mat) over their heads and sat silently on the bare ground in the sun outside of the house. After a short period of time these *matai* were beckoned to come into the house, lengthy speeches of apology and reconciliation were exchanged as well as gifts of apology - in this case a large sum of money – and the matter was considered resolved after completion of these various ritualized acts. While it is certain that the actual

¹⁴ The *matai* happened to also be the boy’s father, but this was described as irrelevant. In this context he served first and foremost as the representative of the boy and the descent group who had been attacked.

perpetrators were severely punished, on a community level it is the *matai* of those involved (both the perpetrator and the victim) who must act in ways to resolve the conflict. My informants explained that it would have been perceived to be irregular and insufficient for the perpetrators to apologize directly to the victims.

In addition to the council of chiefs and in inter-descent group interactions, there is also an expectation that the *matai* will represent the 'aiga in all important village events and in a local church. While ideally all members of the extended family are expected to participate in church activities, arguably there is far greater pressure on the *matai* to attend. Regular church participation is a very much a part of the conception of the morally good person, and as the *matai* represents the public face of his or her 'aiga the vast majority of *matai* are regular attendees. Additionally, as church participation includes regular and substantial contributions to the church and the *matai* is the holder of the 'aiga's purse strings then he or she is also there to make those offerings. Finally, the chief is expected to represent the descent group at the large number of *fa'alavelave*, such as funerals, entitlement ceremonies (*saofai*), and the dedications of new buildings that occur in the village or elsewhere in Samoa where alliances and other relationships exist on a seemingly weekly basis. Participation in these events can be enormously taxing in terms of resources, time and work, and require extensive management of persons and resources for the sake of providing the appropriate ceremonial exchange expected of such occasions.

A second domain of obligations is the flip side of authority: leadership. By this I mean that not only can the *matai* make a range of demands of their descent group, but also that he or she must exercise these powers on a daily basis. Of course the degree to

which the *matai* must regularly provide leadership will vary by the personalities involved, the history of the *matai*'s exercise of power in day-to-day events, and so forth. I found however that in many households, the *matai* tends to provide direction on a daily basis including all manner of issues. While many of these decisions are relatively minor and guided by common traditional patterns, occasionally some are of profound importance. The personal cost of shouldering such a heavy leadership burden is dramatically depicted in Albert Wendt's novel *Pouliuli* (1977) in which the protagonist, a powerful *matai*, awakens one morning disgusting and overwhelmed at the nature of his social role and the constant demands placed on him by his large extended family and the village as a whole. He feigns spirit possession as he struggles to deal with his profound ambivalence and misgivings towards these responsibilities.

It is interesting to note that these various obligations – representation of the larger extended family and leadership – are popularly perceived to be extraordinarily onerous, and it is this aspect of the role that is most commonly cited reason as to why untitled persons do not wish to become *matai*. I was surprised to find that in a village such as Silafaga, where there were so very few clear, alternative routes to higher social status (e.g. education, wage labor) *besides* acquiring chiefly title, how few early adolescents expressed any interest in becoming a chief later in life. Indeed, only one out of the 8 of my oldest group of focal participants (10-12 years of age) expressed even the weakest interest in acquiring chiefly title. (Of course, it is important to underline how ridiculous and inappropriate it would sound to adult Samoan ears for a child to express a serious desire for eventual chiefly status, so despite my relationships with these children and my

attempt to mark the question as “purely hypothetical”, this number may be negatively biased.)

The role of the *matai* in village political organization

Possession of a chiefly title entitles the bearer to participate in the *fono* or village council of chiefs. While there are a number of different village-level social institutions, many of which wield some measure of power on a village level (e.g. Women’s Committee), it is the *fono* that is the most powerful and certainly the one most closely associated with the identity and social role of the *matai* (Duranti 1994; Gilson 1970; Macpherson 1997; Mead 1969; O’Meara 1990; Shore 1982). While Samoa is a representational democracy, the federal government is functionally only a thin veneer outside of the capitol city of Apia. It is the *fono* that is charged with all manner of decision-making, enforcement of village norms and rules, punishment of wrong-doers, and conflict resolution in the village. Of course, some of these political and legalistic functions are dispersed among or complemented by other entities as well, most notably the disciplinary committee, whose role and function was greatly increased in the village over the last half of my time in the village, and the Court of Lands and Titles, a federal court where issues related to land ownership and title succession are brought when no resolution seems possible on a village level (on the Court of Lands & Titles, see Meleisea 1987). Nevertheless, whenever I spoke to informants about the role, obligations and tasks of *matai* on a village level, talk inevitably and usually immediately turned to discussion of the *fono* as this is the institution through which their collective will is realized.

The principal exceptions to the power of the *fono* come in the form of serious criminal matters such as homicide, rape and incest, where the national police force and federal courts take the lead in investigation, prosecution and punishment (Meleisea 1987; see Shore 1982 for an extended discussion of a village homicide). But even in these instances, the *fono* will play a role. While federal criminal statutes are written to punish the individual guilty of the crime, Samoan customary law tends to hold the offender's entire descent group responsible for these violations of village harmony. Thus, the *fono* may also rule on the offense and require additional conciliatory action or retribution be made by the descent group as a whole. Similarly, the federal courts may reduce a sentence if they are informed that the offender has engaged in "traditional" conciliatory with the village and injured parties.

In more recent years, challenges to the authority of the *fono* have also come over freedom of religion as more recently introduced religions, such as the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Assembly of God, have made substantial inroads in rural villages sometimes to the detriment of existing churches. There are examples of some village *fono* actually banning these new churches from the village, which has generated substantial village level conflicts and eventually clashes between the authority of the *fono* and the rights of the individual played out in federal courts (Meleisea 1987).

Ali'i and tulafale

While of little relevance on the level of the individual household, the distinction between the two types of chiefs - *ali'i* (high chiefs) and *tulafale* (orators or talking chiefs) – is of crucial importance at the level of the village (Duranti 1981; Mead 1969; Shore

1982). Ultimately the contemporary distinction is based on Samoan ethnotheories of power and authority. The *ali'i* is conceptualized as the true source or repository of *pule* (authority), while the *tulafale* are commonly referred to as *faipule*, which might be glossed as “the activators of authority” (Shore 1982:241). This distinction is most directly realized in the *fono* and other village-level ritual occasions. In these contexts, the *ali'i* is the true noble with formal powers to command. The *tulafale*, on the other hand, is the active executive agent of that power. It is the *tulafale* that acts in the name of and on behalf of the *ali'i*, in a far more recognizably “political” manner, most prototypically by speaking on his or her behalf.

As bearers of great power and authority, high chiefs are hemmed in by negatively defined behavioral restrictions, which serve to protect the dignity of the title. Certainly the most central of these is the restriction that the *ali'i* not speak on important occasions, but rather to be represented by his complement, the *tulafale*. Mead (1969) describes these contrastive social norms when she writes:

A chief is ceremonially paralyzed without a talking chief, for the people will mock a chief who goes on a journey alone and is forced to make his own speeches. A chief may not make any request for himself nor issue orders directly to untitled men... He may not preside over the kava ceremony; a talking chief or someone who acts as a talking chief must call out the necessary phrases. He is at all times hemmed about with ceremonial red tape to which the talking chief by virtue of his position holds the clue.

Beyond the proscription of oratory on more formal occasions, there are also a myriad of other smaller restrictions and norms, which also serve to restrict the behaviors of the *ali'i* and promote his profound dignity. In contrast, the *tulafale*, who represents the active, energetic side of authority, suffers from few restrictions beyond a more generalized expectation of behaving in ways befitting a chief. Indeed, as the one whose purpose is the activation of authority, the *tulafale* is expected to behave in an aggressive and highly active manner in the *fono* and in other ritual events (Shore 1982).

I should note that this relationship between *ali'i* and *tulafale* may be of more recent historical innovation. Reconstruction of Proto-Polynesian lexemes does provide us with several key social statuses including **'ariki* (chief), **tufunga* (craftsmen, specialist), **toa* (warrior), and **tautai* (seamen, navigator), important conceptual underpinnings of chieftainship including **mana* (supernatural power) and **tapu* (sacred, prohibited), and the social context in which the orator's role would be most marked: **fono* (assembly) (Kirch 1984: table 6, page 65). But there is no linguistic evidence to suggest the existence of a distinct orator role in this ancestral Polynesian society. Nonetheless, there are roughly analogous orator positions in other societies in the Pacific including Tikopia, where the chief's opinion is presented by the *maru*, a social role typically occupied by the eldest male, agnatic relative, so as to protect the chief from expressions of dissent and criticism (Firth 1975). Having another individual serve as the active executor of one's authority may be a common Polynesian resolution to the problem of protecting the sacredness and dignity of the high chief (and – in Western Polynesia - the more highly ranked sister) without limiting their ability to act in the world.

There is little certainty as to the processes that may have transformed chieftainship in pre-contact Samoa, but there is some consensus regarding more recent changes. Some suggest that the contemporary shape of Samoan political organization, including the existence of two types of chiefs, may be the result of the Samoan colonial experience in the 19th and 20th century and its aftermath (Macpherson 1997; Meleisea 1987; Tcherkezoff 2000). The secularization of chieftainship that has occurred since the introduction of Christianity has removed, or minimally distanced, the *ali'i* as the embodiment of authority from their direct linkage with the gods and ancestors (Meleisea 1987; Tcherkezoff 2000). Tcherkezoff (2000) argues that the class of undistinguished *matai* (as a family head equal to other family heads) emerged as a social grouping in the early 20th century as the result of a variety of processes including the leveling of chiefs at the supra-village level and the creation of a registry for chiefly title that includes no important distinctions between *tulafale* and *ali'i*. Over time, these different processes may have served to elevate the *tulafale* in important ways, while also secularizing and leveling the *ali'i* to a rank closer to that of the orator. Regardless of the historical changes, the contrast between the two types of chiefs remains a pivotal part of contemporary Samoan culture and the chiefly system that children must come to understand.

Becoming a *matai*: Criteria of title succession

In contrast to many other Pacific societies where male primogeniture and genealogical proximity to a chiefly line is the normative manner through which succession proceeds (Kirch 1984; Oliver 1989), title succession in Samoan society tends

to be a far more complex, contradictory, and variable process (Shore 1982). At the heart of succession is the existence of a large set of frequently contradictory norms, which are differentially applied depending upon the relative importance of the title being given, the situationally defined needs of the *'aiga*, and the different skills, characteristics, and histories of the candidates. In many ways, the decision-making process of title succession in Samoa is a collective negotiation of the differential application and relative salience of an array of different title succession norms for a very narrowly defined social, political, and historical context. Of the many different norms that guide title succession, there are three crucial domains that are almost always involved: (i) genealogical relationship; (ii) a history of service to the family; and (iii) wisdom, knowledge, and dignity.

Genealogical relationships

In general there is always some expectation of a genealogical link between the deceased titleholder and a future titleholder. In situations where the title is a very important one, substantially more emphasis will be placed on direct genealogical descent and primogeniture. But for the majority of titles and particularly for titles that are of relatively lesser importance in the descent group and village as a whole, the nature and importance of the genealogical connection is open to considerable negotiation. Thus, even persons with no biological relatedness, including affines (*fai ava*), non-Samoans, and adopted children (*tama fai*), have historically been granted chiefly titles (Shore 1982). Individuals with a long history of service to a descent group can be described as possessing fictive kinship relationships of greater import than biological descendants

lacking histories of contributions to the greater good of the family, as is the case throughout Polynesia (Feinberg 1981; Hooper 1970). Primogeniture is also of relatively little importance in Samoan title succession decisions. While the Samoan language does have a word to refer to “first born” (*ulumatua*) and age is a general source of rank, birth order in general is not often a consideration in these matters. It is not unusual for the title to skip any number of older candidates and go to a younger sib on the basis of other characteristics.

Service to the descent group

Certainly one of the most important of all attributes of any person to receive a title is a history of service to the larger extended family and previous titleholder. This notion is encoded in a proverb that almost possesses the status of a national motto: ‘*O le ala i le pule ‘o le tautua* (“The path to power is service”). Service in this context is conceived broadly to include almost any form of activity that supports the interests and needs of the larger descent group. This can range from daily attendance to the needs and demands of the descent group to monetary and material contributions, and from returning from overseas to care for ailing relatives or attend important family functions. Certainly also central to the idea of service is attendance to the *matai* of the household, and this can be especially important with regard to the bestowal of subsidiary titles, which can be given upon the decision of the *matai* rather than the entire ‘*aiga potopoto* (descent group).

Wisdom, knowledge, and dignity

Certainly a central attribute of the prototypical *matai* is wisdom, knowledge of the *matai* system and village, and cultural competence. *Matai* ought to be skillful with regard to oratory, knowledgeable of genealogical relationships both of the descent group and related groups, the management of ritual occasions and ceremonial exchange, and well-versed in the traditions and practices associated with the *fono* and its local manifestations. Such knowledge has very practical applications as they permit the bearer to properly pursue and defend the descent group's interests in land boundary disputes, violations of village social norms, and maintaining its honor and dignity in ritual events. Certainly, skill in leadership and the management of resources and persons is also an element of this category as well. Frequently, a lack of cultural competence can be the basis of a considerable critique of the viability of candidates with extensive overseas experience for work, education or both. While their resources and skills are seen as very attractive, there can be questions about their basic abilities to be able to perform as a *matai* in the context of the village and *fono*. Finally, as the representative of the 'aiga, the *matai* is expected to demonstrate considerable behavioral restraint and dignity in virtually all contexts in which their social status is invoked.

Other considerations

There is a wide range of other factors that can enter title succession decisions. These things include the candidate's higher education, material wealth, regular employment, business acumen, a position as a lay preacher or deacon in a local church, and so forth. Other factors such as an unwillingness to reside in the village and an

undignified or combative interpersonal style can be presented as reasons to disqualify an individual. There may also be existing “power sharing” arrangements where historically titleholders are systematically rotated between different segments of a larger descent group over time. And, although it will not guarantee succession, there is a tradition whereby the incumbent has the right to name a successor in an oral will, called a *mavaega* (Shore 1996a:168).

From a functional point of view, such a flexible system of determining political succession permits the selection of a chief to be finely attuned to a particular social, political, and economic context, and allows the a descent group the widest possible scope in choosing a new chief (Shore 1982:65). Rather than being limited to the eldest, male child of the former titleholder or even a direct descendent, the descent group can place power in the hands of the most able and competent candidate available. Moreover, it has enabled Samoans to incorporate attributes, such as material wealth, higher education, and business acumen, into a “traditional” title succession process without these factors being rejected as “foreign” and illegitimate considerations. This allows the Samoan system the ability to adapt to shifting economic, political and social landscape by selecting leadership with the abilities and knowledge to successfully navigate in such an environment. Of course, such flexibility can also mean that powerful descent group factions can justify the selection of a loyal, but less capable candidate over other more qualified ones for purely political reasons. Similarly, as Shore (1996a:169) points out, these diverse and contradictory norms also provides “ample ammunition for those wishing to cast doubt on the legitimacy of any particular choice of successor”.

Such structural flexibility also introduces considerable space for conflict and competition between descent group members both in terms of candidates jockeying for position and different factions within the family jostling to promote their particular candidate. During my time in the village there were several titles of considerable importance in the village with no titleholders. I was told that several of these descent groups were holding off on open consideration of a new titleholder given the likely family chaos that would ensue given the number of rival candidates for the position. I was told that eventually, after sufficient behind-the-scenes negotiations, a suitable individual could be selected with minimal overt conflict. The federal Court of Land & Titles is also available as the ultimate remedy to otherwise intractable disagreements over title succession decisions (Davidson 1967; Macpherson 1997; Meleisea 1987). Of course, even when a title is bestowed and there is the public demonstration of consensus in the entitlement proceedings of the newly “crowned” chief, it is likely that a degree of status anxiety and ambiguity will continue to plague the new chief beneath the public face of chiefly dignity and reserve.

Status rivalry as a generative dynamic of Polynesian political organization

Polynesia has been likened to a type of cultural “laboratory” (Kirch 1984; Sahlins 1963), because the region offers unique possibilities for analytic control and comparison (Goodenough 1957). As opposed to Melanesia, for example, that experienced multiple distinct waves of migration and back-migration as well as extensive cultural diffusion (Oliver 1989), the fifty ethnographically known Polynesian societies are all demonstrably derived from a single ancestral society (Kirch 1984; 1997). Geographical isolation and

distance between different island groups effectively reduces the thorny problem of diffusion and cultural contact following initial colonization (Goodenough 1957). Moreover, each society presents an ecological and environmental isolate, with insufficient population size or historical depth to permit much internal variation within a single island group. Consequently, each Polynesian society can be readily likened to a historical and cultural “experiment”, in which the founding ancestors are identical, but where certain variables – ecological, demographic, technological, and so on – differed from case to case. Sahlins invoked a biological analogy when he argued that Polynesian societies are “members of a single cultural genus that has filled in and adapted to a variety of local habitats” (1958: ix).

Not only does the region represent a spectrum of societies derived from a common ancestor, but the Polynesian islands exhibit significant variation in their ecological settings, ranging from resource poor atolls to rich, volcanic high islands to nearly continent-sized New Zealand. Climactic variations are also extreme, including tropical, temperate and even some sub-arctic climates in the Chatham Islands (Kirch 1984). Variations in population densities at the time of first European contact ranging from a low of 0.02 persons / km² in southern New Zealand to among the densest known for horticultural societies worldwide (432 persons / km² in Anuta)(Kirch 1984:3). Population sizes ranged from a few hundred to several hundred thousand persons. Clearly, Polynesia provided more than ample space on which to consider the relationship between ecological, environmental, and demographic variability in relationship to social, cultural and technological change.

Much of the interest in social evolution has focused on socio-political organization. Chiefdoms, as an intermediate level of social and political organization between acephalous and state-level societies, have long held a special fascination for anthropologists. Polynesian societies not only exemplify the more 'typical' chiefdom, but also the limits of variation in structure and complexity. Thus, not only do we find societies with relatively minimal distinctions between chiefs and commoners, minimal redistribution of goods, and almost exclusively household-level production, but also elaborate chiefdoms such as Hawai'i, where the chiefly class claimed descent independent from commoners, ranked themselves internally into multiple grades, mobilized corvée labor, organized production on a grand scale, and alienated land ownership from commoners (Kirch 1984).

Over the length of anthropology's engagement with Pacific cultures there have been several efforts to categorize the different types of chiefdoms and isolate the underlying mechanisms and processes of change. A first step away from a purely diffusionist account (e.g. the "two strata" theory, Handy 1930) is the model of Edwin Burrows. Burrows (1939a; 1939b) examined variability in social organization and noted essentially two forms in Polynesia: kinship-based groups, what he called "breed", and those organized along territorial principles or "border". He proposed a four-fold partitioning of the region into Western, Intermediate, Central, and Marginal categories, depending upon the ways in which breed and border were aligned. In so-called "marginal" areas (i.e. atolls with relatively small populations, the Marquesas, and New Zealand), we find a coincidence of breed and border, where for all intensive purposes territorial and kinship groupings are identical. In Western and Eastern Polynesia (the

latter of which Burrows called “Central”) we find the “intermingling of breed and border” in which social groupings were organized partially according to kinship and partially on territorial principles (1939:18). In the West, rank was more gradually graded and land tenure more formally hereditary in nature. In Eastern Polynesia (i.e. the Society Islands, Hawai’i, Mangaia and Mangareva) on the other hand, rank evolved into more sharply drawn class distinctions, and hereditary claims to land were subsidiary to the authority of the chiefly class (Burrows 1939a). Between Western and Eastern Polynesia stretched a line of islands where breed and border either coincided or were aligned in various unique hybrid formations, which Burrows referred to as the “intermediate” type.

Burrows’ model is explicitly evolutionary in nature. He postulated that the “marginal” type with a coincidence of breed and border was the earliest type present, and that marginal areas (i.e. atolls with few resources and small populations) might provide specific environments that prevented further development. Lacking in resources and population, Burrows suggests that there “was probably little incentive to change” and that “old arrangements continued to serve” (Burrows 1939a:21). In Eastern and Western Polynesia, however, his reading of the data suggested that the “progressive encroachment of border over breed seems to have been the rule in Polynesia” (Burrows 1939a:20)¹⁵, but he failed to provide much of a mechanism for or motive force behind change. As territorial units grew larger and stronger, kinship groupings became “simpler or vaguer” (Burrows 1939a:21). As proximate mechanisms, he points to intermarriage, adoption, migration - and in a phrase that portends Goldman’s (1970) later argument - he suggests

¹⁵ Burrows, an early critic of cultural diffusionism, does in the end resort to its use in explaining the similarities of social organization in Eastern and Western Polynesia.

“perhaps most powerful of all - warfare arising from rivalry over land or ambition for enhanced status” (Burrows 1939a:21).

Burrows’ early model is interesting for several reasons. The move away from diffusion of traits, and the acknowledgement of the importance of both internal social processes and adaptation to ecological factors was part of an important theoretical transition in the history of anthropology. Perhaps most importantly, however, his typology takes note of the basic yet crucial transformation in the ideological basis of political power from dependency on descent and proximity of relationship to the senior line (“breed”), to one in which power is defined in more pragmatically in terms of control (frequently militarily) over territory (“border”). Goldman also notes the profound nature of this transformation when he writes: “Kin groups bud, branch and unfold. Territorial groups are created by chiefs. They express human agency. In this expression, they assert a radically new social idea” (Goldman 1970:545).

Ultimately, however, Burrows’ model is far more descriptive than explanatory. What proximate mechanisms are provided to explain local variation (e.g. adoption), are merely suggested without much indication of how they might generate specific outcomes. And there is little indication of what might be driving the “progressive encroachment of border over breed” – Burrows’ central change - other than perhaps simply population growth and political centralization. Ultimately, in these two short papers (1939a; 1939b), Burrows does, however, presage both Sahlins’ (1958) interest in ecology and systems of production and distribution as well as Goldman’s (1955; 1970) focus on status rivalry.

Whereas Burrows’ model is primarily descriptive, Marshall Sahlins’ well-known monograph, *Social Stratification in Polynesia* (1958), advances the specific thesis that

Polynesian cultural differentiation in social stratification was produced by processes of adaptation under varying technological and environmental conditions. After reviewing the variations of Polynesian social organization, Sahlins argued for two basic structural forms: “descent line systems” and “ramage systems”, where each is the result of adaptation to particular ecological conditions, centralization of resources in the former and dispersion in the latter. (As with Burrows, Sahlins argues that the severe ecological constraints of atolls favored far more varied and unique adaptive solutions, which can only be categorized by their novelty.) Ramage systems are based on “internally ranked, unilineal kin groups acting also as political units”, while descent line systems, are “discrete, localized common descent groups organized into territorial political entities” (1958:xi-xii). In ramage systems, it is the ramage that is the most important political administrative unit; territorial bonds are only subsidiary. In descent line systems on the other hand, political action is primarily drawn according to territorial lines. This key distinction is reflected in numerous economic and sociopolitical processes. For example, in terms of land tenure, ramage systems tend to have overlapping stewardship, whereas descent line systems tend to invest such control in the leadership of the lineage with paramount authority in the council of lineage heads. In terms of the distribution of goods, the ramage leadership functions as focal points, while in descent line systems the lineage head supervises small-scale distribution and the village council supervises large-scale distributions.

What then, according to Sahlins’ (1958) model, is the relationship of the degree of complexity of the status system and the economy / ecology? In answering this question, Sahlins concentrates his attention on systems of production, circulation and consumption

of goods as he contends that in most small-scale societies power, prestige and privilege are granted primarily through control over the distribution of goods (1958:3). Thus, his larger argument is that "the degree of stratification is directly related to the surplus output of food producers" (1958:5). More specifically, the greater the technological efficiency and the greater the surplus produced, the greater the frequency and scope of distribution. Increased scope, frequency and complexity of distribution supports and requires increased status differentiation. In this model, chiefs are seen primarily as directors of production, central agents in large-scale redistributions of food and other goods, and privileged consumers. They are also endowed with sacred powers and exercise political prerogatives, but these are clearly derivative of their economic roles. Control of the distribution of goods requires that one's power spread to other arenas of social and economic life such as property rights, control of production and ritual events. Ultimately then, a given society's relative degree of social stratification can be traced to its productivity and the size of indigenous redistribution networks.

While few would doubt the impact of ecological and environmental factors on social organization, there is a key problem with the direct relationship between social stratification and adaptation to particular ecological contexts as postulated by Sahlins' (1958). A surplus production of goods "can only be understood in its institutional context and does not imply some superfluous entity with an inherent capacity to cause the development of social stratification" (Kirch 1984:161). Rather, a surplus must itself be impelled by a demand of goods for use in exchange, for meeting ritual obligations, and for the maintenance and aggrandizement of the chiefly line. Thus, while Sahlins attributes the appearance of Polynesian chieftainship and increasingly elaborate degrees

of stratification to the development of surplus production, it is more likely that the relationship is “at least mutual” if not simply the other way around (Sahlins 1972:140). In *Stone Age Economics*, Sahlins acknowledges this point when he writes: “Leadership continually generates domestic surplus. The development of rank and chieftainship becomes, *pari passu*, development of the productive forces” (Sahlins 1972:140). While crucial in focusing anthropologists’ attention on the relationship between ecological features, modes of production and distribution, and social institutions (Howard 1972), Sahlins model provides little understanding of the motive forces and dynamics driving chiefs and other social actors.

Irving Goldman’s account is the idealist counterpoint to Sahlins’ materialist perspective. In an early article (1955) and in far greater detail in *Ancient Polynesian Society* (1970), Goldman presents an almost Weberian model, wherein he argues that the different forms of Polynesian sociopolitical organization can be best understood as the social negotiation of conflicts and contradictions inherent in the Polynesian status system. Goldman proposes a tripartite classification of Polynesian societies:

In the first, which I call “Traditional,” seniority is central. As the source of *mana* and sanctity, senior descent establishes rank and allocates authority and power in an orderly manner. The Traditional is essentially a religious system headed by a sacred chief and given stability by a religiously sanctioned gradation of worth. In the second system, which I call “Open,” seniority has been modified to allow military and political effectiveness to govern status and political control. The Open system is more strongly military and political than religious, and stability in

it must be maintained more directly by the exercise of secular powers. In the Open, status differences are no longer regularly graded but tend to be sharply defined. Finally, the third system, which I call “Stratified,” is characterized by clear-cut breaks in status that are far-reaching in their impact upon everyday life. In Stratified systems, status differences are economic and political. High rank holds the rule and possesses the land titles; commoners are subjects and are landless. The Stratified represents a synthesis of Traditional and Open, combining respect and reverence for hereditary rank via seniority with necessary concessions to political and economic power. The system seems to have been an outcome of the intense status rivalry so characteristic of the Open societies. In effect, chiefs in the Stratified system had succeeded in consolidating their authority and had emerged therefore far stronger than chiefs in the Traditional and in the Open systems. (Goldman 1970:20-1)

Tonga, Hawaii and the Society Islands are categorized as “stratified”, while Samoa, Niue, Easter Islands and the Marquesas are considered examples of “open” societies. The Maori, Tikopian, Tokelaun, and Pukapukan cultures are provided as examples of “traditional” societies (Goldman 1970).

Goldman’s analytic perspective is that aristocratic systems, such as those found in Polynesia, are not simply political inventions but rather entail ethnotheories of the nature of the social order (Goldman 1970). These ethnotheories and the local principles of status they include give shape and context to actors’ behaviors and their interactions as part of social institutions, which over historical time provides a motive force behind social and

cultural change. "Status" is defined by Goldman, following Nadel, as the "rights and obligations of any individual relative both to those of others and to the scale of worthiness valid in the group" (1953:171, cited in Goldman 1970:5). In Polynesia, Goldman argues, it is the status system that gives direction to the social structure as a whole, and it is clearly the central concept of *mana* that provides shape to the status.

While *mana* has long been a source of considerable debate in Pacific studies, it is now generally defined as "generative potency" obtained from supernatural sources that allows the bearer efficacy in action in the physical world (Hanson 1987; Shore 1989). Possession of *mana* allows one success in various domains, ranging from physical growth and sexual fecundity to agricultural abundance, and from military prowess to skill in physical crafts, such as house and boat construction and tattooing (Hanson and Hanson 1983; Shore 1989). *Mana* is differentially transmitted genealogically along established lineages linking humans to deities, such that it provided a religious significance to the genealogical structure of status, endowing power and authority in aristocratic lines (Goldman 1970:12). The primary aim of religious ritual in traditional Polynesia was to channel the influence of the gods into areas of life where it was useful and away from those areas where it might be harmful¹⁶ (Shore 1989:140).

Yet as Shore notes "the potency defined by *mana* is necessarily unstable and mobile. Simply put, *mana* is not possessed; it is appropriated, and at times even wrested from its divine sources" (1989:142). The uncertainty and unpredictability of *mana* requires the individual to consistently and repeatedly demonstrate their possession of it

¹⁶ Possession of *mana* (and the efficacy it provided) was not without costs, as there are significant ritual prohibitions to prevent it from disrupting and threatening domains of life where its touch is seen as contaminating and poisonous (Hanson and Hanson 1983; Shore 1989). Metaphorically *mana* can be compared to radioactive isotopes, which can be a potent source of energy when properly contained, or sicken and kill when not appropriately enclosed and channeled.

through personal efficacy and success in their actions over time. Even the most eminently successful individual cannot rest on the laurels of their previous successes, but rather must continually prove that the deities and *mana* has not left them powerless and ineffectual. This central contradiction represents the primary “engine” driving the status system. Goldman argues that “the person is constantly engaged in what can only be described as stupendous actions to defend his *mana*, his spiritual worth and hence the essence of his being” (1970:12-3). As always, however, individual action does not occur in isolation. On a systemic level, the result is one of pronounced status anxiety and rivalry as individuals are put into competition with one another in attempting to demonstrate their own efficacy and on occasion subverting the successes of others.

Goldman’s uses this dynamic to explain the social and cultural evolution of chieftainship in the various Polynesian island groups. Rather than contending that the social structure is changed through external events or arises out of ecological context, Goldman maintains that their change and evolution over time is at the hands of those enmeshed within it. He writes: “[t]he interest in valuing, in formulating hierarchical relations, in defining, asserting, defending, and in improvising upon the themes of personal and group identities are [sic] real and substantially explicit” (1970:7).

Additionally, Goldman’s evolutionary account does not carry with it the implication of a rigid canalization of development and a single trajectory of growth, but rather a fairly open and varied vista of possibilities that acknowledges the impact of any number of social institutions and the influence of historical contingency.

In terms of the dissertation research described here, Goldman’s work is of particular importance. Samoa is a (when not *the*) paradigmatic “open” Polynesian chiefly

system, as a range of other title succession criteria besides genealogical relatedness are important. As Goldman (1970) notes both military and political prowess were important aspects of the Samoan status system in addition to, when not supplanting proximity in genealogical descent from deities. Despite profound changes including the introduction of Christianity, the political and secular side of chieftainship has remained extremely important (Macpherson 1997; Meleisea 1987; O'Meara 1990; Shore 1982). In such a context, rivalry remains a crucial aspect of the chiefly system. Moreover, as I have repeatedly mentioned above and will summarize below, Samoa's chief system can be described as one of pronounced "structural ambiguity" (Shore 1996a), meaning that the relative ranking and claims of authority of chiefs are ambiguous, blurred, and open to negotiation. This ambiguity provides freedom for rivalry to play a substantial role in chiefly action, and consequently rivalry ought to be considered a core aspect of the Samoan chief system.

Structural ambiguity and ambivalence towards authority

Earlier portrayals of the Samoan chief suggested that they possessed pervasive and boundless powers, commanded unquestioned deference, and were located within a clearly defined local hierarchy. For example, Gilson suggests that the ranking of chiefly titles in the village is so rigorously institutionalized in ritual practice and historically stable, that "[n]o one in the village, therefore, can have any doubt about the relative status, rank and privileges of the titled heads of the various households" (1970:20-1, cited in Shore 1996:159-60). Similarly, in arguing against Mead's (1973) earlier pronouncement that "the sanctity surrounding chiefs in Samoa was minimal for the

Polynesian area”, Freeman (1983:130-2) points to the extraordinary decision-making power wielded by the highest-ranking *ali'i* in the village *fono*.

In an important article entitled “The absurd side of power in Samoa”, Shore argues that a closer view of the Samoan chief system and its attendant conceptions of status reveals “pervasive status ambiguity and ambivalence to authority that is built into the very character of Samoan status systems” (1996a:159). Interestingly, he argues that the idealized descriptions of Samoan aristocracy are very much local models held and publicly promoted by Samoans in important ritualized contexts and in providing descriptions to outsiders (including ethnographers). Thus, Freeman’s description of the extensive decision-making powers of the *ali'i* in the *fono*, while not wholly incorrect, overlooks the extensive “back-room” negotiations that have occurred between various parties and village factions prior to the chief’s pronouncements and the extent to which those impacted by the chief’s decision may engage in “foot-dragging” and other forms of minor resistance (e.g. Scott 1987) rather than slavishly and unquestioningly acquiescing to the demands of their superiors.

Shore (1996a:165-76) points to several sources of structural ambiguity in the Samoan chief system; several of which I have described earlier in this chapter. First, the unstable nature of *mana*, requires the chief (and the individual more generally) to validate their continued authority through repeated demonstrations of efficacy in action. Such a conception generates widespread status anxiety and rivalry as well as injecting considerable ambiguity into hierarchical rankings. Second, the conceptual division between title and titleholder generates a level of ambiguity about the relation of actual power and authority to the title and to the personal qualities of the individual. Is the

successful, community-oriented Fetu (described earlier) a figure of respect and influence because of his chiefly title or because of his history of community activity? Is the self-destructive Mafui'e still able to command the respect of others by virtue of his title or should his actions be allowed to erode all claims to influence? Third, the frequent splitting of chiefly titles introduces considerable ambiguity into the relationship between co-holders (Shore 1982:84-5). Given there is no explicit ranking of co-holders, there can be substantial questions as to their relative authority and influence with respect to each other. Fourth, alternative pathways to high social rank including material wealth, higher education, wage labor, and church service, can serve to challenge a system of hierarchical ranking done according to chiefly title alone. Wealth and education, for example, can suggest that the influence of a specific titleholder be elevated, while their lack might suggest such influence be curtailed. Fifth, conflicting norms of title succession serves to introduce ambiguity in a very fundamental way into the legitimacy of a particular titleholder despite very public displays of deference and respect. Sixth, the contextual rather than intrinsic definition of status found in Polynesia (Marcus 1989; Ritchie and Ritchie 1989; Shore 1982; 1996a:167) introduces uncertainty and flexibility into hierarchical relationships, as contexts are open to negotiation and manipulation (Duranti 1990; 1992b; see Keating 1998 on Pohnpei).

Shore's (1996a) documentation of the various structural sources of ambiguity in the Samoan political system is important. It provides a far more nuanced perspective of the socio-political organization of Samoan society and its operation. Certainly, heightened structural ambiguity would enhance the status rivalry Goldman describes, as there is relatively little clear definition of the hierarchical ranking of individuals except at

the extremes to limit competition. Shores' argument, however, is farther reaching and argues that the structural ambiguity "has as a psychological consequence a certain amount of ambivalence for Samoans about according deference to authority figures" (1996a:165). This ambivalence has been long noted in the literature on Samoa. Mead, for example, noted a tension between Samoan political institutions that conveyed a strong sense of permanence and orderliness of rank to which individuals seem to subordinate themselves, and what she termed "the rebellion of the individuals within the units against this subordination" (1968:263). Certainly I was able to observe considerable expressions of ambivalence towards figures of authority in the village. Parents, family elders and *matai* were frequently targets of complaints and criticism voiced by subordinates to their same-sex sibs or in peer groups when no one else was around to hear such discussion. As Shore (1982; 1996a) notes Samoa's biting and enormously popular comedy routines (*fale aitu*) frequently focus their attention on authority figures, including chiefs, pastors, educators, and Westerners. During my research a number of occasional acts of disobedience against figures of authority were focus of considerable attention in ways that covertly celebrated and implicitly rewarded those actions.

Shore does not suggest that this ambivalence towards authority figures - essentially a psychological state - emerges simply from the structural ambiguity of the Samoan political system. Certainly it is naïve to argue that there is a simple one-to-one relationship between patterns of social organization and ethos (LeVine 1982; Nuckolls 1996; Paul 1990). Rather, Shore points, correctly I believe, to processes of socialization as the necessary linkage between political structures and the development of this ambivalence in the Samoan people (1996a:178). One of the questions this dissertation

will explore is the developmental processes involved in the production of this very basic and elemental aspect of the chief system.

The next two chapters will turn to the dissertation research far more specifically as it describes the methodologies employed, the research design utilized, and provide considerable more information about the research site in question.

Chapter 4: Research design and methods

In this chapter and the next I will describe the research design and empirical methods I employed to shed light on the research questions described in the introductory chapter. In this chapter I will address the more explicit mechanics of the research methodologies I employed in the field as well as the rationale behind my research design. In an attempt to reconstruct the developmental trajectories of Samoan cultural knowledge of hierarchy and the processes of social learning employed, a cross-sectional research design was used. Such a design is not, however, without its limitations, particularly in examining cultural learning. These potential problems are dealt with in the study through the addition of “mini-longitudinal studies” (Miller 1977) of the focal participants over the course of the study. The case studies consist of an intensive observations over prolonged developmental and transitional periods; a methodology that has proved to be highly productive in recent studies of socialization and learning (Corsaro 1985; Heath 1983; Ochs 1988; Schieffelin 1990; Valsiner 1997). I will then provide some concrete details on the case studies themselves, including mention of the different forms of data collected from each focal household as well as various tests and interviews which were used to assess the competence and knowledge of the focal participants in the study.

I supplemented these case studies with participant observation as well as with the use of two other instruments: a parental belief and practices questionnaire, and tests of respectful vocabulary and conceptual knowledge of the chief system. These two measures were designed to provide more quantitative data on the parents and oldest cross section of children (10-12 years) within the village as a whole to further illuminate patterns found in the case studies and assess their generality. In describing each of the

different methodologies used, my goal will be to show how the data generated will be used to answer specific questions posed by this study.

Research design: Mini-longitudinal case studies

The intention of this study is to document the developmental trajectories of Samoan cultural knowledge of hierarchy as well as understand the mechanisms of cultural learning involved in its acquisition and dissemination. A developmental perspective on the study of psychological phenomena has strong implications for methods utilized and the larger research design employed. Most notably, longitudinal designs are at the heart of developmental research, as they alone are able to plot trajectories of change. As Jessor and colleagues describe it:

Understanding the integrity of the life course, tracing its continuity over large segments of time, distinguishing what is ephemeral from what is lasting, grasping the role that the past plays in shaping the future – all these, and more, are issues that yield only to research that is longitudinal and developmental in design.
(Jessor, Donovan & Costa 1991, cited in Magnusson and Cairns 1996:21)

There were practical constraints on this project, however, that sharply limited my ability to implement a formal longitudinal design. Limitations on research funding and field assistance meant that only so much data could be accumulated in the field. Additionally and more importantly, while longitudinal research projects can take several years to generate even an initial body of data, doctoral dissertation projects require some

measure of completion within a far narrower time frame. For these reasons I chose to adopt a cross-sectional research design for this project, complemented by mini-longitudinal studies of individual cases.

There are also considerable limitations to cross-sectional research designs (Magnusson and Bergman 1990; Magnusson and Cairns 1996; Miller 1977), and especially to the application of cross-sectional studies to investigations of the mechanisms of learning. To help compensate for these limitations, I employed “mini-longitudinal studies” (Miller 1977) of a small set of focal children over the course of the study. These case studies consisted of an intensive observations over prolonged periods of time; a methodology that has proved to be highly productive in recent studies of socialization and learning (Corsaro 1985; Dunn 1988; Heath 1983; Ochs 1988; Schieffelin 1990).

The addition of these cases resolves many of the shortcomings attributed to cross-sectional research designs. First, while large-scale, quantitative longitudinal studies are good at predicting important individual outcomes, they cannot identify what is actually occurring in the various settings in which the individual finds herself, nor can they sort out the key processes of continuity or discontinuity (Corsaro 1997; Mishler 1996). They are poor at detecting and understanding the generation of developmental novelty, and the processes by which the individual adapts (or fails to adapt) to shifting opportunities and changing contexts (Magnusson and Cairns 1996). Second, it will enable me to focus on the individual as actively constructing their personal understandings of hierarchy in their interactions with their social world. Too often in large-scale, population-based studies the individual is stripped of agency and figure only as “sites of measurable attributes...

[that] do not ‘participate’ in or actively produce the events of interest” (Mishler 1996: 79). Third, it will allow me to consider individual variation and idiosyncratic aspects of the individual’s life history and past experiences that are both crucial in understanding the development of the individual and which are typically lost in larger, population-based studies (Magnusson 1988; Valsiner 1997). Finally, intensive case studies will allow for examination of how individuals function across a number of different situations; a position that is critical to understanding children’s transitions over developmental periods and from one cultural institution to another (Boggs 1985; Heath 1983; Watson-Gegeo 1992).

Of course, the addition of case studies is not a “silver bullet”, resolving all of the problems of cross-sectional research designs. Most notably, there are severe limitations to the degree to which I can reconstitute an “average” trajectory, along which most Samoan children traverse, from the data collected in this manner. Mishler (1996) points to the incommensurability of individual developmental trajectories and “average” ones produced from group trends. In terms of the analysis described in latter chapters, then great care will be taken in interpreting the results as a single data set, and analysis will focus as much as possible on maintaining the integrity of a single individual’s trajectory rather than fashioning a hypothetical average.

Sampling of focal participants

Case studies are often criticized on the grounds that the findings they produce are not generalizable, especially in comparison with those of large scale survey research (Gomm, et al. 2000a; Gomm, et al. 2000b; Yin 1989). The response of many case study

researchers is to deny that their work is designed to produce scientific generalizations. For example, Stake (1994) argues for the “intrinsic case study”, which involves simply investigating particular cases for their own sake. On the other hand, Lincoln and Guba (2000) question the appropriateness of “law-like” generalizations in social science research altogether, and instead propose that case studies generate “working hypotheses” whose suitability for understanding other cases can only be assessed by comparing the similarities between source and target case.

Gomm and colleagues (Gomm, et al. 2000a) suggest that these are extreme positions that unnecessarily cede too much ground to critics. They argue that denial of the ability of case study research to support “empirical generalization” (i.e. drawing inferences about features of a larger but finite population of cases from the study of a sample drawn from that population) rests on the mistaken assumption that this form of generalization requires statistical sampling. They note that this restricts the idea of representation to its statistical version, and confuses the task of empirical generalization with the use of common statistical tools for achieving that goal. While these statistical techniques, if applied correctly, can guarantee a relatively high and known level of probable accuracy, they are not essential and do not mean that any study that does not employ them should be rejected as “anecdotal” and biased.

Gomm is, however, quick to point out that this does not mean that considerations of sampling should simply be thrown out. The idea that virtually any case selected can stand in as a microcosm for the whole – what Geertz (1973b) dismissively called the “Jonestown-is-the-USA” model – is problematic as well. While any case may exemplify certain universal and population-level patterns, establishing that it does and what these

patterns are, requires comparative investigation. The universal or even cultural significance of a case cannot simply be taken for granted. More specifically, “[w]ithout knowledge of the location of cases studied in terms of relevant dimensions of heterogeneity in the target population, we cannot know how far empirical generalizations drawn from them will be sound” (Gomm, et al. 2000a: 106).

In terms of this project, I selected case studies according to three primary dimensions of population heterogeneity: age, gender and the relative rank of the child’s household. Table 4.1 summarizes the number of cases (focal participant children) according to the three sampling criteria. As discussed in the introduction, a fundamental part of the study is a comparison of children’s learning and knowledge by gender and the relative rank of their household. Similarly, age is a crucial dimension because of my interest in showing developmental change in domains of cultural knowledge and competence over longer periods of time. While gender is relatively easy to operationalize in terms of sampling, age and relative rank are less so. In the following two sections I will briefly indicate how these dimensions were realized in this research project.

Table 4.1: Summary of focal participant demographic categories

<i>Gender</i>	16 males		20 females	
<i>Age group</i>	10 0-3 year olds	9 4-6 year olds	9 7-9 year olds	8 10-12 year olds
<i>Household rank</i>	12 high-ranking		9 mid-ranking	15 low-ranking

Relative rank of the household

All societies possess a large number of different and overlapping social hierarchies. As I am restricting my focus to the “exemplar” system of hierarchy in the Samoan case – the chief system - for the study, I will similarly restrict my definition of the relative ranking of the household to this same system. For the sake of this project, I

will define a household's relative rank in terms of the physical presence of a living chiefly titleholder in the household, and the relative rank of his or her title in the village and district as a whole. The children of the "high rank" category will have spent a majority of their childhood in the household of a *matai* (chief) with district as well as village prominence. "Middle rank" will refer to households with a *matai* title of relevance only in the village, and "low rank" will refer to households where no resident possesses a title. The "majority of their childhood" is defined as spending more than 50% of their life (and minimally 75% of the previous 12 months) calculated in months in the household in question. Given the high rates of adoption and fosterage in Samoa and Polynesia (Brady 1976; Carroll 1970; Morton 1996), and the fluidity of membership in these households, this is an important consideration.

I assessed the district prominence of chiefly titles based on observations of the role played by chief in different important village events, explicit mention of the chiefly title in the village's *fa'alupega* (ceremonial greeting), and based on advice derived from chiefly informants. I did not consider the presence or absence of individuals who possessed a chiefly title in another village into consideration, because in virtually every instance this individual adopted the role of an untitled man (*taule'alea*) in Silafaga. Except for very important titles, chiefly titles are of importance only in the village in which they are affiliated.

Some may argue that my choice of ranking households neglects some important ways in which Samoan adults may think about relative rank. Thus, for example, there was a wealthy household in the village that had been the home of an extremely prominent high chief. If he were alive, by all the measures described above, his household would

have been considered “high ranking”. But because the chief had died several years earlier and his title had not yet been passed on to a successor, I would have classified his household as a “low ranking” household. My underlying logic here derives from my theoretical emphasis on children’s learning via participation and / or observation of different practices. In almost literal terms, chiefs act as “lightning rods” for practices that are the concrete instantiations of cultural knowledge regarding hierarchy, deference and respectful behavior. It is largely through their presence or absence in a household that the household will be intimately involved in chiefly activities, discussions and preparations for *fa’alavelave*, sites of usage of respectful language and perhaps ritual oratory, and so forth. This is not to say that untitled households are uninvolved in *fa’alavelave* or that untitled men do not participate in important ritual events as members of the *aumaga*. But these untitled and lower ranking households are usually only involved by virtue of their proximity to chiefly households. Chiefs may frequently engage in chiefly activities in their own households, while untitled men will only engage in chiefly activities outside of their own household.

I have also included the family of the Congregational Christian church Pastor within this “high ranking” category. Despite the fact that the Pastor holds no chiefly title in the village and does not participate in any but the most oblique way in village political decisions, he is also among the highest ranked of any individual in the village. Extraordinary levels of deference and respect are directed at the pastor, his spouse and his family in ways very comparable to those of the highest ranking chiefs. Additionally, as the pastor is involved in a large majority of *fa’alavelave* in ways separate from but

parallel to chiefs, I thought it would be important to include the children from this family into the analysis as an important contrast.

Cross sections by age

I delineated participants into four cross-sectional age groups: birth to three, four to six, seven to nine, and ten to twelve years of age. My decision to include very young children was motivated by Ochs and Schieffelin's (Ochs and Schieffelin 1984; Ochs 1986; Ochs 1988; Schieffelin 1990) argument that important cultural norms and values are inculcated as part of language acquisition, as well as the notion that children's developing knowledge is often built on earlier understandings (e.g. Karmiloff-Smith 1992). As will be made clear in the following sections, I paid relatively less attention to this youngest cross-section because an examination of infant development requires a different set of methodological instruments and a significant investment in time. A far greater diversity of methodologies and research time was expended on the three older cross-sections.

Additional sampling concerns

There are three additional issues that I paid attention to and attempted to balance throughout the recruitment of my sample. First, given the length of time I needed to spend in a given household to collect detailed and longitudinal data, I had to select participants and families who were willing to enter into a lengthy working relationship with me. The importance of good rapport between the researcher and the focal participants and their families superseded using a more randomized method of recruiting

participants. It must be acknowledged, however, that doing so may have introduced some selection bias (i.e. towards more social families, those that stood to gain esteem from associating with a Westerner, etc) (Bernard 1995).

Second, in recruiting families I attempted to sample from as broad a range of household sizes and compositions as possible. My two pilot research trips to Samoa revealed the important ways in which household size and composition can have an important role on the dynamics and functioning of the household and the particular social roles adopted by its members. For example, a high ratio of infants and toddlers to children between 6 and 10 years of age will mean that the latter group will spend a disproportionate amount of their time engaged in child care, and with far less ability to be involved in peer interactions and ability to move freely throughout the village. This may serve to put limits on the degree to which these children are able to observe chiefly activities and engage in village activities. Thus, household size and composition are likely operating as an important factor channeling the experience of children, a point also raised by Mead (1973) in her examination of adolescence. For the sake of sampling, I opportunistically selected households with different sizes (above and below the mean rural household size of 7.2 (Government of Samoa 2001)) as well as different types of household composition (e.g. several infants vs. no infants, large sibling sets, large number of adults, mostly male members vs. mostly female members). I cannot claim equal representation of these many different types of household composition, but by examining some of the variation I hope to point to some ways in which composition and size may matter.

Third and finally, my larger task was made considerably easier by focusing on a number of children within a household rather than a single child per household. There was some evidence from the ethnographic literature for differential parental treatment of offspring (e.g. Morton 1996), and pilot research in Samoa suggested parallels. Selecting two or more children within a household would allow me to consider the possibility of birth order effects.

Methods

I employed a range of different methods (listed below in table 4.2) to examine the four focal questions discussed in the introduction. In the following pages I will describe my rationale behind the adoption of these specific methods, and the ways in which they were implemented.

Table 4.2: Research Methods

1. Case studies of individual households
 - a. Demographic survey of household members
 - b. Description and photographs of physical ecology of household
 - c. Repeated observations of social interactions of household members
 - d. Descriptions of patterns of everyday interaction
 - e. Parental belief and practices interview with caretakers
 - f. Semi structured interview with chief (if applicable)
2. Participant observation of key developmental contexts
 - a. Households
 - b. Peer groups
 - c. Local primary school
 - d. Church and church activities
 - e. Village events
3. Semi structured interviews of adults of key contexts
4. Focus group interviews with chiefs
5. Parental belief and practices questionnaire (PBPQ)
6. Conceptual knowledge of the chief system and respectful vocabulary tests
7. Focal participant tasks
 - a. Picture task
 - b. Pretend play task
 - c. Semi-structured interview

1. Case studies of individual households

The different households included in the study represent an important point of contrast. A wide variety of different forms of data were collected over the course of the research period to facilitate this comparison. This data was collected via repeated semi- and unstructured interviews with various members of the household. This data included the following elements:

- a) Demographic survey of household members
- b) Description, photographs, and sketches of the physical ecology of the household
- c) Descriptions of patterns of everyday activities
- d) Parental beliefs and practices interview with caretakers

- e) Repeated observations of social interactions of household members
- f) Interview with the household's chief (if present)

2. Participant observation of key developmental contexts

Participant observation has been cited extensively as particularly crucial to research on human development (Briggs 1992; Corsaro 1997; Gaskins, et al. 1992; Harkness 1992; Jessor, et al. 1996; LeVine, et al. 1994; Rizzo, et al. 1992; Weisner 1996b; 1997). There are extensive discussions of the logic behind this position, and I will not reiterate what has been made abundantly clear in these other places here.

Participant observation was focused on the focal children and on what I will call “key developmental contexts”. These include: the household, peer group, primary school, church and church related activities, and village events. Pilot research trips to Samoa as well as the ethnographic literature on child rearing in Polynesia made clear that these are crucial sites of enculturation and children's activity.

While this might sound like an exhaustive list of developmental contexts in children's lives, it is not. There were important limits to the extent to which I followed these children's lives. Children's ability to move between different households, which could have very different internal dynamics, expectations and practices, meant that they were occasionally exposed to very different configurations that I could not document. I was only able to extensively attend to the child's “primary” household, and in some instances to the child's secondary households when possible. Similarly, peer groups have fluid boundaries, and shifts in participation can have pronounced impact on their interactions and activities. I was only able to perceive a small portion of these differing

peer group interactions. Also, there is a wide range of experiences that children could have had that could exert considerable impact on children's conceptual development that I would not be able to detect. These might include visits to the capitol city of Apia, visits to *faalavelave* in other villages, interactions with visiting relations from other parts of Samoa and abroad, and so forth. Thus, in no sense is my attempt to investigate multiple contexts of development in any sense exhaustive of the full range of contexts.

In the following, I will briefly characterize my contact and role in each of these developmental contexts:

a) *Household*

Considerable time was spent in each household visiting with the family. It is difficult to provide a mean number of hours or days on which I visited a given household over the research period, however, as there was considerable variation. I would estimate I made a minimum of fifteen visits at different times and days of the week with the majority exceeding this by several factors.

b) *Peer group*

I spent as much time as possible with different peers groups, both in an attempt to understand peer group dynamics as well as to develop rapport with children in contexts away from other adults. I spent innumerable afternoons playing *suipi*, fishing, running around, and simply hanging out with different groups of children. My success in visiting larger groups (4+) was always good, but the extent to which my presence impacted the nature of group dynamics remains a question in my mind. I would ask questions of the

children regarding their activities, but as much as possible I would attempt to gain proximity and then follow the lead of the group in terms of activities and conversations. On a handful of occasions I did step in to prevent some behavior from becoming dangerous (e.g. stopping a fight that was getting out of hand), but tried to do so in a way that was consonant with my role as an “atypical adult” rather than as an authoritative elder demanding obedience.

c) *Local primary school*

As described earlier, my contact in the school was far more limited than I hoped. Nonetheless, I spent a total of two weeks in the school for observations, spending a few hours of those days in each of the different grade levels in the school. During these visits, I would sit on a spare chair in the rear of the room, observe, and take notes. While some of the teachers may have altered their teaching style and language usage (e.g. trying to use more English in instruction than usual), my impression is that my visits did not radically alter classroom dynamics or characteristic behaviors. On a few occasions, I visited the school with larger groups of American students (10-12) and was able to videotape several of the classrooms. I was also able to visit a number of preschools, primary and secondary schools in Apia, Manono and Savaii.

d) *Church*

The different churches play an extensive role in the life of the vast majority of Samoans across all age groups that extends far beyond the weekly Sunday church services. Sunday school, adolescent youth groups, several month long White Sunday

rehearsals, Pastor's school, as well as the extensive fundraisers (e.g. beauty / talent contests) and assorted daily rehearsals surrounding the performances for each religious holiday (e.g. Easter, Christmas), means that there is virtually no month during the year when there is not some religious activity in which children are involved.

I attended the Congregational Church and its associated events extensively throughout the length of my time in the village, attending Sunday church service as well as the Sunday school that preceded it on a majority of weeks. I also attended every fundraiser and a majority of practices for all of the various performances, holiday events and so forth that occurred throughout the year. I had initially intended to attend both the Congregational Church and the Roman Catholic church (as well as both of their associated activities), but quickly found this to be impossible given the sheer amount of activities and time involved. I did what I could, however, to maintain as much contact as was feasible under the circumstances. My Catholic wife attended the Roman Catholic Church services and I would periodically accompany her. I also would occasionally attend Roman Catholic events and had good relationships with the enormously welcoming local priest and Catechist.

The church events were by and large the easiest events and activities to observe. This was due to the amount of work and the number of people I could readily observe from the sidelines without changing the character of the event by my presence. I was also able to videotape numerous Sunday school lessons and the Pastor's school without problem. This does not mean, however, the children, Pastor, and deacons were not aware of my presence and that on occasion we did not stand firmly in the center of attention. On several occasions, for example, my wife and I were coaxed repeatedly into

awkwardly dancing the final dance at a variety of formal occasions or fundraisers. But in general it was a very comfortable and productive work environment.

e) *Village events*

My participation in a variety of village events was extensive and began the second morning I was in Silafaga when I was roused at 4am for a 7am reburial ceremony for an important family in the village. Over the course of my time in the village I observed a wide variety of village events, including many funerals, one Roman Catholic wedding, several *saofa'i* (entitlement ceremonies), two large and important *ifoga* (ritual apologies), several *Aso Gafua* (village mayor meetings), the dedication of new buildings and the larger dedication of a local medical center funded by a foreign government. I also participated in many village-wide meetings of chiefs (*fono*) meetings first as an outsider participating both in *'aumaga*, and latter with a chiefly title in the event itself. For the final six months of the study, I also participated in the village *leoleo*¹⁷ on a daily basis, and each Sunday's mandatory one or two hour long disciplinary committee's meeting.

The sheer density of these many events slowed down the larger progress of the research project but was invaluable in obtaining a larger perspective on the nature of the chief system and the larger political organization of the village, as well as building considerable rapport with the village members. Children's participation in the village events was far more marginal than in the other areas. Yet it was an important context to observe, because Samoans frequently asserted that these were the contexts in which

¹⁷ All untitled and titled men no longer attending school (roughly between the ages of 18 – 60) would “patrol” the main street in the village to enforce the curfews during daily prayers (*Sa*) and village curfew at night (10-12pm).

people learnt about the *fa'amatai* (chief system; chiefly way of life). I will describe this in more detail in chapter 8 and 9.

3. Semi structured interviews with adults of key contexts

Adults serve to structure children's actions and experiences in important ways throughout childhood and in each of the key developmental contexts explored in this project, with the exception of peer groups. To supplement the information gathered through participant observation and briefer unstructured interviews in the key developmental contexts, semi structured interviews were also conducted with the adults who participate in significant ways in the key developmental contexts through which the focal participants pass. Specifically, interviews were conducted with: both local Roman Catholic priests; the resident Roman Catholic Catechist and his wife; the Congregational Christian church pastor and his wife; three Congregational Church Sunday School teachers; three local primary school teachers and the primary school principal. All of these different individuals were directly involved with children, often on a daily basis. Interviews lasted one to two hours on average, and were conducted at various times over the length of the research period.

Three sets of data resulted from these interviews. First, crucial formative parts of the child's developmental context are the local theories of human nature, development and the life course (Harkness and Super 1996; Super and Harkness 1986). My interest is to build upon earlier work on Samoan conceptions in these domains (Mageo 1998; Ochs 1982; 1988) by situating it contextually to determine how these adults understand their role-specific goals as socializers and their preferred method of instruction, as well as the

nature of development and children in these specific contexts. Second and more directly connected with the larger project, I was interested in understanding the kinds of respectful behaviors that were expected of children in the different contexts and how these respectful behaviors were taught, monitored and how violations were punished. Third and finally, I was interested if knowledge of the chief system was taught in these contexts and if so, how and to what extent.

4. Focus groups with chiefs

As described in chapter 3, there is an extensive ethnographic literature on Samoan social organization, including chieftainship and political organization. This body of work provided an invaluable basis upon which the current project could be built without forcing me to additionally complete basic research on the adult understandings and competence in these domains of knowledge. Nonetheless, it was important for me to become familiar with the local manifestations and particularities of the chief system as it existed at the time of the research in Silafaga.

In addition to the semi- and unstructured interviews I conducted with individual chiefs, during the first six months of my time in the village I also completed a set of focus groups with 18 different chiefs in the village to discuss various issues related to the chief system. We met at the house of a particular chief, who not only held several important social roles in the village (i.e. lay preacher, Sunday School teacher, Secretary of the Disciplinary Committee), but was also widely liked. He was able to recruit a variety of different chiefs, and they would field my questions on the chief system in Silafaga and Samoa in general. There was still great novelty to my residence in the village and many

were curious to speak with me about the United States. In addition, men found these sessions pleasurable, and enjoyed the opportunity to drink *kava* and socialize.

Particularly when the highest ranking high chief in the village was present, our discussion defied many of the conventions usually attached to “focus groups” as described by Morgan (1997) and others. Great deference was shown toward the highest ranking chief as the “final word” on all knowledge of the chief system and especially with regard to the knowledge. Even though there were many chiefs at each session and even though I addressed my questions to the group as a whole, all eyes would turn towards him and all would politely wait until he briefly answered the question. Then the other chiefs present would flesh out his statements, as well as answer any follow-up questions that I might have. I had many interesting insights into Samoan perceptions of knowledge and its appropriate transmission by virtue of my participation in these sessions.

5. Parental belief and practices questionnaire (PBPQ)

I was interested in generating a body of data based on the initial results I was obtaining from my interviews with parents and caretakers from the focal households of study. I decided to conduct a questionnaire in an attempt to gauge the generalizability of my findings from this smaller number of interviews to a larger population of parents and caretakers. It would also enable me to determine if any of the views expressed in these conversations were more marginal opinions in comparison with the larger Samoan population, and if there was some level of variation in parenting beliefs and practices.

The instrument covered a range of different issues regarding parental beliefs and caretaking behaviors, including among other topics: socialization goals; perceptions of behaviors attributed to “good” parents and children; modes of discipline employed and appropriate developmental time to begin to discipline; respectful behaviors expected of children towards parents, family members, and chiefs; gender and status based differences in expectations of children’s respectful behaviors and cultural knowledge; sources of children’s learning; the use of praise by parents; and understandings of the nature of enculturation. Question formats were varied and included multiple choice, short answer, and Likert scale items. There were a total of twenty questions, many of which included a follow-up question as well.

There were also six demographic questions asked of respondents including age, gender, religious affiliation, and number of children. Two questions provided a rough approximation of the relative social rank of the respondent: “Do you possess a chiefly title or are you married to a person who does?” and “Do you live in the same household as a person with a chiefly title?” Answers to these two questions were combined to create a scale of household rank, where “high ranking” persons were either chiefs or spouses of chiefs, “mid ranking” persons lived in the same household as a chief, and “low ranking” persons neither lived with a chief nor possessed a title or chiefly spouse themselves. While rough, this measure does approximate individual social rank in a way consonant with the rest of the dissertation.

The draft English version was translated into Samoan with the aid of a variety of Samoan speakers, including an individual regularly used by the American Peace Corps for translations. This draft version was then back-translated by a different professional

translator, and the back-translation did not reveal any significant translation difficulties. Five Samoans answered the questionnaires with me present and described the way in which they understood the various questions and possible answers as recommended by Weller (2000). I made repeated improvements to increase readability and precision in the wordings of questions. Samoan and English language versions of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

Administration

The questionnaire was administered in Silafaga in December 2002 and January 2003, by two middle-aged women whom I hired, trained and supervised. We restricted sampling to the three central sub-villages (*pitonu'u*) in Silafaga, as we lacked transportation to move easily through the other two more distant sub-villages. I made a list of all the households in the three central sub-villages based on Women's Committee Public Health records, and 50 households were randomly selected from this list using a random number generator.

The field assistants were instructed to visit the household and administer a parental belief questionnaire to two parents in each household. The assistants visited the selected households on several occasions if necessary to find the parents at home, unless members of the household explicitly indicated that there was no interest in participating. This only occurred in two instances. In a few households, only one questionnaire was completed because only one parent was willing to participate, and in each instance it was the male parent who chose not to participate, typically because 'child care and parenting is a concern of women'. In all 92 parental belief questionnaires were collected in

Silafaga from a total of 48 households. Literacy rates are very high in Samoa, but the field assistants were instructed to administer the test orally if the person so desired.

An additional 53 questionnaires were collected from three other rural villages in Samoa; two on Upolu (n = 10 and 29) and one on Savai'i (n=14). These were collected by a second set of field assistants who were themselves long-time residents of these villages. I was not able to readily obtain a census of households as in Silafaga, and so a different sampling strategy was employed. Field assistants administered the questionnaires to each third household along the different roads in the village beginning from a random spot in the village. One or two questionnaires were obtained from each selected household. The questionnaires were administered preferentially after the evening meal when both males and females were at home, but as this was not always possible more female responses than male responses were obtained.

Adoption and extended fosterage are quite common in Samoa and throughout Polynesia (Brady 1976; Carroll 1970; Mead 1969; Shore 1976a), as is sibling child rearing (Boggs 1985; Howard 1974; Levy 1973; Mead 1973; Ritchie and Ritchie 1989). In this context, it is important to qualify what is meant by a "parent". No distinction was made between adopted, fostered or biological children in determining if one is a "parent", only if the person was the parent or primary caretaker of a child for an extended period of time currently or at any point in the past and older than 18 years of age. While sibling child rearing is extremely prominent in Samoa (see chapter 7), for the sake of this questionnaire I focused my attention on adults. It is the adults rather than the sibling caretakers that tend to set the tone and limits on sibling child rearing behaviors, and I thought

a questionnaire adjusted to the comprehension level of 6 - 10 year olds (the typical age of sib caretakers) would greatly limit the questionnaire's larger utility.

A total of 145 completed questionnaires were completed. Summary demographic data on these respondents to the PBPQ can be found in table 4.3, including village, gender, age, household rank, number of children, and religious affiliation. The sample includes a diversity of religious affiliations, ages, and number of children. The responses are biased towards women (males 33.8%, females 62.8%, and no response 3.4%). This was likely a result of the gender of the assistants administered the questionnaire as well as the more typical timing of administration of the questionnaire (daytime when males are often in the plantations). But it is also a result of some males 'opting out' of the administration of the questionnaire because of perceptions that child care is more a matter for women. Given the reality of the situation that females of all ages are in fact more frequently responsible for child care responsibilities, I thought it important to capture the potential diversity in female opinions and so did not take additional steps to increase the proportion of male respondents (i.e. instituting a stratified random sample by gender). As with household rank, the sheer number of male respondents ($n = 49$) is more than sufficient to enable comparisons of responses by gender.

Table 4.3: Demographic characteristics of Parental Beliefs and Practices Questionnaire (PBPQ) respondents

Village ¹⁸	Location	% (n)
“Silafaga”	Primary research site	63% (92)
Saleapaga	Rural southeastern Upolu	20% (29)
Lefaga	Rural southwestern Upolu	7% (10)
Auala	Rural northwestern Savai’i	10% (14)

Gender	% (n)
Male	34% (49)
Female	63% (91)
No response	3% (5)

Rank of household	% (n)
High ranking	43% (62)
Mid ranking	29% (42)
Low ranking	28% (41)

Religious affiliation	% (n)
Congregational Christian Church (LMS)	45% (65)
Roman Catholic Church	38% (55)
Methodist Church	6% (9)
Latter Day Saints (LDS)	6% (8)
Assembly of God	3% (5)
Other	2% (3)

Number of children ¹⁹	% (n)
1 child	10% (14)
2-4 children	37% (53)
5-7 children	35% (50)
8-10 children	12% (17)
11 or more children	3% (5)
No response	4% (6)

Age	
Mean age (SD)	42.1 (15.5)
Min	17
Max	80

Age groups	% (n)
25 and younger	15% (22)
26-35	24% (35)
36-45	19% (28)
46-55	23% (33)
56 and older	19% (27)

6. Conceptual knowledge of the chief system and respectful vocabulary test

¹⁸ With the exception of the research site, all of these names here are the actual names of the villages in which the questionnaires were administered.

¹⁹ No distinction was made in the questionnaire between biological offspring and adopted or fostered children.

I created and administered two brief multiple choice tests - (1) a test of conceptual knowledge of the *matai* system, and (2) a test of respectful vocabulary - to the entire body of 6th, 7th and 8th grade students (n=82) present at the research site's local primary school present on a single day in March 2002. The intention of these tests was two-fold. First, it was designed to produce a rough assessment of conceptual knowledge regarding the *matai* system and comprehension of respectful vocabulary in 10-14 year old children, an age group that represents and slightly extends the oldest cross-section interviewed in this study. As the majority of this study is focused on detailed case studies of a small group of children, this would generate a complementary body of data that would allow comparison between the focal participants and the larger population of village children from which they were drawn.

I refer to the first test as a test of "conceptual knowledge" of the chief system (hereafter referred to simply as the "concept test") in the sense that the understandings are schematized abstractions. It consisted of a set of 14 multiple choice and true / false questions. 9 of those questions addressed basic concepts of the chief system as it might be constituted anywhere in Samoa. An additional five questions focused on local manifestations of the chief system in Silafaga, including being able to identify the highest ranking *ali'i* in the village. As I described in Chapter 3, despite great commonalities in the chief system across the Samoan archipelago, there are always some local particularities to its organization and operation, including variations in protocol and conduct, terms of address, and aspects of ritual. The 14 questions were consolidated into a one-dimensional, simple cumulative index.

I created the concept test with extensive assistance from several *matai*, untitled adults, and local primary school teachers. The *matai* aided in selecting paradigmatic concepts and questions to include in the tests. I only selected concepts that were agreed upon by all of the consultants and developed a set of over 60 potential questions. In consultation with the same set of individuals and the principal of the local primary school, I reduced the total set of questions to the subset of 14 I eventually used. Questions were removed primarily because my consultants judged them to be either not universally known by adults in the village, or the wording of the questions was seen as potentially difficult for the children. Table 4.4 includes a list of the different issues probed on the test.

Table 4.4: Issues included in the test of conceptual knowledge of the chief system

Part I: General questions
Source of a chief's authority
Types of chiefs
Symbols of office
Duties and obligations of the chief
Meanings attached to spatial layout of ritual events
Meanings attached to the distribution of kava at a village meeting of chiefs
Succession decisions and criteria
Ceremonial distribution of exchange goods
Part II: Silafaga specific questions
Identity of the highest ranking chief in the village
Identity of the high chief's ceremonial attendant (<i>agai</i>)
Respectful name of the village's untitled men's association (' <i>aumaga</i>)
Term of respect used for a senior orator in the village
Legendary genealogical connection mentioned in village ceremonial address (<i>faalupega</i>)

The second multiple choice test was designed to determine the child's comprehension of the Samoan respect vocabulary (hereafter referred to as the "vocabulary test") that is used extensively in reference to chiefs and other high-ranking individuals. As is the case with many other languages, including Japanese (Okamoto

1999), Javanese (Geertz 1960) and the “in-law” languages of Australia (e.g. Haviland 1979), Samoan speakers employ an extensive honorific lexicon in various ways to show deference and respect to others (Duranti 1992b; Shore 1982). For example, one would use the everyday word *fale* to refer to one’s own house, but would use the specialized and honorific *maota* to refer to the house of a high chief or a pastor, and *laoa* to refer to the house of an orator. The use of these latter two lexical items rather than the everyday term *fale* is used to show respect and deference to the owner of the particular house; although other pragmatic goals are also possible (Duranti 1992b). While extensive, the Samoan respect lexicon tends to refer to the personal possessions, bodies, emotions and cognitions, and activities of chiefs and other highly ranked persons (Duranti 1992b; Shore 1982).

The vocabulary test consisted of twenty multiple choice questions in which the child was asked to match the provided respectful word with its everyday equivalent. As with the concept test, the questions were consolidated into a one-dimensional, cumulative index for the sake of simplicity and analytic clarity. In creating the test, I generated a list of over two hundred words based on my own knowledge, lengthy conversations with three *matai*, and consultation with George Milner’s Samoan dictionary (1993). As with the concept test, this list was reduced in consultation with the same set of seven adults by asking them which of the words were the most commonly used by contemporary speakers and the most useful in everyday life. Finally, out of this reduced list of words, I selected twenty words from several different categories. Table 4.5 shows the different categories and some examples of the words selected to represent them.

Table 4.5: Respectful words included in the vocabulary test

Category	Examples	Number of questions
<i>Exchange goods</i>	Cow, pig, cooked chicken, kava	5
<i>Social roles</i>	Pastor, carpenter, wife of chief	4
<i>Common activities</i>	To wake, to see / know	3
<i>Personal hygiene</i>	To wash one's hands, to bathe	2
<i>Parts of the body</i>	Face, back	2
<i>Emotions</i>	To get angry	1
<i>Others</i>	House, opinion of orator, funeral	3

My informants and I had extensive conversations about the administration of the vocabulary test. I was initially concerned that the vocabulary test should be administered orally, with the teacher reading the words aloud and the students then marking the correct answer, as the children are likely to be more familiar with the spoken version of these respectful words than with their written forms. I was also concerned that presenting the words abstracted from a spoken context might make this task unnecessarily difficult and underestimate children's actual competencies. The school principal and the teachers assured me, however, that this format was not unfamiliar, and some claimed to have used a similar format with English vocabulary items. Additionally, the principal thought that an oral administration might end up taking up too much time. In the end I followed the teachers' and principal's advice and used a written, multiple choice format for the vocabulary test as well. Given that the mean score on the vocabulary test (10.46, Std Dev = 4.34) was well above chance (4.25), it seemed that my fears were largely unfounded. It is important, however, to acknowledge that the child's score on the vocabulary test cannot be taken as a direct measure of the child's competence in using respectful speech, because knowing a word and knowing how to use it in the appropriate contexts are two quite different things. Nonetheless, while not sufficient, knowledge of respectful

vocabulary is a necessary step in the child's developing competence in respectful speech as a whole.

Basic demographic questions were also included, including age, gender, grade level, and whether or not the child lived in the same household as a chief. This last question was designed to be a crude index of the relative rank of the child's household. While a more extensive set of questions that would have more precisely assess the relative ranking of the household would have been more analytically useful, the difficulties of ensuring the children's comprehension of these questions as well as the time constraints of the tests' administration forced me to adopt this cruder index.

Once a final draft version was developed (see Appendix 2 for a copy of the tests with English language translations) it was pre-tested on a set of 20 literate adults and older adolescents in the village, who all scored at or near perfect (scores of 92% or better on each test). The test itself was administered on a single morning during regular school hours in mid-March 2003. The teachers explained the test to the students in Samoan, distributed the test to the students, and answered any general questions about completing the test. There were only a few inquiries, and then only about how to mark the answers. I had indicated to the teachers that I would be happy to answer any questions that the students might have about individual questions, but there were none. The students had a full hour to complete the test, but the majority finished in less than 45 minutes.

Tests were excluded from analysis if the child failed to answer the demographic questions about gender, age and rank that would have allowed me to contextually situate their scores on the test. Others were thrown out if the test had not been completed correctly (i.e. each question had multiple answers circled). A total of 6 tests were

excluded, leaving a total of 76 individuals who had completed at least one of the two tests. Descriptive statistics of the sample are included in table 4.6 below. The respondents ranged in age from 10 to 14 years of age, with a mean of 11.0 years (SD = 1.03). The children were almost evenly split by gender, but a majority of the children lived in a household together with a chief, giving the sample an uneven bias in favor of “high-ranking” children (72.4%). 89.6% of the total students enrolled in the 6th – 8th grade in the school completed one or both of the tests.

Table 4.6: Demographic characteristics of student study population (n=76)

Age	Range: 10-14; mean = 11.00 (std dev = 1.03)
Grade level	38.2% 6 th grade, 39.5% 7 th grade, 22.4% 8 th grade
Gender	52.6% male, 47.4% female
Household rank	72.4% high rank, 27.6% low rank

Analysis of the twenty different respectful vocabulary test items showed there to be a high degree of internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.822). Removal of three of the twenty items increased Cronbach’s alpha to 0.847, which is well above the accepted norm for reliability of a test of this kind (usually 0.700). Factor analysis of the questions indicated that the same three items were not directly indexing the same single body of knowledge as the others. The low factor loading scores of these three items (-0.094, 0.105, and -0.188) supported the reliability analysis, and so these three items were removed from the index for analysis, leaving seventeen items in total.

The conceptual test, on the other hand, had a predictably low internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.137), given that the body of knowledge includes such a wide diversity of issues including things such as chiefly obligations, local respect terms, norms of succession, aspects of ritual events and so on. Removal of virtually the entire set of

questions would not elevate the internal consistency to the normative “acceptable” level of 0.700. Consequently, no questions were removed. This does not render this instrument irrelevant, but rather only suggests that results generated by this instrument be analyzed with caution.

Finally, application of the highly conservative Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z test were performed to assess the degree to which the scores of these two tests exhibited a normal curve; a basic requirement for the application of parametric statistical tests. Both the conceptual test ($z=1.195$, $p=0.115$ ns.) and respectful vocabulary test ($z=1.086$, $p=0.189$ ns.) exhibit normal curves.

7. Focal participant tasks

The focal participant tasks are designed to assess the child’s relative comprehension of and competence in the chief system as well as the associated deferential and respectful behaviors. To effectively understand the impact of cultural learning, we must have some way of assessing change in the child. In most instances, learning has been assessed according to children’s changing competence in a domain. For example, Patricia Greenfield (2004) was able to assess the developing weaving skills of the young Zincantan girls she examined by looking at their changing patterns of participation in the weaving process. This is far more problematic for the project here for two reasons. First, there is no discrete domain of performance in which children’s knowledge of the chief system is behaviorally demonstrated, and which could serve as a clear index of their comprehension or competence. While children are required to demonstrate respectful and deferential behavior, that is the limit of their participation in

chiefly activities. Thus, it is impossible to assess their relative knowledge on the basis of their shifting participation, as Greenfield and others were able to do. Second, children's "knowledge" of the chief system includes both behavioral components (e.g. respectful speech and practices) and conceptual components (e.g. knowing the basis for a chief's authority). These conceptual components cannot be readily assessed on the basis of external observation, but rather require cognitive measures.

The focal participant tasks included three distinguishable elements: (a) a picture task; (b) a pretend play task; and (c) a semi-structured interview. I adapted these tasks to children's individual competencies in the following ways. All children completed the basic portion of the first two elements, but there were additional questions and / or tasks that would be added as the child's linguistic and cognitive competencies allowed. The third element, the semi structured interview, which made the greatest demands on the child's ability to talk about fairly abstract and conceptual ideas, was largely reserved for the oldest and most capable children. Obviously none of these tasks were given to the very youngest cross section of children (0-3 years of age).

Part A. Picture task

Children, particularly young children, cannot readily complete the same kinds of interviews that researchers employ with adults (Fine and Sandstrom 1988; Tammivaara and Enright 1986). One of the more significant stumbling blocks is that it can be very difficult for young children to discuss abstract ideas and concepts without some form of scaffolding to structure the conversation. One very productive way to do so is with the aid of photographs, drawings, and video clips (Tammivaara and Enright 1986). Use of

these media provides the young interviewee with something concrete to talk about, and which are sufficiently visually interesting to keep their attention on the task at hand. In contrast to several other methods I tried to use in the Samoan context, including using puppets and social pretend play²⁰, this particular method proved to be very successful in generating data for the project.

The picture test was constructed out of a collection of color photographs, color video clips, and black and white drawings. The color photographs and videos were selected from a collection of photographs I made during my first few months in Samoa during which I visited two different villages some distance from Silafaga to attend two large funerals of high ranking families. These pictures made it highly unlikely that the children would know the chiefs on a personal basis, a source of potential bias to the assessment of “generalized” knowledge. In asking children about photographs of persons with whom they were unfamiliar, the children would have to look for contextual cues in the photograph (e.g. symbols of office, roles in a given event) to identify the individual as a *matai* giving a speech, for example. As I was not able to get photographs of all the kinds of things I wished to use in the tests, I commissioned a local artist to draw a number of ink sketches and completed a few drawings myself to fill in the gaps.

Several of the drawings included violations of social norms and expectations to see if the children could detect these violations. Some photographs also included oddities with the intention of seeking to determine if children could note the discrepancies. For example, orator chiefs use a staff (*to'oto'o*) and a fly whisk (*fue*) draped over a shoulder as symbols of office when they give important speeches. At one of the large funerals, one attendee had neglected to bring his. In the place of the staff, the orator used a fence

²⁰ Many different kinds of methods were pre-tested with relatively little success for a variety of reasons.

post he uprooted from the front yard, and he had no fly whisk. I used a photograph of this man delivering a speech, surrounded by fine mats and other exchange goods, with the children to detect whether they understood the symbolism of the fence post. Was this an orator delivering a speech with a *to'oto'o*, or simply a man holding a fence post? Given the ambiguous use of symbols of office, could the children identify his role on the basis of his activities alone? Or do the symbols of office provide an effective scaffolding for children's developing understandings, which are effectively disrupted in this instance? A total of 12 different photographs and drawings were used in the final version.

I used a structured set of questions were created for each photograph, ranging from a single question on one of the "warm-up" questions on one of the easier photograph prompts to twelve questions for some of the more complex test photographs. There were a total of 78 questions of different formats, including both simple identification and open-ended questions. This structured questionnaire was created to ensure my ability to make direct comparisons between different individual's responses. In addition to this basic set of questions, an additional list of follow-up questions and probes were also written but used more opportunistically given the child's competence and responses.

The picture test took between 30 minutes to an hour to complete, depending on the length of the child's responses to questions. The picture task was recorded from above by a video camera placed on a tripod, set to its maximum height, and arranged so that it focused narrowly on the space between the interviewee and interviewer. It was in this space that I placed the photographs and drawings, which were the basis for the questions asked. It presented the only reasonable solution to recording not only our

verbal discussion of the images, but also the accompanying referential gestures towards the images and drawings.

One of the more substantial problems for the protocol as a whole was the frequent existence of a “supportive audience”. If I completed the task in front of older siblings and adults, they would often chime in and provide answers to the child if they showed any hesitation in answering a question²¹. Even repeated pleas for the audience members to not help did not often end the problem. In other instances, the audience would say something to shame the child when they hesitated in answering or if they failed to answer correctly. Few things could change the child’s willingness to participate more than to have a parent muttering in the background about how stupid their child was. My most frequent recourse was to stop the test and try to complete it on another occasion when there were fewer interruptions (and fewer people present), but this slowed the progress of the research considerably. The impact of the crowd also felt itself considerably when I tried to use video segments as test materials. Bringing out a laptop computer to show video segments tended to draw large crowds of children and curious adults that proved to be such interference that the video clip segment of the tests was only used for a small handful of the children.

The initial photographs and questions were aimed at “warming” the child up to the task, and acquainting them with the type of questions I would be asking. Despite the fact that photographs, televisions, videos and other printed images are very common in Samoa, I wanted to be able to deflect any potential criticism that Samoan children were not sufficiently familiar with printed images and drawn depictions to be able to complete

²¹ Even in social cognitive tests of young infants, it was hard to keep caretakers from trying to aid the children in completing a task (e.g. “Imitate the man’s actions, Vi, use your head to turn the light off!” in response to Meltzoff & Moore’s imitation task using the large lighted button).

the task. Additionally, I wanted to be able to assess whether or not the children had sufficient visual acuity to see the images without problems. For all of these reasons, I asked a set of questions in which children were asked to identify numerous everyday objects and activities (e.g. palm trees, a house, coconuts, a boy grating coconut, a wrist watch, school children, two boys playing *ma* (a Samoan version of checkers)). All of the children who completed the picture task scored at 100% correct on these 14 questions, suggesting that none of these potential complications and critiques were in fact actual problems.

Part B: Pretend play task

The pretend play task consisted of involving the child in a number of pretend play episodes with the intention of determining the child's ability to imitate a number of behaviors characteristic of chiefs, ritual practices, and respectful behaviors. A number of different items were provided (e.g. coconut cup for use in serving kava, plastic tub for use as a kava bowl, stick for use as a orator chief's staff (*to'oto'o*), and a worn fine mat (*'ie toga*)) for use in these sessions. I would ask the child to engage in a number of different episodes to "show me" how a particular culturally specific act was done. These included asking the child to demonstrate: how kava is made and served to different kinds of chiefs; how an orator holds a staff and fly whisk (*fue*) when he gives a speech; how an orator speaks when he gives a speech; how kava was called (*folafola*) in chiefly meetings; and so forth.

While Samoan children are very much socialized to be "performers" (in the sense of being comfortable in performing before their families)(Ochs 1988), this task was not

always completely successful as it relied on the child's willingness to perform. Several of the temperamentally more fearful children could not be coaxed into fully complying, and generally my attempts to video tape their actions tended to make this group even more unwilling. Consequently, I was not frequently able to videotape these portions of the test without adding to the child's "nerves" and often just took notes on their success in performing these actions.

Part C: Semi structured interview

With the older children (roughly 9 – 12 years of age) who were more able to answer more abstract and conceptual questions based on their better linguistic and cognitive abilities, I also conducted semi-structured interviews. The interview schedule consisted of questions probing the child's understanding of a range of issues including such things as: the duties and responsibilities of chiefs; the basis of the chief's authority in the descent group; the differences between the types of chiefs; the criteria used in succession decisions; where and how one learns about the chiefly system; and the etiquette and respectful behavior (*va fealoai*) to be shown towards titled persons. The number of questions varied by the competence of the child as well as their responses, and included between 30 and 70 questions. This portion of the task was also videotaped and lasted between 20 and 50 minutes.

In sum, a variety of different methods and approaches were used to understand the social and cultural organization of processes of cultural learning, children's encounter with the chief system, and their resulting knowledge of that system. I made the case for

the value of a case-based approach to exploring cultural learning and child development in general. This case-based qualitative research is complemented with the use of quantitative instruments as well, including a parental belief and practices questionnaire administered to a large number of village parents and a set of tests given to a sample of local primary school children. The complementarity of different methods allows us to avoid the weaknesses or potential biases of any individual method.

While this chapter addressed the specific mechanics of the research methods, the next chapter discusses the position of the researcher in the community and in relation to his research participants. This is important as the researcher's positionality and stance in the village can have an appreciable impact on the validity of the data generated. I also discuss the complexities of conducting research on and with children, whom I argue present unique but not insurmountable hurdles to successful ethnographic research.

Chapter 5: Building rapport with children and the community

In this chapter I will discuss the more ‘human’ concerns of ethnographic research: the problems of building a positive working relationship with a community. Given the fact that simple access to a population of study as well as the relative validity of the data derived from working with this population is contingent on the nature of one’s relationship with that population of study, I think it appropriate to describe it here. I have decided to devote an entire chapter to it as there are issues and debates particular to conducting ethnographic work with children. I will begin by describing how permission to conduct the study was obtained from various parties in the village as well as briefly provides some background demographic and economic information on the research site. I will then turn to discussing ethnographic research conducted with children and spend some time critiquing both the position that participant observation with children is identical with that of adults requiring no special adaptations, and with the position raised most substantially in sociology that the ethnographer can largely set to one side their adult characteristics and be accepted as another “child”. Instead I will argue for the utility of adopting an “atypical adult” role with children in order to build rapport with children in some limited contexts. I will complete this section by describing some ethical issues including securing consent from children, and my reasons for preserving the anonymity of the village and its population.

Samoa perceptions of the foreign researcher

The stereotype of Samoan hospitality and kindness is a well deserved one. On all of my visits to Samoa and repeatedly over the course of the field work period I was

repeatedly faced with instances of extraordinary cooperativeness, helpfulness and generosity from ordinary Samoans, some of whom I knew not at all. Yet one can also detect a palpable and general sense of ambivalence towards foreign researchers in Samoa. As one of the more populous, more accessible, and yet in some sense more “traditional” of Polynesian island groups, Samoa has been subjected to an amazing quantity and variety of social science research and economic development projects. In a conversation with a Methodist pastor from a village on the northwestern side of Savai’i, he mentioned at least six different groups of researchers who had worked in a small set of villages north or south of his own village just within the past few years. In addition to the amount of research being conducted, there is a large population of international aid workers including most prominently the American Peace Corps but also smaller numbers of Japanese, Australian and New Zealand volunteers in both rural areas and Apia.

The volume of research and level of contact with foreign aid workers have affected the ease with which researchers are able to work in the country, and more relevant to the issues here, the expectations and concerns facing them in two important ways. First, foreigners are frequently perceived to be a risk to proper village protocol. While the majority of past experiences with foreigners are likely to have been positive, a small number of negative experiences tend to linger in the collective memory with greater force. Feeling either less willing to manage such a risk given some barrier of language and culture, Samoans tend to be unwilling to open their doors to researchers and foreigners for extended periods of time. For example, a high ranking orator chief in Falelima told me politely that he would no longer accept researchers or Peace Corp volunteers (PCV) in his village, because at some point in the past year two foreigners

(including at least one PCV) got into a heated argument not far from where the monthly village major's meeting (*Aso Gafua*) was being held. To have an argument in that particular space at that particular time was considered highly insulting to the authority and dignity of the chiefs and the village as a whole.

Second, with increased public awareness of the nature of the research enterprise I noted a healthy interest in what was to be done with the results of the research and non-Samoan's presentation of Samoan culture. For some there is a disquieting lack of indigenous control over the process and its products. We can see this in local perspectives on the Mead-Freeman debate in which neither author's account is felt to square with local perceptions of Samoan culture (Wendt 1983). Both Mead's descriptions of 'easy-going' adolescent sexuality and Freeman's portrayal of Samoans as violent and aggressively competitive are seen as less than flattering by most Samoans and not properly part of their "culture". More recently, foreign scholar's debates over the status of *fa'afafine* (male transvestite) in contemporary society, and whether or not very Christian Samoa 'accepts' homosexuality has been another source of embarrassment for some. In general there is a level of insecurity and unease in allowing foreign researchers to represent Samoa to external audiences. Additionally, one chief explicitly mentioned that he 'knew' that there was some monetary gain received from the publication of academic works, and he was offended that someone would profit from Samoan cultural knowledge that properly belonged to the Samoan people.

Gaining entrance to “Silafaga”²²

My wife and I came to locate a village in which I would conduct the research project after an extended period of actively looking. Through friends of an American expatriate who had married a Samoan and lived there for several decades, we were able to locate a house in which we could live in a rural village on the southern coast of Upolu, the most populace island in the Samoan archipelago. In many ways locating a house in which we could live removed many of the difficulties we had been experiencing. We no longer had to contend with local fears of being unable to ensure our well-being over such a long period of time, which seemed in many cases to be of far greater concern than the prospects of me conducting research in the village for an extended period of time.

Our first step was to meet with the highest ranking chief of the village, a very prominent national political figure who lived in the capitol city returning only for important village business. Being familiar with social science research and having a more realistic perspective on the “risks” of social science research, the chief raised no objections but specified that I seek the permission of the chiefly council (*fono*) in the village. The family with whom I was going to live arranged for a chief in their family to help me in the *fono*. A respected but somewhat controversial figure, Pepe, was selected to help me. He became one of my closest friends and allies in the village, and he and his immediate family helped me extensively in gaining access to the different village institutions and more generally over the course of my stay in the village.

A village *fono* is not held on a regular basis, but rather only when circumstances or events arise that merit their consideration. No one suggested (and I was not pursuing)

²² This name and all the other proper names in this dissertation except where explicitly flagged are pseudonyms and should not be confused with any historical or contemporary person, entity, or location. I discuss my decision to preserve the anonymity of my research site later in this chapter.

the idea that an entire meeting be devoted simply to consideration of my project, and so we took up residence in the village and patiently awaited an opportunity to seek permission and began to make contacts in the village. After several weeks and unsure of how best to proceed, Pepe decided that we should present my proposal to a one of the village's five *pitonu'u* or segments, and request their permission. Samoan *pitonu'u* are the lowest level of village political organization, where the different chiefs associated with that *pitonu'u* will meet to discuss issues of relevance to the village section.

In a ritual event full of the elaborate ceremony and decorum characteristic of chiefly functions, I briefly described my research and asked for their permission to conduct the research in the *pitonu'u* that they represented. There were few questions, and then they tended to be off-topic, including questions as to which American city I hailed from. Given at least the implicit approval of the highest ranking chief, Pepe and his extended family, the overwhelming concern seemed to be the extent to which I was palatable as a person. In the end, no objections to the research were voiced. The discussion as a whole seemed to be concluded when the highest ranking chief present, an old and somewhat senile widower asked if I might introduce him to a 'nice American girl', which caused the meeting to erupt in laughter. In the end I conducted research with several of the households of the chiefs who attended, and had close working relationships with many of these men.

A few weeks later, I attended the monthly meeting of the village *pulenu'u* or mayor and again asked for permission from these chiefs. While again this was not the appropriate audience for my request, but the village-wide *fono* had again been cancelled and Pepe suggested this as an appropriate alternative in the meantime. Again there was

no opposition, and at this point I decided that I had sufficiently gained local approval of the village leadership to proceed with the research in earnest.

Over the next month or so, I also sought out the local religious leaders for the two village churches, the Christian Congregational Church and the Roman Catholic Church. I meet with the pastor and wife of the former and the two local Roman Catholic priests and catechist of the latter. I received permission to regularly attend both Sunday schools, youth groups as well as the numerous church events held throughout the year.

Gaining entrance into the local primary school proved to be the most difficult and time consuming of hurdles to cross, and I was never able to conduct the number of observations I desired. After obtaining official approval from the Department of Education office in Apia, I still had to negotiate with the local principal for her permission to attend school as the somewhat vague official letter of approval allowed a number of interpretations of how much time and under what conditions I was to be allowed to observe classroom activities. Suggesting that I might create unnecessary distraction for the children and teachers, my ability to observe in the school was sharply limited. Because several of the teachers denied that I actually was a distraction in the classroom, I have come to think that at least part of the problem may have been that the principal was aware of the fact that I had met with Samoa's Minister of Education and had some ongoing contact with the National University of Samoa's Department of Education. She may have thought that I was acting as an agent for these parties and was concerned that I might report my observations back to them.

Despite the difficulties in initially locating a field site and the various delays in making contact with and building relationships with the various different organizations in

the village, my eventual acceptance in the village was warm and supportive. While it is difficult to ‘prove’ one’s acceptance in a village (at least without a poignant Geertzian tale of local acceptance), I can point to the extent of my broad participation in village affairs as one indication. I regularly attended the Congregational Christian church as well as their Sunday school for the entire time I lived in the village. My Catholic wife attended the local Catholic Church and I would occasionally accompany her to a service as well as the Catholic Sunday school. I attended the vast majority of church events (e.g. dances, fundraisers, bingo tournaments, beauty pageants, White Sunday pageants, and LMS Pastor’s school) at both churches. About half way through the research period, the village disciplinary committee and the village “police” (*leoleo*) who monitor violations in village curfews at night and during daily *sa* (evening prayers) took on a far greater role in the village. Now all village chiefs and members of the ‘*aumaga* (village untitled men’s association – essentially all males in the village not attending school over the age of 18, had to participate in policing village curfews and attend the lengthy meeting of the disciplinary meetings (2-3 hours) each Sunday. Attendance was taken each day, each *sa* (6-6:30pm), and each evening curfew (10pm), and anyone found absent was fined (5 *tala*, ~2 \$USD) at that week’s Sunday meeting. As a member of this group I participated in policing *sa* and at each Sunday’s meetings. It became a running joke for one of the high chiefs to announce to the group that the meetings had gone on long enough when the “*palagi* (foreigner) could no longer sit cross-legged on the hard concrete floor anymore without squirming”. I was also fined a small fine for failing to attend a Sunday meeting without giving prior notice that I wasn’t going to attend due to illness. The village’s

willingness to hold me accountable to village social norms can also be taken as an indication of the degree of our acceptance in the village.

I also attended and participated in limited ways in every village *fono* that I was present for as well as a large range of village events including funerals, weddings, *saofai* (entitlement ceremonies), and *ifoga* (ritual apologies). Near the conclusion of my time in the village and at the suggestion of the highest ranking chief, an important family in the village honored me by giving me a chiefly title in the village. While I had always attended chiefly meetings, the title served to legitimize my participation in the village and can be taken as a good indication of my acceptance in the village.

Background information on Silafaga

Silafaga is a large village of over 1,000 persons²³, which places it in the largest tenth of villages throughout Samoa (2001 census). In terms of land area, it is also an extremely large village encompassing a vast quantity of land running from the coastline to the mountains, of which only a portion was currently being cultivated at the time of field work. It is contiguous with a lengthy expanse of lagoon bound by a reef several hundred meters from the beach.

The village consists of five different *pitonu'u* or village segments. As mentioned above, *pitonu'u* are the lowest level of village political organization. *Pitonu'u* are often related by historical events and mythological origin. In Silafaga, for example, the land now used by one of the central *pitonu'u* was give to a group of chiefs and their decent groups as a reward for assisting the village during a time of war. In Silafaga these

²³ The data provided on Silafaga that might be used to identify it from Census materials (e.g. population) will only be approximate. Aggregate figures for Samoa as a whole are obviously accurate.

pitonu'u differ dramatically in terms of population size and land area. The three most populous of these *pitonu'u* were clustered around the two village churches and the local primary school, all of which were located within a quarter mile of each other. There is also a large open-walled meeting house built with foreign aid monies that serves as a medical center and was the site of the largest village *fonos* and other large meetings. If one were to look for a village center, it would be this area of churches, school and meeting hall. The two other *pitonu'u* are at considerable distance from the other three and are themselves spread out over a large area. The single government road that runs along the entire coast of Upolu bisects the village and its different *pitonu'u*.

The 2001 census data indicated that Silafaga had over 120 distinct households and an average household size of 8.0 persons. This matches the Samoan national average for household size, but is a bit larger than average for rural households (rural average 7.2, urban average 8.3 (Government of Samoa 2001)). In many ways these figures underestimate the actual household density, as closely related households live near each other and their members move frequently between them. I will go into far greater detail on household composition and their relative fluidity in chapter 7.

The vast majority of economic pursuits in the area are subsistence agriculture. Given the extensive land available I did not hear of problems finding land to use, but some of the land was at considerable distance from the heart of the village where most village households had their homes. For most households it would not be uncommon to walk 30 – 45 minutes to their plantations. The crops grown in these plantations were those common to the Samoan islands and much of the Pacific: various forms of taro, yams, sweet potatoes, coconuts, and bananas, being primary. Some families also

possessed smaller plantings of other crops including cacao beans, pumpkins, cabbage, *kava* (piper methysticum), papayas, and pineapples. Some of these secondary crops as well as the more standard Samoan crops are occasionally brought into Apia to be sold at market, when cash was needed. Although I knew many people who had planted crops for use in cash cropping, given the high cost of transporting them into Apia to be sold, I did not know of anyone who engaged in cash cropping to the exclusion of subsistence agriculture in this village.

While there was an extensive lagoon available, only a small percentage of persons fished on a regular basis. It was not uncommon to see small groups of women gathering various shellfish and other items from the lagoons, but there were no larger boats to be used for long-line, deep sea fishing as was more common in the capital city and a few neighboring villages. Virtually all households had pigs and chickens in their households, and given the extensive land several had a few heads of cattle on unused land near the family's plantations in the foothills. None of the livestock were sold, but rather were kept for household consumption and primarily for ritual exchanges.

There are several local attempts to generate increased flows of cash income. Several families have the tiny stores, common throughout Samoa, selling assorted sundries and household items such as soap, soft drinks, beer, flour, salt, tinned fish, corned beef, cloth, batteries and so on. There are perhaps seven of these in the village as a whole, although few were open regularly. Two families supplemented their income each Sunday by cooking and selling deep-fried balls of dough, locally called *pankeke*, a borrowing of the English "pancake". While there is some level of tourist development in a few areas of Upolu, there were no local tourist establishments in the village and to the

best of my knowledge none of the full-time residents of the village were locally employed in the tourist industry.

In terms of the local churches, the village is very typical for Samoa. There are two large churches near the center of village. The larger of the two is a Congregational Christian Church, and it is staffed by a prominent and well-liked pastor. His family lives in the largest and only two-story house in the village, located directly across from the church. A short distance away and overlooking the village lagoon is the Roman Catholic Church. Two different Roman Catholic priests minister to the local church, one of whom lives locally while the other lives in Apia. The catechist and his family, who in some ways has a more powerful and immediate connection to the village, live opposite the priest's house near the church. The vast majority of the villagers belong to these two churches, but a number of households in the village also attend smaller churches outside of Silafaga, including the Assembly of God, Methodists and the Latter Day Saints. It is important to keep in mind that religious affiliation does not necessarily mean regular attendance, and atheism and agnosticism are not culturally accepted choices.

Two households

During the course of the research, my wife and I lived in two different households within the same village for 20 of the 26 months we lived in Samoa. This proved to be a valuable experience in that it allowed me the opportunity for firsthand experience with some of the more dramatic variations in household structure and relative rank, and the different dynamics that these variations engender.

In the first of these two households, in which my wife and I lived for a total of 17 of those months, we lived in our own house on a large family compound that also housed three other closely related but separable households. This provided us with both our own privacy and a space in which I could conduct interviews with children in relative privacy (see below) but also close proximity to a varied set of households.

The three other households were home to members of the three different sub-lineages of the larger descent group. In each of these households lived one member of a sibling set of three elderly sisters, who together consisted of the senior most generation in the family. Including this senior generation, there was a total of four generations represented in these households, including not only a very large group of children but also five infants less than thirty months of age. At any given point in time the related households (excluding my wife and I) numbered between 25 and almost 50 persons, an amazingly dense social nexus.

While the descent group as a group does possess a number of chiefly titles including one of prominence in the village, the most recent title holder had spent the last several years living outside the village, only returning for village events, holidays, and family occasions. There was a single *faiava* (affinal male) with a minor title from a village in Savai'i, but as affines are afforded far less status on average than consanguines, and minor chiefly titles only provide a person status and authority in the village with which a title is associated, this individual was not afforded the status of chief in this household nor could he act as a chief in village ritual events except when ritual demanded. Thus, in many ways the youngest children of his family had grown up in a household that I would consider of "lower rank" (I will explicate the meaning of these

categories in far greater detail below) given the lack of a physically present chief in the household.

I moved to a second household for the final three months of my time in the village. My wife, who at that point was several months pregnant, returned to the United States. This second household was the household of an enormously influential and well-known orator in the village. His chiefly title was of importance not only in the village but also in the region as a whole, and he had held elected political office many years earlier. He played an absolutely pivotal role in all village and church affairs, and was one of a very select group of two or perhaps three senior orators that was regularly called on to represent the village and his church congregation in all important events. He was also a prominent member of the village disciplinary committee, a deacon in the Congregational Christian Church, and was regularly attributed to me as one of the most knowledgeable persons in the village on subjects of ritual, mythology and local customs and lore. On the issue of relative social rank, then, these two households were markedly opposed. The former included no chiefs in residence, while the latter included one of the highest ranking chiefs in the region and a significant power in the village.

The second household was also quite different in that it approximated the modal household size far more than the earlier one. The household consisted of: an elderly senior male, his wife and their 9 year old daughter as well as the senior males' daughter from an earlier marriage, her husband and their two children (a 12 year old girl and a 5 year old boy). While there were other related families in the village, they lived at some distance and so there was far less fluidity and at no time during my time in the family did any other family members take up residence or leave for more than two days time.

Given that there were only three productive members of the house supporting the other four and far greater demands in that contributions to village and church affairs were far greater (and subjected to far greater public scrutiny), there were far different dynamics and pressures at work than in the earlier and far larger households.

As is the case in any complex social group, there were members of these two households with whom my wife and I were exceedingly close, and others with whom we hardly spoke. Many of the different members, however, proved to be excellent advisors and field assistants and were helpful on many occasions, and the experience was a valuable one.

Building working relationships with children

There is an extensive body of anthropological literature on participant observation, arguably the field's most identifiable and paradigmatic research method. One can find, for example, several books published over the last decade simply on the topic of field notes (e.g. Atkinson 1990; Emerson, et al. 1995; Sanjek 1990). While there is an increasing call for the use of ethnographic field methods in exploring different aspects of child development and in exploring children's worlds (Gaskins, et al. 1992; Gottlieb 2000; Rizzo, et al. 1992; Weisner 1996b), far less ink has been spilt in describing how this can best be accomplished (but see Fine and Sandstrom 1988; Weisner 2005).

One is left with the impression that ethnographic research with children and on child development is simply another shade of normative ethnographic research. In many ways, I would agree that this is true. Conducting ethnographic research on mother –

infant feeding or co-sleeping, for example, would be hard to distinguish methodologically from research focused on traditional craft production or agricultural decision-making. But the extent to which the research focuses directly on children as the population of study, and intends to obtain insight into their interpretative world (e.g. Corsaro 1997; Fine and Sandstrom 1988; Gaskins, et al. 1992), then I think a completely different set of concerns must be addressed.

I would argue that children²⁴ are qualitatively different from adults in ways that strongly preclude the ethnographer's ability to act as if he and his informants are of equal status, a basic goal of the ethnographic enterprise (Bernard 1995; Spradley 1979). While status differences frequently exist between ethnographers and their informants, and can be especially pronounced in certain instances (e.g. inmates, the mentally ill, the homeless), the ethnographer can act in ways that attempt to mute these differences. And given the commitment and skill of the ethnographer, I would argue that much can be done on average to reduce this divide. Yet because of the pronounced differences between adults and children in terms of differential cognitive, affective, and social development as well as age, physical maturity and size, I think there are definite limits on our ability to even act in ways that mimic equivalent status.

My opinion in this regard differs significantly from one of the most widely cited publications in the limited methodological literature on participant observation with children, an article by the sociologist N. Mandell (1988) entitled "The least adult role in studying children". Her title is in many ways a misnomer, as she is not advocating

²⁴ In this instance, I am referring to children between the ages of 4 and 12, the focal age range for this dissertation. Obviously, with early adolescents (including the older age range of the children I worked with) and certainly with adolescents there is far more of a chance to create relationships built around perceptions of equivalence in status.

simply that one can reduce the divide between children and adults, but rather that it can be suspended altogether. In reference to her work in a preschool / daycare center, she argued for the methodological necessity of such a stance, and for her ability to be accepted by the children as a 'child' by virtue of acting in equivalent "childlike" ways in this context (e.g. swinging on swings, playing in the sandbox). She writes:

While acknowledging adult-child differences, the researcher suspends all adult-child characteristics except physical size. By suspending the ontological terms of "child" and "adult" and by participating in children's social world as a child, the central methodological problem rests on essentially a technical question of the extent to which physical superiority prevents adult researchers from participating in the role of child... I argue that even physical differences can be so minimized when participating with children as to be inconsequential in interaction.

(1988:435)

I think this position not only ignores the sheer impossibility of "suspending all adult-child characteristics", but also underestimating the extent to which children may be able to pierce our attempts to do so. Behavior is not the only index of adult status, and many of these attributes (e.g. physical size, skill in toileting, lack of caretakers, superior linguistic and social skills, and differential treatment by others) cannot be suspended. Children are far more astute and perceptive to somehow view the narrow range of behaviors she has selected to emphasize (i.e. play, rejection of authority over children) as definitive proof of her status as an equal. To deny this fact is to deny children's

impressive social cognitive skills even at this early age. Additionally, I know of no practical way in which I myself could “minimize” the extra two feet of height, 100 pounds of weight, and far paler skin that I carried in comparison with many of the children with whom I worked in Samoa to the point where they would become inconsequential, as Mandell seems to imply is possible.

Ultimately, it is impossible to assess the relative success of Mandell’s attempts to suspend her adult status given only her article. But Thorne (1993), who adopted a comparable approach in an American primary school (4th and 5th grades), noted that the “least adult role” was very hard to sustain as a social position, and found herself repeatedly being questioned by the children as to her role and purposes over the course of the research period. I take this enduring probing by the children as a sign of their ability to perceive both her status as an adult and her atypical, discrepant behavior. Their continued inquiries were targeted at trying to reconcile these two observations, and do not suggest that she was so readily and unproblematically seen as an equivalent ‘child’. Also, this relative lack of success is occurring in a Western society in which the divide between children and adults is only moderately emphasized and transgressions of this line are not punished as powerfully as they might be in the Samoan context. In Samoa, relative age remains a central marker of rank (Ochs 1988; Shore 1982) as it does throughout much of Polynesia (e.g. Boggs 1985; Chambers and Chambers 2001; Firth 1936; Howard and Kirkpatrick 1989; Kaeppler 1971; Linnekin 1985; Morton 1996), and cannot be so readily or effortlessly set aside without being seen as a transgression of key social conventions and norms.

I am not, however, rejecting the methods of Mandell, Thorne and others, but rather only questioning their claim of what they might be able to achieve with those methods. I simply doubt the possibility of being able to create a working relationship with a child of this age (roughly 4-12 years of age), which would be fundamentally indistinguishable from a child – child relationship. Rather, I think it both more reasonable and realistic – particularly in the Polynesian context - to follow the lead of Corsaro (2003), Hecht (1998), and Fine (Fine and Sandstrom 1988), for example, who have advocated essentially the same methodological tactics as Mandell, but with the far more realistic goal of casting themselves simply as an “atypical adult” (Corsaro 1981; 2003). In this instance, an atypical adult is one who acts in ways inconsistent with their role by rejecting authority over children, actively engaging in children’s activities in ways consonant with child status, and so forth. One may be accepted as a member of the social group being studied, as was the case with Corsaro (2003) who came to be called “Big Bill” by the children who insisted that he be included in many children’s activities, and with Kehily (Kehily, et al. 2002) who became an “honorary member” of an informal primary school girl’s “diary club”. But this role is never taken for granted and must be constantly renegotiated over time as one continually reasserts one’s distance from the more standard adult role in which our informants and others may seek to place us.

There are specific benefits to the “atypical adult” stance in the context of this research project. First, attempts to adopt the “atypical adult” role and spending time getting to know the children allowed me to build relationships in which they were comfortable interacting with me in a variety of contexts. Despite increases in Western tourism and the prevalence of foreign aid workers in Samoa, a Caucasian researcher is

still a considerable novelty in rural areas, and novelty can quickly become frightening to children. I distinctly remember an interview I tried to conduct with a 10 year old girl with whom I had only had only very limited previous contact. Her palpable fear, hesitation in answering any question, and completely lack of eye contact lead me to stop the interview prematurely. In general I spent extensive amounts of time trying to make children feel comfortable in my presence to avoid this problem and was largely successful.

Second, as Fine (1981) and others have noted, children are adept at impression management, and to ignore the possibility that one is being told what one 'wants to hear' is to ignore the introduction of significant biases into one's data. In Samoa, adults do not tend to acknowledge children's self-initiated play or imaginative activities except in condescending or critical ways. This leads children to hide these activities from adults' attention. By adopting the atypical adult role I could acknowledge the value and legitimacy of children's activities, conceptions and beliefs and gain greater access to these domains. For example, I found an eight year old boy that would occasionally engage in fairly elaborate pretend play involving small armies of stones and bottle caps that represented soldiers in my house after I expressed interest in seeing what it was that he was doing. His father, however, denied that his son ever engaged in imaginative pretend play at his age, probably an accurate reflection of the fact that his son did not do so openly in his presence. This is not to say that I had better rapport or trust with this man's son that he did, but rather that by showing greater acceptance of children's own ideas, behaviors and conceptions that I could potentially have had better access to this particular side of the child's world.

Third, the atypical adult role enabled me to share proximity with children without altering the context in which we share. In Samoa children's behaviors and actions are powerfully influenced by the presence or absence of adults (Ochs 1988), as is the case throughout Polynesia (Martini 1994; Ritchie and Ritchie 1989). To be able to see how children act with other children in peer groups – developmental contexts which are so central to their lives - positively required me to reduce the authority I might claim as an adult.

The atypical adult role also has the powerful benefit of situating the researcher in a space in which children can instruct and correct the adult for violations of cultural norms as well as answer questions that would be obvious to properly socialized and knowledgeable adults (or children). This was a position that was not only easy to adopt given the reality that I was culturally naïve in many ways, and the fact that my linguistic disfluencies and odd accent was regularly taken as an index of my lack of cultural knowledge and skill. I found this particular tactic of great utility, particularly in drawing out children's understandings of ongoing or recent village events and rituals. I found older Samoan children immensely willing to try and 'explain' their culture to me, and this was a revealing way to probe their increasing competencies.

There are important limits, however, on the extent to which the "atypical adult" role can be routinely utilized. Specifically, I would argue that in many contexts, adopting the "atypical adult role" can serve to damage one's relations with the larger adult community in which the research must also operate. This is an issue that is not sufficiently raised by Corsaro, Mandell, Thorne and the other social science who have written on participant observation with children, largely because of the constrained nature

of their research. These authors conduct their research solely in a single context: daycare, preschool, and / or primary school classrooms. For research situations in which a multitude of contexts in which one may interact with the children exist (e.g. household, peer group, classroom, village events, and church), or in which they may observe you interacting with other persons. If one were to act as an “atypical adult” across the board in each instance, one may build good rapport with the population of children, but one would quickly alienate and perhaps anger or offend the adult population. Certainly in the Samoan context, but I would argue commonly in all multi-context research situations in which the child can see the researcher in a variety of settings, a balance must be struck between adopting an “atypical adult” role with children and a more typical adult role in contexts where other adults are present.

In terms of my project, my ability to more fully utilize an “atypical adult” role was limited to a constrained set of contexts. These included the large front room of the house in which I lived, the nearby beach and more marginal areas of the village including the plantations. In these contexts I was able to interact in more equal ways with children. I was also able to reduce my relative authority and distance from children in contexts in which I interacted solely with children and adults were not immediately present. I would often spend extended periods of time talking to children in front of a neighboring store and near the main village road for example. While these settings sound limited, these interactions allowed me to build rapport and create relationships in which the children were far more comfortable in working with me in the other contexts of their lives. I noted this distinctly when I tried to conduct an interview with a girl with whom I had not had much previous contact. Her palpable fear, hesitation in answering any question, and

completely lack of eye contact lead me to stop the interview prematurely. But it also showed me how much rapport can be built in informal contexts, and how important this interpersonal comfort can be in eliciting information from children.

I should also note that in all contexts I sharply avoided being alone with young girls and adolescent females except where I was readily visible to Samoan adults and / or my wife was also present. I was aware of the Samoan perception that there are foreign males who had come to Samoa as tourists primarily to find young sexual partners, and I knew that if I were accused of such an interest that such a perception however erroneous would prove poisonous to my working relationships in the village.

Negotiating children's meta-interactional understandings of interviews

There was one particular category of interaction – semi-structured interviews and tests - that I had repeatedly with children over the course of the fieldwork that requires particular mention. It requires reference both because of the importance of the particular methodology for the larger project and also because of the particular pitfalls this methodology possessed. In his important work *Learning how to ask*, Charles Briggs (1986) make a persuasive argument that an important methodological issues is the extent to which the underlying meanings and understandings of the interview as a speech act for the interviewer did or did not match those held by the interviewee. The interview presupposes a set of role relations, rules for turn-taking, canons for introducing new topics and judging the relevance of statements, constraints on linguistic forms and so forth. The extent to which the interviewee and interviewer differ from one another by reason of ethnicity, social class, culture and in my case age, there can be significant

disjuncture between the norms that guide the interview speech act as perceived by Western researchers and the different communicative patterns that tend to be used by the non Western populations anthropologists tend to study.

As Briggs (1986) shows with regard to his own work with *Mexicanos* in Northern New Mexico, a contrast in communicative pattern and norm may generate interpersonal tension, misinterpretations, and irrelevant and incomplete replies. In light of Brigg's argument, I paid attention to the kinds of interpretations that Samoan children would tend to make of the interviews and tasks I conducted with them, and how this particular interpretation may or may not influence the ways in which information was conveyed in that specific interaction.

The specific nature of the interviews and tests administered, varied considerably by the age and competence of the different children involved. (The specifics of these interviews and the accommodations I made for age and competence will be discussed later in this chapter.) All children were administered a highly structured test instrument in which they were shown a series of pictures and drawings and asked a set of questions regarding the persons or activity depicted. Older children and more capable younger children were also subjected to a set of more open-ended questions about the chief system and respectful behavior. And the oldest and most capable group of children was subjected to lengthier, more conversational semi-structured interviews with far more abstract referents. In all cases, it was I who controlled the flow of interaction and I who tended to solely ask the questions, although children did occasionally ask questions of clarification and a few tended to talk off topic. Children's role was largely if not exclusively that of respondent.

In the experience of Samoan children, there are few parallels to this type of interaction, but the one that seemed most salient for school aged children and older was the relationship of teacher and student. In the rural village context, this is derived from both the primary school and for Congregationalist children also from the Pastor's school that will be described in far greater detail in chapter 7. I was able to discern this interpretation of my interaction with the children both from my observations but more importantly also from listening to their interactions with each other. Several different children spoke with their peers about the interview and the tests as a *su'ega* (glossed perhaps best as "examination") that I had given them. The fact that this particular word is used almost exclusively in a school setting clearly indexes the particular loading that the children are giving to interaction.

There was a specific benefit of this interpretation for my role as the researcher striving to complete the project in a timely manner. The teacher-student interpretative frame provided me with considerable control over the interaction. While in most situations I tended to yield control to the children and adolescents with whom I worked, the interview consisted of a setting in which children tended to cede greater control to me. This was important because in virtually no instance were the interview and various tests perceived as "enjoyable" or "entertaining". I did not, for example, have any children repeatedly ask to participate in an interview²⁵. In this instance, by tagging this interaction as one in which I held most of the power, I could reasonably complete these tests and interviews. If I were to continue to adopt, for example, the atypical adult role in which I continually ceded authority, I would never have been able to complete these tests.

²⁵ There were some other activities including drawing tasks that were perceived to be a bit more like a "game" and were sought by a few informants.

This is not to say that I somehow forced the children to complete the tests by force of will, or that I never suspended the tests when faced with children's reluctance or hesitation. Quite the contrary. But I was able to coax a higher level of compliance with a somewhat 'tedious' task from a group that I had otherwise carefully acclimated to more egalitarian interactions with me.

The negative connotations tended, however, to far outweigh the minor benefits. In the context of the Samoan classroom the authority of the teacher is supreme. In this context a specific question of a student is often taken as a test of what the student should already know. In no sense do teachers ask questions meant to simply probe their grasp of a material or for some rhetorical purpose. In this context, a wrong answer or indications of ignorance (e.g. silence or "I don't know") is potentially embarrassing and anxiety provoking. This is particularly the case because some teachers (and some Sunday school teachers and parents) will punish the child for their ignorance up to and including corporal punishment and verbal shaming. Thus, it would not be out of the realm of the possible for some children to at least consider it a possibility that the foreign "teacher" in this interaction may exact some sort of punishment for their inability to answer my questions. An even larger proportion of the children may simply find any expressions of ignorance in such a way to be anxiety provoking regardless of how they might think I would react to their lack of knowledge.

This problem was made potentially far worse by the nature of the test and interviews I had designed. To try and capture the full range of competencies in children and to be able to locate any extremely high scoring children, the questions ranged from relatively easy to very difficult, such that no child answered all the questions correctly

and most missed a good proportion of the questions. This meant that all children were repeatedly faced with situations in which they did not know the answers to my questions. Given the potential for anxiety and embarrassment was great, I took many steps to try and minimize this eventuality.

Before I began the interviews or the videotaped tests, I was explicit in telling the children that some of the questions were difficult and that they might not know all of the answers to them. I urged them to try their best, but emphasized that many children could not answer them correctly but that there was nothing wrong with an incorrect answer. I was only trying to see how much of the different things “children their age” might know. My attempt to cast my tests as seeking to determine what “children their age” knew about the chief system and respectful behavior. In this way I was trying to distance their understandings from them and place it on a larger population of children.

I also began the test with many very easy questions, both to probe the child’s ability to recognize everyday items in the photographs (for reasons I will detail below) but also to make the child as comfortable as possible with the format of the tests and to reassure the child. Over the course of the test there were sections in which I would again provide fairly easy questions that they children were more likely to be able to answer.

If the child’s performance seemed to be causing them some measure of shame as gauged by physical manifestations such as lowering volume of speech, eye gaze avoidance, lowering , shrinking into self, (Lewis 1992), I would again reiterate that these were very difficult questions and that most children their age did not know the answer to them. I did avoid, however, indicating which any particular answer of theirs was correct or incorrect to avoid priming them. Additionally, after it became clear that I was not

going to administer any punishment (corporal or otherwise) that there was relatively less hesitation in answering questions. In general, I think that I was successful in minimizing the potential impact of the teacher-student role that many children would impart to our interactions. Several of the children seemed to revise their role to that of aiding me in describing what kinds of things that children of their age knew or didn't know based on what they themselves knew or didn't know.

Ethical concerns of working with children in Samoa

A positive change over the last few years has been both disciplinary and institutional realization of the necessity of ensuring the ethical treatment of our informants and research participants. Given my dissertations' focus on children, a "vulnerable" population comparable to other groups of persons with reduced abilities to make competent decisions regarding their interests and express their dissent, such as inmates, institutionalized and handicapped persons, and students, I feel that it is necessary to briefly discuss some relevant ethical issues.

Samoa represents an interesting ethical dilemma in that its hierarchical structure invests authority in a very small group of persons. In practical terms this means that the individual's ability to "opt out" of a research project is sharply constrained. A colleague of mine brought this fact home to me when he described the nature of a Samoan epidemiological research project that worked in a wide variety of Samoan villages. The local medical research team would meet with the village chiefs, describe their project, contribute money and other gifts, and then receive the leadership's permission to conduct their research in the village. Once this permission had been obtained, every member of

the village would be lined up, blood samples drawn, and various health and demographic data extracted from them. Given that authority was fully vested in the chiefs, there was reduced opportunity for villagers to opt out of – what Western populations would perceive to be – a physically and personally invasive government research project unless they were to actually physically hide from the researchers in the plantations for the duration of the visit.

This greatly reduced personal autonomy in deciding one's participation in research project is certainly more the case for children than for any other subpopulation in Samoa. During the time of my fieldwork there was a lengthy battle in the Samoan broadcast and print media over the "rights of children". Groups working to prevent domestic violence had been waging an increasingly public battle arguing for the rights of children to be free from violence, and pointed to Samoa's signature on the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. A Catholic priest responded by arguing in a nationally televised sermon that children have no rights at all and are wholly subject to the authority of their parents, family and descent group, as both Biblical scripture and Samoan culture assert. The ensuing argument endured for quite some time during my fieldwork. In my opinion the priest's argument was based on the erroneous idea that children's rights were in some sense superior to the rights of chiefs and parents, and would be used to somehow resist the authority of these parties in a general way. I found no Samoan parents who disagreed with the idea that children should not be protected from abusive situations and persons, even if those persons were the child's parents or relatives. But the parents were firm in arguing that the authority of the parents, caretakers and family leaders were the ultimate authority and children's own opinions

were of no concern. Indeed, several suggested that even eliciting children's opinions would be unforgivably damaging to the authority of parents and chiefs, as it would be providing children with a space in which they could dissent from the directives of their superiors.

Despite the fact that it would be culturally appropriate to simply obtain permission of chiefs and / or parents to conduct research on their children, I felt that it would be ethically irresponsible to do so without also striving to obtain the consent of the child themselves. Additionally, I thought that taking such a course would be damaging to the rapport that I was trying very hard to build with my focal participants and thus damaging to the validity of the data I hoped to collect. Thus, I tried to the best of my ability to educate them on the nature of the research project and to repeatedly elicit their consent to participate in the project. During the initial period when I sought consent from the parents and caretakers to participate themselves and assent to allow their children to participate, I always made sure to include the children themselves in the conversation as much as was possible. During the course of the research itself I made every attempt to provide the child with some opportunity to "opt out" of individual aspects of the research.

One other potential issue that I have taken added steps to address is with regard to photographs, audio, and visual recordings of the children. During the course of fieldwork I took extensive photographs and audio / visual recordings both in the village and, to a far lesser extent, in the households of study. Additionally, I created video recordings of the interviews and most of the tests I used with the focal participants of the study. Due to the potential threat that these recordings represent to the informant's and their household's anonymity, I asked for their permission to use the photographs and recordings both as a

source of data and for the sake of academic presentations. I obtained permission to do so both when I obtained informed consent at the onset of the research period and at the conclusion of the research period as I prepared to depart. At the conclusion I also frequently showed the households the different photographs and video recordings that I had obtained. Given the context of many of other recordings (i.e. public ritual events that occurred in the center of the village, school classrooms) I did not seek permission to use any recordings, which is in line with contemporary ethical understandings that behavior in public contexts does not require permission. I do not, to the best of my knowledge, have any recordings of potentially legally actionable behaviors (e.g. corporal punishment), and would not in any case use these in any public demonstration or academic presentation.

Anonymity of the village and its residents

About two thirds of the way through my field work there was a heinous crime committed in the village. Although the family most affected by the incident lived a great distance from the center of the village, the details of the crime came out at meetings of the disciplinary council, which all chiefs and untitled men were required to attend each Sunday evening. One of the national newspapers regularly accepted news articles written in English by villagers from rural villages in an attempt to increase their coverage of these areas. A local man whom I knew well wrote a brief news article describing the crime and how it was addressed by the government court and village disciplinary council and it was published in the newspaper. I found the article to be professionally written in that it contained no salacious details or subjective opinions, which are a hallmark of

much of the “news” articles written in Samoa. But it did mention the family involved, named the village and described a fairly horrible crime. The reaction of the village leadership was quick and decisive. The man was fined a very steep fine of approximately 500 *tala* (approximately 170 \$USD). The village only later rescinded this fine when faced with a potentially expensive lawsuit by the newspaper that had published the article. What proved to be most interesting about this case for me was that the village leadership did not dispute any of the details of his article. In my conversations with a prominent member of the disciplinary council this point was made abundantly clear. He indicated that the writer’s error was to have publicly embarrassed the village and its council of chiefs, and for that he was fined.

For the sake of this dissertation and other future publications I have decided keep the identity of the village and its residents anonymous, based largely on the village reaction to this incident. This is in contrast to most other earlier ethnographic works in Samoa including Shore (1982), Duranti (1994), and Ochs (1988) who explicitly named their respective research field sites. This is certainly not to say that what I will describe in this study contains descriptions of comparably terrible events. This dissertation is not in any sense an exposé of Samoan child rearing or rural village life more generally. I would be the first to say that there were many ways in which growing up in this village can be said to be far superior to growing up in the Northern Californian city in which I was raised, for example. Moreover, much of what I will have to say in this may even be a source of pride for the villagers if they were to be identified. However, I have chosen to keep the identity of the village anonymous, because I do wish to risk inadvertently offending or embarrassing any member of the community in which I worked. For the

remainder of this dissertation I will refer to the village as “Silafaga”, which should not be confused with any existing or historical villages, individuals or groups. Similarly, the names of all persons in this dissertation, except where explicitly indicated, are pseudonyms.

Anonymity does present some difficulties because in this case it is not merely a matter of disguising names and locations. There are some specific details of the village, its population and characteristics of some of my focal participants that could potentially be used to identify them. I have had to adjust some of these characteristics accordingly, but have only done so to disguise their identities rather than to somehow inflate the persuasiveness of my arguments. To the extent possible I have tried to retain as many details of people’s lives as possible and relevant.

In this chapter I have sought to describe the set of concerns relevant to completing ethnographic research with a population of children in Samoa. While all of the concerns mentioned – rapport, ethics, intersubjectivity – are common to ethnographers working with adult populations in any society, there can be the perception that there are no substantial differences and no special accommodation are necessary. I argue that there are indeed special concerns that need to be addressed given the unique characteristics of children as a group. I also problematize the suggestion that the wide range of physical, psychological, linguistic, social and political differences between the adult researcher and child participants can be readily ‘set aside’ with the use of appropriate methodological maneuvers. I argue for the value of adopting an “atypical adult” role with children in order to build rapport with children in some limited contexts, while also not disrupting

one's ongoing relationships with adults and "gatekeepers" (e.g. parents, teachers) in the village. I have also provided some basic information on the village in which I conducted the research.

In the next chapter, I switch gears to begin consideration of the larger research questions guiding the project. In specific, I introduce the notion of a "developmental niche", a model for understanding the specific way in which culture and social organization is thought to interact with processes of child development. The particular way in which the developmental niche is structured in Samoa, provides shape to how social learning in general, and of the chief system in particular, proceed over the course of childhood.

Chapter 6: Developmental niches of Samoan childhood

In the wonderfully titled article “Travel broadens the mind”, Joseph Campos and colleagues (Campos, et al. 2000) describe the profound changes that occur in the infant with the onset of locomotion. Synthesizing a broad body of published findings they point to pervasive changes in perception, spatial cognition, referential gestural communication, and social and emotional development. Yet despite its importance, developmentalists would underscore the fact that locomotion is only one of a very large number of changes that occur on virtually every front over the course of childhood. Moreover, Campos’ account does not situate the development of locomotion within a specific social and cultural framework, which may view locomotion as something that must be actively trained by adults to be fully realized (e.g. the Kipsigis, Super 1976), or as an emerging threat to the child’s well-being given a plethora of environmental hazards on the ground (e.g. the Ache, Hill and Hurtado 1996). My point is that childhood represents a period of profound neurological, physiological, psychological, social and emotional changes, which are viewed and made meaningful through a particular cultural lens. Cultures will parse childhood in a great number of different (although not limitless) ways. As the particular patterns of activity, caretakers, expectations and modes of socialization will vary in important ways by the particular kind of child (e.g. infant vs. preschooler vs. adolescent), understanding how Samoan childhood is partitioned is important to our larger task of understand processes of cultural learning over longer periods of developmental time.

The aim of this chapter then is to make the argument that Samoan childhood is parsed into three distinct phases - *infancy*, *early childhood*, and *community childhood* – with each representing a distinct manifestations of the Samoan “developmental niche” (Super and Harkness 1986; 2002). In this chapter I will make use of the ecocultural developmental niche concept that has been productively employed by a range of different authors in anthropology, developmental psychology, and human development to describe the complex interaction of social, cultural and ecological processes with the physiological and psychological process at work in the developing child (Berry 2004; Bronfenbrenner 1993; Bronfenbrenner and Ceci 1994; Cole 1996; Gallimore, et al. 1989; Gauvain 1995; Greenfield, et al. 2003; Harkness and Super 1994; 2002; Lewis 2000; Super and Harkness 1982; 1986; Weisner 1984; Worthman 1994)²⁶.

While the developmental niche is constantly adapting to exogenous and endogenous changes, these changes tend to be particularistic and quantitative rather than qualitative in nature. I point to two key population-wide transitions that serve to significantly transform the configuration of the developmental niche for all Samoan children: (1) the transition into sibling care and parallel process of parental distancing that occurs between 15 and 30 months, and (2) the child’s transition into the public sphere that occurs in the fifth or sixth year of life. These two major, population-wide transitions delimit three distinct niches that I will refer to as: “infancy”, “early childhood” and “community childhood”. These different manifestations of the Samoan developmental niche include changes in populations of tasked caretakers, patterns of caretaker treatment, sets of everyday activities, and behavioral expectations. To provide

²⁶ I am using the “developmental niche” concept here as an umbrella term to consider an admittedly quite disparate collection of theorists. Consequently, one should be aware that there are substantial variations in theoretical perspectives included in this group of researchers and theorists.

some basic shape to these niches, I will conclude the chapter with three case studies of focal participants.

The relevance of my discussion of developmental niches and their changes over time to the larger project of cultural learning is that the particular configuration of the developmental niche (e.g. social ecology, activities, and caretakers) influences the process of socialization and cultural learning at work. Consequently this chapter lays out a framework for connecting the next four chapters. In chapter 7, I will focus on the first of the developmental niche transitions, which entails a shift into sibling child care, a particularly fertile ground for learning many of the basic behaviors and conceptions appropriate to life in hierarchical contexts. Chapters 8, 9 and 10 focus on the impact of the second population-wide niche transition that propels the child beyond the household and into the larger village community. Chapter 8 surveys the contribution of different village social institutions to children's learning about the chief system, including the council of chiefs and *fa'alavelave*. Chapter 10 considers the local primary school and Pastor's school with the same intention. Chapter 9 examines the possibility that children's differential proximity to chiefly activity by household rank and gender can translate into differential competence in the chief system. Thus, the changing shape of the developmental niche over developmental time helps us to make sense of how children are situated in the household and village, and the different opportunities for learning about the chief system that are available to them.

Developmental niches: Intersections of culture and development

As a concept, the notion of the “developmental niche” has been most elaborately worked out by Charles Super and Sarah Harkness (Super and Harkness 1982; 1986; 1997; 2002), who have variously applied it to thinking about culture and temperament (Super and Harkness 1993; 1994), public health concerns (Harkness and Super 1994), affect (Harkness and Super 1983), and mental health (Harkness and Super 2000). There are clear parallels with these and earlier ideas and some productive cross-fertilization in the work of Urie Bronfenbrenner (1993; Bronfenbrenner and Ceci 1994), Thomas Weisner and Ronald Gallimore (Gallimore, et al. 1989; Weisner 1984; 1997; 1998; Weisner, et al. 1988), and others (Berry 2004; Elderling 1995; Gauvain 1995; Greenfield, et al. 2003). Several of these thinkers were students of the Whitings (Whiting and Edwards 1988; Whiting and Whiting 1975), and most show the influence of their model for psychocultural research. It also has parallels with “systems view” of individual development increasingly prominent in biology and psychology, including the work of Cairns (Cairns and Cairns 1994), Magnusson (1988; Magnusson and Cairns 1996), Gottlieb (1996), Worthman (1994; 1999), and Valsiner (1997).

Super and Harkness’s model seeks to capture important theoretical elements from both developmental psychology and anthropology, and was designed to be a “theoretical framework for studying the cultural regulation of the micro-environment of the child” (1986:552). From the perspective of psychological anthropology, it can be seen as the synthesis of the behavioral focus of the Whitings’ ecocultural model with cognitive anthropology’s interest in cognition and meaning. As they define it, the niche encompasses three “subsystems”: the child’s physical and social setting, customs of

childcare, and the psychology of the caretakers. The latter of which can be describe more specifically as ethnotheories of childhood and development, and the culturally-specific, affective orientations of the caregivers (Super and Harkness 1986). These different subsystems mediate the individual's developmental experience within the larger culture and society, and are argued to be in mutual adaptation with the other elements of the niche.

“Culture” as a concept has little analytic utility unless the proximate mechanisms connecting processes of child development and exogenous social and cultural processes are made clear, and this is a strength of the developmental niche concept. It is also important to note that it is not a “theory” *per se*, but rather only an orienting concept as it does not provide theoretical predictions on the relationship between different aspects of the niche and outcomes or dynamics. This is a significant move away from the earlier Culture and Personality research as well as the Whittings’ psychocultural model, which sought to link ‘antecedents’ with ‘consequents’ via personality and early child-rearing experience (Harkness 1992). It is also a move that is also in line with contemporary positions in developmental science, which see development as a probabilistic rather than deterministic process (Gottlieb 1996; Magnusson and Cairns 1996; Miller 2002).

Developmental niche transitions

Researchers employing the developmental niche concept have always acknowledged that the niche adapts to endogenous and exogenous changes over developmental time (Cole 1996:190-2; Gauvain 1995; Super 1991; Super and Harkness 1986; Worthman 1994). Harkness and Super describe the niche as an “open system”

where “the growing child and the developmental niche are co-evolving, mutually adapting units” (1994:224). Adaptations come in a multitude of forms including: shifts in patterns of parental care and child-parent interactions, accommodations for children’s special needs and attributes, changes in the physical ecology (e.g. moving into smaller housing due to changes in parental employment), and so forth.

We might divide these different adaptations into two categories: individual and population-level adjustments. Individual adjustments involve adapting the developmental niche to idiosyncratic aspects of the child or their environment, including things such as: individual or parental temperament, the timing of the onset of puberty, maternal depression, and changes in parental employment. These adjustments are not widely shared across the population, however, as they consist of alterations for more individuated sets of circumstances. Such adjustments may nonetheless be culturally patterned in that there may be culturally meaningful ways to alter parental care and treatment in response to a specific behaviors and characteristics in the child or to adapt to shifting life circumstances (Odden Submitted).

By definition population-level adjustments will occur in the life of the vast majority of children, not beset by substantial abnormality such as autism. The vast majority of these adaptations occur in response to maturational events, including the development of theory of mind, language acquisition, the onset of locomotion, and puberty. Many of these maturational events also serve as the basis for complexes of cultural meanings and practices that serve to mark and render meaningful these important life cycle transitions. The clearest examples of such biocultural interactions are initiation rituals (e.g. Barth 1987; Beidelman 1997; Herdt 1982; Kratz 1994; Lutkehaus 1995;

Worthman 1987) whose timing, meaning, and individual impact are matters both of the widespread physiological changes occurring as part of puberty as well as significant cultural construction. Finally, there are population-level changes that are largely physiologically arbitrary (i.e. not directly tied to specific physiological changes). Examples include Americans allowing children to begin to consume alcohol at 21 and drive a motor vehicle at 16. These changes have far less to do with assessing the individual's developmental progress and ability, than with selecting an easily assessable criterion for the purposes of monitoring and policing a large population.

In Samoa there are two major population-level transformations in the developmental niche over the course of childhood. The first of these occurs as the child comes to be cared for primarily by their older siblings, and includes shifts in the population of caregivers as well as their relative competence, as well as changes in patterns of parental investment. As a large number of different factors are implicated in the timing of this transition, the precise timing ranges from 12 to 36 months. The second shift occurs as the child comes to move with far greater frequency in the village public sphere, including Sunday school, primary school and other village level events. Accompanying this expansion of the child's social environment is increasingly expectations that the child will behavior according to social norms (and increasing sanctions if not). As the prototypical aspect of this shift is the child's enrollment in school, however, the exact timing is more tightly tied to the child's chronological age than other factors. Consequently this shift occurs at the beginning of the school year (February) somewhere in the child's fifth (or occasionally sixth) year of life.

There are of course other socially and culturally important events in Samoan childhood. For example, while birthdays in general are not celebrated, the child's first birthday is marked with great fanfare including a visit by the local pastor to provide a blessing, gifts, a special meal that usually includes a cake and ice cream (borrowing from Western models of birthday celebrations). Yet this ritual event does not necessarily alter the child's developmental niche in any substantial way²⁷. Patterns of care remain largely unchanged. Samoan ethnotheories suggest that the mind and body of the 11 month old and the 13 month child are identical. Diet and patterns of daily activity remain similarly unaffected. Similarly, in infancy there are at least two lexically marked stage of infancy including *pepe meamea* (literally: "baby thing thing") and *pepe* ("baby"), the latter of which is used around 5 months of age with the emergence of social smiling and the "psychological birth" of the child (on the psychological birth of the child see Rochat 2001; Rochat and Striano 1999). Yet while this endogenous change in the child may elicit warmer parental responses and potentially increasing parental and alloparental investment in the child the changes in the developmental niche are only quantitative in nature. In contrast, the move into sibling child care and movement into institutionalized education is accompanied by far more profound and qualitative transformations in the constitution of the developmental niche. I will now briefly discuss these two transitions, before moving on to characterize the three different developmental niches these two transitions delimit.

²⁷ Under conditions of far higher rates of infant mortality, the first birthday may have served as a culturally salient marker of the child's health and "will to live" and opened the door to increasingly substantial parental and family investment. A reduction in infant mortality over the past several decades may have removed this association.

(1) Shift into sibling care and parental distancing

Care for the infant through the first year of life is primarily a concern of the mother and other (usually female) adults in the household, with some assistance from the infant's older siblings. The first important transformation in the child's developmental niche occurs when the child is more substantial shuttled into the care of older siblings somewhere between 15 and 30 months of age. The precise timing of this shift is a result of a confluence of multiple factors, including birth spacing, household size and composition, the availability of other caretakers, and adult concerns with maintaining rank.

While part of the shift may be attributed to children's own interest in playing with his or her older siblings and reallocation of parental investment at the birth of a younger sib, a primary motive factor behind the shift to sibling care is clearly parental concerns with the preservation of their rank. As the previously indulged infant becomes progressively more mobile and as their language skills improves, the child is able to make increasingly insistent demands upon parents and other adults, which eventually are perceived as an affront to the parents' higher rank. Rather than indulging such demands and needs as was the case in the first years, these demands for attention and care are increasingly rejected and ignored, and the infant is pushed into the care of the older siblings. While written as a description of interactions between Hawaiian-American children and their parents at this age, Howard's description is an equally accurate depiction of Samoa:

[A]ttention-seeking behavior is apt to be seen as an attempt to intrude and control. It is therefore an assault on the privileges of rank, for only the senior-ranking individual in an interaction has the right to make demands. By responding harshly parents are therefore socializing their children to respect the privileges of rank (1974:42).

The same association of control over the flow and conduct of social interactions with authority has been noted by Ochs (1982; 1988) for Samoa.

Beyond the observed shift in interactional style between adult and child and the child's move into sibling care that occurs as part of parental distancing, the larger meaning of the event for the child remains unclear. Influenced by Freudian psychoanalysis, some early ethnographers, such as the Beagleholes (1946), saw parental distancing as a form of parental rejection that would likely have long-term organizational effects on the child's developing psyche. Howard (1974) has argued against such an interpretation in the majority of cases, as the shift into sibling care is usually neither sudden nor is there clear evidence of clear distress on the part of most children. Yet even if the event is not profoundly distressing it can still be quite meaningful for children. Shore has argued that "social control is understood by Samoans as public constraint over private impulses" (1982:ch. 9,185-92), and certainly these early experiences of parental distancing and impulse control could form some of the experiential grounding for such an ideological perspective on human action.

In summary, the shift into predominantly sibling care transforms the developmental niche in two important ways. First, it entails a fundamental shift in the

parent-child relationship from one of highly indulgent care to a more distant, restrained and frequently dismissive one. This entails shifts both in expectations directed at the child as well as patterns of social interactions between child and adult caretakers.

Presumably, it also changes the nature of the attachment relationship between child and their parents and sibs as well as patterns of parental investment. Second, the primary group of caretakers is now the child's older siblings. While they had always played some role in child care from birth, now they are the group primarily responsible. Given the differences in maturity and social cognitive abilities, sibling child care can have very different attributes and character than parental care (Levy 1970; Maynard 2002; Rabain-Jamin, et al. 2003; Weisner and Gallimore 1977; Zukow-Goldring 1995). I will describe Samoan sibling care and the interpersonal dynamics it engenders in greater detail in the next chapter.

(2) Transition into the public sphere

The second major transformation in the child's developmental niche occurs as they began to participate in the public sphere of the village. This shift is most strongly indexed by the child's enrollment in the local elementary school, but there are a range of other village social institutions with which the child is also involved at this age and even a bit earlier, including Sunday school and the pastor's school. School attendance may be the most marked aspect of this transition as it comes at the highest material cost to the household (e.g. school uniforms, school fees, loss in children's labor), and is very publicly marked as the event occurs simultaneously in all households in the village. It also represents a substantial transformation in children's everyday patterns of practice,

from more substantial free play to something perceived by adults to include more “serious work”.

The central transformation in the developmental niche that occurs at this point is a substantial shift in parent and caretaker’s expectations regarding the child’s self-regulatory abilities, and social and cognitive skills. At this point and increasingly over the next few years the child is perceived to have sufficient competence to be held accountable to social norms, as well as being able to shoulder greater responsibilities. Parents, such as this 32 year old mother of 3 young children, are fairly explicit about these perceived maturational changes:

At that time [five years of age] the child begins to know all things that are essential for them to do [and] also what they should not do.

‘O le taimi lena [five years of age] ‘ua iloa ‘uma ai e le tamaitiiti mea e ao ona fai ia mea fo’i e le tatau ona fai.

32 year old mother of 3

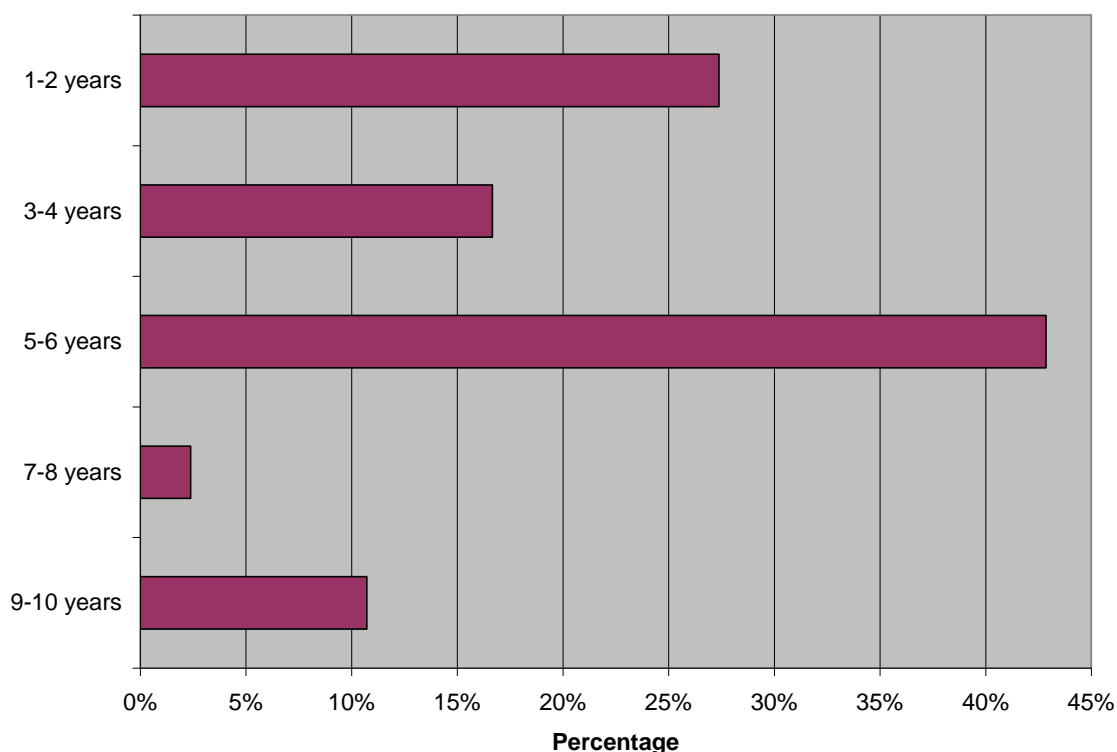
This is in contrast to younger children, who are allowed considerable latitude in behavior as they are incapable of self-control and are largely “immune” to social learning except from fairly coercive forms of punishment. Infants and younger children are like “animals” (*manu*) opined one grandfather and *matai*. Children this age are only held accountable to the barest set of behavioral norms (e.g. wearing clothes but not necessarily clothing appropriate for adults, no behavioral restrictions between brothers and sisters)

and can evade participation in household chores without much risk of punishment. School aged children, however, receive far more explicit responsibilities and chores to complete, including caring for younger siblings. Moreover, they will be punished if they fail to complete these tasks.

Additional support for the timing of this shift can be seen in the responses of parents to the question: “At what age should parents begin to admonish (*a’oa’oi*) their children?” *A’oa’oi* has the denotation of correcting errors or violations of social norms in children’s behavior. I interpret the answers to this question as an index of Samoan perceptions of the age at which children are (a) receptive to social influence and (b) able to self-regulate. Parents’ responses (n=84) can be seen in figure 6-1 below. Despite the admitted imprecision of the question, over one-third of the parents pointed to school age (5-6 years of age) as the point at which they begin to hold children accountable to social norms. It is interesting to note that the second most common response points to a period of time between 12 and 24 months, which is the time frame for the transition into sibling childcare, punctuated by increasingly accountability to social norms as I described above.

It is important to note that the basis for this change is not simply a substantial broadening of the child’s social environments, although that is certain an important element. Rather the centerpiece of this change is the significant transformation in expectations directed of the child based on the child’s increasing ability to self-regulate their behaviors, and the social and cognitive skills to be sufficiently open to social instruction to learn norms of proper behavior.

Figure 6.1: Age at which parents “should begin to admonish (*a’oa’oi*) children”



There is considerable cross-cultural parallel to the timing of this transition at 5 or 6 years of age. Rogoff et al.’s (1975) review of Human Relations Area Files (HRAF) data on 50 societies showed a modal cultural assignment of greatly increased social roles and responsibilities at 5-7 years of age. Given the timing of the development of theory of mind at between 4 and 6 years on average (Harris 1990; Thompson 1998; Wellman 1990) with its accompanying body of social cognitive skills and more advanced forms of cultural learning (Tomasello 1999a; 2001; Tomasello, et al. 1993), it would be logical to at least postulate this as an underlying cause.

A second important and related element in this transition is that children’s actions are increasingly seen to be a reflection not only of their own behavior, but also of their parents, and to a more limited extent, of their descent group as a whole. The relationship

between children's good or bad behavior and that of their parents and caretakers is a fairly explicit one. For example, children who played noisily in front of the church and pastor's house, which in many ways is the most behaviorally restrained part of the village, were described to me as clearly demonstrating the parent's own lack of restraint and dignity. As children are increasingly beginning to traverse social contexts (e.g. church, school, and village) populated by persons of rank, children's behavior can be a great concern for caretakers and other family members.

In contrast to the transition into sibling child care, the timing of the shift into the public sphere is far more precise and arbitrary as it is tied to the commencement of the school year in February. Samoan law dictates that children begin the first grade at the local primary school at age 5 and so those children who are that age prior to the beginning of the school year in February enroll. At this age the child is contributing relatively little to the household's maintenance, concerns about losing their labor contribution seemed to play little role in deciding whether to enroll the child. (Such a consideration is far more marked towards the end of elementary school and certainly as part of the decision to send the child to secondary school.) I noticed that some children were held back from beginning school for a single year to allow them time for further development to allow for sufficient physical and emotional maturity if there is hesitation on the part of children or parents. As there is little monitoring of enrollment in the village, there is little social cost to doing so.

Three developmental niches

These two developmental transitions demarcate three distinct niches of childhood, which I will refer to as: infancy, early childhood, and “community childhood”. The latter term harks back to the last of Margaret Mead’s classification of age grades in terms of the “world” of the child at each stage: *lap child*, *knee child*, *yard child*, and *community or school-age child* (Whiting and Edwards 1988:4) and is meant to refer to a stage of childhood marked by the child’s emergence and more active participation in community-level social institutions. Linguistically, these three categories are not clearly marked in Samoa, except with regard to infancy (i.e. *pepe* – baby). Young children who have not yet entered school are usually referred to individually as *tama ’ititi* and collectively as *tamaiti*, while schoolboys and girls are called *tama aoga* and *teine aoga* respectively. The latter two are fairly role- and context-specific, however, and school-aged children may also be called *tama ’ititi* when outside of the school. Additionally, older children, adolescents, and even young untitled adults (including the author) can be referred to with the generic *tama / teine* (“boy” / “girl”). Consequently, there is no clear basic-level Samoan term for the two latter categories, which suggests that the particular structure of these niches and their internal dynamics are likely emergent forms rather than clearly marked categories.

To provide some “shape” to these three different developmental niches, I will now provide brief case studies of three focal children. It goes without saying that these examples cannot be taken as representative of the full range of variation of children in Samoa. But either as exemplars or as exceptions to the rule, the three cases do provide additional information about the nature of the developmental niche: (1) physical and

social ecology; (2) customs of child care; and (3) ethnotheories of childhood and development. Later chapters will provide far greater detail on the specific developmental contexts children experience.

Infancy: “MOSO”

Male, low-ranking household, 35 months at the conclusion of the research

(See figure 6.2 for a genealogy of Moso’s household)

Infants are treated with great affection and indulgence (Mageo 1998; Mead 1973), and Moso was no exception in this regard. When I first got to know him, in the end of his first year of life, he was the focus of considerable attention by all members of his household as well as the frequent visitor. He was primarily cared for by his nineteen year old biological mother, Kiose. Given her youth and perceived inexperience in child-rearing practices²⁸, she was aided in substantial ways by the older female relatives - Aso and Aveolela – of the household. Much of this assistance, however, came in the form of verbal directives and exhortations on how to care for the child. Given the household’s lack of young children between 6 and 12 years of age, who would ordinarily shoulder an increasingly large proportion of the burden of care, much of the everyday care fell to Kiose. The older females in the house, Kiose’s older sister Toaono, and occasionally some younger children from a neighboring, related household would also provide more concrete assistance on a more intermittent basis.

²⁸ While Kiose is a very young and inexperienced mother, all first-time mothers regardless of age and maturity receive substantial assistance (desired or not) from a range of other adults.

Relatively large for his age, Moso demonstrated good gross motor control in comparison with other similarly aged infants. He also exhibited a far higher activity level as well, and once he began to crawl and walk would rarely remain in a particular spot or lap for very long. Indeed, his maternal grandmother, Aveolela argued that he weaned himself as he was unable to remain seated long enough for an extended bout of feeding in his second year of life. He was on most occasions a very jovial infant; quick to laugh, smile and playfully interact with others, but he would also often react angrily in the face of even mild frustration.

Rather than his mobility, physical size or activity level, Moso's most notable characteristic in Samoan eyes was his pronounced lack of social inhibition. While all infants show considerable behavioral restraint (e.g. cessation of ongoing activity, maintain proximity to a caretaker, and quietly observe) in the presence of an unfamiliar phenomenon, person and event (Kagan and Snidman 2004), Moso quickly recovered from his apprehension and would frequently approach or engage the unfamiliar. He actively engaged my wife and me on our second visit to his home by walking up to us and taking a seat in my wife's lap. At the age of 25 months, my field notes include observations of Moso walking alone to neighboring and unrelated households (including my own) to visit. Such behavior suggests a substantial fearlessness in the face of the unfamiliar, and was not a pattern of action that I observed in other children at his age. Moso was also notably assertive and aggressive in his actions with other persons, occasionally pushing, striking or slapping at others, including adults, which was a considerable source of amusement.

Moso's particularly temperamental profile is certainly not shared by all Samoan infants (Odden Submitted), but the reaction of his caretakers does tell us something important about local theories of infants and the meanings attached to their developing behaviors. Interviews with his caretakers suggested that his marked fearlessness and occasionally aggressive behavior fit local ethnotheories of the inherent nature of children as aggressive, self-interested, and antagonistic beings. As Shore (1982) has argued, Samoan conceptions of the "natural" and pre-cultural state of humanity – embodied in infants and young children – is essentially a Hobbesian one, and Moso fit this description far better than most because of this particular temperamental profile.

Certainly one of the clearest examples of this ethnotheory of infancy is the belief that Samoan children's first words are an aggressive curse "*Tae*" (Shit!), drawn from the more complex curse "*'Ai tae!*" (Eat shit!) which has the force of "Damn!" in English (Ochs 1988). When I asked one father about the veracity of this claim, he denied it and with a laugh indicated that his own son had actually used the far more forceful curse "*Ufa!*" (Asshole!) as his first word. Even if this last comment was made in jest (which I believe to be the case), it is nonetheless indicative of Samoan ethnotheories of early childhood. This line of interpretation – infants and young children as willful, assertive, egocentric and hard to control – is applied in varying degrees to the full spectrum of children's behavior. Consequently, temper tantrums, refusals to sit down, shoving away a sibling, and so forth are interpreted as expressions of the innate aggressiveness and assertiveness of children (for a Tongan analog see Morton 1996). From a developmental perspective it is important as it provides a basis against which socialization goals and expectations can be set (a point to which I will return in the next chapter).

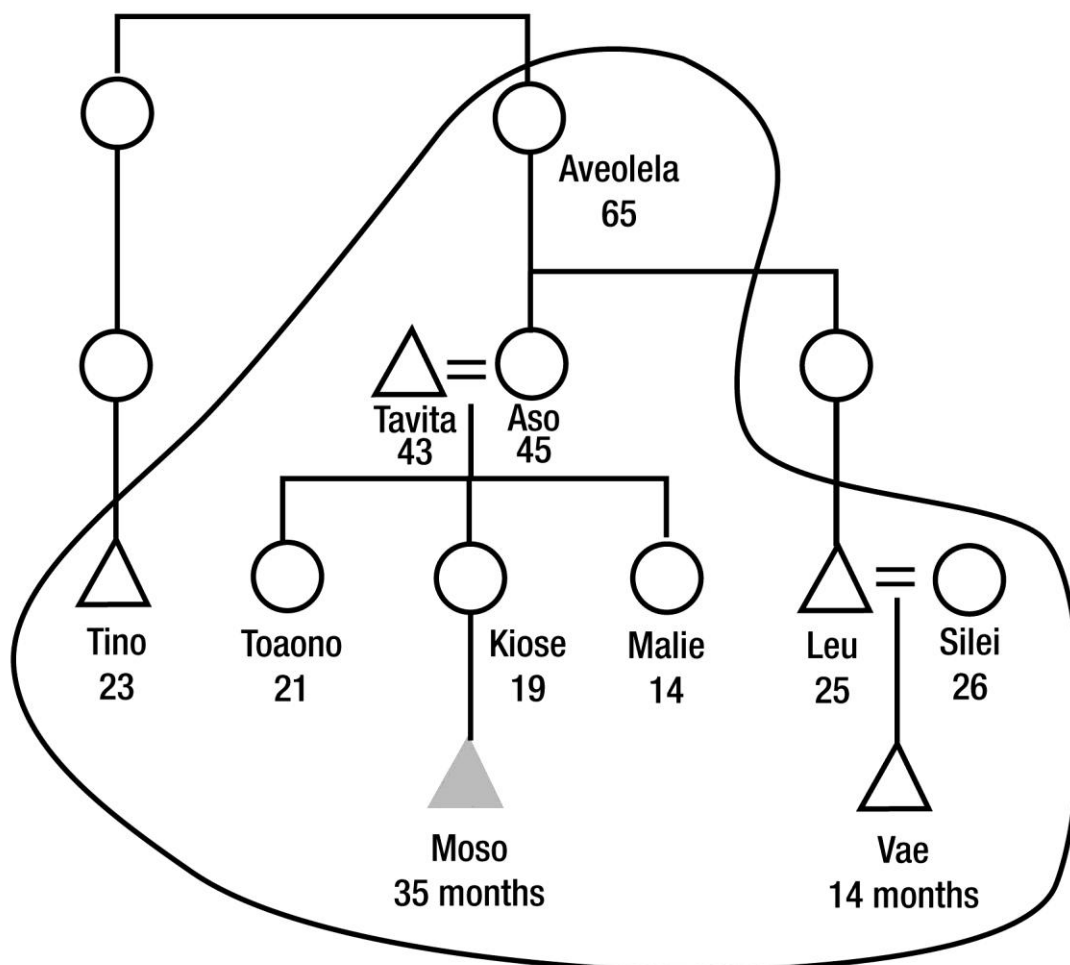


Figure 6.1:
Household genealogy of Moso

Note: Individuals within the boundary include those members of the descent group that spent 75% or more of their time as residents of the household. The numbers below the names are ages in years (unless otherwise indicated). The shape representing Moso is shaded.

What is perhaps most interesting about Moso's embodiment of this local theory of infancy is the very positive feedback he received. While he was never described as a "good" or even "friendly" child, he was endlessly and enthusiastically proclaimed to be very "naughty" (*uluvale*) with a very clearly positive connotation. His occasional aggressive actions towards the other infants, older children and even adults and his angry responses towards frustration was often met with laughter and clear amusement by observers.

Moso's interpersonal assertiveness also served to elicit a pattern of differential treatment that I observed over and over again with different adults and in different contexts²⁹. In these interactions, an older adolescent or adult – generally male but sometimes female - would act in ways to challenge, confront or threaten the socially assertive infant. Examples of the kinds of challenges include: faking a punch, pushing him away, running at him aggressively, speaking in an abnormally deep voice, staring at him with crossed eyes, and so forth. Moso's fearless response to these different challenges was met with great laughter and amusement from the audience of adult observers. Far greater amusement was occasioned when he responded to these challenges aggressively or violently by slapping, striking or yelling at the adult antagonist. Whatever their response, the adult antagonist would counter with an even more threatening and exaggerated threat. And this dance of challenge and repost between infant and adult antagonist was repeated over and over again with increasing intensity until one or the other parties either tired of it or Moso would eventually become afraid and move away.

²⁹ I observed this pattern of differential treatment keyed to a socially uninhibited temperament in two other infants in addition to Moso (see Odden submitted). While only further research will reveal the larger generalizability of this behavioral pattern, I am not however generalizing from a single case.

I should note that the various reinforcements (i.e. laughter and amusement) provided by adults should be considered "covert" praise, because a child's aggressive response towards an adult – even an antagonizing adult – is considered to be highly disrespectful, and runs counter to the larger cultural expectations that children should be restrained and even fearful in interactions with adults. In children only a few years older even an attempted slap or punch would elicit a fairly severe beating, as it would be perceived as a sign of profound disrespect. Given these social norms, it is unsurprising that my adult informants universally described these interactions as “only play”. It also demonstrates the fact that parallel to the norm on deferential and respectful behavior is a strong undercurrent of support for the aggressive and assertive behavior in the defense of the individual's self interests (Freeman 1996; Gerber 1985; Mageo 1988; 1998; Shore 1982). Such moves to simultaneously socialize children to be deferential to authority as well as boldly aggressive towards authority figures is an example of what Shore (1982:312, ftnt 3) referred to as “double socialization”.

To briefly summarize some of the key aspects of the infant's developmental niche: Infants are treated in a highly affectionate and indulgent way by all members of their social environment. While a wide diversity of different persons will aid in aspects of the child's care, a majority of this early care is provided by the mother with the assistance of older adult females, usually in a supervisory role. Ethnotheories of infancy suggest the infant to be a markedly aggressive, self-interested, asocial creature, and caretakers generally interpret their different disorganized behaviors through this lens. While not all infants will exhibit Moso's level of aggressiveness and interpersonal

assertiveness, those who do will find their behaviors explicitly praised, reinforced and further elicited.

Early childhood: “MATAGI”

Low-ranking, male, 6 years old at the conclusion of the project

(See figure 6.3 for the genealogy of Matagi’s household)

Matagi was four years old when I first got to know him. Swathed in sparkling white clothes, Matagi and his younger sister Teuila, would walk with me down the government road that bisected the village to the Congregational Christian church’s Sunday school. I found Matagi to be initially quiet and reserved, but enormously curious (as evidenced by his periodic predilection for staring in our windows to see what we might be doing). Matagi seemed to have a particularly close bond with his father, Anesi, whom he accompanied when possible on errands and occasionally to the plantation. At five and six years of age, Matagi would also serve as his father’s errand boy, carrying messages to other households including my own, borrowing items from relatives, and making small purchases from the nearest village store.

The development of Matagi’s household has been strongly influenced by adoption and fosterage; a practice that is very common throughout many parts of Polynesia (Brady 1976; Carroll 1970) and certainly in Samoa (Mageo 1998; 1973; Mead 1969; Shore 1976a). Matagi’s oldest brother Alesana was adopted at birth by his father’s oldest sister, a traditional privilege of the brother’s oldest sister (on the analogous practice in Tonga, see Rogers 1977), and now lives in Auckland, New Zealand. Matagi himself was

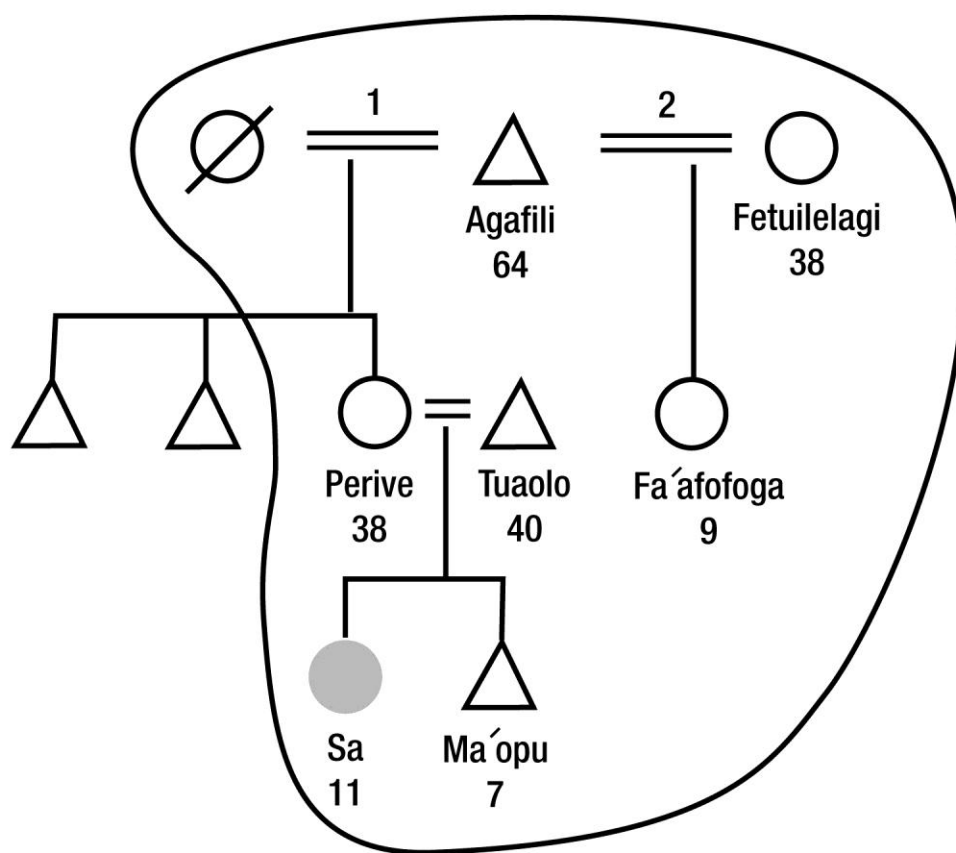


Figure 6.2
Household genealogy of Sa

fostered out for an extended period to his father's older brother when he was very young, but was then reclaimed at a later point.

Matagi is very close to his younger sister, Teuila, and they generally play enthusiastically together in their household or the immediate surrounding area. Matagi's parents indicated that once they were older, however, they would have to learn the characteristic restrained, distant and careful behavior appropriate for the brother – sister relationship (*feagaiaga*). This is a central relationship in Samoan culture, conceptualized in complementary terms with the sister providing dignity (*mamalu*) through her dignified and respectful behavior for the pair, while the brother provides material support and active protection of the sister's (and his own) honor (Schoeffel 1978; Shore 1981).

Matagi's youngest sibling, the twenty month old infant Solosolo, is cared for primarily by her mother and her mother's younger, unmarried sister who also lives in this household. Matagi is also an enthusiastic playmate with two of his neighbor's boys with which he tends to engage in rough, physical play including foot races and rugby. Anesi claims that the two neighboring boys are a negative influence as the boys' father is known to drink too much and swear. Yet he claimed to exert no influence over who his son selected as playmates, presumably because such monitoring would be well beneath his rank.

Despite Anesi's possession of a minor chiefly title in another part of 'Upolu, the family had chosen to live with and care for Matagi's aging maternal grandmother. Anesi's life history presents almost a catalogue of potential routes to social status and influence, including acquiring a minor chiefly title as a young adult, repeated efforts to gain entrance to the theological college in order to become a pastor, some higher

education in hopes of wage employment, and some attempts at cash-cropping. Despite repeated attempts and considerable effort, few of these endeavors had borne fruit over the long-term and provided him with the rank and influence he seems to desire. By all indications part of his willingness to live in his wife's family was because of the possibility of obtaining an important chiefly title in his wife's village. Consequently, he has strived to position himself in the good graces of senior village chiefs and his wife's family.

Anesi's aspirations began to have an impact on his children as Matagi approached his sixth birthday and increasingly came to be involved with multiple contexts outside of the household including most notably the church and primary school. Anesi expressed a measure of concern that Matagi and his younger sister regularly attend these social institutions (to demonstrate his and the larger descent group's concern for the church and for his children's well-being), as well as strong expectations of his children's proper and restrained behavior (*amio pulea*) in these contexts as their actions reflected on him as a parent and on his family.

While corporal punishment was widely used by most of the parents (see below), Anesi was one of the only parents I actually observed using a ritualized form of punishment in which the parent strikes the child for the offense using an implement, such as a branch, and continues to hit them until they stop crying (Gerber 1985). Anesi seemed to increase the ritualization by administering the punishment with the members of the household seated around him, so that the punishment of one child was very much a learning experience for all of the children.

To briefly summarize some of the key attributes of this manifestation of the developmental niche: Children are increasingly more involved with their mixed-gender, mixed-aged sibling groups than with their parents and adult caretakers, as was the case during infancy. In Matagi's case, the sibling group frequently involved the two unrelated boys from the neighboring family; a frequent occurrence for smaller households. Parental care is usually focused most intensely on the youngest offspring, as was the case with in Matagi's household. Children begin to contribute to the household upkeep with small tasks and limited responsibilities including childcare. Parents have begun to expect some compliance with social norms in great contrast with the indulgence and broad permissiveness characteristic of infancy. Yet this will also change dramatically as the child moves into the public sphere when they begin to attend the local primary school, Sunday school and other village events.

Community child: "SA"

High-ranking household, female, 11 years at the conclusion of the project

(See figure 6.4 for the genealogy of Sa's household)

Sa was a slender girl of 11, who lived in one of the most highly ranked households in the village. Soft-spoken, she was quick to laugh and was patient with even my most painfully long interview schedule and tests. Born in February 1992, Sa had lived in the village for the past six or seven years in the village. As with Matagi, Sa's mother and father returned to care for and support her elderly maternal grandfather, leaving behind the village in which her father held a minor chiefly title.

Sa's maternal grandfather, Agafili, was an one of the most prominent, influential and important chiefs in the village and throughout the region. He was one of perhaps two or three of the most senior *tulafale* in the village, and was widely considered to be one of the most knowledgeable and dignified personages in the village. His importance was linguistically marked by a special term of address rather than the more typical, *lau tofa*, for orators. Additionally, one of the three central *pitonu'u* (village segments) in Silafaga was named after the title he bore, and his title was specifically and prominently included in the village *fa'alupega*. He was almost inevitably selected to speak on behalf of the village and church congregation for larger social occasions. Politically, he also dominated in many ways the village disciplinary committee and other social groups in which he was involved by strength of personality and influence he wielded. Due to the importance of his title and the number of relationships and alliances he cultivated with other descent groups, it was very rare for him to not be participating in some *fa'avelave* on a weekly basis.

Sa's household consisted of her father and mother, her younger brother, her maternal grandfather, his second wife, and their daughter. Agafili has several adult children from his first marriage, but only his daughter Perive and one son remained in the village with the others residing overseas and in the urban areas of Apia. Spatially, the household was divided between the two nuclear households, with Sa's family living in one side and Sa's maternal grandfather, his wife and daughter living in a smaller but more recently constructed house across the road.

Sa's nuclear family was a very religious one; one of the very few of which I was aware that would wake at dawn to conduct prayers and song in addition to prayers in the

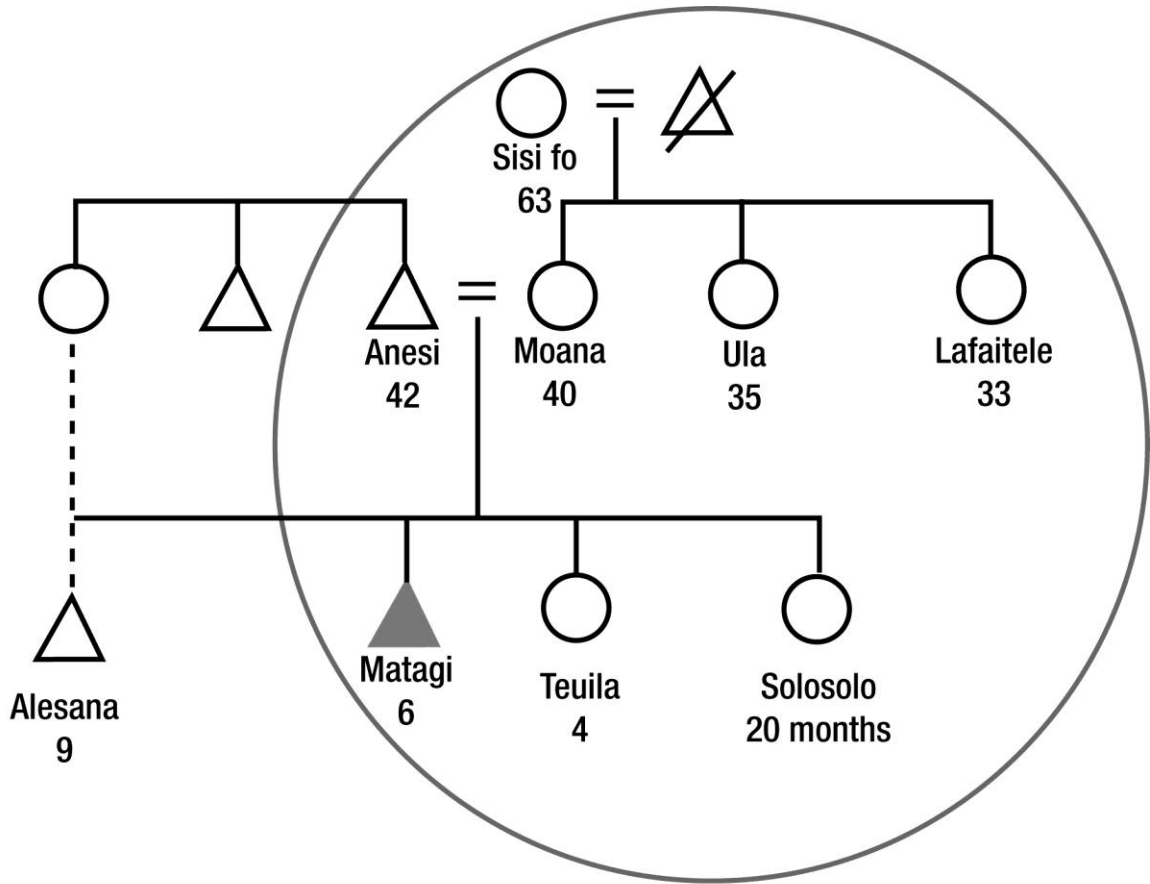


Figure 6.3
Household genealogy of Matagi

evening that were more typical. The entire family attended church each Sunday, occasionally both the morning and afternoon service. Sa, her brother, and Fa'afofoga also attended the pastor's school and Sunday school regularly. Sa's mother was also deeply concerned with the *aitu* (ancestral spirits). On a few occasions when she was clearly stressed, she described to me how some spirits would occasionally plague her, and could described various pains and odd bodily sensations that she attributed to their influence.

Sa and her siblings regularly attended the local primary school, and her work demonstrated skill and effort. She would often complete her homework quickly but effectively in the evenings after eating her meal. When questioned about whether she enjoyed school, she showed some ambivalence describing the work as frequently boring and the teachers as occasionally punitive. For a relatively small household, the three children contributed relatively little to the upkeep of the household (e.g. weeding the yard, washing clothes and dishes, sweeping the house) in comparison to most of the other families with which I worked. The vast majority of care for the household's care was completed by Perive, and cooking and care for the family's plantations exclusively by her husband Tuaolo. Occasionally, Fa'afofoga would man the family's small store, but given the lack of goods available and the amount of competition from other stores, there was little work to be completed on most days.

Sa appeared to be emotionally close to her brother and sister. The three children frequently played together, and often with two similarly aged girls from an unrelated but neighboring household. Sa appeared to have relatively little active contact with Agafili, who seemed to largely ignore her presence. Sa's relationship with her father was warm

and occasionally affectionate, but her mother was frequently distant and dismissive. Her parents had high expectations of her behavior in public domains in which she moved (i.e. church, school, and village events), but she was very well behaved and conscientious and gave them little opportunity to be disappointed.

To summarize some of the key aspects of the developmental niche of the “community child”: The child is now involved in a range of activities beyond the narrow confines of the household, including the primary school, Sunday school, pastor’s school, and is a frequent observer of a range of village events. Same-sex peer groups have increased in importance, largely spurred by the opportunities presented by the school and church to socialize with unrelated children. Although Sa was an exception in this regard, most children this age are engaged in increasing amounts of labor to support their household and larger descent group. Parents are concerned with their children’s behavior in public settings, particularly because it was now felt to reflect on the parents and the larger descent group. Children were also felt to be well-equipped to self-regulate and know when and how to behave appropriately in these contexts, but are quick to punish if children violate norms.

Chapter 7: The household, patterns of social learning, and children's early experiences of hierarchy

In this chapter I will turn my attention to one of the most crucial developmental milieu for children's emerging understanding of hierarchy: the family household. I will point to two important channels for children's learning about hierarchy and the chief system in this context: (1) as part of learning respectful and deferential behavior, and (2) through participation in the "caregiving hierarchy" (Ochs 1988:80-4). With regard to the first of these: I argue that parents and caretakers demand that children develop competence in deferential and respectful behavior, a generalized set of behavioral norms used broadly across a variety of village contexts including school, church, and a chance encounter with a high-ranking individual on the path to the plantation. Not only is this a very basic element of children's social competence, but it also serves as a potent mechanism for learning about hierarchy and the chief system. Much as language acquisition entails socialization in important cultural values and practices (Garrett and Baquedano-Lopez 2002; Ochs and Schieffelin 1984; 1986a; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986b), so does acquiring competence in deferential behavior entail learning about how to properly employ such behaviors and identify contexts and persons towards which respect is to be offered.

I will then turn to explore children's daily experience with child care (both as a recipient and provider) as a second important mechanism for learning about hierarchy. I argue that the child's intimate and daily experience of the "caregiving hierarchy" and

their occupation of “pivotal positions” (Levy 1968) within that structure provides a particularly rich experiential base for children’s developing understandings of hierarchy. These basic notions children acquire can serve as the foundation for their emerging understanding of the *matai* system, particularly once their movement into the larger community brings them into more regular contact with chiefly activity.

To make these two arguments I will take a number of steps. I begin by providing ethnographic description of the household, including discussion of household social and physical ecology, and patterns of daily activity. I then turn to discuss the social and cultural organization of social learning in the household with an eye towards how children come to acquire competence in respectful behavior and the *matai* system. I will characterize Samoan perceptions of teaching, and argue that adults’ interest in the preservation of relative rank vis-à-vis their children, and an epistemological bias against speculating on others’ thoughts and motivations renders intentional instruction employing extensive forms of “scaffolding” (Wood, et al. 1976) that rely on taking the child’s perspective a marginalized and less common form of social learning. Consequently we do not tend to see in the Samoan context much of the kind of active instruction and support of children’s developing knowledge and competence by adults and caretakers in most domains of knowledge, including the *matai* system. This is an important observation as it suggests we revisit and revise the cultural-historical model of cultural learning, largely inspired by the work of Lev Vygotsky, his students and colleagues, which predicts such active support and instruction on the part of adults and more experienced social others in the midst of everyday practice in all social and cultural settings.

Various forms of collaborative learning and some active instruction and scaffolding by older siblings, who are relatively closer in rank, are somewhat more common than between adults and children. Yet instruction by older siblings can also be conflicted in that children's pronounced sensitivity to inappropriate assertions of rank by others can problematize such interactions. Consequently, the most common forms of social learning in the Samoan household are a combination of observational learning, imitation, collaborative learning and individual experimentation. The one important exception to this pattern is the various forms of aversion training, including the use of shaming, verbal threats, and corporal punishment, focused on teaching children obedience, deference, and respectful behavior. Given that these modes of teaching are concrete expressions of parental authority and do not require the parent to adopt the child's perspective, they represent one of very few forms of "scaffolding" that is not injurious to parental rank.

I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the "caregiving hierarchy" and children's experience of "pivotal positions". I argue that these early experiences provide a powerful experiential base for developing notions of hierarchy as well as some of the complex affective orientations including most importantly ambivalence towards authority, which is a hallmark of the Samoan system. While early experience is important in providing initial direction and shape to many different conceptions, it must be refined, supported and further developed. I will discuss this in greater detail in the next chapter. I close the chapter by summarizing a number of key lessons regarding hierarchy acquired in the context of the family and household.

Ethnographic context of the household

Household composition

The prototypical Samoan household is headed by a *matai* and consists of his untitled brothers and their families, his parents, his wife, his sons and their wives, and his unmarried daughters. As the preferred residential pattern is patrilocal, his married sisters and daughters will likely live in different villages, but it is traditional practice for widowed women to return to their natal villages on the death of their husbands. As Mead (1969:23) notes, however, there is considerable variation in household composition. One of the more common sources of variation is matrilocal residence, which is particularly common when the maternal household lacks members to attend to aging parents or to work in the plantations. Additionally, males may take up residence with their wives' families if there may be chiefly titles available in the near future and a smaller pool of potential candidates. (A history of service to the *matai* and the descent group could position him favorably as a successor, despite the lack of a genealogical relationship, as I described in chapter 3.) In addition to matrilocal residing groups, one also finds adopted children, and various other blood relations living in the household as well.

The 2001 National Census reported the average household size to be 7.2 in rural areas and 8.3 in urban Apia, with Silafaga reporting an average household size of 8.0 (Government of Samoa 2001). My experience is that these figures can substantially underestimate the actual density of the social network as they imply fairly rigid household boundaries. In practice, there is substantial cooperation and very high levels of interaction between neighboring and related households in a village such that the boundaries between households can be significantly blurred. In order to provide or ask

for help with work and *fa'alavelave*, to borrow tools and money, or simply to socialize, Samoans of all ages regularly move between households. Adolescent males, who already live on the periphery of the household, as they eat, sleep and socialize primarily in the rear cooking houses rather than the main house and who are expected to “roam” (*tafau* or *ta'a*; positive and negative connotations respectively) about the village at that age, are particularly mobile.

In addition to the blurred boundaries of the household, there is also a remarkable fluidity to Samoan household composition. Relatives and friends seem to constantly flow between the larger descent group's different households across the village, island, and larger archipelago. The most obvious and regular of these flows is the movement of secondary school students from the urban areas where these schools tend to be located and their home villages, and the return of overseas migrants for the holidays in December. Beyond these more obvious flows, however, there is substantial movement of relatives and friends between households in order to aid with some task or more frequently simply to visit. These visits can last for a few days, a few weeks or indefinitely.

There is also substantial movement of children between households, that parallels that of adults. Frequently, these visits are done at the child's own initiative and caretakers may not necessarily be aware of the child's location. For example, I noted that one of my focal children, a ten-year-old girl, moved between three different households over the course of a two week period, including: her biological mother's household, her adoptive mother's household (although her adoptive mother was not present at the time), and her adoptive grandmother's household in Apia. The latter move required the girl to

accompany relatives by car from the village into Apia. When I spoke with the girl's biological mother in the village in an attempt to locate her to complete some of the tests, I discovered that she was completely unaware of the girl's location and was largely unconcerned, as she was certain that the girls was being cared for by some relative somewhere.

A more extreme form of this movement of children between households can be seen in the adoption and fosterage that has long been a topic of interest throughout Polynesia (Brady 1976; Carroll 1970) and Samoa (Mageo 1998; 1973; Mead 1969; Shore 1976a). Both more temporary fosterage (of at least a few months) and adoption were very common practices in Silafaga. Every single one of the dissertation research's focal households had either adopted or fostered a child at some point, or had adopted or fostered out a child to another household. Samoans find the practice as a whole completely unremarkable.

It is interesting to consider the possibility that the possibility of moving between households may serve as a cultural-constituted means of avoiding short- and long-term interpersonal conflicts. I have seen, for example, Samoans take extended visits to other households in the village or other villages to - at least temporarily - avoid household conflicts. And in one instance of which I was aware, a *matai* I knew well directed a pre-adolescent girl from his descent group, who was in an abusive (possibly sexually abusive) relationship with an adult family member, to come and live with him. Thus, it would seem possible that the fluidity and flexible constitution of households may serve as a significant source of conflict avoidance and / or emotional "release valve".

Given the degree to which children can initiate moves between households on their own accord, it would seem that that this release may also be available to children as well. If so, it would add a layer of complexity to recent research on culture change and adolescent stress conducted by McDade (2001; 2002; McDade, et al. 2000; McDade and Worthman 2004). Most recently, McDade and Worthman (2004) present a model of adolescent stress that arises out of the experience of inconsistencies between the individual's and their household's relative orientation to traditional and newly emergent ways of life, which they describe as "socialization ambiguity". If there is widespread "flight" by children out of households experienced as particularly stressful, however, then their findings may systematically underestimate the scope of adolescent stress.

Alternatively, if there are significant variations in children's relative ability to remove themselves from distressing household situations (e.g. a household with a high ratio of individuals requiring care to those able to provide care), then this may serve as an important and as of yet unexplored, mediating factor for the individual's experience of stress.

Household physical ecology

A household compound usually consists of a main house and subsidiary buildings, including a cooking house. Samoan houses are of two major types: traditional oval open-sided structures, where poles are used to support the thatched or corrugated iron and rectangular "European-style" houses usually built of concrete cinder block walls with corrugated tin roofs. The roofs of traditional houses are either thatched or tin. Traditional homes had no walls and used woven thatched blinds to protect the occupants

from sun, rain and winds. European-style houses usually had low walls, glass slat windows, and wooden doors. Most European style houses had a large front room in which most activities were conducted and rear rooms used principally for storage. As remains the tradition, all Samoan homes have separate rear cooking houses where the *umu* (earth oven) cooking is completed and typically where untitled men and adolescents sleep, eat and socialize.

As Ochs (1988:75-6) notes the physical openness of the home (both traditional and European-style), proximity of houses, and density of persons in the compound creates “a particular interactional and communicative setting”. Most notably it creates a setting in which the individual is readily able to observe the activities and interactions of all persons in the household and frequently neighboring households, and issue of great relevance for social control (Shore Dissertation [YEAR], Kean 1977). Additionally, dyadic social interactions are relatively rare in comparison with polyadic or multiparty ones.

With the exception of newborns, there are few alterations or adaptations made to the physical ecology of the household for the sake of children. This can be seen as another example of the generalized expectation that children are to adapt to the world of adults. There are, for example, no eating implements, children’s foods, or furniture specialized for the use of young children. Indeed, the one exception I observed - a small, homemade “playpen” of sorts produced by one father to prevent his newly mobile toddler from tumbling out of a house – was the butt of jokes by his neighbors. Yet as there are few adaptations of the physical ecology for children, there are also few limitations set on their use of it. While caretakers will protect newly mobile infants from crawling into the

fire or off the side of house, there is little attempt to keep other children from other items that might be perceived as dangerous (e.g. machetes, tools).

Newborns are the only real exception to this tendency against adapting the physical ecology. For example, newborns frequently sleep on small specially made mats and pillows under mosquito netting. Similarly, they are traditionally fed small balls of pre-masticated starches, called simply “*ma*”; the production of which was taken to be a particularly paradigmatic sign of the mother’s love by several of my informants.

Village children are also generally not provisioned with toys, books, or other things with which to play, although they were available for purchase in the larger stores in Apia. Children did develop some playthings on their own, including using a stick to push a breadfruit or plastic lid (“a car”) or a triangle of wood (“a boat”) that was popular across the island³⁰. I also saw one group use rocks, bottle caps and a piece of cardboard to produce a game board for something analogous to a game of checkers called *mu* (“stones”). Physical games such as rugby, rough play, and races are far more popular than play with toys and pretend play with props is infrequent.

Economic activities and children’s participation

The household acts in a cooperative manner to feed, clothe and shelter its different members, as well as generating the various exchange goods (i.e. fine mats, pigs, and cash) necessary for regular contributions to the church and *fa’alavelave*. Every

³⁰ It was not at all clear whether the transmission of how to make this toy was between children, between adults, or – most likely – a mixture of both. There was, however, some interesting child-level innovation including one set of 7-10 year old boys who nailed tin cans to the stick into which they placed burning leaves to simulate “exhaust” coming out of their “cars”.

member is expected to contribute to these ends, but the nature and amount of their particular contributions are organized by age, gender and title.

Paradigmatically, women's work tends to be associated with activities that are "lighter" and associated with keeping the household orderly and clean (Shore 1982). These activities include washing the clothing and plates, cleaning and sweeping the house, and child-care. Women are also responsible for the labor intensive production of fine mats (*'ie toga*), which are a pivotal exchange good (Linnekin 1991; Tiffany 1975b; Weiner 1992), as well as the far simpler floor mats widely used in the homes. Men's work tends to focus on work that is perceived to be "heavier" and "dirtier", and tends to focus on planting, harvesting and carrying for the family's plantations. Men will also be responsible for caring for the various livestock owned by the family (e.g. pigs, cows, and horses), building and repairing the houses and fences, as well as clearing land and village spaces. In food preparation, boiling or baking taro, breadfruit, and bananas in the *umu* as well as fish, pigs and other traditional food preparation are usually completed by the men. Women usually prepare any food stuff that is associated with a European-style cooking process or Western prepared foods. Although a relatively less common activity in Silafaga, spear-, net- and line-fishing are the responsibility of men, while gathering shellfish is usually conducted by women.

This gendered distribution of labor provides a broad structure to the location and participatory structure of everyday activities. With the exception of more senior male *matai* and elderly untitled men, adult males generally spend much of their time working in the plantations. As the cultivated gardens are usually at some distance from the household (15-45 minute walk) and the work is best done out of the midday sun, adult

males usually leave at sunrise and return to the house in the early afternoon. This effectively removes the males from the household for a fair portion of the day. Although few of my informants fished extensively and none on a daily basis, the pattern is similar in that the day's activities essentially removed the males from the household. On the other hand, female work tends to be located in the immediate vicinity of the household, itself and consequently most women could be found in or around their immediate household on most days. Female dominance of childcare is clearly supported by this pattern of work.

Children begin to contribute to work in small ways at an early age. This usually begins with very simple activities such as collecting fallen leaves and carrying coconuts back from the plantation. The community child is increasingly responsible for significant volume of labor, including: fetching wood, firewood, and coconuts; feeding pigs; caring for younger siblings; washing clothes, plates and dishes; sweeping the house; and so forth. Children this age will also contribute as a group to caring for the pastor's house and the school grounds as well as the school, which has several "work days" each academic year to care for the school grounds and classrooms. Depending upon the relative ratio of persons of productive age (~15 to 50 years of age) to persons requiring some level of support, service, and care (e.g. infants, infirmed, elderly, *matai*), children can be pressed into fulfilling a significant amount of work to the extent that their time with peers and ability to regularly attend school, Sunday school and observe various village events can be sharply curtailed.

Cultural learning in the family

It is essential to parents that their children learn the traditions and culture of Samoa, so that when they reach maturity they are skilled in making speeches, portioning kava, participating in funerals, and other things like that.

E ao i matua ona aoao lana fanau i tu ma aganuu a Samoa, aua a oo ina matutua ua popoto i faiga o lauga, folafola ava, faiga o maliu, ma isi mea fa'apena.

35 year old female, mother of 4, wife of a *matai*

Samoaan parents perceive children's enculturation to be an important task, as the quote above illustrates. For children's own good, in order to show the appropriate respects to their parents and elders, and in their role as the *lumana'i* ("future") of the family, children must gain cultural competence. Moreover, when asked how important it is for children to learn about the chief system in particular, parents spoke essentially in a single voice with 140 out of 144 parents indicated that it was "very important" (97.2%) and one parent suggested that it was only "somewhat important" (0.7%), the two highest categories on a 7-point Likert scale; (the remaining 3 selected "I don't know" (2.1%).)

Given the declared importance of this domain for children to learn and the complexity of this body of cultural knowledge (as I mentioned in chapter 3), one might predict a fairly intensive program of active instruction by parents, caregivers and other adults, and perhaps even institutionalized settings for the intergenerational transmission of such complex knowledge. Kruger and Tomasello (1996; see also: Tomasello

1999a:80) predict such a positive correlation between the difficulty and value of a specific domain of knowledge and increased societal efforts, institutionalization, and intensive instruction. While there may be an ‘objective’ logic to such an assertion, the social and cultural organization of learning does not necessarily emerge from such rational (and perhaps ethnocentric) calculations, but rather is significantly shaped by social processes, cultural value, and historical contingency. The aim of this section is to briefly examine learning as it occurs in the Samoan household from this perspective.

It will also critically engage the cultural-historical model of cultural learning, which has gained prominence within developmental psychology and anthropology as it seeks to understand child development as situated in a particular social and cultural context. This body of research and theorizing is largely inspired by the work of Lev S. Vygotsky and his collaborators A. Luria and A. Leont’iev (Leont'ev 1981; Vygotsky 1978; 1986; 1994; Vygotsky and Luria 1994). As I discussed briefly in chapter 2, Vygotsky’s sociogenic model argues that children come to internalize patterns of activity that occurs in the midst of activity between different persons. The general thrust of his theoretical position can be seen in what has come to be known as his “general law of cultural development”, which argues that:

Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first *between* people (*interpsychological*), and then *inside* the child (*intrapsychological*). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of

concepts. All higher [psychological] functions originate as actual relations between human individuals. (Vygotsky 1978:57, italics in original)

Vygotsky never produced a cohesive conceptual framework during his brief lifetime and much of his writings is sufficiently abstract to allow multiple, divergent interpretations (Valsiner and Van der Veer 1993; 2000; Van der Veer and Valsiner 1994). Much of the more recent work within this cultural-historical school has tried to refine the mechanism(s) implicit in Vygotsky's account of internalization (e.g. Cole 1996; Gaskins, et al. 1992; Tudge, et al. 1997; Valsiner 1997; Wertsch 1991).

Within the cultural-historical literature on cognitive development and socialization sensitive to cross-cultural variation, consensus has crystallized around the notion that enculturation occurs through the child's increasing participation in everyday, culturally-specific activities (Bugenthal and Goodnow 1998; Cole 1996; Goodnow, et al. 1995; Miller and Goodnow 1995a; 1995b; Rogoff 1990; 1998; Rogoff, et al. 1995). The logic of this "participatory learning" perspective is that the child begins to learn as they begin to participate on the periphery of the activity; or what Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as "legitimate peripheral participation". Frequently, the activities of this initial peripheral role are merely observational. There is no presumption that this initial peripheral participation means that the child understands the nature of the activity or even its larger goals, but provides a space to begin to learn about the larger organization of the activity in question.

As the novice young child continues to observe the actions of the more experienced participants, imitates their actions, and possibly receives advice or correction

from more experienced others, he or she will begin to adjust and refine his actions and understandings. As their abilities and understandings grow, the child will begin to participate more fully in the activity. According to this position, as their participation grows so does their understanding until their skills and conceptions approximate those of the more expert participants (Goodnow, et al. 1995; Rogoff 1990; 1993; Rogoff, et al. 1995). Full participation is usually understood to be equated with acquisition of competence but not necessarily mastery.

From this perspective, there is a postulated large role for social others in the process of learning. More specifically, novices are assisted or “scaffolded” by more experienced individuals in various ways, which enabled them to operate on a level beyond what they could do alone (Cole 1985; Rogoff 1990; Stone 1993). The differences between what novices can do alone and what they can do with guidance from more expert persons represents the boundaries of the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD)³¹, which is where teaching is most productively targeted. There are very strong parallels between the ZPD concept and the research on tutoring and language acquisition conducted by Jerome Bruner, David Wood and colleagues (Bruner 1978; 1982; Wood 1986; Wood, et al. 1976; Wood and Middleton 1975), who actually coined the term “scaffolding” (Stone 1993)³². Scaffolding included such actions as: segmenting the larger tasks into smaller sub-tasks, marking critical features of the task, motivating the

³¹ How Vygotsky actually meant the concept of ZPD to be used remains an open question. Although he did argue that the most productive teaching should be targeted in this range, he used the ZPD concept more in a descriptive manner than an explanatory one. He initially introduced it as the general difference between the child’s ability on their own and with social assistance, and frequently used it as a critique of test-based assessments of children’s abilities. He argued that such tests could not properly assess the more tentative and less-developed aspects of development currently scaffolded by social others (Valsiner & Van der Veer 1993:43-4).

³² Their version of the zone of proximal development is called the “region of sensitivity to instruction” (Wood and Middleton 1975), and is defined in roughly equivalent ways as the amount of scaffolding to provide for most productive outcomes in terms of the child’s learning.

novice, providing verbal directions and reminders that could function as mnemonic devices, and so forth (Wood, et al. 1976). In essence, these actions serve to adjust the task's difficulty in line with the novice's capabilities and conception of the task at hand; reducing the "degrees of freedom" available (Wood 1986). The amount of scaffolding provided is reduced over time as the novice's skills and understandings of the task increase.

For example, running one's finger beneath the words in a line of printed text as the young child attempts to read, focuses their attention on the immediate focus of the larger task of reading the page. The pace of the movement slows as the child has trouble and assistance with pronunciation is provided for particularly difficult words. Words of praise after completing a line of reading served to further motivate the novice reader. As the child's expertise increases, different elements of this scaffolding are withdrawn allowing the child more independence and adjusting the relative challenge of the task. In contrasting this pattern of intensive scaffolding with Samoan patterns of practice, I will refer to it as the "Western" model, while explicitly acknowledging that such a label generalizes and may not even be an accurate portrayal of Western practice (e.g. Goodnow 1990).

While the cultural-historical paradigm described above provides a particularly useful theoretical model for understanding many aspects of cultural learning, there have been important critiques of certain elements that are relevant to this project. Most notably, some have questioned the cross-cultural viability of the active scaffolding element as a normative and required aspect of the model. Lancy (1996:21-3) provides numerous ethnographic examples of cultures where the face-to-face didactic interactions,

which are the classic sites for parent-child / expert-novice teaching, are markedly rare. As he notes: “research on child language socialization in other societies (e.g. Irvine 1978; Ochs and Schieffelin 1984) is mostly a story about the *absence* of parent-child interaction” (Lancy 1996:22). This is equally true not only in non-Western contexts, but also with regard to some ethnic minorities in the United States (e.g. Southern African-Americans, Heath 1983). Although clearly variation exists (e.g. the Kaluli practice of directing children to "say like this", Schieffelin 1990: chapter 4), in many non-Western contexts children do not tend to be deemed as appropriate conversational partners and parent-child interactions tend to be characterized more by directives and warnings.

Goodnow’s (1990) critique is similar but focuses more on a key underlying assumption to the “participatory learning paradigm”. Specifically, she criticizes the model’s neglect of the social and cultural context in which learning occurs, and its potential impact on the motivations of the actors involved. I quote her at length:

My disappointment with the picture usually presented [i.e. Vygotsky-inspired accounts of cognitive development] is that... the world is benign and relatively neutral. To be more specific, the standard picture is one of willing teachers on the one hand and eager learners on the other. Where are the parents who do not see their role as one of imparting information and encouraging understanding? Where are the children who do not wish to learn or perform in the first place, or who regard as useless what the teaching adult is presenting?

(Goodnow 1990:279)

Parents may not be invested in teaching children skills or promoting their development in particular avenues (e.g. crawling, eating with a spoon, horseback riding) that will prove to be increase their work-load (Valsiner 1997). In a more general sense, life history theory (Hrdy 1992; 1999; Stearns 1992) reminds us that parental resources (e.g. time, money, energy) are always limited and tradeoffs and compromises in investments and allocations must always be made. In certain contexts, parents may be highly selective in taking advantage of opportunities to teach their children, even when parents acknowledge children's enculturation as an overarching goal. Samoan parents' decision to expend resources to allow one child to succeed academically, while keeping others to work in the plantation and attend to the home can be seen as one simple example of such a pattern.

Similarly, sibling rivalry may introduce dynamics that reduce the willingness of elder sibs to teach and younger sibs to learn from the other. "Sibling differentiation theory" (Feinberg, et al. 2003; Sulloway 1996; 2001) suggests that younger sib will be motivated to differentiate themselves from older sibs by developing individual niches (i.e. individual interests, skills, and personal characteristics) to minimize rivalry and elicit parental investment and attention. Consequently, we might predict that the younger sib might not always be interested in learning what the older has to teach. Similarly, elder siblings may not be highly motivated to transmit skills on to younger sibs (particularly if competence in those skills elicits investment), unless such teaching aids them in some way in their competition for parental attention.

Finally, children may also not always be interested in acquiring new knowledge or expanding their level of competence. David Wood (1986) notes this when he

repeatedly points to the child's motivation as a "vital basis for learning through instruction", and by including motivation as a crucial aspect of scaffolding that can be provided by the teacher. The possibility of children "opting out" of learning specific skills and competencies (e.g. Willis 1977) is an underappreciated idea in educational and developmental psychology research, but clearly a reality and an issue I will return to in later chapters.

Observations of cultural learning in the Samoan household provide support for Lancy's and Goodnow's respective critiques of the participatory learning model. Parents were explicit in describing their relative role in children's enculturation as pronounced. When parents (n=141) were asked: "How do children acquire their culture?", they overwhelmingly responded that culture was actively taught to them by others (92.7%). Only a small group suggested that children learn their culture on their own accord (2.9%), and an even smaller group (4.4%) saw cultural learning as a responsibility of both the child and caretakers. Yet despite a stated commitment to children's learning, Samoan parents generally tend to avoid the intensive dyadic instruction with elaborate scaffolding of the sort common in middle-class American households for three primary reasons: (1) parental concerns with rank, (2) an epistemological bias against speculating about other's thoughts and motivations; and (3) an ethnotheory of knowledge acquisition that equates knowledge with observation.

As Ochs (1982; 1988) has amply documented, persons of higher rank initiate and control the flow of interaction with lower-ranking persons including children. This interactional norm disinclines parents from engaging in many forms of active instruction and scaffolding. For example, children employ verbal requests for help and questions

relatively infrequently. Far more common is the use of non-verbal help-seeking behaviors that demonstrate a need, but which allow the adult to choose to engage the child or not (e.g. maintaining close physical proximity to an adult when they are engaged in an interesting activity; facial and postural displays of physical distress when confronted with a problem)³³. Similarly, the majority of forms of scaffolding most noted in the psychological literature (e.g. task segmentation, marking critical features) are made possible only when the adult takes note of the child's respective abilities and difficulties in the ongoing task. This requires the teacher to adopt the novice's focus of attention in order to assess the novice's perspective on the task and note discrepancies with their own (more experienced) view, as well as properly tailor communications to have an impact on the novice's cognitions (Kruger and Tomasello 1996; Tomasello 1999b). Yet as "the single most important quality of *fa'aaloalo* 'respect' is attentiveness to others" (Ochs 1988:162), it is the lower-ranking person who is to follow into the higher-ranking person's attention in order to properly identify their needs and wishes. In Samoa, egocentrism is a prerogative of rank, and parents are less willing to interact with children in a manner that serves to denigrate their rank by taking the child's perspective.

In comparison with Western populations, Samoans are also relatively less inclined to speculate on other's thoughts, inner worlds, and motivations. The focus of attention for Samoan individuals is on the level of behavior and activity; what has the individual actually done, not what might the individual want to do, mean to do, or have attempted to

³³ Gallimore et al (1974: chapter 10) provides a particularly interesting empirical demonstration of the contrast between help-seeking behaviors in Hawaiian-American (H-A) and middle-class Caucasian preschool children. Asked to complete a puzzle too difficult for the child to complete on their own and told that the teacher will be happy to assist them if they only asked, 93% of Caucasian children sought help through verbal means while only 19% of H-A children did so. 56% of the H-A children, however, used various non-verbal means to attempt to elicit aid including "casting appealing, sad glances at the experimenter", "appearing anxious", and so forth.

do. This was brought amply home to me in my initial conversations with people in which I would attempt to understand other's actions in terms of their inner motivations and beliefs (a perspective with which I was comfortable), whereas Samoans tended to focus purely on external behaviors. My repeated questions as to the underlying conceptions, beliefs and motivations behind different people's actions were inevitably answered either with "I don't know" or instructions to go ask the person myself. In terms of teaching practice, such an epistemological stance may predispose more experienced persons to view novices' mistakes simply as failures rather than attempting to understand the novices' underlying flawed conceptions and seek to revise them.

Finally, Samoan ethnotheory of knowledge acquisition equates knowledge with prior observation. Certainly the clearest indication is simply Samoan's typical response to questions as to how they learnt some skill, attribute or fact, which tends to be simply a matter of observation. This is very much a common theme in Polynesian epistemologies, for as Koskinen (1968) has argued, most Polynesian cultures have a visual orientation towards knowledge and its acquisition. The Samoan word for "to know" – *iloa* – carries a strong association of active visual perception. For example, in addition to "to know", *iloa* can be used in the sense of "to see or spot", "to notice", "to recognize", and "to be aware of". Examples include:

<i>'Ua 'amata ona iloa mea e le pepe.</i>	The baby begins to notice things.
<i>Pe e te iloa lenei tusilima?</i>	Do you recognize his handwriting?
<i>E mafai ona 'e iloa mai a'u?</i>	Can you see me?

(Milner 1993:84)

The negative form of the verb “*lē iloa*” can be used to mean “lack of knowledge” as well as a “lack of awareness or consciousness”.

Sa lē iloa e ia se mea i lona ita tele. He was unaware in his rage.

(Milner 1993:84)

Furthermore, the nominalization of *iloa* is *iloga*, which is usually used in the sense of a “sign” or “distinguishing mark”. Other lexical items mirror this association of knowledge with observation and sight, including “to understand” (*malamalama*) which can also be used to refer to daylight, sunshine, and consciousness. Not only does there seem to be a strong visual element to the underlying Samoan conception of knowledge, but also a sense of agency. One does not simply ‘see’ but rather one actively ‘distinguishes’, ‘notices’, and ‘recognizes’ some pattern of significance on the basis of individual agency (see Borofsky 1987; Koskinen 1968; Levy 1973, esp. chapter 8; Shore 1982:168-9, for further discussion of Pacific epistemologies).

In terms of teaching practice, such a local theory of learning can be expected to put more weight on the agency of the individual learner rather than potential teachers and promote a “hands-off” approach to children’s learning, except with regard to error correction. Additionally, it provides a basis for Samoan conceptions of the parents as models for their children’s learning. It is not uncommon for Samoan observers to draw a link between behaviors of the parents and the later behavior of their children. Accordingly, a parent’s poor behavior (e.g. swearing, drunkenness, fighting, laziness) would be taken as a sign that the children were being exposed to such behavior, and suggest a predisposition for the child to develop such behaviors. Similarly, a child’s

contemporary bad behavior would be taken as evidence of parental misbehavior or neglect in correcting misconduct.

For these three different reasons – adults’ assertion of social distance from children, their activities, and the focus of their attention; an epistemological focus on the level of behavior rather than underlying intentionality; and an ethnotheory of knowledge acquisition that equates knowledge with prior observation – we tend to see very little active instruction with the exception of error correction and great stress placed on the child’s own agency in learning. Of course, this statement should not be taken to mean that Samoans “never” employ such methods; I am only speaking in terms of relative tendencies and inclinations. I did witness on various occasions adults engage children in brief episodes of teaching (e.g. teaching how to sing a particular Bible hymn), just as I also witnessed parents engage young children in playful encounters and wrestling in which the interactants were of roughly equivalent roles (although it was still the adult who initiated and terminated the encounter). Yet in comparison to the North American and Western European norm, which seems to serve as the implicit point of reference from which the participatory learning model originates, there are significant differences. As illustration of the pattern, I will briefly describe some data relating to children’s learning about fishing in the Silafaga lagoon.

Learning to fish: An example of cultural learning

Various forms of individual and communal fishing³⁴ are very common in Samoa as they are throughout the Pacific (Chapman 1987; Kirch and Green 2001; O’Meara

³⁴ I focus here on the capture of saltwater vertebrates as opposed to gathering marine resources such as mollusks and echinoderms, which tends to be women’s work (but see Chapman 1987). My use of the term

1990). The three most common methods of individual fishing in Silaga included: spear fishing, line fishing and thrown net fishing. Spear fishing entailed using a thrown or propelled metal spear to kill individual fish. The most common form of spear used in the village was a four-foot-long aluminum spear propelled by a two-foot-long loop of rubber tubing attached at the rear of the spear, and so-called “Hawaiian slings”, which fires shorter metal spears with a length of rubber tubing through a short section of plastic pipe much like a sling shot. Line fishing included the use of Western fishing poles if available, but far more commonly a weighted fishing line spun freehand over the head and thrown into the lagoon³⁵. Finally, thrown net fishing entailed throwing a weighted circular fishing net to capture groups of fish. Both net and spear fishing could be done at night using large kerosene lanterns or large flashlights to attract fish. There are, of course, many other forms of traditional and collective fishing, but none were as common in Silafaga as these three.

Male children, usually between 5 and 12 years of age, virtually always accompanied the male adults or older adolescents who were the primary participants. Part of this was because of general Samoan preference not to be alone, but more frequently because of the boys’ large interest in fishing. I have, for example, observed children collect earthworms to present to adults who fish in the hope that they will then be enticed to go fishing and take the child. Additionally, because the relative physical costs of fishing are generally low adults did not need to bring numerous children to help.

“boys” in the following is intentionally as no girls ever accompanied these various fishing excursions, except as a way to walk down to the beach.

³⁵ Occasionally children would use long lengths of bamboo with short lengths of fishing line and metal hooks that they would repeatedly flick over the water as in fly-fishing. As this form of fishing was physically taxing and generally produced only tiny, inedible fish, this was more a form of play, and I never saw an adult participating. It did not appear to provide a form of training for an adult form of fishing.

Consequently, it is safe to suggest that the children who did choose to accompany adults were very motivated to participate in fishing³⁶.

Generally, the main and unglamorous task of the accompanying child or children is to carry woven coconut palm frond baskets into which the captured fish are placed. With line fishing, children may also be told to gather hermit crabs on the beach, which can be used to bait fishing hooks. But the child's participation in the actual fishing is limited. Fishing line, nets, and spears are quite limited in number, so that there is essentially no opportunity for the child to fish simultaneously with adults where the adults might supervise the child's actions. Of course with spear fishing there are even stricter physical limits on observation as there is frequently only a single spear and set of goggles so that the child would simply wait on the shore while the adult fished in the lagoon. Generally speaking then, children's roles can be clearly categorized as "legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave and Wenger 1991).

On the numerous occasions on which I observed children fishing with adults (n > 50; 1-3 hours per episode), only once did an adult allow the accompanying child to use the adults' fishing line while they supervised their efforts and provided some measure of guidance for an extended period of time. On that instance, the adult corrected the location of where the boy threw the fishing line ("don't do it there, throw it over there") and then waited and watched with the boy as he waited for a bite, and occasionally asked if the boy felt a tug. This pattern was repeated a few times on this occasion, with the adult redirecting the child's efforts in different parts of the lagoon. On a handful of other

³⁶ Clearly some children may be motivated to accompany the adults in order to spend time with older male relatives such as fathers in a small group, which can be somewhat of a rare situation. However, these children would also be motivated to demonstrate keen interest in fishing in order to share activity with these males.

instances (n~10), the child attempted to use the fishing pole or line and was allowed to do so by the adult, but neither the adult nor the child made any specific overtures either at eliciting assistance nor providing assistance at proper performance either verbally or non-verbally. In three of those instances, I didn't even note a shared glance between adult and child. Given that intersubjective sharing is a virtual hallmark of scaffolding as it is classically conceived (e.g. Wood, et al. 1976), it suggests a considerable divergence from what we might see in middle-class North American households.

The observational and unstructured interview data suggests that the majority of learning how to fish occurs by observing the actions of an adult or more experienced adolescent at close proximity on several occasions, regardless of the fishing method employed. Older adolescents (generally 10 years or older) would then generally borrow the adult's fishing equipment and attempt to go fishing on their own without any adult supervision. Thus, there is observational learning coupled with imitation or "emulation"³⁷ (Tomasello 1996) and independent experimentation by the child or a group of children, which eventually led to moderate levels of competence in fishing. There were several older children (10-16 years of age) in the village who were moderately skilled fisherman, able to catch fish via one or more of these methods with a reliability that approached most adults. One pair of sub-12 year old brothers could be frequently seen fishing with a thrown net in the late afternoon without an accompanying adult with sufficiently good success to regularly contribute to their family's intake on a weekly basis. When these various young fishermen were asked how they learned to do so, each provided a brief narrative that they had initially observed the actions of a more skilled

³⁷ "Emulation learning" is learning about the dynamic affordances of a specific artifact, such as a tool, by watching another use the object, but without learning about the goals and intentions behind the particular usage (Tomasello 1999:81-2; Tomasello 1996).

fisherman and then had repeated tried to imitate the action on their own, and with some practice began to successfully catch fish. I also observed “collaborative learning” (Tomasello, et al. 1993) between siblings close in age and / or peers.

The question of scaffolding in Samoa: Behaviorally-focused, corrective scaffolding

Given the disinclination of parents and adults to employ most of the forms of scaffolding commonly discussed in the psychological literature (e.g. task segmentation, praise to motivate, verbal or non-verbal marking of relevant aspects of the task), should we interpret this to mean that Samoans do not employ *any* scaffolding except perhaps as an exception to cultural and social norms? No, I think such a pronouncement would be an over-simplification. Rather, I think we can see elements of scaffolding in many of parents, adults and older siblings’ actions taken to correct or admonish their younger charges for their actions. Moreover, the contrast between the more “normative Western” forms of scaffolding described in the existing literature and the modes most frequently employed by Samoan can push us to further broaden and refine our conception of scaffolding. Finally, it also allows us to reconcile Samoan parents’ clear assertion of their significant role in children’s enculturation with a seeming reluctance to engage in teaching as most frequently conceptualized in the developmental psychology literature.

Samoan forms of scaffolding tend to take the form of error correction, pointing to and marking mistakes in the child’s behavior. What is important to note about this corrective form of scaffolding is that it is a form of interaction that is not injurious to parental rank in the same way as it does not require the parent to adopt the child’s

perspective, but rather only act from an external perspective focus on behavior alone.

Consider the following brief example:

Example 1:

On one afternoon, eleven-year-old A'ana was washing the breakfast dishes and some laundry at the external faucet behind her family's house, using a piece of yellow soap and a large opaque plastic bucket. After she had completed the work to her satisfaction, she began to hang up the clothing on a clothes line behind the house as well as on nearby bushes. Her mother happened by and noted that not all of the soap had been washed out of one or more articles of clothing (soap bubbles were visible on one dark colored t-shirt that I could see) and some seemed to be still dirty. She tersely told her daughter that the clothes were "still dirty" (without actually indicating which of the items were still dirty except for one that she pulled off the line and threw on the grass next to the girl), told her to go back and wash them again, and then walked off after the girl started to pull the clothing off the line.

While household chores tend to get short-shrift as simplistic, they do nonetheless entail a process of learning. Washing clothes, for example, requires the child to learn how much soap and water to use, how to apply the bar soap used by Samoans to the clothing, how to remove stains and heavily soiled areas, how to rinse the clothes to remove the soap, and so forth. It also entails learning standards for cleanliness, which seemed to be the particular norm communicated by the mother in this instance through her correction.

A key contrast between the corrective form of scaffolding employed by Samoans and the normative Western pattern of scaffolding is that the former tends to be *behaviorally-focused* while the latter is *intersubjectively-focused*. By this I mean that the parents, elders or more experienced individual making the correction are focusing their attention on correcting the child's inappropriate or incorrect behavior, rather than attempting to alter the underlying perspective or conception guiding the behavior. In the example above, A'ana is simply told by her mother that the clothes are still dirty and to go do it again. Samoan parents infrequently provide explanations about the particular mistakes or errors, but rather simply call for the child to desist in a particular activity. Samoan parents do not tend to "follow in" to the attention of the child in an attempt to locate and correct the underlying errors. There is no attempt, for example, by the mother to try and suggest to A'ana that she might have used too much soap or not enough water in washing the clothes. She also does not point out which articles of clothing she deems to be still dirty so as to bring her perspective and her daughter's into line. In contrast, the normative Western model can use the child's mistakes as a starting point (i.e. "teaching opportunity") for continued teaching and instruction and focuses on working to improve or refine the underlying conceptual or perspectival inaccuracies that lead to the child's incorrect behaviors.

In pointing to these contrasts I am not suggesting that such behaviorally-focused scaffolding is of little utility because it does not address children's underlying meanings and conceptions. Corrective scaffolding can provide significant assistance to children's learning as it provides crucial feedback from more experienced members of the social world. Moreover, such additional information may not be necessary. Samoan children

are able to gain competence in a wide range of various skills including household chores, agricultural work, and personal hygiene as well as complex systems of practice and cultural knowledge such as the chief system (as I will relate in chapter 11).

A second key difference is in terms of the *motivation* entailed by corrective and normative Western scaffolding. While much of the motivational component in the West is directed around praising successes and the child's effort (Wood 1986) even when largely ineffectual, this is not seen as a viable option in Samoa as there are strong norms against boasting and public pronouncements of one's superiority (Mead 1973) as well as a clearly articulated parental fear of generating conceit in the child by praising them. When parents (n=137) were asked whether parents in general should praise their children's good behavior or successes as part of the parental belief questionnaire, the majority indicated "never" (83.2%), with smaller minorities answering "occasionally" (8.1%), "frequently" (5.8%), and "every time" (2.9%).

Rather than praise, parents frequently used shame and aversion training for the purposes of motivation. Shaming including most frequently derisive and critical comments such as *E te valea?* ("Are you stupid?"), laughing at children's efforts, teasing, and various curses and insults. By "aversion training" I mean the application or threat of application of corporal punishment to punish a violation of social norms and / or inculcate a fear in repeating the action in the future. Parents who acknowledged the use of corporal punishment were consistent in describing their use of these measures as explicitly pedagogical in nature.

The actual usage of corporal punishment is difficult to estimate with a great degree of accuracy as there is considerable reluctance on the part of Samoan parents and

caretakers to discuss the matter. This is based on an erroneous perception that Western populations do not use or support the use of corporal punishment, and that Western researchers and some segments of the Samoan population³⁸ would condemn or criticize such actions. Consequently, there were several parents with whom I had otherwise open and trusting relationships, but whom indicated that they did not use corporal punishment at all when I had either actually witnessed it first-hand, or had heard about it from their children and / or spouse that they did.

Questions on the use of corporal punishment were included on the parental beliefs and practices questionnaire (n=138), as well as at a far smaller subset of children (17 males, 16 females, age range of 10-15 years, mean of 12.1 years) recruited from the 7th and 8th grade classes at the local primary school. 41% of parents acknowledged using corporal punishment, while 50.0% of daughters and 76.5% of sons suggested that such discipline had been used on them. Given that children's answers are less likely to be biased for the sake of social approval than parents, I will estimate the actual rate at the lower end of a range between 50 and 75%. Cross-tabulations showed no significant difference between male and female children on their report of corporal punishment ($\chi^2 = 1.48$, $df = 1$, $p > .1$ ns).

In summary then, we might characterize the social and cultural organization of learning within the household with the following points:

- Samoan adults are disinclined to employ a characteristically (or stereotypically)

“Western” pattern of intensive and elaborate scaffolding due to:

³⁸ There are a handful of small organizations, such as *Mapusaga o Aiga* (“Resting place for families”), formed to combat spousal abuse that have increasingly taken up the issue of corporal punishment, child abuse, and sexual abuse over the past decade.

1. Parental concerns at maintain their rank with respect to the child,
 2. Reluctance to speculate about other's thoughts and motivations, and
 3. Ethnotheory of knowledge acquisition that privileges observational learning
- The scaffolding parents do use tends to be *behaviorally-focused* (rather than intersubjectively-focused) and *corrective* in nature; concentrating on correcting incorrect, inappropriate and improper behaviors, rather than the underlying conceptual understandings or perspectival inaccuracies.
 - Shame and aversion training are commonly used to motivate compliance with social norms and children's learning more generally.

I have thus far neglected the important issue of younger children learning from their older siblings. With less pronounced rank differentials, the potential exists that while parents and other adults may be less inclined to engage in more elaborate and scaffolded teaching, older sibs may not be. I will explore this possibility later in this chapter after I have described sibling caretaking in greater detail, the context of which will make my points on this topic clearer.

In discussing the social and cultural organization of learning, it is important to note that cultural values, social ecology, and social norms, while important are not the only factors contributing to the choice of mode of social learning, the type of scaffolding used and so forth. Certainly, the particular type of knowledge (e.g. legal codes, dance steps, song lyrics, genealogical relationships, household chores) will also have an impact in rendering some modes of learning more effective than others. I would also note that social institutions frequently possess institutional histories of practices that have been

used previously and this will certainly contribute to the choices being made. Finally, one must note the various endogenous factors in the “novice” and “teacher” (or “model” for imitation, as the case may be) such as variations in temperament (e.g. social fearfulness), perceptions of self-efficacy and locus of control, for example, will all have an impact on which mode or modes of social learning will more typically be employed by a given individual. Due to the large number of contributing factors, at best we can talk about relative frequencies of use and cultural preferences, but we must always take care and expect both contextual and individual variations.

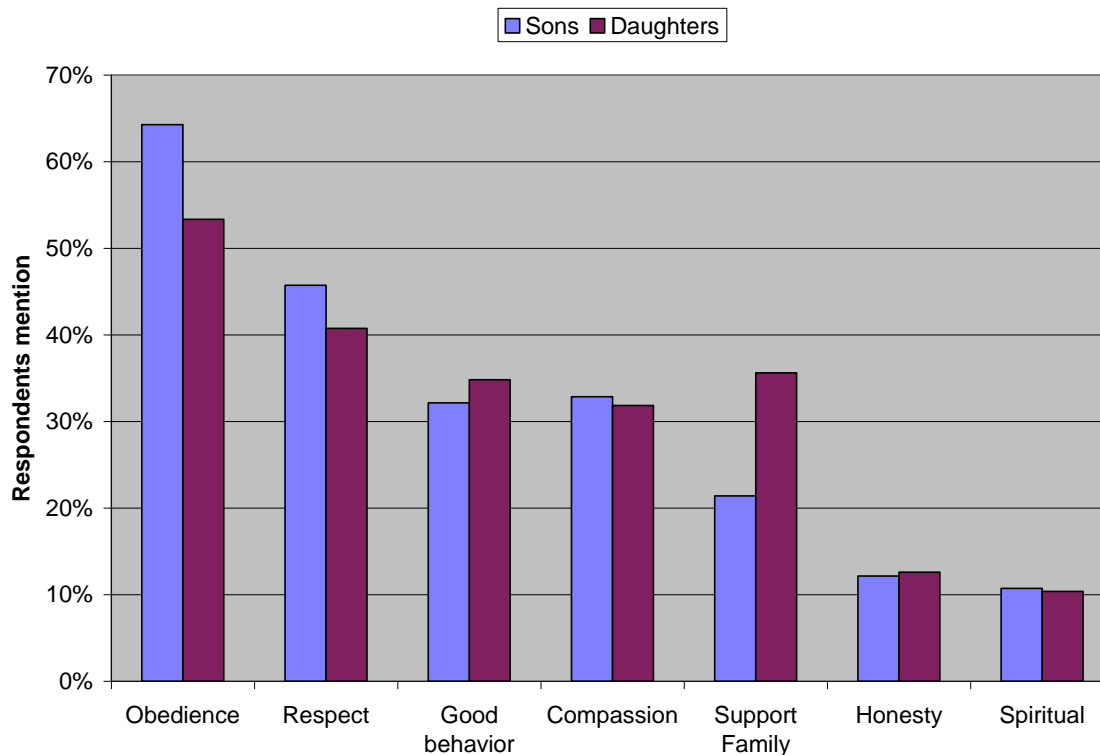
Respectful and deferential behavior

Lancy (1996:23) suggests if any domain of cultural knowledge or practice is going to be a focus of parental socialization cross-culturally, it will be respectful behavior. This is certainly the case with Samoa. In interviews, for example, if parents suggested that they have a pronounced role in children’s enculturation it was inevitably focused on teaching and enforcing children’s respectful and deferential behavior. The corrective, behaviorally-focused scaffolding that I have described in the previous section can be clearly seen in parent’s corrections of their children’s disrespectful behavior. But knowledge of respectful behavior is important not only as it represents an area of focus for parental socialization, but also because it constitutes a clear behavioral component to knowledge of the chief system. Knowing how to serve and demonstrate one’s respect to *matai* behaviorally is a central aspect of competence in this particular domain of cultural knowledge.

Parental and caretaker expectations of children's respectful and deferential behaviors predictably increase over the course of childhood. As I noted earlier the key shifts in expectations of the child coincide with transformations in the developmental niche. These transitions occur at the transition out of infancy and into sibling care and greatly increases with the child's adoption of a more public role at around 5 to 6 years of age as I will describe in greater detail in chapter 8.

Respect and deference to parents' and adults' authority represents a very basic and fundamental socialization goal for Samoans. As part of the parental belief and practices questionnaire, parents (n=140) were asked to describe the three most important expectations they held for their sons and daughters when they were older. This was meant to capture gender-specific socialization goals. Responses (n= 370 for sons and 347 for daughters) were coded and are summarized in Figure 7.1 below.

Few of the responses will surprise those familiar with the extant literature on childrearing in Samoa and Polynesia (e.g. Howard 1970; 1974; Mageo 1998; Morton 1996; Ritchie and Ritchie 1979; 1989). Obedience (*usita'i*) and respect (*fa'aaloalo*) lead the list for both sons and daughters, followed by good behavior and compassion (*alofa*). "Good behavior" includes various similar behaviors such as: *amio lelei* ("good behavior"), *amio pulea* ("controlled behavior"), *amio fa'aleatua* ("godly behavior"), *tausa'afia e tagata* ("social approval"), and *amio tamali'i* ("chiefly behavior"). The results suggest that we can safely consider respectful, deferential and obedient behavior to be a basic socialization goal and behavioral expectation of children in the household. Given its basic importance, it is no surprise that this domain of cultural competence is an active point of socialization in the household.

Figure 7.1: Parents' three key socialization goals for sons and daughters

Note: Each respondent (n=140) provided the three most important socialization goals for both their sons and daughters, so the total percentages clearly exceed 100%.

You can know the child's good behavior by their walk, speech, sitting.

[You can] also know the well-behaved child by their obedience when their parents give an order.

E mafai ona e iloa le tamaitiiti i lana amio lelei i lana savali, tautala, nofo i lalo.

E iloa fo'i le tamaitiiti amio lelei e usitai i le fa'atonuga pe'a fai atu e ona matua.

35 year old female, mother of 4, wife of a *matai* (018.9)

The actual expectations of children's respectful and deferential behavior can be categorized into two general concerns: (i) exhibition of behavioral restraint appropriate to the social context and activity, and (ii) obedience to the directives of higher-ranking

persons; both of which are mentioned in the mother's quote above. The first aspect of deferential and respectful behavior expected of children in the household is behavioral restraint. Parental interviews frequently suggested the idea that a good proportion of the task of children developing proper behavior was children learning to "restrain" themselves, and *amio pulea* (retrained or controlled behavior)³⁹ was a common phrase used in these descriptions. While some of this notion of restraint flows from an objective view of young children's behavior as lacking self-regulation, some of it also originates in Samoan conceptions of human nature. Given perceptions of infants as embodiments of our innate aggressive, willful and self-centered drives and tendencies, the development of good behavior is to learn to properly restrain these potentially destructive inner predispositions (on Samoan conceptions of human nature and social control, see Shore 1982: especially chapter 9). Restraint is expressed behaviorally in a range of different modalities including bodily movement, posture, speech and interactional style. Parents, including the mother/ father quoted above frequently refer to this breadth by including mention of actions such as: *savali* (walking), *tautala* (speech), and *nofo i lalo* (sitting down [when speaking, eating, and in more formal contexts].)

As opposed to the most Western contexts in which formality and respect is expressed behaviorally by remaining standing, in Samoa and other Pacific societies, deference to rank is expressed by lowering one's body, particularly with reference to the higher-ranking other (Duranti 1992a; Keating 1998). Consequently, when one enters a household one immediately sits down and waits to be formally acknowledged by the residents. Similarly, if one has to pass in front of another person, one lowers oneself and

³⁹ "*Pulea*" is frequently used to describe rational and measured executive control as in "the king led the country" and "the principal administered the school", and comes from the root *pule* ("authority", "power").

bends at the waist while simultaneously saying *tulou* (“excuse me”). Finally, if a person happens to pass a house in which there are other persons, they will first provide a ritualized apology for speaking while standing before acknowledging the persons seated in the house. Expectations are obviously reduced with regard to children as few would expect a child to provide a coherent apology for standing while speaking. Children are, however, expected to avoid walking in front of other persons, particularly strangers and persons of high rank, and they are to remain seated in formal contexts.

In terms of proper speech expected of children, my observations parallel those of Ochs (1982; 1988). Persons of higher rank initiate and control the flow of interaction with lower ranking persons including children. The most frequent type of linguistic interaction between adults and children are directives issued by adults, and there is no expectation of a verbal response from the child. Indeed, one of the more prototypical behavioral aspects of the naughty and disrespectful child is to talk back to parents and adults. It is usually described with the phrase *gutu oso*, which can be glossed as “talking too much”. The word *gutu* is “mouth”, and *oso* is used variously to describe various uncontrolled and destructive actions, including: jumping, dashing, invading, destroying, an uncontrolled flow (of water), and cars running off the road (Milner 1993), which clearly supports the focus on behavioral restraint, in this case the proper restraint of speech.

As a language, Samoan contains an elaborate respectful speech that uses extensive substitution of ordinary words with respectful terms which serves to elevate the relative rank of the addressee while simultaneously subordinating the speaker (Duranti 1992b; Milner 1961; Shore 1982). As children have only relatively limited verbal interactions

with unrelated adults⁴⁰ where this lexicon is primarily used, there is relatively little emphasis on children's actual production of the respect lexicon in the household. Of course, parents do stress basic respectful words such as "please" (*fa'amolemole*), "thank you" (*fa'afetai*), and "excuse me" (*tulou*), but children's "polite speech" in the household is generally realized by keeping silent in the company of adults unless directly questioned, or by addressing adults only on occasions when they provide contextualization cues indicating they are relative open to address by children (on parallel phenomenon in Hawaii, see Howard 1974:60-2).

The second aspect of deferential and respectful behavior expected of children is the direct expression of obedience to the directives of higher-ranking individuals, including parents, caregivers and other adults in the household⁴¹. While initially these directives may be quite explicit in nature, as the child matures and begins to serve the adults in more substantive ways, this may include perceiving and satisfying the needs of persons of higher rank without receiving explicit direction from others. Thus, for example, the older child serving food to his grandparents needs to learn to perceive the empty glass or dinner plate as sign of a desire for more unless told otherwise. For the younger child the social cognitive requirements of such a task can be considerable, as it requires a level of perspective-taking not typically seen in children until after they have

⁴⁰ Duranti (personal communication, 2002) suggested that children might have opportunity to use more elaborate respectful speech when they carry messages from one household to another. While I did witness children carrying messages between related households (which didn't require elaborate respectful speech), I did not witness this practice frequently between unrelated households where respectful speech would be more of a requirement.

⁴¹ There was some disagreement on how far obedience was to extend to unrelated adults. Some parents indicated that children should obey all adults in all contexts, while others indicated that unrelated adults cannot make legitimate demands of children and thus children need not obey. Yet given the cultural value of *alofa* (compassion), which has as its prototypical instantiation the individual assisting the unrelated elderly person, it is likely that such assistance would be expected as an expression of *alofa* rather than obedience.

developed theory of mind between 4 and 6 years of age (Dunn 1988; Tomasello 1995; 1999a; Wellman 1990).

With few exceptions (i.e. the pastor's house, the church, and the village *malae*) expectations of respectful behavior are not tied to specific physical spaces such that there are formal and informal areas of the house and village. Rather, expectations of respectful behavior shift with regard to the social context and patterns of activity. The presence of unrelated visitors in the household for *to'ona'i* (the main Sunday meal), and special occasions, for example, can all heighten expectations of respectful and deferential behaviors for all persons including children. Other contexts, such as situations of casual joking and play after meals, and the rear cook houses after twilight, for instance, can reduce expectations of respectful behavior such that some norm violations are possible. Children must learn not only how to behave in a respectful manner, but how to read the ongoing social interaction properly to know when respectful behavior is appropriate (Ritchie and Ritchie 1989:102-4). "Contextualization cues" (Gumperz 1992), including both linguistic and non-linguistic factors including bodily posture, speech register and intonation contours, and the use of physical space. Example two can illustrate the importance of context in shifting expectations regarding respectful behavior:

Example 2:

On a visit to the home of a *matai* I knew relatively less well, I gashed my foot open on a sharp lava rock just prior to my arrival at his house. When he and his family saw my bloody wound, several members of his household rushed to grab a cloth and bucket of water to clean and bandage my foot. The *matai*

proceeded to poke fun at how ‘soft’ and ‘delicate’ the feet, hands, and bodies of foreigners like mine were in comparison to the physically tough and resilient bodies of Samoans. “No wonder the Americans [national rugby team] got beat so bad [by the Samoan national team]?” interjected his adult son from the back of the house. We all laughed for a moment as two of his children helped me with my foot.

Once the bleeding had stopped and as the children retreated to the rear of the house with the bucket of water and towel, the *matai* quickly crossed his legs, adjusted his posture into a slightly more upright position, and slid opposite me in the house. In a quiet and deep voice he launched into the *susu mai*, a brief formal exchange of welcoming to visitors, as he shifted his gaze from my eyes to a spot on the ground in front of him. Most members of his household responded to the rapid contextual shift from an informal joking situation to a far more formal one in which an unrelated and high-ranking visitor was formally welcomed in the home of a *matai*, by taking a seat in the rear of the house and remaining quiet. His 10-year-old son failed, however, to note the rapid contextual shift and he remained standing just behind and to one side of his father staring at me with a grin on his face waiting for the joking to continue. His mother seated behind him quickly rebuked his violation in fairly characteristic fashion by muttering *E ke valea?* (“Are you stupid?”). Suitably keyed into the context, the boy quickly retreated a few steps and sat down in the rear of the house before I began my response.

Beyond the illustration of the importance of context, I would also direct your attention to several aspects of this example as illustrative of the corrective scaffolding described earlier. Note in particular the use of shame to motivate the child's compliance, and the global reference to bad behavior rather than a specific attribute (e.g. not sitting down in the rear of the house when context demands it). Note also how no explanation of wrong-doing is offered, although perhaps because of the boy's age and typical competence such an explanation may not be necessary.

Learning respectful behavior as a context for cultural learning

Respectful behavior is a basic aspect of children's social competence, and thus is important in and of itself for children to learn (as evidenced by Samoan parents' stated socialization goals). Yet children's acquisition of respectful behavior also represents a means by which they can learn about the nature of hierarchy in general and the chief system more specifically. Elinor Ochs and Bambi Schieffelin have argued persuasively that the acquisition of language goes hand-in-hand with socialization (in a process they refer to as "language socialization") as the child must learn the relevant social norms, cultural values and important local conceptual divisions to use language competently (Ochs and Schieffelin 1984; Ochs 1988; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986a; 1986b). I would argue that this is similarly the case with regard to respectful and deferential behavior, as children must learn not only the physical enactments of such behaviors but also *who* to act respectful towards as well as the *contexts* that demand such displays of deference. This includes learning complex local hierarchies as well as the "contextual cues"

(Gumperz 1992) that signal when the context requires one to act in a deferential manner towards one's social superiors.

While clearly all persons merit a basic level of respectful treatment, there are certainly some members of the child's social ecology who merit more consistent and dramatic expressions of respectful behavior. In this regard, respect (*fa'aaloalo*) and compassion (*alofa*), both of which are important Samoan cultural values, differ. All persons are worthy of our aid and assistance in a time of need because of the strong value on displays of compassion (*alofa*) towards one's fellow man and woman. Yet respect (*fa'aaloalo*) is arrayed on a sliding scale by rank, such that higher-ranking individuals deserve more elaborate and consistent displays of respectful behavior, deference and service. Lower- or equivalently ranking individuals, such as unrelated peers and younger siblings, for example, do not.

Parents, caregivers, and older siblings thus socialize children into understanding this linear arrangement of hierarchy (i.e. that some persons are more worthy of respect than others) by exercising differential expectations. Children are reprimanded and punished more severely if they show a lack of respect to persons far above them in the family hierarchy (e.g. grandparents, parents, other more senior adults). Similarly, the requests and directives of higher-ranking persons require substantially greater levels of compliance than those of equivalent or lower ranking persons. Other adults and far older siblings may step in to punish such violations of respect and obedience. Conversely, the amount of respect expected to be demonstrated to a slightly older sibling can be far more minimal, and children can demonstrate far more moderate levels of compliance to their

requests without receiving punishment (except by the older sibling caretakers who may mount a concerted effort to extract compliance).

As part of the focal participant tasks, I asked the children a variety of questions about the ritualized way in which Samoans apologize for moving in front of seated persons. As I describe above, deference to rank is expressed in one's posture by lowering one's body with reference to higher-ranking others (Duranti 1992a). While one should optimally avoid moving in front of another in such a way, if one is unable to do so, one lowers oneself and bends at the waist while simultaneously saying *tulou* ("excuse me"). Children as young as six years of age were able to both recognize the practice as well as point out how they personally did not perform such an act in front of all persons. Siblings close in age (both older and younger) were regularly excluded. Far older siblings and parents merited such deference on most occasions. Elderly persons, *matai*, and the village pastor all merited such treatment on every occasion.

While quite rough, this differential pattern of expectations does impress on children the basic notion that persons are differentially arrayed along a linear scale in terms of the amount of respect they deserve. Although simple, such a notion is a basic element of any larger conceptual understanding of asymmetrical hierarchical system such as the Samoan chief system: individuals are differentially valued and this "value" translates into differential claims of authority and power. This does not mean, however, that children understand "rank" in some abstracted or decontextualized manner at this age. Indeed, this is highly unlikely given the pattern of training in respectful behavior that provides little feedback or explanation other than to punish violations in respectful behavior. There is little external impetus to drive such conceptual development. Rather,

it would seem to be more likely that children are simply developing a pattern of behavioral practice that is sensitive to social context and allows them to adapt to the Samoan household. Such knowledge is likely to be simply procedural knowledge. While children will develop more elaborate and differentiated models of hierarchy later, the earliest index of rank as taught through learning about respectful behavior would seem to be age. Social statuses are too little developed for the youngest and gender is not consistently predictive of higher or lower rank within the household.

Childcare and hierarchy

In this final section I will focus on a second mechanism important for learning hierarchy in the household: children's daily and intimate experience with child care (both as recipient and provider). I will argue that the child's experience with the "caregiving hierarchy" and their occupation of "pivotal positions" (Levy 1968) within that structure provides a particularly rich experiential base for children's developing understandings of hierarchy. This in turn will serve as the foundation for children's emerging understanding of the *matai* system, particularly once their movement into the larger community brings them into more regular contact with chiefly activity. I begin with a description of childcare.

Social distribution of childcare

As Weisner and Gallimore's (1977) seminal article brought to attention of anthropologists almost four decades ago, childcare is very commonly distributed across a number of other individuals than simply a "primary" female caretaker. Analysis of a

controlled sample of 186 different societies revealed that a majority possessed a pattern of childcare in which other persons in addition to the mother had care-giving roles. Moreover, in 43.5% of the societies infants were “cared for by others in important caretaker roles or cared for more than half the time by others” (Weisner and Gallimore 1977:170). The role of the mother continues to diminish as the infant becomes a toddler, as she served as the principal caregiver of children beyond infancy in only 19.4% of the societies sampled.

Samoa is very much an example of this modal pattern. Samoan childcare is widely distributed across all family members with few exceptions. While I did have older male informants who claimed relatively less knowledge about children as that was “the work of women”, in the majority of cases there was no stigma attached to male care of infants, toddlers and children. Additionally, I found even the roughest, most hyper-masculine young men to exhibit extraordinarily affectionate and tender treatment of infants. I think the gendered dimension of childcare that emerges in early adolescence with young women completing the brunt of the work while young men escape away to work in the plantations, has far more to do with males taking advantage of the opportunity for independence and socializing with friends than it does with them “avoiding” children *per se*. Yet once men begin to distance themselves from childcare in adolescence they tend not to return to it later in life. By and large fathers, other adult males, and title-holding males in particular, do not provide any childcare other than occasionally holding and sharing food with a child.

During the first year of life, the biological or adoptive mother does tend to play a large role in the infant’s care. But in the majority of instances, particularly for the first-

time mother who is considered to be largely ignorant in childcare, the mother is supervised and supported by a large number of attendants drawn from both her and her husband's relatives. Older siblings (or the children of relatives) do play an early role in childcare under the supervision of this array of adults. As I've described above, at some point between two and three years of age, care will become increasingly shifted towards sibling caretakers until it is this group that provides the clear majority of the care. An increasing role in supporting men's work in the plantations and lagoons tends to remove the older boys from the group, such that if these sibling groups have "older" members (i.e. 10 to 15 years of age) they are disproportionately female.

Based on fieldwork completed in the 1920's, Mead (1973) reports the existence of a specialized relationship between an older sibling and a particular younger charge, which was referred to by the term *tei*. As Ochs (1988:76) notes, this relationship is loaded with positive affect and the term is frequently used by adults to evoke sympathy between siblings. Virtually all of the parents with which I spoke were aware of the practice and described it as a "Samoan tradition", but most indicated that it was not a typical contemporary practice. This was also Ochs' (1988:79-80) observation from her fieldwork on the north coast of 'Upolu in the late 1970's. She attributes the change to the introduction of primary school in most rural villages and I have no reason to doubt that interpretation. Mandatory schooling removed the population of children that would have provided this care for several hours per day for several months at a time. Contemporary practice seems to be an adaptation to this problem, and usually involves sharing childcare between the mother and the older siblings (with the mother caring for the child during school hours) or splitting the task between the oldest sibs in the sibling set. If the charge

is particularly young, this may include the older siblings taking turns missing days of school in order to care for the child.

The only analogous relationship to the *tei* in contemporary Samoa is when one of the mother's older unmarried sisters comes to live with family in order to provide assistance with child care. This is particularly the case if the mother has several other children, is married to a *matai* and consequently has a number of important social roles, or if the mother lives close enough to an urban area to be employed. Generally these relationships between child and mother's sister are particularly strong and affectionate ones with at least the outward appearance of a strong attachment relationship (e.g. social reference and proximity-seeking behaviors focused on the caretaker rather than the mother when both are available), and may provide a suggestion of the emotional tone of what the *tei* relationship was like.

Caregiving hierarchy

One of Ochs' most perceptive observations of Samoan childcare is that the different individuals available to provide care to a young child in a specific context are arranged hierarchically by age; a structure she called the "caregiving hierarchy" (1988:80-85). Given that responsibility for care is widely distributed across the majority of persons in the household including only slightly older siblings, the caregiving hierarchy can involve a good proportion of individuals physically present. The individual caregiver's relative position in this caregiving structure organizes their actions. Persons of relatively higher rank tend to adopt supervisory roles with minimal actual involvement in the caretaking, and frequently assume a detached and disinterested air. They will not

tend to be involved in the immediate care of younger children, but rather may act or intervene only when the lower ranking person proves unable to carry out a specific directive or appears ignorant of how best to proceed. Persons of lower rank, on the other hand, take on the very active and physical aspects of care.

Finally, the relative position of a given individual in this hierarchy shifts contextually as people move into and out of the immediate interactional space (Ochs 1988:81). To illustrate, let me provide a description of a brief interaction from my fieldnotes:

Example 3:

Malie (3.5 years of age) and Ikenasio (9 months) are eating a snack of *misi luki* (lady finger bananas) and pieces of cold taro from the previous night's meal. Fili (10 years of age) is supervising them and feeding small pieces of banana to Ikenasio, who is seated facing outward in her lap. They sit in a semi-circle around the plates of food. Their mother, Ula, sits a few feet away working on a fine mat she is hurrying to complete for a *fa'alavelave* a few days later.

Tale (7 years of age) returns to the house carrying a hammer that one of his father's friends had borrowed. After hanging the tools up in the rafters of the house, he sits down with his three siblings and begins to eat a piece of taro. Fili immediately picks up Ikenasio from her lap and tries to hand him to Tale, who looks up at her but does not take Ikenasio. She forces the infant into his arms and slaps him on the top of his head, picks up a piece of taro, and walks to sit near her

mother and eat her taro. Her mother does not turn her head from her work. Tale alternates between feeding the infant and taking large bites of taro himself.

After the children have finished eating their food, Ikenasio starts moving around the floor of the fale and Tale periodically moves him back from the edge of the fale, which is elevated two feet above the ground. Ula's younger brother emerges from the path from the plantation carrying coconuts and two large woven baskets of *taro* and *taamu*. He drops off one of the baskets next to his sister's fale, and spends a few moments talking with Ula and me before he picks up his items and begins walking off to his own house down the road. As he begins to pick up his materials to leave, Tale jumps down from the house, grabs a bundle of coconuts and looks to his mother in a silent request for permission to accompany her brother. Judging his mother's lack of resistance as permission, Tale turns and quickly walks down the path after Ula's brother.

Fili, who has been sitting next to her mother watching her weave and staring seemingly bored down the path, moves to the other side of the house to sit next to Ikenasio. She initiates a playful interaction with him by gently tapping him on the head with a woven fan and then pulling the fan out of his reach when he tries to grab it. They repeat this for a few minutes.

Of particular note in the example is how the relative involvement of the participants in childcare fluctuates as the participants in the setting change. When it is only Fili and her mother present, then Fili serves as the primary active caregiver. With the arrival of Tale, however, Fili asserts her rank by forcing care of the child on her younger brother. She is

of higher relative rank than he (by virtue of her age), and so he hesitantly accepts the role of active caregiver. Fili then adopts the inactive and distant stance of her mother. When Tale eventually leaves, Fili must once again take the role of active caregiver. This is quite different from a system in which childcare is delegated to a single child or adult caregiver, who maintains those responsibilities and stance irregardless of the shifting social ecology. While this example (and the phenomenon it describes) is simple, its ubiquity in daily life argues that it is an important aspect of children's everyday experience.

Also of note is the subtle negotiation of role that occurred between Tale and Fili over care of their infant brother. Tale's immediate response to Fili's attempts to push the infant to him, are briefly rebuked as he looks at her but does not immediately accept the infant. He only does so when she thrusts the infant on him, and provides a slap to his head as reprimand. Och's (1988:80-5) general description of the contextually shifting caregiving hierarchy suggests it to be a fairly straightforward process. And indeed, while distinctions of social rank tend to be unmarked and ambiguous in adult society (Shore 1982), rank by age in childhood is comparably more clearly marked by differences in physical stature and social, cognitive, and emotional maturity⁴². Nonetheless, there are frequent attempts, particularly by children close in age, to subvert the age hierarchy. Tale's attempt to ignore Fili's assertion of rank in the example is a fairly common pattern. He does quickly concede when she pushes the issue, but this is likely because of the presence of their mother, who would eventually intercede and potentially punish his display of disrespect for his higher-ranking sister. In contexts where adults are not

⁴² There are also sources of ambiguity as frequent adoption and fosterage can introduce children who are not clearly older or younger than other children.

observing there can be more substantial subversions of the childcare hierarchy. For example, I have witnessed Tale simply walk away from or ignore Fili's requests and directives in other contexts (e.g. along the beach), where there are no adult authorities to potentially enforce her demands.

Pivotal positions

In seeking to understand the meaning and impact of this pattern of child rearing for children living in the midst of them, Robert Levy (1968) long ago pointed out that Tahitian children occupy a "pivotal position" in the childcare hierarchy. By this he meant that the child's role in the hierarchy can shift from moment to moment depending on the social context, such that "the younger children who at one moment might be the recipient of orders or punishment and at the next the stern rebuker of a still younger child" (Levy 1968:593). This is unquestionably the case with regard to Samoan children as well.

Certainly the clearest and most important lesson to be learnt from occupying this pivotal position (or observing others who do) is that the *social context matters*, a point raised repeatedly in the child development literature in the Pacific (Ochs 1988; Ritchie and Ritchie 1989). Jane and James Ritchie argue that acquiring the ability to perceive and manipulate "contextualization cues" (Gumperz 1992) is a very basic and crucial aspect of enculturation across Polynesia as a whole:

[C]ontextualization is all important for interpreting social action within Polynesian communities... Learning about contexts, about how to redefine them

as well as recognize them, is therefore one of the most important lessons Polynesian children must master (Ritchie and Ritchie 1989:103).

Certainly the earliest step in this process is to first learn to attend to the social context, a lesson Ochs (1988) argues can be seen in parents teaching very young children to acknowledge and greet others. The next element is to learn to attend to how changes in the social contexts impact changes in social roles and expected behaviors. While surely not the only route to acquiring such understandings – as D’Andrade (1992) notes, such important cultural understandings are usually overdetermined in terms of socialization (see also Levy's discussion of "redundancy" in 1973:466-8) – children’s participation in the contextually shifting childcare hierarchy is certainly one particularly rich and immediate experience of this association.

A second important lesson of particular relevance is children’s emerging attitudes towards authority and authority figures. A basic aspect of the alterations in social role that occur through a “pivot” is a transformation in the individual’s claims to authority. A specific child will one minute be able to exercise authority over his or her younger siblings (e.g. making directives, administering punishment, expecting deference), only to have their authority dissolve away in the next minute as he or she must submit to another’s authority (e.g. receiving directives, being punished, providing deference). While the first example does entail such a transformation, as Fili’s position is elevated with the arrival of her lower-ranking brother, and then lowered with his subsequent departure, here are two other examples (4 & 5) that more concretely demonstrate the pivotal position:

Example 4:

Kosi (13 years of age), Matafeo (6 years of age) and Mamea (5 years of age) were seated in a *fale*. Kosi was sitting on one corner of the house thumbing through a copy of the newspaper he had borrowed from me. Matafeo and Mamea were running and chasing each other around the house. Accidentally one of the two younger boys, bumped a card table in the *fale* (traditional open walled house) itself, which upset a plate containing uncooked eggs that fell and cracked on the floor of the *fale*. At the crash, Kosi jumped up and yelled at the two boys to stop running and clean up the eggs. The two younger boys looked very shocked and a little scared as they realized what had happened. They hurriedly picked up the egg shells and yokes, and threw them under the house and into the bushes beyond. When the two boys had finished cleaning up the eggs, Kosi told the two boys to come to him, and he carefully and hit them hard across the head and face in one case with the rolled up newspaper.

Not long after, Matafeo and Mamea's father, Malo, returned from the plantation and learned about the accident with the eggs from Kosi. (I do not know if Kosi provided the information, or someone else mentioned it to Malo.) Malo was clearly furious and yelled for the two younger boys who were playing elsewhere to come to him. He then cuffed Kosi hard across the head knocking him to the ground. As Kosi sat on the ground sobbing, he grabbed a branch from a green sapling and stripped off its leaves. When the other two boys arrived he hit them on the arms and legs with the branch, and then turned to hit Kosi one last time with the branch before storming away to another *fale* where he eventually

cooled down. When I was able to ask Kosi about the incident hours later, he indicated that Malo had hit him because as the older boy he had been responsible for their actions and keeping them out of trouble.

Example 5:

Falefa (8 years of age) and her younger brother and cousin (ages 4 and 5) were playing on a grassy area adjacent to their home. It had rained earlier that morning and the ground was muddy with large puddles of standing water. While the two younger children were having quite a bit of fun chasing each other around randomly, Falefa wanted to play a particular children's game she had recent learnt or played at school. The game seemed to be a variety of "Red light / green light" where the children would start at a particular line in space and run towards a finish line when the leader yelled "green light". The children had to stop all movement when the leader yelled "red light". If the child failed to stop, he or she had to return to the starting line. As I had seen it played, the trick was to repeatedly say "red light" in an attempt to trick the runners into moving inappropriately so that they would get sent back to the starting line. The winner was the runner who passed the finishing line first, and there reward was to serve as the leader in the next game.

The two younger children seemed not to understand the logic of the game. Falefa took no opportunity to tell them how to play, instead only issued directive about what they were to do next. Consequently the two younger children repeatedly broke the rules by continuing to run after Falefa yelled "stop", did not

run in the correct direction, or did not return to the starting line when they moved inappropriately. Falefa would pedantically insist that they begin the game again, throwing up her arms if they continued to run when they were to stop. She frequently grabbing them and pushing them back to the starting line. It was quickly apparent that the younger children were not particularly interested in the game as they had stopped laughing and attended to Falefa's demands with far less enthusiasm than earlier. Yet Falefa continued to insist that they play, even employing a ubiquitous parental threat of corporal punishment (*Sasa 'oe!* – "I'll hit you!") accompanied by the raised open hand threat gesture when the two young children fail to follow her orders, and (*Sau!* – "Come!") when the boy started to walk away.

The game abruptly ended, when just as Falefa was forcing the children into a line yet again, Falefa's older sister (20 years old) came out of the house and yelled for the three children to stop running through the mud with some anger in her voice. The two younger children immediately ran to the house, while Falefa stood there silent and then after a pause followed the two younger sibs up the steps and into the house.

What these two examples demonstrate are instances in which a sibling is acting as an authority figure only to have their claims of authority sharply undercut by an even higher authority. In example 4, Kosi is able to extract obedience from the other two boys in cleaning up the broken eggs. (A far more common response would have been for the two younger boys to simply flee the scene and deny involvement.) More notably, he is

able to get them to submit to his punishment, a clear indication of his relatively greater rank in this situation (Mageo 1988). However, shortly thereafter his own claims for authority are sharply undercut by the father, Malo, who includes him in the punishment of the two younger boys, because his supervision was deemed to be negligent and insufficient. While implicitly his authority is reaffirmed by the punishment, the punishment is also condescending (by lumping him in with the far younger children who actually broke the eggs) and explicitly challenges his claims for authority over his younger siblings and raw ability to control them.

Similarly in example 5, Falefa compels her two younger siblings to play a foot race game; a game largely constructed around her exercise of control over the other two. As they become increasingly uninterested in the game, she employs several of the most ubiquitous verbal and non-linguistic threats of corporal punishment used by adult caretakers to extract her siblings' continued compliance. Her game and ability to continue to exercise authority over the other two, however, is quickly extinguished by a far older individual, who intercedes, reverses Falefa's directives that the game continue, and demands that they stop playing in the muddy yard. Ultimately these regular shifts in the sibling caretaker's authority serve to sharply qualify their relative authority over their younger charges. It publicizes the fact that their relatively demands for authority from younger siblings are far from absolute and frequently disregarded or reversed in a heartbeat by more senior members of the household.

Another factor that serves to undercut sibling caretaker's claims for authority is their own cognitive and socio-emotional immaturity. While Samoan adults operate on a model of the mature and wise older sibling benevolently guiding the ignorant younger

sib, such a model may only infrequently be an accurate depiction of reality (see also Brison 1999:109). Levy notes that “punishment by [Tahitian] children for the transgression of a rule is sporadic, arbitrary, and related to mood” (1973:463). With regard to my observations of Samoan children, I would expand the description to include childcare in a far more general sense. Of course there are exceptions based on the caretaker’s age, experience and relative maturity, yet in a general sense much of the care provided by siblings can be on occasion markedly immature and punitive. The third example provides an example of some of this, as Falefa essentially forces two younger siblings to play a game in which they have limited interest and then threatens punishment if they refuse to comply. Such pure displays of dominance over others are not uncommon. Other clear examples include a lack of restraint in punishing one’s sibling charges, and overly punitive punishments for minor instances of disrespect and disobedience. Additionally, Morton (1996) has argued that Tongan children may vent on younger siblings frustrations generated in interactions with higher-ranking persons including parents and siblings, and this is true here as well.

Generally speaking, adults are usually available to step in and stop any clearly malicious or abusive childcare practices perpetrated by siblings. (We can see something akin to parental intervention in the third example above, although it was probably motivated more by an interest in children’s cleanliness than by a perception of an abuse of authority by Falefa.) I have even witnessed more senior adults step in and very effectively halt younger adults punishing children in situations bordering on abuse (see Ritchie 1981 for a discussion of this phenomenon). Yet adults also do not intervene in many cases as they have an explicit interest in seeing that younger siblings learn to show

respect for older ones (see Brison 1999; Martini 1994 on this practice in Fiji and the Marquesas respectively). And adults as the senior member of the childcare hierarchy tend to remain apart from the moment-by-moment performance of childcare. Thus, arbitrary, occasionally punitive, and immature childcare is likely to be an extremely common experience of childhood.

This does not mean, however, that younger siblings are consistently passive recipients of domineering expressions of authority by their older siblings. There can be bitter struggles for control and significant expressions of resistance by younger siblings, particularly in contexts when differences in age and physical size between the child authority figure and his or her subordinates is relatively slight. In such instance it is not uncommon for the younger charges to simply ignore particularly onerous demands and assertions of control. Fights, particularly between male siblings younger than 8, were also not uncommon. Frequently these occurred with the slightly older “caretaker” attempted to punish the slightly younger “charge” for disobedience. Of course, such resistance is strongly moderated by the presence or absence of adult oversight, as adults will usually act to prevent obvious abuses of power including purely punitive punishments as well as stop more obvious resistance to the older sibling’s requests.

The impact of pivotal positionality on sibling teaching and ambivalence

I would argue that children’s experience with pivotal positions in the childcare hierarchy influences patterns of social learning that occurs between siblings. As I note earlier in the chapter, given the less pronounced rank differential that exists between siblings (in contrast to the relationship between children and adults), the potential exists

that older siblings may be more willing to engage in more elaborate socialization or “cultural teaching” (Maynard 2002; Rabain-Jamin, et al. 2003) including the application of more involved forms of scaffolding more typical of Western populations.

Interestingly, however, this is not the case. Some older siblings may be adopting adult forms of behaviorally-focused, corrective scaffolding, with which they are well-familiar. Following Bateson’s (2000) logic of “deuterolearning” that the individual must “learn how to learn”, it is also likely that children must learn how to teach in culturally appropriate ways, and these children may not have sufficient experience with more elaborate and less familiar forms of scaffolding and instruction⁴³.

Another possibility is that the slightly older sibling attempting to employ more involved forms of intentional instruction featuring more elaborate forms of scaffolding may find their efforts rebuffed by their younger charges. Such teaching can be perceived by the younger charge as an inappropriate assertion of authority. As I will describe in the next chapter, unrelated peers tend to strongly resist other’s claims of knowledge and skill as it can be equated with a claim of superiority, which is frequently challenged. On a few occasions I did witness older siblings attempting to explain or teach their younger sibs how to use various unfamiliar or less common toys and implements (e.g. water purifier, chalk board, cribbage board, marbles, and dominoes) that my wife and I had in our house. It was not uncommon for the younger sib to resist their explanations and attempts at teaching on the basis that they didn’t know any better. This also points up the degree to

⁴³ This suggestion runs counter to Maynard’s (2002) claim that children’s increasing skill in “cultural teaching” is driven largely by their social cognitive development, based on her work among the Mayan. While I would certainly agree that it is built upon that framework, I would also point to the impact of the cultural norms of social interaction and ethnotheories of learning and child development as having a substantial impact on how children learn to teach.

which Samoan children are sensitive to potentially inappropriate assertions of authority, a sensitivity that will be greatly refined in later years in peer groups.

This is an interesting possibility as it suggests that when the rank differential is very broad (e.g. parent and child), the higher-ranking person resists adopting more intensive and scaffolded forms of instruction as they are injurious to their relative rank. On the other hand, when the rank differential is very narrow (e.g. similarly aged siblings), the relatively lower-ranking person resists the slightly older person's attempts at teaching as inappropriate assertions of authority. It remains a possibility that more intensive instruction may be more common (or likely) with a moderate difference in rank, in which the younger sibling is more willing to attend to the older, and the older may not be as invested in the preservation of their relative rank. Anecdotally, I can relate a few examples of late adolescent and early adult siblings providing more elaborate assistance to much younger sibs (6-10 years younger), but whether this is a larger pattern requires further empirical research.

With regard to the issue of ambivalence towards figures of authority: Robert Levy long ago argued that this immature childcare (in particular, he points to punishment) can be considered as one potent source of ambivalence in adults towards authority and authority figures. He asserts that:

[Tahitian adults] as we have noted, are suspicious of authority, of anyone "having power over them". It is possible to see one element in such an attitude as a residue of experience with oppressive childish authorities (1973:463)

This is an important observation. As I note in chapter three, Samoan attitudes towards hierarchical figures is complex and marked by a strong sense of ambivalence in addition to the profound levels of respect and deference (Shore 1996a). A robust understanding of the ontogeny of conceptions and orientations towards chiefs and other persons of higher rank must also come to terms with the origins of this marked ambivalence.

Yet sibling childcare is exceedingly common cross-culturally, as Weisner and Gallimore (1977) point out. Does this mean that all children with an experience of sibling childcare will possess a comparable ambivalence towards figures of authority as adults? No, of course not. As LeVine (1982; 2001), Levy (1968:594; 1973), Shweder (1979), and others have pointed out, early experience may have important organizational effects but are never sufficient as explanations of adult personality characteristics, behaviors, or attitudes. What I would argue is that children's experience in sibling care (which also likely varies in important ways cross-culturally), provides an important *experiential basis* for ambivalent feelings towards authority figures. It must be further refined and developed over the course of childhood and into adolescence and adulthood to be fully actualized. Moreover, latter experiences will add considerable shape to these early experiences.

Children's early experiences of hierarchy

To summarize, I argue that the social organization of childcare and the internal dynamics of the interactions of this organization are particularly important in providing important foundational experiences in hierarchical relationships. There are a number of specific "lessons" learnt through these experiences:

(1) *The social environment is organized hierarchically*

As with the learning that occurs as part of learning respectful behavior, a key and basic lesson is one of social inequality. Claims to power, authority, and worth are differentially distributed across the child's social environment, such that some persons have considerable claims while others including the child have relatively little. Of course children's conceptions of this are not abstractly realized – particularly in the youngest group - but rather instantiated in innumerable ways with regard to patterns of social interaction and social practice. Children may not be aware of the larger philosophical issues at work, but they are likely cognizant of differential patterns of treatment, characteristic patterns of practice, and expectations leveled at higher- and lower-ranking persons in the household.

(2) *Relative household rank is indexed by age*

Gender and various social statuses (e.g. *matai*, pastor, deacon, teacher) will be of importance later in life in determining the distribution of rank and authority. Additionally, Samoa, like all societies, possesses a number of different systems of hierarchy based on different criteria such as chiefly title, education, material wealth, church membership and so forth (Meleisea 1987; Shore 1982). Yet from the perspectives of the young child situated primarily within the household, rank is organized according to relative age (as well as physical size and strength to a lesser extent in early childhood). This organization of authority includes the adults present in the household as well, as the child's parents will themselves frequently submit to the authority of an older generation in the multigenerational Samoan household. While rank distinctions tend to be largely

unmarked and highly ambiguous in adult Samoan society (Shore 1982), age in childhood is comparably more clearly marked by differences in physical stature and social, cognitive, and emotional maturity. Yet there are also sources of ambiguity as high rates of adoption and fosterage can introduce children who are not clearly older or younger.

(3) *Rank varies by social context*

Just as children learn that age is a key organizing principle, they also learn that it varies in important ways by context. Specifically, children come to learn that rank is contextually set by the relative rank of individuals physically present. This lesson is repeatedly and incessantly taught in the caregiving hierarchy and social practice more broadly.

(4) *High rank is associated with immobility, while lower rank is associated with activity*

The complementary pattern of the inactive, immobile, high-ranking individual who is the repository of power and the active, energetic lower-ranking executor of that power is a very basic one in Samoan society (Shore 1982: see especially chapter 12). It likely possesses the status of a “foundational schema” (Shore 1996b), as it provides shape to an entire class of culturally salient relationships including *ali'i – tulafale*, sister - brother, and pastor – *matai*. Children likely begin to associate social rank and relatively activity level through their early experience in the caregiving hierarchy as they note that the pinnacle of the childcare hierarchy adopts a supervisory role with minimal involvement in the caretaking, and frequently assume a detached and disinterested air. The lower-ranking person adopts the more immediate and very active and physical

aspects of care. The “pivoting” of people through these different roles (see example 3 above) likely makes this association a more salient one. This initial association is likely refined in adolescence when it gains the very specific and symbolically important associations of the *feagaiga* relationship between brother and sister.

(5) *Ambivalence towards figures of authority*

Observations of the extent to which slightly older sibling’s authority can be summarily altered at the slightest shift in social context as well as experience with the immature, arbitrary, and occasionally punitive caretaking of sibs can generate a certain degree of ambivalence towards authority figures. As I argue above, this does not mean that it translates directly into an adult attitude, but rather provides only an *experiential basis* for ambivalent feelings towards authority figures. It must be further refined and developed over the course of childhood and into adolescence and adulthood to be fully actualized. These early experiences also likely provide a heightened sensitivity to assertions of authority in siblings (and later in peers). Children will not simply ‘cave’ into older sibling’s authority but rather frequently challenge and resist such assertions.

Chapter 8: Learning the *matai* system as a “community child” in the village

As I note in chapter six, between five and six years of age a marked transformation in the Samoan child’s developmental niche is initiated as he or she begins to move beyond the boundaries of the household with far greater frequency. Children are enrolled in the local primary school, and begin to attend Sunday school and a range of other church-affiliated events regularly. With their increased movement in the village, they can observe various village events and social institutions, including meetings of village chiefs (*fono*) and the various *fa’alavelave* that are a ubiquitous part of Samoan village life. Many of these contexts and experiences have the potential to serve as important sites for learning about the *matai* system and its associated concepts and behavioral competencies as well as hierarchy more generally. In the next three chapters I will examine the world of the “community child” with an eye towards this central issue.

In this chapter I will focus my attention on the range of assorted village social institutions and events, in which *matai* are prominently involved, including the meetings of village chiefs (*fono*) and descent group social events - such as funerals, weddings, and entitlement ceremonies (*saofa’i*) - which are collectively referred to as *fa’alavelave*. I will argue that the *fa’alavelave* in particular provides a particularly rich resource for children’s learning about the chief system for a variety of reasons. In contrast, key chiefly social institutions such as the village council of chiefs (*fono*) and the disciplinary committee are far more limited in the opportunities they offer for children to observe and learn. In the following chapter (chapter 9) I will consider the possibility that children possess different opportunities to learn from these contexts and events based on the child’s gender and household rank. Such a question is tied to the dissertation’s interest in

the differential distribution of cultural competence across the population of village children. And in chapter 10 I will complete my ethnographic description of village social institutions by examining those with an explicitly pedagogical function: the Pastor's school and the village primary school. Together the different contexts and institutions discussed in these chapters represent a significant proportion of the larger village social ecology through which "community children" move.

I begin this chapter by discussing the increasing expectations regarding children's demonstration of respect and deference towards social others, particularly their social superiors. As I described earlier this is a core aspect of the developmental niche transition and the child's shift into community life. In chapter 7 I note that learning to show respect for others can be a context through which children learn much about hierarchical social relations and the contexts where such displays of respect are relevant. I begin this chapter by extending this argument to consider the possibility that greater levels of respectful behavior can be expected of some children and whether or not these higher expectations translate into greater competence in the chief system.

Shifting expectations of children's respectful behavior

Between the ages of 5 and 6 children begin to move outside of the household with greater regularity and frequency as they begin to attend the village primary school, and local village church's Pastor's school, Sunday school, and other church events. While younger children may also occasionally attend these and other village events, they will do so largely as an older family member's charge and far less frequently. Children described by Samoans as *tamaiti a'oga* ("school aged children"), or what I have been

calling “community children” to acknowledge the full scope of their movements, begin to move about the village and take part in its social institutions increasingly as fully sanctioned individual members rather than under the auspices of a caretaker. As I describe in chapter 6, this transition into the public sphere constitutes a major population-level developmental niche transition as it represents a profound transformation in the child’s social ecology as well as the associated changes in expectations.

Central to this particular developmental niche transition is the rapid increase in expectations regarding children’s use of culturally and contextually appropriate behaviors to show respect and deference to social superiors. Children of this age are seen as progressively more capable of self-regulation as well as having sufficient cognitive and social skills to learn from others about proper behavior (see chapters 6 and 7 for greater discussion of these points). The modal responses to questions on the parental belief and practices questionnaire (n=84)⁴⁴ regarding the age at which parents should begin to admonish (*a’oa’oi*) their children – presumably the age at which they are open to social influence - was 5 - 6 years of age (see table 6.1). As Rogoff et al. (1975) noted in their review of Human Relations Area File (HRAF) data on 50 societies, transformations in children’s social roles and responsibilities including greater expectations on the expression of respectful behavior during the 5 to 7 age range is quite common cross-culturally suggesting some underlying biopsychosocial maturational shift (see also Sameroff and Haith 1996; Weisner 1996a).

Samoan parents and other adults in the child’s household appear to be motivated to increase their expectations for children at this age not only because of the child’s increasing abilities at social regulation and social learning, but also because the child’s

⁴⁴ Only responses that could be coded for specific ages (over one-third of the total) were included.

new activities – particularly in the school and in the church – brings them into contact with some of the highest ranking individuals in the community, including the pastor, church deacons, and school teachers. Consequently the impact of their poor behavior is potentially far more embarrassing and serious than comparable misbehavior contained within the household.

Additionally, the child's behavior is very clearly perceived as an index of the caretaker's commitment to parenting. A central aspect of the caretaker's role from the Samoan perspective is seen as correcting their offspring's misbehavior. Consider the following excerpt from a father's description of "good parents":

Good parents faithfully care for their children,
 [They] correct the child in the things they ought to do.
 It is also essential that [they] educate the child in the culture,
 which is the reason behind the walk, the customs, the talk,
 and all respectful behavior and [proper] conduct.

*'O matua lelei e tausia ma le fa'amaoni i lana fanau,
 e fa'atonu le fanau e mea a ao ona fai.
 E ao fo'i ona a'oa'o le fanau i le aganu'u,
 e ala i le savali, tu, tautala,
 ma le fa'aaloalo atoa ai ma le amio.*

30 year old untitled male, father of 2

I would draw the reader's attention to the use of the word "correct" (*fa'atonu*) in line 2 rather than other possible alternatives such as "teach", "educate" or "instruct". This issue is meaningful as this particular term is one of the most frequently employed by parents and caretakers to describe their role. The word *fa'atonu*, which is constructed of two morphemes: *fa'a-* which as part of a transitive verb means "to make or cause" and *tonu* which means "exact", "correct", or "straight", is frequently used to describe the correction of errors (i.e. "to fix or make right") as well as the admonishment of misbehavior (Milner 1993:276). Other parents are very explicit about the error-correction aspect of parenting as they explicitly tie it to the use of corporal punishment:

The good parent **hits and corrects** their children in the Samoan way of life and respectful behavior.

'O le matua lelei e sasa ma fa'atonu lana fanau i le fa'asamoa ma le fa'aaloalo

17 year old female, mother of 1, wife of an untitled man

The compassionate parent **hits and corrects**.

O le matau alofa e sasa ma fa'atonu

23 year old female, mother of 2, wife of an untitled man

Consequently, children's public misbehavior - particularly if it is repeated - can be taken as evidence that the parent is not accepting his or her role as vigorously as they should.

A final factor that motivates parents' increasing focus on children's misbehavior at this age is that children's behavior (or misbehavior) can be viewed as an index of the

quality of the parents' own behavior. This association returns us to the centrality of observational and imitative learning in Samoan thought. Given the heavy reliance on observational learning and with a perception of parents as one of the most important models for the child to imitate, the child's misbehavior is often taken as evidence for the parents' poor behavior. Children's swearing or aggressive behavior, or an adolescents' drunken misbehavior, for example, can be taken to divulge a parallel pattern of parental misbehavior. For, as the proverb says, *e so'o le moasope i le moasope*, the chicken resembles the chicken, and characteristics observed in one member of the domestic household are believed likely to emerge in other members as well (Macpherson and Macpherson 1990: 97-8).

Variation in expectations of respectful behavior by household rank and gender

While this shift in expectations of children's respectful behavior is important in and of itself, it is also significant because the learning of such behaviors can be an important context for cultural learning as I described in chapter 7. Drawing an analogy to Ochs and Schieffelin's (Ochs 1988; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986a) argument that language acquisition necessarily entails considerable socialization, I suggested that similarities can be seen with regard to respectful and deferential behavior. Children must learn not only the physical enactments of the appropriate behaviors, but also who to act respectful towards as well as the contexts that demand such displays of deference.

There is a difference, however, between language socialization as described by Ochs and Schieffelin and learning about hierarchy and the chief system through learning respectful behavior. With language acquisition, parental expectations of the eventual

level of language competence are fairly equivalent across different sub-populations of children⁴⁵. Excluding children with developmental delays and disability, all parents expect their children to be able to speak with roughly the same level of competence as other children of the society. With respectful behavior, however, there can be a greater level of variability in expectation as certain subpopulations of children may be held to higher standards than others.

As I will describe below, the ethnographic literature on Samoa can be read to suggest that *females* – as bearers of a family’s and sibling pair’s honor – as well as *children of high-ranking families* are held to relatively higher standards of respectful behavior (i.e. exhibit greater respectful behavior towards others). We might expect children held to higher standard to be more attuned and sensitive to expressions of hierarchy and status as there is greater impetus to behave respectful (or risk more frequent and perhaps more severe sanctions for violations of these standards). Additionally, these expectations as they elicit greater parental attention and correction will likely be incorporated into the child’s emerging sense of self to a greater extent than his or her lower-ranked peers. For both of these reasons, children held to higher standards of behavior will likely pay greater attention to and learn about local hierarchies and the chief system than their peers who are held to lower standards. I will examine this possible relationship in greater detail below, but first I will briefly review why we would expect differential expectations by household rank and gender in Samoa. I will begin with the issue of gender because it is by far the more culturally salient of the two.

⁴⁵ Acknowledging that there can be small variations in expectations in American ethnopediatric understandings such as, for example, the notion that girls exhibit earlier and greater social competence and linguistic ability than boys.

The social relationship between the brother and the sister is endowed with considerable meaning for Samoans, and it is arguably more socially and culturally important than the relationship between parent and child, same-sex siblings, and the marital pair (Mead 1973:32). The relationship is frequently described using the term *feagaiga*, which can be glossed as “an agreement, treaty, or contract” and “covenant” (Milner 1993:8). The referent is a special relationship between two parties who act in a careful defined and reciprocal manner towards one another, and who represent opposed concepts that regulate their interaction. Schoeffel (1978:69) argues that this concept is crucial to “formal Samoan social philosophy” as it incorporates the basic principles which impose order on all levels of society. The term can be used to describe not only the relationship between brother and sister – although that is the prototype - but also ministers and congregations, husband and wife in Christian marriage, and – as Shore (1976b) notes - *ali’i* and *tulfale*.

Schoeffel (1978:70) writes:

“[t]he basis of the opposition is... the contrast of moral, ideological concepts with secular, utilitarian function. The *feagaiga* relationship is therefore a form of social contract between two parties, one of whom represents a sacred force which imposes moral order on the other, who represents the impulsive, ‘natural’ human”.

In the brother-sister relationship, it is the sister who represents the sacred, dignified and ‘formal’ type of power that provides moral structure to the secular, active and

‘instrumental’ power of the brother (Shore 1976b). The special relationship of women with the sacred, through their role in human reproduction, has been noted by many ethnographers working throughout Polynesia (Gailey 1987; Hanson 1982; Hanson and Hanson 1983; Mageo 1998; Ralston and Thomas 1987; Rogers 1977; Schoeffel 1978; Shore 1981; 1989).

In terms of concrete behavior the relationship between the brother and the sister sets up a reciprocal set of specialized rights, obligations, and responsibilities. The brother provides material support for the sister in terms of his physical labor and male exchange goods such as taro, yams, and bananas. The sister, on the other hand is to provide the dignity (*mamalu*) and moral structure to the relationship by acting as the noble and public “face” of her brother and the larger descent group to which they belong (Shore 1982:233-6). The brother acts to defend their collective honor against both external threats and the sister’s own actions, and it was not uncommon to hear about brothers tailing their sisters as they walk through the village to prevent any hazard from befalling her. Indeed, the one instance in which the brother may aggressively punish the sister is if she has somehow denigrated their name, most typically through things such as the public pursuit of sexual liaisons or drinking. As Schoeffel (1978:72), “a sister represents her brother and is honored by him because she represents his own honor as a member of their mutual descent group”. In the vast majority of other instances, however, the brother-sister relationship is marked by strong behavioral restraint (Mead 1973:32).

My interviews with parents and written comments on the parental belief and practices questionnaire generally supported these earlier ethnographic works. Samoan parents are clearly cognizant of the idea of the girl as the embodiment of the dignity

(*mamalu*) of the brother – sister relationship as well as the descent group more generally. Examples drawn from interviews and questionnaire responses from individuals include:

The black part of the boy’s eye [i.e. pupil] is his sister.

Girls should certainly be more respectful than boys.

*‘O le mea uliuli o le mata o le tama ‘o lona tuafafine,
E tatau lava ona fa’aaloalo teine i lo tama.*

59 year old female, mother of 5, wife of a *matai*

Girls are the eyeball of boys.

The girl is also the ceremonial princess of any family.

*‘O teine ‘o le ‘i’oimata o tama.
‘O le teine fo’i ‘o le augafa’apae i so’o se aiga.*

34 year old untitled male, father of 3

Girls are the covenant of the Samoan family,

They also bear all the responsibility for the special things of a Samoan family.

*‘O teine ‘o le feagaiaga lea o le ‘aiga Samoa.
‘O ia fo’i e ‘ave uma iai le fa’ataua mo le va’aiga o mea totino a se ‘aiga Samoa.*

31 year old female, mother of 4, wife of an untitled man

Frequent metaphorical references in these quotations to the girl as the pupil or “eyeball” of the boy refer to the fact that she is the focus of societal attention (i.e. she is

her brother's pupils because he is always watching her). Her brother watches her in order to properly serve her and protect her from harm. But the sister and the daughter is also the very public personification of the family's dignity and in that sense as well they are the focus of a far more substantial societal attention. This association is also captured in the other quotations above, when the girl is variously described as the *feagaiga* of the Samoan family, reference made to her role in caring for family treasures such as fine mats, and serving in ritual events as *augafa'apae*, a respectful term for the *taupou* or ceremonial village princess. While there are a limited number of *taupou* titles⁴⁶ in a single village, the girl serves as the metaphorical representative of even a small lower-ranking household, and its members will expect her to act accordingly.

There is also an association of females in general with a more dignified, subdued, and socially conscientious nature. Almost 40% of questionnaire respondents, who indicated that girls should demonstrate more respectful and deferential behavior than boys (n= 55), argued that it was girls' innate nature to be more deferential and respectful than boys (see figure 8.1 below). Girls are usually described, for example, as easier to rear as they are comparably less naughty, less assertive and more amenable to social controls. As two young women put it:

Boys behave like animals, but girls are calm.

'O tama e amio i manu, 'a'o teine e filemu.

21 year old mother of 1, wife of an untitled man

⁴⁶ Each of the senior *ali'i* titles in a village may possess a *taupou* title that is held by one of the chief's unmarried adolescent daughters, and it is a source of status and carries important ritual obligations. It is usually relinquished to a younger sister on the girl's marriage.

The lady or girl should have the best behaviors.

But the boy has all the indecent behaviors.

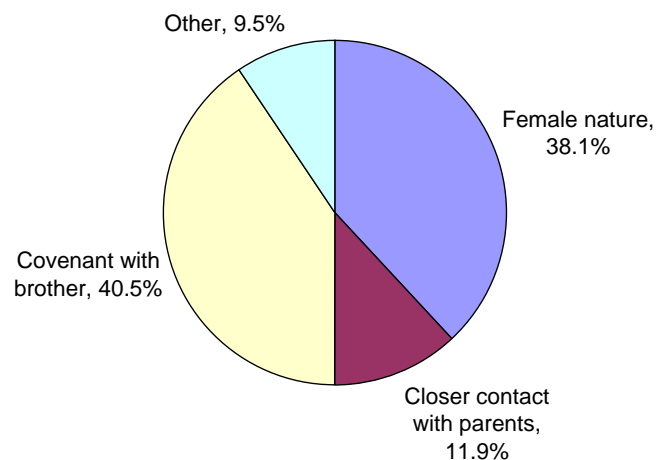
O le tamaitai poo teine e tatau ona ia faia amioga sili ona lelei.

'A'o le tama e maua uma ai amioga mataga.

20 year old mother of 1, wife of a chief

It is, however, important not to over-interpret these findings, because as Shore (1982:136-44) notes the Samoan sense of the person does not view the person as somehow distinct from the contexts in which they operate. Thus, when respondents point to a female “nature” or character, they are likely to be implicitly referencing the expression of a particular behavioral style within a specific context.

Figure 8.1: Reasons why girls should demonstrate greater respect than boys



Note: Includes only the subset of respondents (n= 55) who answered that girls should show more respect than boys.

In addition to differential expectations by gender, there is also reason to expect differential expectations of children to vary by household rank as well. As I described in chapter 3, the actions of a descent group's members including its children can impact its reputation (either positively or negatively) in ways analogous to how children's actions can impact the reputation of their parents, household and descent group as I described earlier in this chapter. As the reputations of chiefly and especially high-ranking chiefly families are qualitatively greater and more carefully guarded, we would anticipate that expectations of children from these high-ranking households to be greater than for other children. By this I mean, that children of higher-ranking households would be expected to demonstrate higher levels of deferential and respectful behavior towards others, and that violation of those expectations would be met with relatively greater disdain and punishment than would be the case in other households. This would also be the expectation for the pastor's children, who are members of an equivalently high-ranking although not chiefly household in the village. Mead suggested that such variations in expectations were indeed the case:

“[I]n the family of a high chief or high talking chief there is more emphasis upon ceremonial, more emphasis upon hospitality. The children are better bred and also much harder worked” (1973:36).

It is difficult to empirically examine this issue on the basis either of my observations or parental report. While I was present to innumerable instances of children's (generally mild) misbehavior and parents' periodic punishment of their

offspring, given the differences in the quality of rapport that I had with different households the contexts in which my observations were made varied from very informal to relative formal. Even mild misbehavior in the latter would generally be punished (particularly to show ‘good’ parenting skills to the foreign visitor asking about child-rearing), while parents with whom I had closer relationships might be more willing to overlook everything except the most glaring violation of norms. While I am willing to argue that parents are able to report on their own caretaking behavior, I am less willing to accept their ability to compare their own behavior with those of parents in other households.

Consequently, to examine this issue in greater detail I included questions in the parental belief and practices questionnaire as to which subpopulations by gender (girls and boys) and household rank (high-ranking households, including both chiefly and pastors’ households vs. lower-ranking households) should demonstrate more respectful behavior or whether the expectations of respectful behavior should be identical for all children. Frequency data for parents’ responses to these questions is included in table 8.1 below. The results suggest that a strong minority do believe that children of higher-ranking households and females should consistently exhibit more respectful behavior than other children (31% and 40% respectively) in line with the ethnographic literature. Yet the majority of parents surveyed argue that all children regardless of rank and gender should exhibit respectful behavior to the same degree (66% and 60% respectively).

Table 8.1: Which group of children should demonstrate more respectful behavior?

By household rank (n=144)	
Children of higher-ranking households	30.6%
Children of lower-ranking households	3.5%
Children of all households equally	66.0%
By gender (n=138)	
Girls	39.9%
Boys	2.1%
Boys and girls equally	60.1%

I attempted to parse out the differences in opinion on household rank (i.e. whether or not children of higher rank should exhibit more respectful behavior) by subpopulation with the use of cross-tabulations to try and determine the relative impact of these ideas upon child-rearing. For example, older men's opinions about how young girls ought to behave may actually not have great impact given that child-rearing tends to be primarily overseen by women and carried out by older sibs. The results of these cross-tabulations⁴⁷, found no statistically significant differences by the respondent's gender ($\chi^2 = 0.461$, $df=1$, $p=.491$ ns.) or their possession of a chiefly title / marriage to a chief ($\chi^2 = 0.759$, $df=1$, $p = .384$ ns.) This is also the case with gender (i.e. whether or not girls should exhibit more respectful behavior than boys), where there were also no statistically significant differences of opinion by the respondent's gender ($\chi^2 = 2.067$, $df=1$, $p=.151$ ns.) or possession of a chiefly title / marriage to a chief ($\chi^2 = .029$, $df=1$, $p=.865$ ns.).

Cross-tabulation did reveal statistically significant generational differences in opinions on these issues. Respondents were divided into two groups based on age ("younger generation" ≤ 40 years of age and an "older generation" > 40 years of age)⁴⁸.

Tests comparing patterns of response by generation on the importance of the child's

⁴⁷ Cross-tabulation calculations do not tolerate cells with very small expected frequencies. Consequently, I removed from consideration the small number of cases representing the minority opinion that children of lower-ranking households ($n=5$) and boys ($n=3$) should exhibit more respectful behavior than others.

⁴⁸ While Samoans do have a conception of generational cohorts, there is a lack of consensus as to the ages that divide these generations. Consequently, my selection of age 40 as a cutoff is an arbitrary selection.

household rank ($\chi^2 = 10.294$, $df=1$, $p=.001$, $\Phi = .272$) and gender ($\chi^2 = 4.815$, $df=1$, $p = .028$, $\Phi = .187$) for heightened expectations of respectful behavior were both statistically significant but only of modest strength. The differences of opinion are interesting, and are summarized in table 8.2 below. Of particular note is that a greater percentage of the older generation believes that both girls and boys should demonstrate equivalent levels of respectful behavior (70% vs. 51% of the younger generation), while it is the strong majority of the *younger* generation that feels that both high and lower ranking children should demonstrate equivalent levels of respectful behavior (81% vs. 55%).

Table 8.2: Generational differences in opinion on which group of children should exhibit more respectful behavior

Generation	Gender ^a		Household rank ^b	
	Girls more	All equally	High-rank more	All equally
Younger generation (≤ 40 years)	48.6% (35)	51.4% (37)	19.4% (14)	80.6% (58)
Older generation (>40 years)	30.3% (20)	69.7% (46)	44.8% (30)	55.2% (37)

a. Pearson Chi-Square = 10.294, $df=1$, $p= .001$, $\Phi = .272$

b. Pearson Chi-Square = 4.815, $df=1$, $p = .028$, $\Phi = .187$

Note: The number of respondents is in parentheses.

We can readily see the difficulties in attributing stronger support for “traditional” beliefs (i.e. females and higher ranking children should exhibit more respectful behavior) to the more senior generation because their support for these positions only reaches 30% and 45% respectively. While there is stronger support (81%) among the younger generation of parents for the more egalitarian view that all children should demonstrate respectful behavior regardless of household rank, their support of equality of expectation by gender is markedly split (49% vs. 51%). Indeed, the younger generation’s support for

the “traditional” view that girls should demonstrate greater respectful behavior than males is actually *more* pronounced than it is among the older generation (49% vs. 30%).

The most important finding here is the marked division of opinion in whether girls and children of higher-ranking families should be held to higher expectations of respectful behavior. While a majority suggests that all children should be held to the same behavior standards, a strong minority (40% and 31% respectively) suggests the opposite. Analysis of the responses failed to locate any subpopulation by rank, gender or generation that was more likely to argue one way or the other, which suggests a more generalized division of opinion. In thinking about expectations of children’s respectful behavior as a context for learning: it suggests that we may not see a strong correlation between gender, the household rank of the child, and their relative understanding of the chief system, which as I will show later in this chapter is actually the case.

Of particular interest for the literature on Samoa is how best to reconcile the questionnaire results that a majority of parents feel that all children should demonstrate equivalent levels of respect with a gender ideology of females as the embodiment of dignity as reported by parents and documented in the ethnographic literature? I would explain the contrast primarily in terms of the child’s age. While there are differences in parental treatment by gender (e.g. the greater emphasis on girls wearing clothing at an earlier age), the association of the girl as the representative of the brother’s and descent group’s dignity does not likely manifest itself until later in adolescence. Parents would, for example, comment to me that their young sons and daughters currently played and spent considerable time together now, but would eventually have to adopt the more distant, respectful and avoidant pattern of behavior characteristic of the brother-sister

relationship. (See, for example, the case study of Matagi and his sister, in chapter 6.) Few if any of the oldest group of focal participants in this study (10-12 years of age) demonstrated much of this pattern of behavior with their cross-sex siblings. Increased participation in same-sex peer groups did tend to separate them more, but they were not ‘pushed’ apart by increased parental expectations, nor did they adopt the behavioral restraint that is such a central part of this relationship. Consequently, I would argue that parents are likely indicating equality of expectations on the questionnaire thinking in terms of childhood rather than adolescence and early adulthood, where the gender differences are far more robust.

Ethnographic descriptions of extra-household events and social institutions

I will now turn to describe the set of extra-household events and social institutions that could serve as contexts for children’s learning about the chief system. As I indicated earlier, these contexts are an extremely diverse set that resists easy categorization. For the sake of the argument to be made here I will sort them according to the child’s relative position within these institutions and their relative opportunity to observe and learn about chiefly activity from them. The grouping, examples and what I will argue the relative impact of the different institutions on children’s learning of the chief system is included in table 8.3 below.

Table 8.3: Village social institutions and events as contexts for children’s learning of the chief system

Category	Examples	Impact on Children’s Learning of the Chief System
(A) Chiefly institutions	Village council of chiefs (<i>Fono</i>), village mayor’s council (<i>Aso Gafua</i>), village disciplinary committee	Low
(B) <i>Fa’alavelave</i>	Funerals, weddings, entitlement ceremonies, birthdays, ritual apologies (<i>ifoga</i>), re-internment of remains, dedication of new buildings	High
(C) Women’s Committee	Weekly Saturday night meeting, public health and sanitation inspections	Nil to low
(D) Pedagogical institutions (school & church) and affiliated events	Village primary school, Pastor’s school, Sunday School; church fundraisers (beauty pageants, Boxing Day dance), church holiday performance rehearsals (White Sunday, Christmas)	Moderate

A) Chiefly institutions:

Within all Samoan villages, the most prominent and important of political institutions is that of the village council of chiefs called simply the *fono* (“meeting”). Virtually all important village-level political, social, and economic decisions are discussed and made in this forum (Duranti 1981; Gilson 1970; Macpherson 1997; Mead 1969; O’Meara 1990; Shore 1982). Additionally, it serves as a body to adjudicate important violations of village laws as well as mediating and resolving conflicts between persons and descent groups. Indeed, Samoan courts may waive punishment during sentencing for less serious crimes if a fine has already been assessed by a village *fono* (see Meleisea 1987 for a fuller discussion of the relationship of *fono* and the federal government). As I discuss in chapter 3, membership and full participation in the *fono* is made possible by possession of a chiefly title. In this forum, the title-holder speaks on behalf of the larger descent group that he (or she) represents.

In addition to village-level *fono*, there are less frequent *fono* held by the distinct *pitonu'u* (sub-villages) within the larger village. As with village-level *fono*, the frequency of these meetings is largely driven by need, such that some *pitonu'u* met repeatedly during my time in the village to manage a particular conflict, while others met only very rarely. There is also a *fono* regularly scheduled for the first Monday of each month held by the village *pulenu'u* or “mayor”. A locally appointed officer, the *pulenu'u* is the liaison with the federal government, representing the village in regular meetings in Apia, and presenting the governments programs and policies to the village. The *fono* of the *pulenu'u* is a small meeting attended by representatives from each *pitonu'u* in the village.

In each of these three different types of *fono* described above, a group of untitled men referred to as the *'aumaga*, assists and attends to the needs of the *matai*. Their paradigmatic role is the highly ritualized preparation and service of *'ava*, a mild stimulant with muscle relaxant properties made from the pulverized dried root of the *piper methysticum* plant. This role is likely the original source of this group's name (*'au-* “group of” + *-maga* “chewers”) as *'ava* was likely prepared by chewing the green roots and mixing it with water (Shore 1982:101), as is the case in other parts of the Pacific (Lebot, et al. 1992). The order in which the *'ava* is served is an important way in which a temporary social ranking is constituted at the commencement of each *fono*.

A fourth village-level social institution that was radically revised near the end of my fieldwork, and which rose to great prominence during my time in the village was the disciplinary committee. During my first year in residence, the disciplinary committee met only periodically (perhaps once per month) to assess fines for those who had violated

village rules for such things as public drunkenness, fighting, petty theft, and violation of village curfews. More serious violations, particularly those that might create tension between different descent groups remained in the hands of the village *fono*.

In my final nine months in the village, the disciplinary committee's structure and role was fundamentally changed. Largely at the behest of the local pastor who was concerned by the frequency with which there were unchecked violations of curfew for evening prayers (*sa*) and a perceived increase in public misbehavior, the disciplinary committee began to meet each Sunday and required the attendance of all village *matai* and untitled men not currently attending school (in essence the '*aumaga*'). It also began to require that all untitled men police the main village road during evening prayers or "*sa*" (approximately 6 - 6:30pm each day) and a subset during the night curfew (11pm to dawn) in uniform (black sarongs (*lavalavas*) and white shirts) in a number of small houses built for the purpose staggered along the main road of the village. This service was referred to as *leoleo* ("police") and could be found in a number of other villages. Daily attendance was taken for *leoleo* and weekly attendance at the disciplinary committee meetings, and fines of 2 *tala* (~ \$.80USD) were assessed for any missed attendance not excused by illness or other important business.

The organizational structure of the disciplinary committee borrowed heavily from Western parliamentary models, such that the committee was led by a "chairman" who was assisted by a "general secretary" as well as a representative of each village *pitonu'u*. The individuals holding these positions were elected for one year terms by a vote of the entire membership including both *matai* and untitled men, each with a single vote. Yet much of the structure was also heavily informed by more traditional notions of authority

and the *fono*, such that the governing members had to hold a chiefly title and the first chairman elected was the highest ranking *ali'i* who permanently resided in the village. Moreover, two of the elected representatives for *pitonu'u* were the most prominent *tulafale* in the village and they almost always served as something akin to “prosecutors” as they took the lead in asking questions of individuals accused of misbehavior. Finally, processes of decision-making usually mirrored those of the *fono* with the various *matai* “representatives” presenting different arguments for the guilt or innocence of parties as well as proposed punishments, and with the *ali'i* chairman presenting a consensus view that serves as the final decision on a given matter.

Interestingly, it appeared that the disciplinary committee was beginning to usurp some of the classic tasks of the village *fono* when it began to discuss more serious violations as well as hearing and mediating conflicts between different descent groups. For example, during this time period a village man was accused of having sexual relations with his adolescent daughter. While the crime was prosecuted by the Samoan court system, it would be expected that it would also historically be dealt with by the village *fono* given the severity of the crime. Yet in this instance it was the disciplinary committee that questioned the accused and which decided to banish him and his family from the village⁴⁹. Similarly, the disciplinary committee discussed some village-level disputes between different descent groups over the possession of tracts of land, which is also traditionally well within the purview of the *fono* rather than the disciplinary committee as there was no actual violation of any village rule. It seems obvious that the reason these issues are arising in the committee rather than the *fono*, is the great

⁴⁹ Interestingly, the accused's wife and representatives of her descent group obtained permission from the village *fono* rather than the disciplinary committee to allow her to remain in the village as it was her natal village.

frequency with which the committee meets in comparison to the *fono*. Yet, with the different weighting of decision-making powers in the committee - where a subset of village *matai* have been elevated to greater decision-making power than others – in comparison with the *fono*, there could possibly be disputes regarding the authority of the disciplinary committee in the future.

Location of meetings

There were three different locations in Silafaga where these different meetings were held during the research period. Village-wide *fono* as well as the weekly disciplinary committee meetings are held in the very large and newly constructed meeting house affiliated with the community health clinic, built recently using a Japanese government grant. Indeed this rectangular building approximately 50 x 120 feet was the only village structure that could accommodate the Sunday night disciplinary committee meetings, given that a large majority of the adult male population of the village attended. The meetings of the *pulenu'u* occurred in a relatively small rectangular *fale* located the west of the main road bisecting the village and opposite the primary school. As this particular meeting was hosted by the *pulenu'u*, its location rotated also shifted every few years. The location of the *fono* of the different *pitonu'u* varied according to the chiefs involved. But at least two of the three central *pitonu'u* had meetings over the course of the research period. In the easternmost *pitonu'u*, meetings were hosted in the house of the highest-ranking permanently residing *ali'i*, while in a central *pitonu'u* meetings were hosted in the house of one of three high ranking *tulafale* in the village.

In most villages *fono* are held in the meeting house of an *ali'i* (called a “*maota*”) which is situated on the periphery of the village green or “*malae*” which functions as the sacred political and moral center of the village (Shore 1982:48-51,79). Expectations of moral, respectful and dignified behavior are far greater, and violations of social norms are far more vigorously pursued in these central areas than in peripheral ones. Moreover, these central village greens are occasionally the sites of larger village events including the visits of honored guests, village *fono*, and special celebrations, all of which demand greater dignity and formality than everyday events.

Silafaga’s primary *malae* and its “classic” concentric circle village layout of *malae* surrounded by circles of houses, was severely disrupted by the massive storm surge of a hurricane several decades ago. This portion of the village was left barren by most families who chose to rebuild their homes in other portions of the village located farther back and higher up from the lagoon. Only two prominent *ali'i* rebuilt their homes along the periphery of this *malae*. One of these matai hosted the meeting of matai for the *pitonu'u* in which he resided. Village-wide *fono*, which were certainly held in a *maota* along this *malae* were now held in the large meeting house of the community health complex. This area - bounded by the Congregational Christian church, the pastor’s house and the community health complex -functioned as a “*malae-like*” sacred center for the village in terms of the activities held there as well as the heightened behavioral norms associated with it. It was not bordered, however, by the residences of the most prominent chiefs. Finally, a central *pitonu'u* to the west of the church complex also possessed a named *malae*. This *pitonu'u* held a set of *fono* during my time in the village regarding a

number of contentious issues, but these *fono* were held in the meeting house (*laoa*) of a particularly prominent orator in the village.

Children's involvement, roles, and opportunities for observation

Strictly speaking, even one's physical presence in the *fono* is limited to chiefly title-holders of the village in question. As I mentioned earlier at least some untitled men are always present as members of the 'aumaga, but their participation is restricted to subsidiary and supporting roles on the periphery of the *fono*, including preparing and serving the 'ava, food and drink that always accompanies such meetings. A small group of untitled men will sit within the meeting house itself only during the preparation and service of the 'ava, and as they serve and remove the food at the conclusion of the meeting. For the remainder of the meeting they usually sit in a neighboring house or on the ground outside of the meeting house. Beyond those two categories of persons, there is no regular ratified space within the meeting house itself for non-participating audience members to sit and observe, with some very limited exceptions⁵⁰. Moreover, given the dignity and 'stateliness' of these events, villagers take great care to avoid disturbing them with noise or nearby activity. For example, on one occasions I noted members of the 'aumaga attending to a *fono* of the *pulenu'u* drive away a small group of children (~ 6 to 10 years of age) talking loudly as they walked along the road near a *fono*. And on a few occasions I have seen adults and caretakers sitting near the telephone behind the large

⁵⁰ Certainly, I as an untitled ethnographer was an exception in that I attended the vast majority of *fono* in the village during my time in the village, but this was only after receiving permission to do so (see chapter 5). Other untitled persons did on rare occasions attend when their business involved addressing and / or receiving permission from the village *fono*. A telephone company representative seeking permission for a local construction project, for example, attended a *fono* accompanied by an orator chief who represented him and spoke on his behalf.

committee house in the village quiet the children who accompanied them or send them home if their play or talk seemed too loud. Consequently, children (and untitled women) may only hope to observe these proceedings – *fono* and disciplinary committee meetings - from far more peripheral and spatially distant positions.

My point about the lack of a ratified space for an audience in the meeting house - particularly with regard to children - runs counter to that of O'Meara, who in a discussion of the benefits of being the favored child (*pele*) in the Samoan family argues that "one of the most visible privileges is to accompany the *matai* to the village council meetings or other formal affairs to sit quietly at the chief's side" (1990:78). Over the two years I attended the vast majority of village and sub-village *fono* (n= ~30) and the seven months of weekly disciplinary committee meetings of the entire body of untitled men and *matai* in the village, I did not witness a single child being brought to a meeting by a *matai*. On one occasion I saw a young boy of perhaps five or six years of age sit for perhaps 15 minutes in his untitled father's lap at a disciplinary committee meeting before departing on his own accord. (It's likely that the child accompanied an adult to the village phone located in a house behind the committee house.) This was the one and only instance in which I observed a child immediately within the confines of the meeting house itself during the course of a *fono* or disciplinary committee meeting. When I raised the possibility of children observing from within the meeting house itself or a *matai* bringing a child along to watch, my chiefly informants dismissed it out of hand as "inappropriate" (*e lē fetau'i*) and thus unlikely to occur. Similarly, Simanu rejects the notion outright; "[i]n the Samoan culture, children are not allowed to be in close proximity of the chiefs, particularly while they are meeting" (2002:9). Given the grave and serious ethos that

pervades these meetings, I would be quite surprised to see a child within the immediate confines of the meeting itself, and even more so to see one brought by a chief.⁵¹

While children may not frequently (if at all) view the chiefly activity of such events from within the meeting house itself, there are still possibilities for observation from a distance. Such observation of these meetings could certainly reveal important aspects of the chief system within this activity setting. The seating position and spatial orientation of the *matai* in the meeting house, for example, is highly meaningful in that it reveals much about the relative ranking and social statuses of the different *matai* present (Duranti 1992a; 1994:56-72; Shore 1982:79-81). Indeed, the spatial arrangement may be particularly important given the relative lack of other unambiguous visible symbols of rank and status employed by *matai*. One *tulafale* told me that when a group of *matai* receive a group of visiting and unfamiliar *matai* “we can only wait to see where they sit [in the meeting house] to know who is who”. By this he was referring to the fact that chiefs sit according to relative rank and social status (i.e. *ali'i* vs. *tulafale*). High chiefs sit in the two rounded ends or “*tala*” of the house, while orators (and untitled men when present) sit arrayed along the sides or “*atualuma*”. The very highest ranking *ali'i* sit in the extreme end of the house, called the “*matuatala*”, with lower ranking *ali'i* arrayed away from these points in space depending upon relative rank. Gradations in relative rank for the orators are likewise enacted through seating position such that the most senior orators take the centermost position on the sides with rank gradations realized as one moves away from those points (Shore 1982:80-1). Of course, there can be significant

⁵¹ I would reconcile O'Meara's observations with my own on the base of research interests and village idiosyncrasies. O'Meara's work focuses on issues of land tenure and economic development, and thus he may not necessarily have paid as much careful attention to the lives of children, ruling a chance occurrence as normative practice. Moreover, despite their commonalities, villages are distinct social units and it is certainly possible that a practice accepted in one village may not be tolerated in another.

variation in where a given titleholder might sit depending on the mix of individuals present, the type of *fono* being held, the presence of visitors, and so forth, such that the actual enactment of the village hierarchy in spatial terms is notably variable.

Interviews with the focal children of the study did reveal that at least this small population of children was taking advantage of these observational opportunities. Virtually all of the children in the oldest age group (10-12 years) and more than half of the younger children indicated that they had witnessed at least one *fono*. I observed on several occasions small groups of children (2-5 individuals) sitting or playing within a visual sight line of village *fono*. For example, I witnessed several younger children playing within two different houses that were only 60 feet from the meeting of the *fono* of a central *pitonu'u*, which is held in one of the most densely populated portions of the village, on several occasions. Similarly, I have regularly observed children accompanying and sitting with an adult or caretaker to the house that housed the village telephone, which lies within forty feet of the center of the disciplinary committee meeting house. But one would be completely unable to view any of the speakers or activities within the *fono* as the telephone house lay almost twenty feet below the level of the floor of the meeting house down the hillside towards the lagoon. Arguably these distances (on average around 50-100 feet) combined with the large amount of ambient noise of the village (e.g. wind, surf, occasional traffic and animals) likely precluded the children from being able to perceive the different speeches of the event with any clarity.

Even if hearing is limited, there remains the possibility of viewing the events and the vital use of space in the meeting house. I would argue, however, that while children's abilities to observe may be better than hear there are still considerable hurdles. Certainly

the open spaces of the meeting houses would facilitate observation, but the typical seating posture of participating *matai* have them seating on the edges of the house facing inward. This seating pattern obscures identification of the different *matai* within as well as hides at least some of their actions. Children's relative lack of understanding of the meanings of space as will be described in greater detail in chapter 10 seem quite logically given these hurdles.

In addition to the physical and social 'hurdles' to observation of these chiefly meetings, I also found children's interest in observing these various formal meetings to be relatively lacking. Despite the great cultural importance of *matai* in village social life and the high regard with which they are held by community members, their activities in these particular contexts did not translate well into an event perceived to be of particularly interesting children's eyes. This was readily apparent in interviews with children. While children would indicate that they had witnessed on several occasions a *fono*, they exhibited virtually no interest in accompanying me to see another. Nor could any recount the details of *fono* they claimed to have seen or even the timing of the meetings. Their responses seemed to suggest an awareness only of the fact of the meeting itself, and relatively little as to the concrete details of the meetings.

The actual impact of the *fono* as a resource for children's learning is difficult to measure and quantify, but my ethnographic observations suggest relatively little impact at least for children younger than 12 years of age. While children may observe a *fono* – and most say that they have – this observation occurs at a physical distance that precludes hearing or seeing with sufficient acuity to be able to learn effectively from these perceptions. Although exceptions may exist (e.g. O'Meara 1990:78), children are not

allowed within the meeting houses themselves and out of concern that their actions might disturb the assembled *matai* children tend to be kept at some distance from the meeting by caretakers and members of the ‘*aumaga*. Of course, this should not be taken to be an absolute social norm. Certainly a child could position themselves in such a way to observe the chiefly activity, but the tendency is that children do not.

This observation of the relative weakness of the *fono* as a site of children’s learning about the chief system is particularly interesting in view of parental opinion, which tends to argue the opposite. When parents are asked – as they were in interviews and as part of the parental belief and practices questionnaire – where children learn about the chief system, over 60% point to the *fono* and the chiefly activities contained within this key social institution as a fundamental place in which such learning occurs. The following statements are common responses:

It is essential to go and listen to the words of the chiefs
and to go to the meeting house when a council of chiefs meets.

E ao ina alu e fa’alogologo i upu a matai

ma alu i le fale o matai pe afai e fai le fono a le nu’u

53 year old mother of 11 children, wife of chief

Go to village meetings and listen to the things that are done in the village

Alu i fonotaga a le nu’u ma fa’alogologo i mea fai a le nu’u

23 year old mother of 2, wife of untitled man

Listen and watch the things that chiefs do.

Fa'alogologo ma matamata i mea fai a matai.

59 year old chief and father of 5

Diligence in learning the culture, respect and obedience from some chief
and also diligence in entering the chiefs' meeting house.

*Toaga e aoao le aganu'u, fa'aaloalo ma fa'alogo i isi matai
pe toaga foi e ulufale I fale o matai.*

23 year old mother of 2, wife of untitled

Diligence in going to the chiefs' meeting house

Toaga e alu i le fale o matai

80 year old untitled man, father of 10

Listen well to chiefs and to the words and statements that are made

Fa'alogo lelei i matai i upu ma tala e fai

25 year old mother of 3, wife of untitled woman

While repetitive, the responses should evoke the great frequency and ease with which this particular response was provided by many informants. The reader will also note that parents are also fairly explicit about the way in which children are to learn from these contexts: through careful observation of the actions of chiefs. Note also the stress placed on "diligence" (*toaga*) in children's observations and service, which implies the slow

growth of learning over repeated exposures, as well as highlights the child's own agency in deciding whether or not they are to learn. Children's relative agency is an oft-overlooked part of cultural learning that I will discuss later in this chapter.

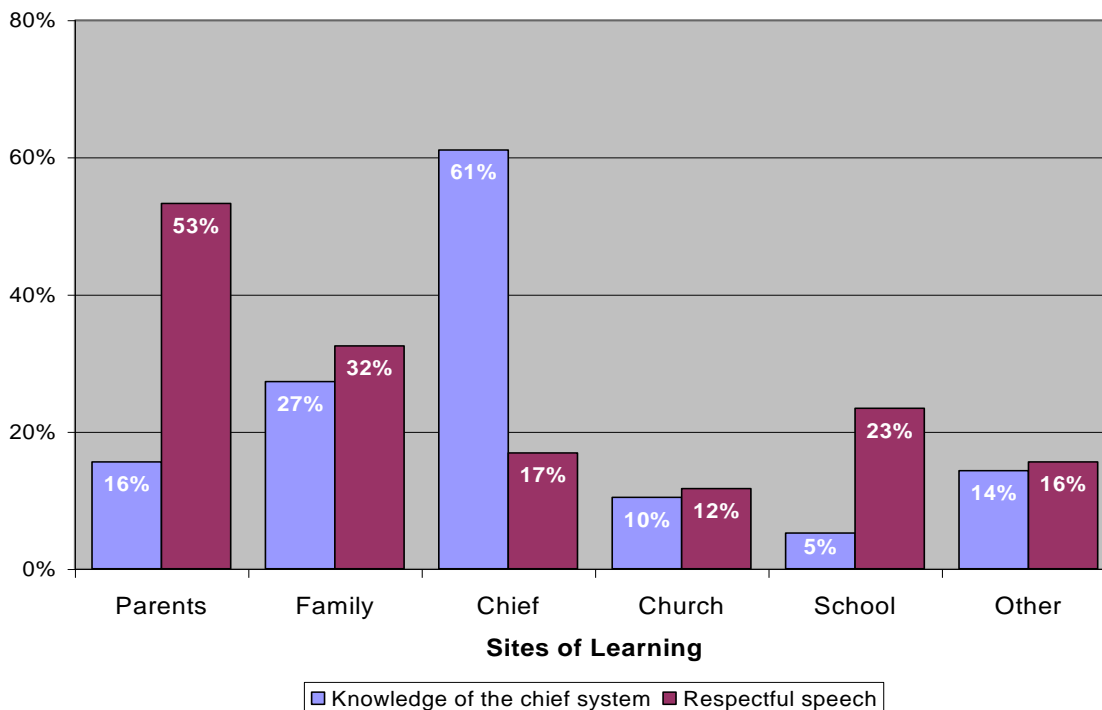
The opinions expressed above are well represented across the population of parents in the village as evidenced by the results of the parental belief and practices questionnaire summarized in figure 8.2 below (n = 149 caretakers / parents). I have also included data on parental opinions on where children learning about respectful speech, which provides an interesting contrast. With regard to learning about the chief system, 61% of the parents queried pointed to the *matai* and / or the *fono* ("chiefs" in the figure below) as a key resource for children's learning. This was followed by: learning that occurs in the descent group or 'aiga ("family", 27%); from parents (16%); from the pastor, church activities and sermons, or residence in the pastor's house (10%); and other locations (14%). Only 5% of parents pointed to the local primary school ("school") as a site of learning about the chief system; a context that I will explore in far greater detail in the next chapter.

I would not interpret this data to suggest that parents are in error in how their children are learning about the chief system. I think instead that parents are focusing their attention on the untitled men's association ('*aumaga*), which possesses a privileged vantage point from which to learn about the *matai* system through their service and close proximity to chiefly activity. The pedagogical possibilities of this service are very obvious, and were consistently the most common institution mentioned when I asked about cultural learning of the chief system. Yet membership in the '*aumaga*, as I note earlier, does not begin until the boy has minimally completed his schooling and usually

doesn't begin until he is 18 years of age (see also Mead 1973:25). Consequently it is not a forum for children's learning.

Parents' opinions of where children learn respectful language is an interesting contrast (see figure 8.2). Parents are elevated to the most important context (53% vs. 16% for the chief system), while the role of chiefs and the *fono* is marginalized (17% vs. 61%). While chiefs are seen as the heart of chiefly activity and the bearers of knowledge of the chief system itself, respectful speech may be seen as a skill more broadly distributed across the village population. Parents may be elevated to the primary context for learning of respectful speech because of their role in monitoring and correcting children's disrespectful behavior.

Figure 8.2: Parental responses to the questions: "Where do children learn about the chief system" and "...respectful speech?" (n=149)



Note: Respondents indicated as many sites as they wished, and so percentages do not add up to 100%. See the text above for explication of the categories used.

B) Fa'avelave:

Fa'avelave, which can be literally translated as “entanglements”, refers to a category of important social events that typically celebrate important life cycle transitions. Examples of the kind of events in this category include: funerals, birthdays⁵², weddings, dedication of new homes or buildings, entitlement ceremonies (*saofa'i*), and the re-internment of burial remains⁵³. Although in common discourse *fa'avelave* can also be used more broadly to refer to village-level events that involve contributions of labor, material goods, and wealth (e.g. annual May 1st event in which the Congregational Christian church congregation showers the pastor and his family with gifts and house wares), I will restrict my use of the term here to only those social events tied to and hosted by a particular descent group on their land. Although there can be important *fa'avelave* that are village-level functions (e.g. dedication of the new community health center's buildings), these tend to be few and far between, and usually occur under the auspices of and operate like the village council of chiefs (*fono*).

While the origins of many of these social occasions are tied to an individual's life cycle event, the *fa'avelave* itself always incorporates the active involvement of a far larger network of individuals and social groups, including most notably the individual's descent group. Samoa's ambilineal (non-unilineal) descent reckoning provides extensive possibilities for kinship relationships, and providing support (in the form of exchange goods, labor and cash) for *fa'avelave* are a premier way in which kin relationships are

⁵² Children's first and twenty-first birthdays are typically celebrated by the family and may include blessings by the village pastor. The birthdays of family elders may also be celebrated in much the same way, but few other birthdays receive any notice and it is not uncommon for children to be unaware of their date of birth.

⁵³ It is a traditional practice for a descent group to re-inter the remains of the dead a few years after the initial burial. The re-internment involves washing the bones, wrapping them in *tapa* cloth, and returning them to the grave during an abbreviated religious service led by the village pastor or priest.

actualized and regenerated. In addition to descent group members, support and attendance can also be expected – again, very much depending upon the specific kind of *fa'alavelave* in question - from a range of non-kin including individuals and descent groups who reside in the same village *pitonu'u*, friends, co-workers, membership of the same church congregation, and so forth. For some events the local village pastor, Catholic priest or catechist will be invited to bestow a blessing on the individual or event, and he (or all) will attend as well.

The range of descent group members who will participate, the number of non-kin, and the level of support provided (i.e. attendance at the event, and the provisioning of labor and exchange goods) will very much depends upon the relative importance of the individual and the event as well as the relative social ranking of the descent group to which the individual belongs. For example, the funeral of the wife of a very prominent *tulafale* in the village received contributions from their respective descent groups, the deceased's fellow teachers in the local primary school, the local Congregational Christian Church's women's committee, other chiefs and their descent groups from the deceased's husband's *pitonu'u*, and a very large number of more distantly related individuals who could trace genealogical relations to the descent group of the deceased. The great outpouring of wealth and support lasted the better part of several days and occasioned the renting of several buses to transport mourners from other parts of the island to the village. In contrast, the tragic death of a mid-twenty-year-old man in the village, while shocking to the community because of his youth, received a far less substantial expression of support that was largely restricted to localized members of the boy's descent group.

Regardless of the specific kind of *fa'alavelave*, *matai* involvement will always be intensive for two reasons. First, these events frequently include the use of extensive material and social resources over which *matai* have control. For example, the descent group deciding to bestow a *matai* title on one of its own members will need to have the resources necessary to host the event as it will include inviting the village's high chiefs all of the local village clergy members (to provide their blessing), and expect a large number of village chiefs to attend as well. The clergy and the high chiefs receive a range of exchange goods including cooked pigs, cases of canned fish and/or corned beef, numerous fine mats, lengths of cloth, cash, and other food items. While the other attending chiefs do not expect such large quantities of gifts, their attendance must also be acknowledged in the form of smaller quantities of the same. Additionally, a token meal is also provided to the attendees. The resources expended on this as well as the labor involved in transporting the goods, preparing and serving the food are all resources the *matai* mobilizes and directs. Of course, this does not mean that a single *matai* alone manage all organizational, logistical, and distributional decisions. In reality, spouses of *matai*, family elders, and others can and certainly do contribute to the discussion as well, but *matai* remain at the heart of these actions.

A second reason that *matai* are heavily involved in *fa'alavelave* is that these events frequently entail considerable ritual activity that *matai* alone are qualified to do, including most notably oratory. The exact ritual role (and the kind of chiefly activity available to observers) will vary considerably depending upon the nature of the *fa'alavelave*. At a funeral, for example, a *tulafale* assisted by a number of men and women will ceremonially present the range of exchange goods they as a group have

provided to show support for the deceased. The *tulafale*'s role is to give the elaborate speech accompanying the prestation, which will not only indicate the relationship of the orator and the group he represents to the deceased (“the path” or *auala* that has brought them to the event), but also honor the deceased and describe the depths of support shown by the material gifts his words introduce. The *tulafale* will also be on hand at the conclusion of the funeral to accept the counter-gift, that will honor him personally for his speech as well as the group he represents for their support of the deceased, their descent group, and the event itself.

What is particularly notable about the ritual components of chiefly activity in many *fa'alavelave* is its performative intensity. By this, I mean that chiefly activity within this context tends to be far more dramatic and theatrical than in other contexts. This is particularly the case with the presentation of goods by the *tulafale* to show support for a descent group. Rather than a purely utilitarian donation of gifts brought to where they can best be used and a simple report of what is contained, the presentation is a highly choreographed affair brought swiftly into full view of all present by a string of assistants as the orator provides his speech in a loud voice. Groups of untitled male assistants present traditional ‘male’ exchange goods including whole baked pigs carried on litters, newly slaughtered sides of beef, and cases of canned fish. Female assistants rush in as they unfurl finely woven mats (*ie toga*), the largest of which are hoisted onto bamboo poles to show their full size (see photo 8.1). And all are presented with a speed and rhythm that seems designed to highlight the coordinated nature of the descent group’s collective will, and to punctuated and underline the orator’s words. The larger intention of the presentation is of course not only to demonstrate support for the

recipient's descent group, but also to enact the prestige, prominence and skill of the orator, the descent group and its assorted members.

Photo 8.1: Presentation of fine mats (*'ie toga*) at a funeral.



Photo 8.2: Orator chief (*tulafale*) with symbols of office giving a speech



The orator's social role in the performance is marked in ways that are uncommon in other contexts of chiefly activity⁵⁴. As I described in chapter 3, the social status of a Samoan chief remains highly ambiguous in most social contexts as there are no clear and

⁵⁴ On a very limited number of occasions during particularly important and well-attended *fono* two of the highest ranking orators did bring and use their *fue* (although not their staffs, as they would not stand while speaking in this context).

consistent visible signs of social status (titled vs. untitled, *ali'i* vs. *tulafale*) nor of relative rank (e.g. senior orator vs. orator). An individual's claim of status and relative rank emerge and become clear only in specific ritual contexts such as the *fono*, where the individual's use of space or other's treatment including referential language, bodily posture and other forms of social interaction provide clues as to how the person is situated in the social landscape (Duranti 1992a; 1994; see also Keating 1998; 2000; Keating and Duranti 2006 for a very similar example of the construction of hierarchy in Pohnpei). At *fa'alavelave*, however, the orators making speeches do so using their distinctive and very visible symbols of office: an approximately six foot tall, carved wooden staff (*to'oto'o*) and a fly whisk (*fue*), which is frequently slung over the right shoulder (see photo 8.2). As the speech is delivered, *tulafale* use these symbols almost as stage props: flicking the large fly whisk at the ground like a whip to shift visual attention to the orator as he begins his speech, for example, and shifting position and leaning into the staff as a point is made. The two items are extremely prominent Samoan symbols of governance, culture and the chief system. Schematic images of these two and the kava bowl are prominently displayed on a range of governmental offices and signs, printed money, and even school uniform emblems. But on a local level, these important symbols are generally only employed at *fa'alavelave*. It should be noted, however, that it is only *tulafale* and not *ali'i* ("high chiefs") whose social roles are marked in these ways, and that only the more senior orators who actually make speeches at these events are the ones who will employ their use.

Attendance at most *fa'alavelave* is markedly different from the chiefly social institutions (*fono* and disciplinary committee meetings) that I described earlier in this

chapter. While those are restricted to title-holders and members of the *'aumaga*, there are no such restrictions to the majority of *fa'alavelave*⁵⁵. Adult descent group members from other households within the village, neighboring villages and frequently farther afield will attend to provide labor and other forms of assistance. These individuals will include not only *matai* and untitled men, but can include a full range of members including the elderly senior members, spouses of *matai*, and young adults and adolescents of both sexes. Children will occasionally accompany their caretakers or parents, and will sometimes be removed from school for the day to attend a more distant *fa'alavelave*. And if the event is a serious one (e.g. funeral or a wedding) and the individuals and descent groups involved are senior, the visiting guests can include literally hundreds of persons. Buses can be rented to transport guests to and from their villages, and while the *matai* wait for the events to unfold they can be distributed spatially across the village in a number of different houses.

***Fa'alavelave* as contexts for children's learning about the chief system**

While earlier in this chapter I disputed O'Meara's (1990) claim of *matai* bringing children to *fono*, I have on many occasions seen *matai* bring children (as well as spouses, siblings, anthropologists, and others) to *fa'alavelave*. While I myself was brought by informants to many local and distant *fa'alavelave* 'to witness important examples of Samoan culture', my informants were not motivated to bring their own children for the purposes of cultural learning. Indeed, most seemed positively puzzled by the idea when I

⁵⁵ The one notable exception is that of the *saofa'i* (entitlement ceremony), which is in essence an elaborated kava ceremony in which the newly titled chief takes his or her first cup of kava. As the kava ceremony, which is a part of any *fono*, is restricted to titled individuals and a small number of untitled attendants, the central ritual element of this *fa'alavelave* is restricted as well.

raised it with them. From a Samoan perspective, people (including children) are interested in attending *fa'alavelave* because they provide ample opportunity: to demonstrate one's respect and affiliation for individuals and descent groups; to socialize; to take time off from work / school and everyday drudgery; to enact one's rank and social status; and to obtain exchange goods and wealth.

Despite the fact that parents and caretakers are not bringing children to these events specifically so that they can learn about the chief system from them, *fa'alavelave* do nonetheless provide some of the very best opportunities for children to observe chiefly activity. Much of this is enabled by the simple reason that attendance is expected to include the whole range of family members including the young. In contrast to *fono* and disciplinary committee meetings that restrict access and keep the young at a distance that precludes their easy observation and hearing, *fa'alavelave* bear no such expectations. Rather in these contexts chiefly activity is meant to be conducted in front of the attendees, with them as an attentive audience.

In terms of children's learning from these events we can also point to the character of the event as providing some measure of scaffolding to children's attention and focus on the activity of chiefs. As Jerome Bruner, David Wood and colleagues note (Wood 1986; Wood, et al. 1976), one of the most significant but often overlooked aspects of scaffolding processes is to motivate the learner. Children's interest in a problem or phenomenon may wane or their attention may wander well before they have developed a greater and more conceptually focused understanding. There are numerous aspects of the event and chiefly activity itself that may act to keep children attention engaged. First and quite simply, the audience of attendees is attentive and focused. When a speech is made,

a gift presented, a blessing made, or a ritual conducted at a *fa'alavelave*, the audience sits quietly, respectfully, and directs their attention at the ongoing activity. The sustained and collective focus of attention of the assembled group of adults at these events provides some measure of scaffolding for children by highlighting the culturally salient and important role played by chiefs at these events. Again, children are not forced or explicitly directed to attend to the activity of chiefs, and one can always find a set of children at *fa'alavelave* playing with peers in the street or in the cookhouse behind the main house.

A second feature of chiefly activity in these settings is that it is highly dramatized and novel, as I suggested above. Speeches are provided at a far louder volume than would be the case in the meeting houses. They are marked with dramatic movements of the speakers and can be punctuated with the swift actions of the orator's assistants as they bring in or receive vast quantities of exchange items. The speeches themselves are given standing, using the symbols of office, which are rarely seen outside of these contexts. These events are dramatic, theatrical and novel, and such activity can be exciting for children (and adults) to watch. The drama and performative intensity of the chiefly activity itself should be seen as a way of motivating children's interest and focusing their attention.

C) Women's committees

It is quite possible that the women's committees, both the village-level committee as well as the women's committees for both local church congregations, do provide some context for children to learn about hierarchy more generally and possibly about the chief

system to some degree. Given the time constraints posed by my participation and observations of other contexts and the relative distance of committee activities from explicitly chiefly activities, however, I chose not to complete more than a relatively cursory examination of the women's committees in the village. Consequently my comments will be brief and future investigations may be needed to examine the role these particular social organizations play in children's developing conceptions of hierarchy, social organization and the chief system. I do think, however, that in this particular instance relatively little knowledge of the chief system could have been culled from children's observations of these particular committee meetings for reasons I provide below.

Almost all village-level social organizations are based on a gendered division of labor and thus Samoans perceive a conceptual divide of village-level social organizations into "the village of men" ('*o le nu'u o ali'i*) and "the village of women" ('*o le nu'u o tama'ita'i*) (Shore 1982:99-106). All of the social institutions associated with the "village of men" as described by Shore (1982:99-106) – council of chiefs (*fono*), untitled men's association ('*aumaga*), and the disciplinary committee – are all well represented in the village as I've described above. Women's associations in the village were primarily represented, however, by the village-level women's committee and by the women's committees for the two church congregations in town⁵⁶.

At the time of the research there was no active *auaaluma* (association of village girls) in the village. Both Shore (1982: 104-5) and Mead (1973:50) describe the *auaaluma*

⁵⁶ There was a single weaving house associated with the local Roman Catholic Church congregation's women's committee, rather than with the different sub-villages (*pitonu'u*) as Shore (1982:105) suggests. Of course this does not mean that this social institution did not exist earlier.

as the association of village girls, lead by a village *taupou*⁵⁷ (a virginal ceremonial princess), that serves an important ceremonial role in performing for and attending to prominent groups of visitors to the village. As Mead notes “in villages where the old intricacies of social organization are beginning to fall into disuse, it is the *aualuma* which disappears first” (1973:50; see also Shore 1982:105). Although I cannot speak to factors implicated in the institution’s fall from local prominence, this did appear to be the case in Silafaga as well. On the few instances in which a group formally visited the village (e.g. Japanese ambassador and embassy staff’s visit at the dedication of the community health center they sponsored), the ceremonial role that would have been taken by the *aualuma* were shared by the Women’s Committee (preparation and service of food) and Congregational Christian Church youth group (entertainment). Arguably, the pastor’s oldest unmarried daughter, who speaks very good English, acted as something akin to a *taupou* in that she addressed the visitors and performed for them.

The village-level Women’s Committee met on a weekly basis⁵⁸ on a range of issues, primarily village presentation and hygiene. Responsibilities included conducting periodic household inspections to insure that all households and latrines adhered to village standards of cleanliness and hygiene, as well as shouldering the burden of manning and maintaining the village telephone. The latter was an arduous responsibility given the cost of international phone calls, the difficulty in collecting the debts that inevitably accrued in some households, and the need to have a person on hand constantly to answer any incoming calls.

⁵⁷ The *taupou* has an important role preparing kava in *fono* and performing certain dances at formal events. The *taupou* is usually the oldest unmarried daughter of one of the more senior *ali'i* in the village, and receives a title that entitles her to serve this role until she is married.

⁵⁸ Attendance at both the meetings and the bingo fundraisers, which preceded them at which women were expected to pay at least 10 tala (~3\$USD), were mandatory.

While the *aualuma* was a traditional Samoan social organization, the Women's Committee had its origins in the German colonial period in the 19th and early 20th centuries (Shore 1982:105). Consequently, its structure more closely approximates a Western-derived committee, with leadership provided by a *pelesitene* ("president"), than the council of chiefs. Its most immediate link to the chief system was that the presidents of the organization are inevitably drawn from the wives of some of the highest-ranking chiefs. While the members and particularly the wives of other high-ranking chiefs could voice their opinions in the meetings, my observations suggested these meetings to be far more autocratic than those of the *fono*. There was relatively little debate or discussion of issues⁵⁹, and the president more than not simply distributed tasks among the women present or made announcements. This was a marked contrast to the frequently contentious and lengthy meetings of the *fono* that could run for hours at a time with many of the assembled chiefs participating in the debate.

It was not uncommon to see quite a few children playing in small groups or sitting with the female relatives they had accompanied to the bingo games that preceded the weekly Saturday meetings. While some older children were sent home once the meetings began, it was not uncommon for a few children to remain within the house for the meeting, sitting quietly on the periphery or immediately next to the female caretaker who had brought them. This was of course in marked contrast with the *fono* and disciplinary meetings, where children were neither brought along nor tolerated within the meeting house itself. Therefore, children's opportunities to observe the workings of the institution were in many cases far greater than with the *fono*, for example.

⁵⁹ As can occur with the *fono* as well, it is likely that any contentious decision has been discussed and vetted in private discussions prior to the meeting itself.

Yet as I mentioned earlier, neither the organization of the institution nor the format of the meetings themselves revealed much if anything about the chief system. Certainly the children would learn little about the structure of the *fono* as the committee meetings did not use them as their model. Nor could children reconstruct the village power structure accurately from their observations. First, it would have suggested that far more power was invested in a single leader, which is patently not the case in village Samoa. Second, it would be difficult to reconstruct the village hierarchy from the women most involved in the Women's Committee's business. While the president is the wife of a prominent *tulafale*, strictly speaking there are several *ali'i* in the village with greater relative authority than the president's husband. Similarly, as I note in chapter 3, the highest ranking *ali'i* in the village is actually a woman who does not attend nor take part in these meetings. And of course there are high-ranking chiefs who are widowers and thus are not represented at all in these meetings except by sisters and daughters. So, certain women would be "marked" as socially important and hierarchically more prominent than other women, but it would not reveal much if anything about the structure of the local chiefly hierarchy in the village. Consequently, I would gauge the relative impact of the Women's Committee as a context for children's social learning about the chief system to be low to nil.

I would also argue the same with regard to the local women's committees tied to the local churches. Each local church congregation also possesses a very active women's organization headed inevitably by the pastor's wife or the Roman Catholic catechist's wife, who is assisted by a combination of female Sunday school teachers and deacon's wives. The responsibilities of these organizations are focused on managing the numerous

different annual church activities including fundraisers, supporting the pastor or priest and their household, preparations for White Sunday and Christmas, and so forth. Given the social prominence of the pastor or catechist's wife, there can be little room for discussion or disagreement and these organizations can perhaps be better imagined as vehicles to execute the pastor's wife's orders. Consequently, they are typically even more autocratic than the village's Women's Committee. Moreover, given the fact that deacon's wives and Sunday school teachers – individuals whose husbands may not even hold chiefly titles - have greater prominence in this context, the hierarchy represented in this context may be even more distant from the local chiefly hierarchy than is the Women's Committee. This is not to say that children are not learning important concepts regarding the relative social prominence of the pastor's / catechist's wife – a very important social fact – but this has relatively little to say about the chief system.

D) Pedagogical institutions and assorted church and school social events

There are two primary formal pedagogical institutions in the village: the local government primary school and the pastor's school. The latter of these two is instantiated locally by both the Roman Catholic and the Congregational Christian Churches in roughly parallel ways. I will provide ethnographic descriptions of these both the primary school and pastor's school in the next chapter (chapter 9). I will also discuss the range of village social events associated with both. More specifically, both the school and church hold various fundraisers and performances that inevitably include strong elements of chiefly activity and children's "cultural performances" (e.g. traditional dances, oratory, traditional cultural skills, mythology). I argue that the context can allow

children to observe chiefly activity up close as was the case with *fa'alavelave*. And children's cultural performances at both the school's "culture days" and at church fundraisers provide children with the opportunity to witness important elements of Samoan culture such as the preparation of kava by a *taupou* and recitation of the *fa'alupega* (ceremonial village address). Yet as I describe in chapter 9, the cognitive impact of these encapsulated and 'decontextualized' elements of culture on children's understandings is difficult to determine.

I will now briefly summarize the main points made with regard to children's learning from these three categories of village-level social institutions. As I described earlier in this chapter, parents and caretakers frequently indicated in informal conversations, interviews and questionnaire responses that the council of chiefs (*fono*) and other chiefly village meetings represented the village context where young people learn about the chief system. My observations do support their statement (as well as their assertion that observational and participatory learning via service was the predominant form of social learning) for older male adolescents and young male adults, but not for children of the age range examined in this study (3 – 12 years of age) and not for women of any age. For children of this earlier age range, there seemed to be too many social and physical barriers to reliably gain sufficient proximity to allow for good visual and auditory perception of the proceedings.

Instead of the various *fono* that occur within the village as the key learning context, I have pointed to the *fa'alavelave* that regularly enliven village social life as a particularly rich opportunity for the close observation of chiefly activity for children of

both genders as well as the larger community. Moreover, the collective focus of the assembled ‘audience’ on the chiefly activity of the *fa’alavelave*, the performative intensity and drama of the *matai* and his or her assistants engaged in ritual performance, and the frequent use of concrete signs of office by *tulafale* to symbolizing their special role in the events certainly provides a form of scaffolding to facilitate children’s learning from this rich activity setting.

I have also suggested that while the different women’s committee meetings do potentially provide greater access for children to the interior of meeting houses, the event itself – at least in this particular village – tended not to provide much opportunity for children to learn about the chief system as it failed to emulate the *fono*. As I indicated, these observations were reasonably limited and further research may be necessary to confirm or deny these findings. In the next chapter I will focus my attention on the remaining two key village-level social institutions and events with an impact on children’s learning of the chief system: the local government primary school and the church. In the next chapter, I will extend my discussion of the *fa’alavelave* as a context for learning by considering the possibility that not all children benefit equally from the opportunities they represent.

Chapter 9: Proximity to chiefly activity and the role of leveling mechanisms in the differential distribution of knowledge

This chapter will seek to consider the implications for the pattern of cultural learning that I described in chapter 7, a relatively heavy reliance upon observation and imitation as predominant modes of social learning in the Samoan context. While in chapter 11 I will consider the impact of such a pattern on the individual's developing conceptions, in this chapter and the next I will consider the impact of this form of social learning on the differential distribution of cultural competence in the chief system across the population of children in the village. If children's social learning tends to be observational and imitative, then their relative proximity to chiefs and their activities is likely to have an impact on the extent to which they are able to learn about the chief system. Ethnographic observation suggests that there is a marked difference in the extent to which households serve as sites of chiefly activity with lower-ranking households tending to be marginalized. I will also argue that gender serves to mediate the impact of household rank on the child's relative proximity to chiefly activity in complex ways.

While the data collected by this research project lacks sufficient longitudinal depth to be able to appropriately examine questions of causality (i.e. greater exposure to chiefly activity *causes* greater competence with the chief system over a developmental time span of several years), we can at least test for correlations between children's proximity to chiefly activity and their relative competency. I include in this chapter statistical analyses of children's test scores on a multiple-choice test for knowledge of respectful language and a test for conceptual knowledge of the chief system, both of which were administered to all 6th, 7th and 8th grade students at the local primary school (n=76).

While my ethnographic observations support the notion of differential proximity to chiefly activity, statistical analyses of the children's scores on tests of their knowledge of the chief system fail to provide evidence for the impact of variable proximity on children's performance. In particular, analysis of the test data fails to find statistically significant differences by gender, household rank, or the two combined. To explain these discrepancies I conclude the chapter by introduce the notion of a "leveling mechanism" in the transmission of cultural knowledge. Specifically, I argue for five leveling mechanisms, all of which serve to undercut a potentially unequal distribution of competence and cultural knowledge. In this chapter I will describe the first three of these five: (1) the public nature of the various events featuring chiefs and their actions; (2) the great permissiveness for other's observation of one's activities; and (3) a focus on the child's "behavioral" rather than "conceptual competence", which allows the child to "opt out" of refining their conceptual understanding once they can behave in ways appropriate for a given context. These three leveling factors act to allow lower-ranking children the opportunity to gain proximity to chiefly activity in order to learn about it as well as enables children of higher ranking households the freedom *not* to capitalize on the opportunities available to them. In chapter 9 I will introduce two other leveling mechanisms: (4) the role of the Pastor's school's tutoring of respectful speech and the public performance of chiefly activity at church-related events; and (5) the village primary school, its Samoan studies curriculum, and its public performances of chiefly activity. These two mechanisms work to provide instruction in and exposure to aspects of the chief system and respectful behavior without recourse to gender or the relative rank of the child's household. The net result of these five different leveling mechanisms is to

enable far greater variation in children's relative cultural competence in the chief system and to undercut a more restrictive intergenerational transmission of knowledge.

Differential proximity to chiefly activity by household rank and gender

While I have argued that the *fa'alavelave* represents a particularly good opportunity for children to be able to observe chiefly activity from relatively close proximity, it is not an opportunity that is equally shared by all. More specifically, we can observe the potential for differences in exposure to vary by household rank and by gender. I argue that this is a particularly important issue as it ties the question of cultural learning to the village-level differential distribution of competence and contributes to our understanding of the potential replication of inequality over generations in Samoa.

Household rank exerts an influence on children's opportunities to observe *fa'alavelave* and the chiefly activity, because *fa'alavelave* are disproportionately held at higher-ranking, chiefly households. This is even frequently the case when the *fa'alavelave* is held for an individual who resides in a lower-ranking household. I have attended first birthdays, events associated with weddings, and entitlement ceremonies (*saofa'i*), all of which were held in a household other than where the individual member whose birthday / wedding / entitlement was celebrated actually lived. The reason is largely one of dignity, relative space and comfort. The senior-most *matai* of a descent group usually lives in the relatively largest household for the given descent group, and some particularly high ranking title holders may possess a specialized title house usually adjacent to a village *malae* (as described in a previous section). Not only are such houses usually more able to accommodate larger numbers of guests, but they also are perceived

to be a ‘more dignified’ space in which to receive those guests. Additionally, my perception is that it was also an accommodation to the descent group’s *matai*.

What this means is that the vast majority of *fa’alavelave* associated with a given descent group are hosted at the household of the *matai* that leads the descent group. For children of the highest-ranking households in the village this means that they will have superb proximity to chiefly activity as their particularly household will host a wide range of *fa’alavelave* over time. Moreover, it is far more likely that they will have a set of immediately household members who will take an active role in the event itself, which functions to further draw their interest. For children of lower-ranking households, where no titled *matai* reside, this means that their households will likely never host a *fa’alavelave*. For these children to observe such events requires them to physical visit a higher-ranking household. Of course this does not preclude children of lower-ranking households from observing *fa’alavelave* as any member of a descent group is welcome to visit any household within that descent group. But given the increasingly large amount of work required of children beginning in middle childhood and early adolescence in the form of schoolwork, church-related activities and chores such as child-care and laundry, such a hurdle should not be underestimated. Mead (1973:45-8) speaks of young Samoan girls who are “socially isolated” even though they reside in the middle of the village as their household puts significant everyday labor in their hands, which precludes them from interacting regularly with peers. In this case, we are speaking of children who may be more “culturally isolated” as their lower-ranking household does not provide the same level of *proximity to chiefly activity* (in the form of *fa’alavelave*) as is found in higher

ranking households. Consequently, we can talk about a pattern of differential proximity to chiefly activity as varying by household rank.

This is an important issue as it suggests at least one way in which systems of inequality can be replicated with the children of higher-ranking households having greater opportunities to learn more about the chief system than children of lower-ranking households. Of course, relative competence as a child does not translate in any immediate way to relative competence as an adult, nor does relative competence in the chief system by itself automatically provide one with a position of power and authority in society. Genealogical ties and a history of service to the family, for example, can also be factors crucial to succession decisions as I describe in chapter 3. Yet my informants did suggest that early cultural competence can be a limited source of prestige for young adults, who then may then be entrusted with more prominent forms of service in adulthood and in the *'aumaga*. Additionally, cultural competence can be an important factor in deciding which among a set of candidates for chiefly title is the most viable. So while knowledge (particularly children's knowledge) cannot be precisely equated with power and authority, children's early advances may position them favorably vis-a-vis one's peers and may represent some of the earliest steps towards a pattern of unequal intergenerational transmission of power and authority.

As my mention of Mead (1973) two paragraphs ago might have foreshadowed, gender exerts an impact upon the phenomenon I have been describing. More specifically, the gender of the child serves to mediate the relative impact of the child's household rank on the child's relative proximity to chiefly activity. As has been noted repeatedly, work is largely gender-specific such that young girls and women will labor primarily in the

immediate vicinity of the household, while boys will tend to assist men in the plantation, lagoons and in the rear cooking houses with work perceived to be “dirty and heavy”. Additionally, while boys may be allowed considerable freedom to ‘wander’ (*tafao*) the village with peers particularly in early adolescence, girls are generally expected to remain at home even when their work is accomplished. Much of this is to protect the girl’s honor and chastity (as well as the brother’s and descent group’s honor for whom she is the embodiment and standard-bearer). In terms of physical mobility the impact is that girls’ relative movement within the village are far more restricted to the household than are boys, who are almost positively expected to be able to move far more widely within the village at an early age.

With regard to the *fa’alavelave*: boys’ mobility allows them the relative freedom to attend and observe *fa’alavelave* within their respective descent groups and to some extent beyond with some ease. While there is obviously still great benefit for a boy to reside within a higher-ranking household, his lower-ranking opposite is nonetheless able to visit other households when *fa’alavelave* are being held. Thus, the lower-ranking boy’s relatively great mobility enables him to overcome the potential limited proximity to chiefly activity that I have suggested exists in lower-ranking households.

For girls, however, gender mediates the impact of household rank in a different fashion than for boys. Girls’ reduced mobility means that girls of higher-ranking households are kept within the orbit of the household and thus have good proximity to chiefly activity. Girls of lower-ranking households, however, are kept close to a household that has little to no proximity to chiefly activity. While her brother’s mobility allows him to potentially overcome this deficit with his mobility, the greater restriction

on girls' mobility further enhances this deficit. Thus, gender *reduces* the impact of lower-ranking households' lack of proximity to chiefly activity for males, but *enhances* that impact for females.

We can simplify this discussion of proximity to chiefly activity and its relative impact on children's cultural competence, and open it to empirical test by summarizing these arguments as three specific hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1– Household Rank:

Children of higher-ranking households will have greater cultural competence with regard to the chief system than will children of lower-ranking households, because (a) higher-ranking households have greater proximity to chiefly activity than do lower-ranking ones, and (b) higher-ranking children are held to higher expectations of respectful behavior than are lower-ranking children. (The latter of these two proposed causal factors is likely only to operate in a minority of cases, because as I note at the beginning of the chapter only 31% believe that higher-ranking children should be held to a higher standard of behavior.)

Hypothesis 2– Gender:

Females will have greater cultural competence with regard to the chief system and respectful behavior than will males, because (a) gender-specific work and restrictions on their mobility tend to keep girls within the confines of the home and in contexts in which respectful behavior is more important than are boys, and (b) females are held to higher expectations of respectful behavior than are males. (As with hypothesis 1, the latter of

these two is likely to operate in a minority of cases, as only 40% of caretakers indicated that girls should be held to a higher standard of respectful behavior than boys.)

Hypothesis 3 - Household rank and gender:

Gender will moderate the impact of household rank on children's relative competence in chiefly activity. For females the relative impact of the household rank and proximity to chiefly activity (high in higher-higher ranking households and low in lower-ranking households) will be *enhanced* as females tend to be more restricted in their movements beyond the household. For males, on the other hand, the relative impact of the household rank and proximity to chiefly activity will be *reduced* as the more highly mobile boys are able to overcome the short-comings of the lower-ranking household and its relatively low proximity to chiefly activity.

We can hypothesize that girls of high-ranking households will have the highest scores, followed by boys of high-ranking households and boys of lower-ranking households. Girls of lower-ranking households will have the weakest competence of any sub-group of children. Schematically, we can represent the predicted scores for the four sub-populations of children as follows:

High-ranking girls > High-ranking boys > Low-ranking boys > Low-ranking girls

Differences in competence by gender and household rank: Testing the hypotheses

Based on the evidence gathered by this study, is there any evidence to support any or all of these three hypotheses? Certainly the body of evidence most amenable to examining these possibilities is the test of conceptual knowledge of the chief system (hereafter “conceptual test”) and the test of knowledge of respectful vocabulary (hereafter “vocabulary test”). As described in greater detail in chapter 4, these two paper-and-pencil tests were administered to all of the 6th, 7th and 8th grade students (n=76) present at the local government primary school on a single day in March 2002. The conceptual test was designed to provide an assessment of children’s conceptual knowledge regarding the Samoan chief system in general and its local manifestations and consisted of 14 multiple choice and true / false questions. The vocabulary test was designed to determine the child’s comprehension of the Samoan respect lexicon used extensively in reference to *matai* and other high-ranking individuals. It consisted of 17 multiple choice questions that required respondents to match a respectful lexical item with its everyday equivalent. The scores on each of these tests were summed and constitute a simple linear index. Simple demographic data was also collected and this set of data was analyzed using SPSS version 14 as described below. Descriptive statistics of the test scores by gender and household rank are presented in table 9.1.

The first two hypotheses of the impact of household rank and gender were evaluated using t-tests of independent samples, and the results are summarized in table 9.2. While the descriptive statistics of table 9.1 show that both females and children of higher ranking households do have a mean that is higher than that of males and children

of lower ranking households, the t-tests of the test score data suggest that these differences by gender and household rank are not statistically significant.

Table 9.1: Descriptive statistics of Test Scores by Gender and Household Rank

Vocabulary Test			
	N	Mean (SE Mean)	Std. deviation
Male	32	9.81 ± .72	4.08
Female	32	10.88 ± .81	4.61
High ranking household	48	10.44 ± .64	4.43
Low ranking household	16	10.06 ± 1.05	4.20
Conceptual Test			
	N	Mean (SE Mean)	Std. deviation
Male	39	4.77 ± .31	1.95
Female	36	5.36 ± .35	2.10
High ranking household	55	5.22 ± .28	2.07
Low ranking household	20	4.60 ± .42	1.87

Table 9.2: T-tests of Independent Samples of Test Scores by Gender and Household Rank

	Mean difference	95% CI	T	df	Sig.
Vocabulary Test					
Gender	1.06	-3.24, 1.11	0.977	62	.333 ns.
Household rank	0.38	-2.15, 2.90	0.296	62	.768 ns.
Conceptual Test					
Gender	0.59	-1.52, 0.34	1.265	73	.210 ns.
Household rank	0.62	-0.40, 1.67	1.167	73	.247 ns.

With regard to the impact of gender on children's performance on the respectful vocabulary test scores: the difference between the sample mean of females and males was 1.06 with a 95% confidence interval from -3.24 to 1.11, and the test statistic (t) was 0.977 with 62 degrees of freedom and a P value of 0.333. The difference in the sample mean between children of high-ranking families and lower-ranking families was 0.38 with a 95% confidence interval from -2.15 to 2.90. The test statistic in this case was 0.296 with 62 degrees of freedom and a P value of .768. Neither of the results of these two t-tests

demonstrates any statistically significant difference by gender or the household rank of the child on the vocabulary test.

T-tests of the conceptual test score data by gender and household rank reveal the same lack of statistically significant difference in children's performance. The difference between the sample means of females and males was 0.59 with a 95% confidence interval from -1.52 to 0.34; the test statistic (t) was 1.265 with 73 degrees of freedom and a P value of .210. The difference between the sample means of children of high ranking and lower ranking households was 0.62 with a 95% confidence interval from -0.40 to 1.67, and the test statistic (t) was 1.167 with 73 degrees of freedom and a P value of .247.

Interaction of Gender and Household Rank

The potential effects of the interactions of the child's gender and household rank on their test scores (hypothesis 3) were evaluated using a factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) having two levels of household rank (high and low) and two levels of gender as the between-group variables. Descriptive statistics of the performance of these groups on the two tests can be found in table 9.3 below. The far right two columns includes rank ordering by mean score for each of these sub-populations (i.e. high ranking females, high ranking males, lower ranking males, and lower ranking females). "Predicted" is the rank ordering forecasted by hypothesis 3, while "actual" is the calculated rank order by mean test score. As the reader can see, there are some elements of the prediction that can be observed in the data. For example, high-ranking females do indeed lead all other groups in mean scores on both tests, and low-ranking females are at least second to last in mean scores on both tests.

Table 9.3: Descriptive Statistics of Test Scores for Children Grouped by Gender and Household Rank

Vocabulary Test					
	n	Mean (95% CI)	Std. dev.	Rank order by mean	
				Predicted	Actual
High ranking female	23	11.39 (9.45, 13.32)	4.48	1	1
High ranking male	25	9.56 (7.78, 11.34)	4.30	2	3
Low ranking male	7	10.71 (7.66, 13.77)	3.30	3	2
Low ranking female	9	9.55 (9.25, 11.43)	4.93	4	4
Conceptual Test					
	n	Mean (95% CI)	Std. dev.	Rank order by mean	
				Predicted	Actual
High ranking female	25	5.64 (4.77, 6.51)	2.10	1	1
High ranking male	30	4.87 (4.10, 5.62)	2.03	2	2
Low ranking male	9	4.44 (3.11, 5.78)	1.74	3	4
Low ranking female	11	4.73 (3.34, 6.11)	2.05	4	3

Despite these tentative patterns in the rank ordering of the means, the factorial ANOVA showed neither the main effects of household rank and gender nor the interaction effect of the two to be statistically significant. The results of this analysis are in table 9.4 below. The results do not lend any support for hypothesis 3 that household rank moderates the impact of gender on children's developing cultural competence and knowledge. Given the considerable overlap in the 95% confidence interval for all of the mean scores reported in table 9.3 this result is not surprising.

Table 9.4: Factorial ANOVA of Children's Test Scores by Rank, Gender and Rank*Gender

Vocabulary test					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Rank	1.376	1	1.376	.072	.789 ns.
Gender	1.341	1	1.341	.070	.792 ns.
Rank*Gender	26.494	1	26.494	1.388	.243 ns.
Error	1145.289	60	19.088		
Conceptual test					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Rank	6.472	1	6.472	1.576	.214 ns.
Gender	4.051	1	4.051	.986	.324 ns.
Rank*Gender	.874	1	.874	.213	.646 ns.
Error	291.631	71	4.107		

In conclusion then, my analysis of the test score data provides no support for the three hypotheses described above. This was a surprising finding and contrasted in important ways with ethnographic observations that do suggest practical differences in proximity to chiefly activity by gender and household rank. How can we reconcile this disjuncture between ethnographic observation and statistical analysis of the test scores? Three clear possibilities seem to exist.

First, there is the potential problem of measurement validity. I cannot rule out the possibility that the two tests submitted to the school children do not adequately assess and quantify children's competence in these domains of cultural knowledge. Yet as I describe in chapter 4, pre-testing of the instruments in which adults scored at or near perfect and where chiefs and untitled adults described the questions as touching upon important concepts does not suggest this to be the case. Another possible complication with the instruments is that the tests may not measure household rank in sufficient specificity to adequate test for its impact. Given the difficulties inherent in asking children to rank their own households in a coherent and linear fashion and the political

delicacy of obtaining external rankings of the child's household, a more robust measure seemed exceedingly difficult at the time.

A second possibility is that the sample size may simply have been too small to detect anything but an extremely strong effect by rank and / or gender on children's scores. Future research using a far larger population of children drawn from different villages can serve to determine whether or not this is a reality.

A third and final possible explanation for the disjuncture between ethnographic observation and analysis of the test scores that I would like to consider in the remainder of this chapter is that there is a set of practices and social institutions that serve to overcome the problem of proximity to chiefly activity. Specifically, I will consider the possibility that various *leveling mechanisms* exist to more broadly distribute exposure to chiefly activity across the population of village children.

Leveling mechanisms in the differential distribution of cultural competence

The notion of a "leveling mechanism" has been used in various ways in social and political anthropology, most typically with reference to social, economic or ecological factors that serve to reduce differences in wealth or sociopolitical hierarchy in a given society (Boehm 1993). Fried (1967:34), for example, argued that the exigencies of nomadic hunting, which required relatively small group sizes and high levels of interpersonal cooperation, barred some members of the group from accumulating far more material wealth and power than others. The role of witchcraft accusations in preventing community members from varying too far from community norms, particularly in the accumulation of wealth and possessions, has been asserted by authors

ranging from Kluckhohn (1967) in his work among the Navaho to Evers' (2002) more recent work among the Betsileo of Madagascar. Richard Lee's (2003) account of the practice of ridiculing the spoils of hunting (i.e. 'insulting the meat') and of sharing arrows amongst hunters to confuse the issue of who actually killed a given animal are examples of practices employed by the Dobe Ju/'hoansi to restrict the ascendancy of any individual adult male through skill in hunting in this markedly egalitarian society. Finally, in his cross-cultural survey of egalitarian societies, Christopher Boehm (1993) points to a wide range of different leveling mechanisms including criticism and ridicule, disobedience, and even the killing of individuals deemed to be excessively domineering, aggressive or repeated violators of important social norms. He argues that these different leveling mechanisms enable the domination of any potential leaders by their own "followers", who are guided by an ethos that disapproves of hierarchical behavior and individual actors' striving for power.

My use of a "leveling mechanism" in this context will be in line with these other authors in that I will focus on social and cultural practices and institutions that serve to prevent or reduce the development of disparities in a population of people. Yet my interest here is not in inequalities in political power, but rather in cultural learning and the distribution of cultural knowledge and competence. Consequently I will use the term "leveling mechanism" in this context to refer to a pattern of social practice, social institution, or ecological variable that serves to widely disseminate knowledge and cultural competence, and undercut more restrictive forms of intergenerational transmission. My larger argument is that there are a set of leveling mechanisms in the Samoan context that operate to disseminate cultural knowledge without recourse to

household rank, enabling children of lower- and mid-ranking families the opportunity to learn what might otherwise be primarily the province of the higher-ranking families. I will point to three leveling mechanisms below as well as a further two in the next chapter (# 4 and 5 in chapter 9) when I discuss important pedagogical institutions in village Samoa. These five mechanisms are summarized in table 9.5.

Table 9.5: Leveling mechanisms in the dissemination of cultural knowledge and behavioral competence

Leveling mechanisms
1. High visibility and ‘publicness’ of chiefly activity
2. Permissiveness towards other’s observations of one’s actions
3. Focus on behavioral rather than conceptual competence
4. Pastor’s school’s tutoring of respectful speech and cultural performances
5. Primary School’s Samoan Studies curriculum and cultural performances

1. High visibility and ‘publicness’ of chiefly activity

As described earlier in this chapter, village social events and the chiefly activities that they envelope are pronouncedly public and highly visible as they draw audiences from across the village and occasionally from neighboring villages and well beyond. While one could try to explain public interest in these events away simply with reference to the spectacle that many of these events entail, it is important to ask why they are locally perceived by nature to be public and open to observation. It is certainly possible to imagine an alternative situation, where *fa’alavelave* such as weddings and funerals, for example, could be conceptualized as more “private” affairs involving only those individuals immediately involved.

There are two specific reasons why these events are locally perceived to be public in nature. First, it is necessary for the individual to demonstrate his or her continued support for individuals and groups connected through genealogical ties for those

relationships to stay alive. As Firth (1957; 1963), Keesing (1968), and others have noted, ambilineal (cognatic) forms of descent reckoning, such as those found throughout Polynesia, require genealogical relations to be ‘activated’ through effort (i.e. providing exchange goods, labor, support in time of need, residence). Such activation substantiates otherwise latent genealogical relations and crystallizes descent groups in pragmatic ways (Fox 1983:150-63). With reference to Samoa, Tiffany (1975a:432) points to economic support of the descent group’s exchanges and ceremonial redistributions through the provisioning of labor, cash and other important exchange goods such as pigs and fine mats (*‘ie toga*) as a quintessential way⁶⁰ in which such genealogical relations are activated. What this means is that any *fa’alavelave* will be the hub of activity not only for the immediate household(s) involved in the event, but also for individuals and households interested in asserting (or reasserting) more distant genealogical relationships to that household. Consequently, any *fa’alavelave* will inherently attract a far larger collection of related individuals across the village, and occasionally across the region, archipelago and from overseas communities. As it is important that the descent group as a corporate body understand who its various members are, the provisioning of support by those members is necessarily public.

A second and more important reason is that all social events and *fa’alavelave* that feature chiefly activity represent opportunities for different chiefs and their descent groups to publicly demonstrate and enact their social rank in the village. As I described earlier in this chapter, chiefs and higher-ranking families lack unambiguous markers of their social status and relative rank in the majority of social contexts in the village.

⁶⁰ Tiffany (1975:432) also points to: (i) residence on and (ii) cultivation of a descent group’s land, and (iii) political support as other the key ways in which descent group membership is enacted and asserted.

Consequently, public enactment of status in the more limited number of ritual contexts, such as *fa'alavelave* and *fono*, where social rank can be signified are especially important. These situations allow for the assertion of the rank of the individual chief and the strength of the descent group that he or she represents. The continued vitality of the descent group is demonstrated through the quality and quantity of the economic support they provide. For the chiefs themselves these events can take on a competitive edge, because, as I describe in chapter 3, the relative ranking of individual chiefs within a village is far from static and uncontested. The *fa'alavelave* and other social events thus provides an important context in which chiefs can and do compete with one another in asserting their relative rank, importance, and influence in the village.

There are, of course, some limits to the visibility of chiefly activities as well; most notably with regard to economic considerations. For example, there was an entitlement ceremony (*saofa'i*) in which a set of three individuals were to take the same title, and there had been considerable public discussion prior to the event. Much of this publicity occurred because the event was held in late December, when the village swells with family members returning from other parts of the archipelago as well as overseas for the holidays. Additionally, two of the three were individuals to receive titles resided permanently overseas. As long-time overseas residents are (correctly or incorrectly) perceived to be wealthy, there was an expectation that the various *matai* who attended the ceremony would receive substantial cash gifts for attending. However, there were so many *matai* from the village and neighboring villages in attendance that the vast majority received less than a *tala* (~\$.50 USD), which was perceived to be ridiculous and by some a bit insulting. Much of the blame for this state of affairs fell to descent group members

who had “over-publicized” the event and drew too many visitors. People suggested that, while it would be an affront and embarrassing for the descent group hosting the event, to conduct any social events such as a wedding, funeral or *saofa'i* as if it were a private event, steps can be taken to host the event early in the morning to reduce the number of individuals coming simply to receive gifts for attending.

The high visibility and publicness of chiefly activity functions as a leveling mechanism in that it provides opportunities for observational learning not merely for children whose households are directly involved, but more broadly to other children within the larger descent group(s) involved, as well as children across the larger community if they are so motivated to observe. In this sense, the pronounced visibility of the different social events provides a check to fact that higher-ranking households hold or attend a disproportionate amount of *fa'alavelave* and live in greater proximity to important social events in the village. Because of the very publicness of these events and the ability of any motivated individual to observe them, children of any ranking household may frequently choose to attend these events and gain proximity to chiefly activity.

2. Permissiveness towards other's observations of one's actions

In a very general sense, Samoan culture is markedly and pervasively permissive in allowing others to observe one's actions. Personal privacy and having some expectation to be out of the gaze of others is simply not valued in this cultural context. My best explanation for such an orientation is a developmental one. Growing up in a densely populated social environment, frequently in homes without walls or other private

spaces, and being in consistent and close proximity to others certainly would inculcate such an attitude and pattern of value. Additionally, the degree to which individuals will call greetings to and address comments to others in neighboring houses or walkways, and the way in which descent group members and acquaintances may suddenly appear in one's home with little warning consistently enacts the high visibility of one's actions. Indeed, not only do Samoans have little expectation or desire for privacy, but as Shore (1982: 178-80) notes, attempts at obscuring one's activities, by lowering the blinds on one's home for example, can be taken to suggest engagement in illicit and immoral acts. Consequently, steps can be taken to prevent even the accidental provisioning of private spaces in households in the village center.

As a leveling mechanism, such an attitude supplements the very publicness of chiefly activity by allowing individuals the freedom to position themselves in such a way to observe such activities purely for the sake of curiosity. Rather than the audience of a given *fa'alavelave* or village social event being sharply limited to a closed set of "ratified participants" (Goffman 1979; 1981; see also Hanks 1996: 207ff) who are directly and immediately involved in the interaction as speaker and addressee, the audience can legitimately consist of any number of other interested but "unratified" parties. Consequently, just as any nighttime television program in a rural household will have an audience of immediately family members watching from within the house and another audience observing from outside the house, so too will any large wedding, funeral or *saofa'i* draw a crowd of uninvolved but curious observers on the periphery.

The significance of this phenomenon should not be overlooked. Its practical significance is that while chiefly activities, which tend to be disproportionately

concentrated in the higher-ranking households, can be readily observed by children and other members of lower-ranking households. Thus, while children of higher-ranking households will more likely have pragmatically easier time observing chiefly activity in their household, children of lower-ranking households are not excluded from observation. The potentially direct line of transmission by household rank is upset.

3. Focus on behavioral rather than conceptual competence

A third leveling mechanism is the relatively greater emphasis paid by parents, caretakers and other adults to children's "behavioral competency" rather than "conceptual competency" in teaching children about respectful behavior and the chief system. As I described in far greater detail in chapter 7, while Samoan parents tend not to actively teach their children about the chief system or respectful behavior (e.g. verbal instruction) they do correct children's inappropriate behavior and mistakes. These corrections usually take the form of verbal exhortations to stop or not perform a given action - the ubiquitous *aua* ("don't") and *soia* ("stop it"), threats of physical punishment (e.g. *sasa 'oe* "[I'll] hit you", *fasi 'oe* "[I'll] beat you"), or general insults (e.g. *e te valea?* "Are you stupid?"). More serious violations of etiquette or other forms of misbehavior, particularly around persons of rank, can elicit fairly intense levels of corporeal punishment by Western standards depending on the particular caretaker involved.

Yet what this pattern of error-correction typically lacks, however, is additional information to qualify or extend the correction. Children learn to associate certain patterns of behavior and contextual cues with caretaker disapproval (e.g. remaining quiet and out of the way of adults when 'less familiar' persons and older persons visit the

household), but there is little external impetus to try and connect larger conceptual understandings that might structure these more concrete associations (e.g. persons of higher rank (i.e. strangers, chiefs, pastors, and the elderly) deserve greater respect because of their social standing and this includes heightened behavioral restraint). Consequently, while the child has learnt that such misbehavior is inappropriate and may elicit sanctions in the future, they may not consistently understand the larger logic of the correction or the concepts involved.

This third leveling mechanism is prelude to a topic that I will discuss in far greater detail in chapter 10, where I consider individual conceptual development in terms of representational change. Consensus has grown in developmental psychology around a notion of distinct representational levels including non-symbolic, non-propositional, procedural representational levels as well as increasingly abstract, computationally and consciously accessible representational levels (Bickhard 1987; Karmiloff-Smith 1992; Mandler 1998; Mounoud 1993; Nelson 1996; Perner 1993). Children's associational learning of behavioral restraint and contextual cues of rank, for example, can be considered to be instantiated at a lower, procedural level of representation. Robust knowledge at this representational level entails behavioral competency, which allows the bearer to behave in appropriate ways in appropriate contexts. But such competence does not require nor entail more refined and abstract conceptual knowledge and competency. Whether these representations are abstracted, refined, and made consciously accessible over developmental time (in a process that Karmiloff-Smith (1992) refers to as "representational redefinition") remains a secondary step⁶¹. In the Samoan context, once

⁶¹ Of course, learning may occur initially at a consciously and explicitly accessible level (e.g. learning about the tooth fairy, the names of state capitals, and that the Earth is not flat). But as I will argue in

the child learns to behave in ways that accord with caretaker standards so that they no longer elicit corrections (i.e. *behavioral competence*), there is little to no caretaker or parental efforts promoting or testing for children's further refinement of their understandings (i.e. *conceptual competence*).

This issue is important with regard to the differential distribution of cultural competence, because it means that children may effectively “opt out” of refining their learning once they have achieved behavioral competency in this domain of cultural knowledge. Stated another way, once the child can exhibit all of the appropriate respectful behaviors so that they fail to elicit parental corrections, there is no further external motivation from parents, adults or other family members to refine and further develop their understanding on a conceptual level. As Bruner, Wood and colleagues note (Wood 1986; Wood, et al. 1976), one of the most significant but often overlooked aspects of the scaffolding processes is to motivate the learner. Children's interest in a problem may wane or their attention may be wander well before they have developed a greater and more conceptually focused understanding. Acknowledging this fact is important because it reminds us that although a child may be in an environment rich in chiefly activity, it does not automatically mean that they will be attending to those aspects of the environment in a concentrated way. While this fact is relevant for all children and the different developmental trajectories along down which they flow, it is clearly most relevant for children of highest ranking households. It means that whatever advantage might be incurred via residence in a higher-ranking household, not all higher ranking

chapter 10, certainly a good proportion of the learning in this domain of cultural knowledge does seem to be built on a framework of procedural knowledge regarding respectful behavior.

children may decide to take advantage of these opportunities. Individual agency is an important and oft overlooked constituent element of cultural learning.

We can contrast such a situation with relatively little external scaffolding of children's motivation, for example, with the initiation rituals of highland Papua New Guinea as described by Herdt (1981; 1982), Barth (1975; 1987), Tuzin (1980), Lutkehaus (1995) and others. In these diverse contexts, there are significant and concerted attempts by adults and ritual elders to recruit and focus children's attention on the task at hand through a variety of means, including the use of specialized contexts, various ritual practices, and heightened fear and anxiety (Whitehouse 2001). After providing an account of the practice of "penis-bleeding" as part of the male initiation among the Ilahita Arapesh, Tuzin observes that the whole ordeal is "carefully and successfully designed to inspire maximum horror in its victims" (1980:74). In such contexts, we can be far more certain of children's focus and a greater probability of fidelity in transmission because there are considerable external resources focused on recruiting and orienting children (on the complex relationship of trauma and memory see Cordon, et al. 2004). Of course as Shore (1996b:236-60) notes in discussing the age-grading rites of the Murngin of Northern Australia, cultural knowledge may not necessarily be presented in a manner readily accessible to children and may require repeated encounters before the child can begin to develop more sophisticated understandings of the material.

4. Pastor's school's tutoring of respectful speech and cultural performances

5. Village primary school's Samoan Studies curriculum and cultural performances

In the next chapter I will consider the role of the pastor's school (#4) and the village primary school (#5) in providing instruction in Samoan culture, the chief system, and respectful behavior and language to the entire population of village children. Moreover, the school and church activities, such as beauty pageant fundraisers, are also a frequent source of "cultural performances" that provide a form of exposure to chiefly activity – although few if any chiefs are actually involved in the activity itself – that can provide opportunities to learn about the chief system. I will examine these two leveling mechanisms in the context of an ethnographic description of these pedagogical institutions in the next chapter.

The impact of individual histories, relationships and meanings on competence

It is important to keep in mind that there are many additional factors at work in influencing the particular level of competence achieved by a child beyond the influence of their "social address" (i.e. gender and the relative rank of their household). As an illustration of some of these more stochastic and individual factors, I will conclude this chapter with a brief description of a 12-year-old female student, who I will call "Sina", who achieved some of the very highest scores on the conceptual test of the chief system and the respectful language test.

Examination of the primary school children's test scores revealed Sina's scores on both tests to be among the very highest. Her score on the conceptual test of the chief system was the single highest out of all of the children in all three grade levels ($n = 75$). Her score of 11 (out of a possible 14) on this test was just within three standard deviations above the mean (mean = 5.05, SD = 2.00, 3 standard deviations = 11.15),

indicating the degree to which her performance qualifies her as an outlier. Her score on the respectful vocabulary test placed her among the top 8 performers (90th percentile), 7 of who scored 16 out of a possible 17. The variance on this test was more pronounced such that Sina's score was within two standard deviation above the mean (mean = 10.34, SD = 4.35). Thus in terms of these two measures, Sina's level of cultural competence and knowledge of the chief system and respectful speech is very good when not superior in comparison with other children of her age range (10 - 14 years of age) in the village.

What processes or mechanisms might be responsible for Sina's particularly strong competence in these domains of cultural knowledge? Certainly her household is a prominent chiefly one as it includes two titleholders, including Fuga, a high-ranking and politically prominent *ali'i* in the village. Fuga was widely known in the village as a prominent actor in both the village and *pitonu'u fono*, as well as in his role as the representative for his *pitonu'u* on the disciplinary committee. Fuga was also a deacon in the local Congregational Christian Church, which provided him with distinction and authority in that sphere of village life as well. When asked to describe him, his peers pointed to his intimate knowledge of the village and its history as well as his ability to use humor and persuasion to diffuse tense situations and social conflicts. Given Fuga's and his household's regular engagement in *fa'alavelave* in the village and beyond, *fono*, and disciplinary committee work, the level of chiefly activity in which his household and descent group were engaged was high.

In addition to the household itself being a center of chiefly activity, the physical location of the residence was in close spatial proximity to a range of other important sites of chiefly activities in the village. Fuga's senior *ali'i* title entitled him to live in a

designated chiefly residence, referred to as a “*maota*”⁶², directly adjacent to the *malae* of the central *pitonu’u* of the village. This meant, of course, that the majority of Fuga’s neighbors also bore important chiefly titles in this *pitonu’u* and his household had a privileged position to view any *fa’alavelave* that might occur in these neighboring households. One of these neighboring households housed one of the three most prominent orators in the entire village. During the course of my stay, the *fono* of this particular *pitonu’u* were consistently held in this orator’s chiefly house (*laoa*), which being only a few hundred feet from Fuga’s residence was readily visible and accessible. This sub-village’s *fono* was particularly active during my research as it sought to resolve a number of ongoing conflicts over plantation land rights and building rights. Fuga’s household was also positioned a few hundred yards east of the pastor’s house, the EFKS church and church meeting house, and the community health center, which functioned as the village’s meeting house (*fale fonu*) for the large village-wide *fono* and for meetings of the village disciplinary committee. In terms of positioning oneself to observe chiefly activity, it would have been very difficult to select a better location anywhere in the village.

While Sina’s household clearly represented a rich environment for learning about the chief system, as I described above children may still select to “opt out” of these opportunities once a basic level of behavioral competence is achieved. What characteristics, experiences or relationships might have stimulated Sina to take advantage of these opportunities? In terms of personal attributes, I found Sina to be confident and competent in all of the different social contexts in which I had occasion to observe her,

⁶² All senior high and orator chiefs have a main title house. Those belonging to high-ranking orators are called “*laoa*”, but are not associated with specific *malae* as is the case with *ali’i* (Shore 1982:61).

ranging from caring for her younger siblings to the Sunday school classroom to peer groups that I occasionally witnessed. In our few individual interactions, I found her to be articulate, intelligent, and markedly serious for her age. She also demonstrated little of the shyness towards strangers that some children her age could show when interviewed in front of family members by the foreign ethnographer. Her parents described her as a good student in school, and although they acknowledged that she would have to study hard in preparation of the final examinations to qualify for admittance into secondary school, they were unanimous in their belief that she would continue.

In addition to her social competence, confidence and intelligence, two additional possible contributing factors seemed relevant. First, Sina's mother intimated that Sina's close relationship to Fuga, who was her oldest brother, might actually have motivated her to attend more closely to chiefly activity in general in an attempt to gain his attention. Sina's father had died when she was 6 and her mother had returned to live with her family in her natal village. Although the entire family provided support to Sina and her mother, Sina's mother suggested that Fuga might have demonstrated a level of compassion and kindness towards the girl that was uncharacteristic for an otherwise reserved senior *matai*. She described Sina as his *pele* ("favorite") amongst the number of children in the household in terms of his treatment of her. And Sina's mother and grandmother both reported Sina as being greatly enamored of Fuga at this time in her life and acting in ways to gain his attention.⁶³

While there are few opportunities for children to demonstrate any skill with regard to chiefly activity except through proper service and behavioral restraint, Sina did

⁶³ While the girl herself denied such a motivation, it is unlikely that I was sufficiently well acquainted with her to get an honest response to such a question.

represent her family in the EFKS's beauty pageant fundraiser. All of the church deacons, lay preacher, the pastor, and a few other prominent families with children roughly 10 – 16 select one boy and / or one girl to compete in this event which includes performing a set of traditional dances as well as a “cultural performance”. Whereas most competitors demonstrate gender stereotyped skills (e.g. girls demonstrating *tapa*-making⁶⁴ and boys demonstrating kava preparation), Sina's selected a recitation of the village *fa'alupega* or honorific village address for her skill. The *fa'alupega* directly or implicitly recognizes all of the important constituent families and titles of the specific village and is used in a variety of important discourse contexts, including formal greetings (Duranti 1994:32-6; 1997; Mead 1969; Shore 1982:71-8). Replete with metaphor, mythological reference, and esoteric language it can be difficult to learn, additionally because its use is typically restricted to ritual occasions. Indeed, despite its cultural value there were several middle-aged, untitled fathers in my study who could not accurately recite even the beginning of the village's *fa'alupega* when asked. Consequently, the ability of a young girl (11 years of age at the time of the pageant) to learn to perform the *fa'alupega* is an impressive one⁶⁵. While Fuga did not himself tutor her in the ceremonial address, he was reported by her mother to have taken visible pride in her ability to have done so without error. When I asked him about it, Fuga himself visibly expressed a measure of pride in Sina's

⁶⁴ Tapa (“*siapo*”) is traditional cloth made from pounding the bark of the paper mulberry tree (*broussonetia papyrifera*) into strips of soft fiber, which is then glued together to make large sheets and painted with geometric designs.

⁶⁵ The generalized cognitive skill of memorization is an important and culturally valued one in Samoan society. *Matai*'s ability to remember the *fa'alupega* from different villages, Biblical quotes & mythology for use in oration, as well as genealogical relationships, the boundaries of land, and so forth are considered to be quintessential skills for this social role. Children are socialized into this skill both in school and in Sunday school where the memorization of Biblical passages and hymns are included at every level.

performance even if he had to disguise his pride⁶⁶ by describing the entire event of children “playing” at being *matai* as somewhat silly.

This case was meant to be merely illustrative of the various factors beyond those of the child’s “social address” (i.e. gender and household rank) that might prove to motivate an interest (or its lack) in chiefly activity. In this case it may very well have been a positive, paternal relationship with a senior member of the household soon after her move to an unfamiliar household that induced Sina to attend to the chiefly activities involving that senior member in an attempt to continue to gain his attention. Certainly, if we were to inquire more broadly into children’s life histories a wide range of stochastic events, relationships and individual attributes might promote a particular interest in gaining competence in the system. The third leveling mechanism, which lends considerable weight to children’s agency in deciding whether or not they will continue to develop their understandings in conceptual ways, certainly increases the impact of these factors.

In the next chapter I will continue to consider two further leveling mechanism tied to two particularly important contexts of children’s lives: the village primary school and the church.

⁶⁶ Samoan parents tend to believe that children should not be praised for positive behaviors or success in school as such praise is thought to create conceit (*fiapoto*) in the child.

Chapter 10 - The role of village pedagogical institutions in teaching hierarchy: The local primary and Pastor's Schools

Rogoff (2003) points out that the rise of industrialization in the United States and other Western nations was accompanied by the increasing separation of home and the workplace, age-grading of everyday activities, and increasing segregation of children into specialized child-focused social institutions, most notably schools and daycare. She argues that such a phenomenon rendered the West fundamentally different from much of the rest of the world, where children tend to be well-integrated into the everyday activities of their families and communities, and learning is simply an aspect of children's participation. While her general point is well-taken and accurate in many cases, there are examples of specialized child-focused social institutions with important pedagogical functions in non-Western contexts as well. The most notable example is male and female initiation rituals, where children are removed from their families, subjected to specialized rites of passage, and explicitly trained in forms of knowledge and practices thought to be necessary for adulthood (Barth 1987; Beidelman 1997; Herdt 1982; Kratz 1994; Lutkehaus 1995). A second is apprenticeships with ritual specialists, artisans and craftspeople (e.g. Barth 1989; Lancy 1980; Marchant 2001; Singleton 1998), which includes some scaffolding to allow novices to participate in specialized activities typically segregated from the everyday life of the larger community.

Moreover, regardless of the historically veracity of Rogoff's argument, in contemporary Samoa as in many other parts of the world formal, institutionalized schooling is now very common. Primary schools are widely available in most villages in both urban and rural areas of Samoa, and are widely attended through age 14. There has also been a recent push in Samoa to introduce preschools in much of the country, and

there exists training and national certification for early education as well as an active and international Samoan Preschool Teachers Association. The village church is also a source of institutionalized formal education in its numerous manifestations: Sunday school, youth group and choir practice, Pastor's school, preparations for White Sunday, Christmas service, and other church events. While Sunday school and the Pastor's school are the clearest and best examples of pedagogical institutions, the majority of these different church organizations are organized using the template of the Western classroom with teachers, blackboards, homework, and grade levels. These facts suggest that an examination of socialization and cultural learning in the Samoan context would not be complete without a consideration of these educational institutions.

In this chapter I will examine two of these social institutions – the local primary school and the pastor's school – in terms of their relative contribution to children and young adults' developing knowledge of the *matai* system. These two are institutions of “formal education” in the classical sense (e.g. Lave 1988; Scribner and Cole 1973) as their explicit and primary purpose is to educate and socialize, rather than “informal education” where socialization occurs as part of one's participation in everyday activity, and where learning is frequently a subsidiary outcome. Although not their only or even most prominent task, education in certain aspects of Samoan culture is included as a subject of study in both school⁶⁷ and church. Additionally, contribution to children's learning about the chief system are also made via more informal channels as the school and various church-organized social events provide contexts for children to observe and

⁶⁷ The study of Samoan language and culture is included at all levels of education from preschool to tertiary. At the tertiary level, one can study Samoan culture, society, and history in the Department of Anthropology as well as the Department of Samoan Studies at the National University of Samoa (NUS) in Apia.

learn about “traditional” Samoan culture - including elements of chiefly ritual practice - through cultural performances and “Culture Days”.

In this chapter I will also continue the argument begun in the last chapter with regard to leveling mechanisms and the differential distribution of competence. Specifically I will consider the local primary school and Pastor’s school as a fourth and fifth leveling mechanism respectively, serving to widely disseminate competence in respectful language and knowledge of the chief system across the population of children in the village (see table 8.8 for a summary of the different proposed leveling mechanisms). Considerations of schools as a means of reducing social inequality have their roots in a philosophical tradition that can be traced back to John Dewey (1916), Thomas Jefferson (Hellenbrand 1990), and others, who believed that public education could provide equality of opportunity in the acquisition of socially-valued knowledge and skills to persons of all social classes and backgrounds. While this position has been sharply criticized as naïve and untenable in large, industrialized nations, given the particular circumstances of the Samoan educational system (i.e. the lack of alternative schools and “tracking” by ability), the local primary school and the pastor’s school could actually serve this role.

On the basis of ethnographic observation and statistical analyses of a set of multiple-choice tests of respectful language and the chief system administered to several grades in the local primary school, I provide evidence that the primary school does effectively disseminate knowledge of respectful language widely across the population of village children. The data suggests that schooling does greatly reduce the existing variance in village children’s relative knowledge of respectful speech, and effectively

erases some of the ‘gain’ or ‘shortcoming’ provided by the child’s household in terms of providing greater or lesser exposure to respectful speech. The impact of schooling is less pronounced with regard to knowledge of the chief system but still noteworthy.

The primary village social institutions for children

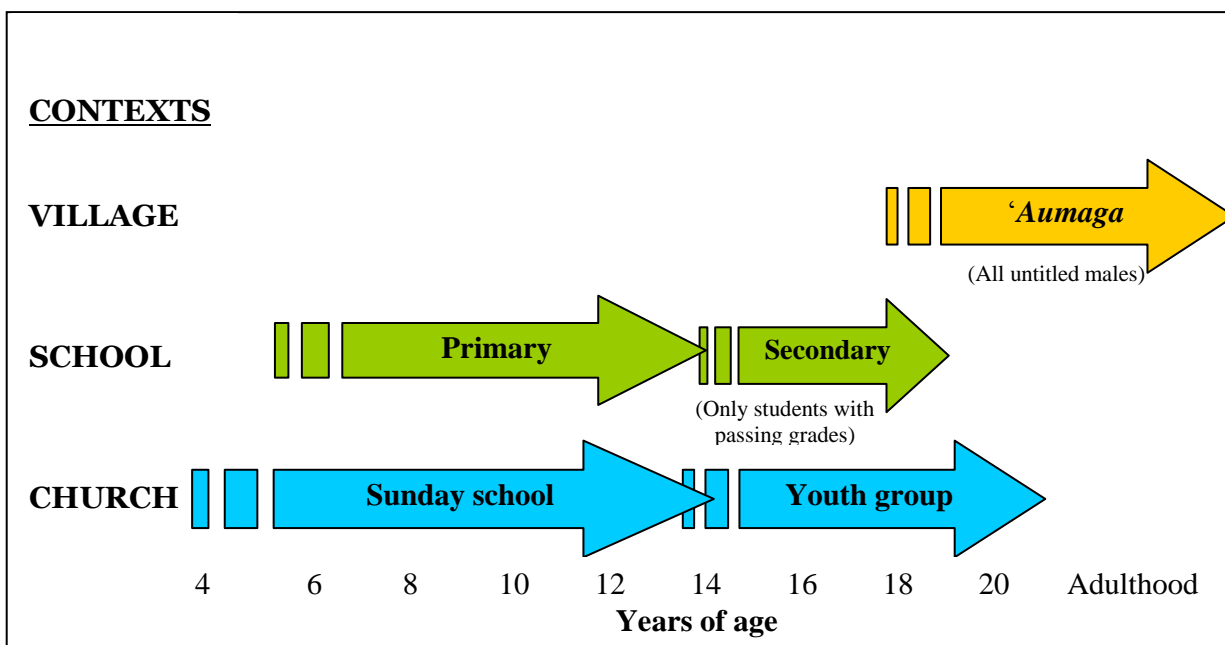
There is a small set of child- or youth-focused, extra-familial social institutions in village Samoa. The most important of these for children and adolescents younger than 20 years of age – Primary and secondary schools, the untitled men’s association or ‘*aumaga*, Sunday school and church youth group - are represented in Figure 10.1 below. The graphic representation depicts the approximate age range for their participation. They are quite predictably tied to the central village social institutions of church, school, and village council of chiefs (*fono*). Historically the ‘*aumaga* was complemented by an association of young, unmarried women⁶⁸ called the *aualuma*. As I noted in the previous chapter, at least in recent history this group and its role in village life has largely been co-opted by the village Women’s Committee and church youth groups. Consequently I have not included it in the Figure 10.1.

With the exception of primary school, in which one enrolls usually in the fifth year of life, there is flexibility to the timing of starting and the length of the child’s participation in these various groups. The dashed lines represent the rough range of ages at which a child will enter the institution, and the point of the arrow’s head represents the age at which children will complete it. With the exception of the primary school and the ‘*aumaga*, participation in these other institutions is not mandatory. Thus, many young

⁶⁸ As Shore (1982:105) notes membership is actually more complicated than this, as women remain daughters of their natal village after they are married. Consequently, membership includes all women born into the village, and yet stereotypically the members are young and unmarried women such as the *taupou*.

children do not regularly attend one of the two Sunday schools, nor do all adolescents belong to a church youth group. To qualify to move into secondary school, one must also score sufficiently high on national examinations to qualify. 54% of males and 63% of females from the rural areas of Upolu, such as Silafaga, go on to attend secondary school (Government of Samoa 2001: Table 16, see also table 10.1 below).

Figure 10.1: Age ranges for participation in youth-focused village social institutions



Note: The age ranges are only approximations, given the high level of variation in ages of participants in these institutions. Lines are dashed to indicate variability in the age in which children enter these institutions, and correspondingly it should be noted that children leave these institutions at variable ages as well. Only children with sufficiently high test scores in their last year of primary school will move on to secondary school, meaning that a majority of the population end their formal schooling at age 14.

The Samoan primary school

There is a martial tone to certain practices found in the Samoan primary school. Students dressed in their colorful school uniforms assemble on the green grass in front of the building, line up rigidly by grade level. Called to attention by a junior teacher they

sing the national anthem as the flag is raised. Directed to stand “at ease” with arms clasped behind their backs, the students listen attentively as the head teacher addresses them, noting any special announcements, reminders, and the occasional disciplinary action. They are then called to attention again, ordered to begin to march in place, and then proceed to march single-file into their individual classrooms. The martial tone, practices, and various trappings of the school are a remnant of the British Commonwealth’s (and later New Zealand’s) influence on the educational system and serve to underscore not only the importance of rank and hierarchical relations for structuring the relationship of principals, teachers and students in this context, but also that this system of hierarchy is distinct from and in many ways incommensurable with the *matai* system.

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to examine the system of hierarchy that informs the school, but I would direct the reader to the work of Sutter (1980) who has contrasted processes of socialization in the household with those of the primary school, and who provides greater ethnographic detail of the school. One clue to some of the meaning of hierarchy in this context, however, has been described by Shore (1982: chapter 13) in his examination of the “emotional tone” or esthetics of social interactions in various social contexts in Samoa. In an analysis of the linguistic marking of context he notes that speech in school classrooms, church activities as well as radio broadcasts and government proclamations use a particular phonological system referred to as *tautala lelei* (literally: “good speaking”)⁶⁹, while general conversation among intimates as well as traditional oratory uses a second, more common phonological system referred to as

⁶⁹ The classroom and Church are the village contexts where children are learning *tautala lelei* or the t-style of pronunciation (Mayer 2001).

tautala leaga (literally: “bad speaking”)⁷⁰ (see also Mayer 2001). The former of these two phonological systems bears a range of multifaceted semantic associations including formality, control, social distance, and Western (*fa’apalagi*) origins, which serve to contrast it in complex ways with other systems of hierarchy including the chief system (for a fuller treatment see Shore 1982: 267-76). My point in relating this is to underscore the fact that children are exposed to various different systems of hierarchy and the meanings they entail, and that some of the meanings are likely generated by meta-level contrasts between the different systems that they encounter.

Within the context of the school and classroom, teachers and principals are figures of respect and authority. Although pay is low, teaching remains one of the only sources of wage labor in rural areas and it is a desirable occupational choice. Additionally, teaching is increasingly professionalized occupation that frequently means that the teacher has completed at least some college coursework, and this is also a source of status. Accordingly, it is often a source of pride to have a teacher in the family, and teachers are afforded a measure of respect by the community even though the scope of their authority remains within the classroom.

Teaching and learning in the Samoan classroom

Teaching and learning in the Samoan classroom consists of fashioning a balance between Samoan social norms guiding adult and child (and high- and low-ranking

⁷⁰ The most pronounced difference between the two patterns of pronunciation are parallel sound shifts in the phonemes [t] -> [k] and [n] -> [ng], which is an articulatory lateral shift to the rear of the vocal tract in the pronunciation of the phonemes /t/ and /n/ with *tautala leaga* or k-style pronunciation (Shore 1982:268; see also Mayer 2001 for a fuller description of the phonology involved). Mayer (2001) also notes a set of grammatical shifts that also occur in parallel with the phonological shifts, but the shift in pronunciation is the most visible and marked difference between these two patterns of speech.

individuals) and a social role bearing expectations that information will be actively transmitted to a large group of children over the course of an academic year. Given the stress placed on children's performance on end-of-the-year examinations, there can be significant pressure on teachers. While teachers are increasingly trained in various Western pedagogical methods⁷¹ such as leading group discussions and facilitating small group work, however, there is reluctance to apply them because of their frequently discursive and child-centered nature (Pereira n.d.). Additionally, such methods usually include having the teacher "follow-in" to children's attentional focus (i.e. actively adopt the child's perspective on the problem or issue, see Tomasello and Farrar 1986) as the children work through problems and make mistakes. As was the case with adult caretakers (see chapter 7), teachers are reluctant to follow-in to the children's attentional focus as such behavior is perceived to lower the teacher's relative rank vis-à-vis the child. In contrast to these promoted Western pedagogical practices, Samoan classroom teaching tends to be directive, regulative, and focused on modeling the correct task solution, concept or idea so that children can imitative the teacher's correct behavior. Such practice is far more consonant with maintaining the rank differential between teacher and students.

As an example of this pattern of pedagogical practice: consider an episode I observed in an eight-grade classroom where the teacher was reviewing a set of arithmetic problems on the blackboard that the students had completed in class. When a child is called upon to provide the correct answer for a particular problem and fails to do so, the teacher's most common response was simply move on to other children in search of the

⁷¹ Assorted pre- and in-service programs, a Peace Corp program providing teachers with the time to gain additional training in Apia, has resulted in an increasingly number of teachers with credentials in the primary schools.

correct answer. If several children failed to do so, the teacher would then repeat a demonstration of how to solve the particular problem in question. Such a pattern of instruction maintains control of the interaction in the teacher's hands and asks the students to imitate his or her actions (and eventually adapt their perspectives as well.) In contrast to Western pedagogical practice, it does not focus on adopting the child's perspective and locating the errors in the child's conceptualization of the problem. Rather it asks the child to copy the teacher's process and eventually come to understand the underlying perspective that informs the process of solving the problem. While the former asks may undercut the Samoan teacher's claim at rank, the latter does not.

Another example of the ways in which frequently used pedagogical methods reflect a concern with maintaining the differential rank of teacher and student, is the frequent use of rote memorization and a group "call and response" format in instruction. Much of the grammatical exercises, arithmetic, and other concepts are taught using a call and response format where the teacher provides a correct answer (e.g. "2 times 2 is 4. 2 times 3 is 6."), which is then verbally repeated back to the teacher in unison by the students. Such collective and ritualized response patterns rely upon rote memorization, and can be considered a form of scaffolding.

As is the case in the household, help- and attention-seeking are largely non-verbal. This is even the case when students are instructed to approach the teacher to present their homework or class work for review. Students frequently stand wordlessly at the teacher's side waiting to be addressed by the teacher. By doing so, children and teachers are enacting and refining the more general interactional rules of deferential and respectful behavior in a new context.

It would be incorrect, however, to see pedagogical practice as flowing directly from more general Samoan norms of social interaction. There are points of conflict as well. In the older grades (5th – 8th), a greater variety of pedagogical methods prevail, and it is common for the teacher to provide work for the students to complete on the blackboard, which is then reviewed and corrected by the teacher. Children do work individually and in small groups or pairs, and are regularly called upon by the teacher either to complete work on the blackboard, or to provide an answer verbally as the teacher reviews the problems. As Sutter (1980) notes, the stress and public acknowledgement of successful individual achievement in the classroom runs counter to strong Samoan norms against the individual drawing attention to their successes. He notes that children can be punished in the home and described as *fiapoto* (conceited, or literally “want to be smart”) for behaving in ways that would be rewarded in the classroom.

Classroom instruction in Samoan cultural knowledge and practice

Samoan language and culture is a required topic of study in primary and secondary school education, with essentially the same status as English, social studies and mathematics in terms of end-of-the-year examinations (although not in terms of class time devoted to its study according to local teachers). Yet instruction in this potentially broad topical area is largely dominated by the study of Samoan grammar. Teacher’s lessons and pedagogical efforts are almost largely derived from the primary school curriculum guides (Pereira n.d.), and these guides include extensive descriptions of the parts of speech, assorted grammatical constructions, and so forth to be taught in at the

different grade levels⁷². There is little mention in these guides (less than a paragraph), however, of other aspects of culture to be taught in this segment of the school day, with vague references to the use of well-known stories and myths as part of language lessons. In interviews teachers suggested that more elaborate cultural lessons including mention of the chief system is more a topic of secondary school, but did acknowledge instruction in some aspects of the culture as part of their lessons.

One aspect of Samoan language instruction that is of direct relevance to respectful behavior and the chief system is instruction in the Samoan respect lexicon (*upu fa'aaloalo*), which teachers confirmed as a topic of instruction. As is the case with many languages, including Japanese (Okamoto 1999), Javanese (Geertz 1960) and the “in-law” languages of Australia (e.g. Haviland 1979), Samoan speakers employ an extensive honorific lexicon rather than everyday terms to show deference and respect to others (Duranti 1992b; Shore 1982). For example, one would use the everyday word *fale* to refer to one’s own house, but would use the specialized and honorific *maota* in reference to the house of a high chief or a pastor, and *laoa* to refer to the house of an orator. The use of these latter two lexical items rather than the everyday term *fale* is used to show respect and deference (Duranti 1992b). While extensive, the Samoan respect lexicon tends to cluster around the personal possessions, bodies, emotions and cognitions, and activities of chiefs and other highly ranked persons (Duranti 1992b; Keesing and Keesing 1956; Shore 1982).

⁷² New curriculum guides and teaching materials had been developed and were being printed at the time of my departure from Samoa in 2003. There was some suggestion of more elaborate and refined inclusion of other aspects of Samoan culture beyond simply Samoan grammar in this new version.

I was able to observe some instruction in Samoan culture beyond language instruction during my visits to the local primary school classrooms⁷³. One instance in particular is revealing of the kind of materials being taught as well as a more elaborate example of teaching style. On one visit to the year 8 classroom, students were learning about the proper order and manner of presentation for a *sua*, a common ceremonial presentation of food, fine mats, money and other exchange goods. It is used to show respect to an unrelated visitor or other important person on a variety of occasions, such as for example, thanking a pastor for providing a prayer at a *saofa'i* (entitlement ceremony).

There is a very particular mode and order by which a procession of persons takes turn physically presents the different items to the honored recipient. The procession is lead by a young woman who brings a husked, green drinking coconut 'garnished' with some paper money held out straight at arm's length in front of her, as she trails a length of Western cloth (more traditionally *siapo* ("bark cloth") was used) behind her. She halts before and to one side of the recipient, removes the cloth and kneels sideways to hand over the cloth and the coconut. These items and the other gifts are usually quickly whisked away by the recipient's attendants sitting beside him or her. The woman is followed by a person who brings a *laulau*, or woven food mat, on which is arranged a variety of prepared foods, including such things as taro, *palusami*, boiled chicken, corned beef and so forth. This tray of foods is placed in front of the person. The other items included will vary by the occasion, but usually it involves the presentation of one or more fine mats, which represents women's labor and a cooked pig or cases of corned

⁷³ It is not unheard of for teachers to "play to their audience" of observers (e.g. trying to use English as a language of instruction more than they might otherwise). There is thus the possibility that this particular lesson may have been atypical. Even if this is true, however, it does provide some indication of what sorts of things would be taught and the manner in which it would teaching would likely occur.

beef, which is the characteristic gift of men. The fine mat is presented visually by holding it open to reveal its size and surface as the presenter walks quickly towards the recipient, before folding it again at presentation to the recipient. Cases of corned beef or tinned fish are hauled in by young, untitled men and dropped in front of but at least a body length away from the recipient. If a whole cooked pig is presented, it will be carried by a set of men on a litter. If cash is presented to the recipient, a person will bring the cash in a single hand outstretched before them to place it on the ground in front of the person. All of the various presentations are completed at a very brisk tempo, much faster than normal walking speed, and the different presenters immediately depart after making the presentation to allow others to come forward.

In the teacher's presentation on the *sua*, there was no explanation of its context, meaning, or even when it might be used. When I inquired about this potential aspect of the lesson, the teacher responded simply that the students knew what it was, as they had all seen it numerous times before. And this may be the case, but there was no attempt to determine if this was so or to refine those potentially limited understandings. Rather, the teacher's focus in his lesson was on the proper behavioral performance of the *sua* essentially free of a context in which it might be used. So he directed one male student to sit cross-legged on the floor in front of the blackboard to serve as the recipient. Then he selected a set of male and female students and directed them to demonstrate the specific presentations of goods for a *sua* using imaginary items. The girl selected to present the initial gift of coconut and cloth, hesitantly walked up to the boy with an imaginary coconut grasped between both hands below her waist, and when she reached him simply bent at the waist and set it down in front of him. The teacher responded to her numerous

mistakes (e.g. hand position, pace, failure to kneel sideways to make the presentation) by telling her repeatedly: “*Leai, leai*” (No, no!). He then modeled the presentation for her, holding the coconut stiffly in front of him, walking quickly and kneeling properly at the side of the boy. He then made her repeat his actions and she improved. Then he proceeded to have the others pretend to present their gifts. He noted two errors and verbally corrected them. First, the woven food mat (*laulau*) has a front and a rear side⁷⁴ and the boy reversed these. Second, the girl selected to present the fine mat (*ie toga*) did not imitate the hand motions to spread the mat and display it prior to presenting it, but rather simply carried it in front of her and dropped it off before the recipient.

Next, the teacher selected a male student to demonstrate presentation of a dried kava root to a chief. As with the *sua*, this presentation has a very particular - and in this case - theatrically aggressive behavioral element. As it is practiced as part of a kava ceremony, the untitled presenter will be directed to present a length of dried kava root (usually between three to five feet in length) to a chief. Beginning on the opposite side of the meeting house from the intended recipient, the man will quickly walk at the recipient with the root grasped underhand in both hands pointing ahead of him almost like a spear. As he begins his walk, he will utter loudly a very distinct and characteristic yelp or cry called an *ususū*, and then conclude the presentation by sliding the root to one side of the receiving chief. An onomatopoeia, the name of the cry imitates its actual sound. The cry itself is not simply for dramatic value, but symbolically expresses the aggressive strength of the *‘aumaga* in this context. It also carries an association of violent anger and can be used to challenge someone to a fight. As one indication of its significance and force: on

⁷⁴ A *laulau* is woven out of a coconut palm frond that is split down the center, folded over onto itself so that the individual leaves can be woven together. The “front” of the resulting mat is the split stem of the frond, and should be pointed towards the person eating.

one occasion during my stay in the village two men were actually fined for making that particular cry in a relatively populated area of the village while drunk late one evening.

In the classroom, the male student selected to perform the kava presentation had difficulties articulating the cry correctly and doing the actions with the kind of vigor that the teacher wanted. And so the teacher repeatedly demonstrated the action brandishing an imaginary kava root, and pushed the student to make the cry sufficiently loud when he repeated the teacher's actions.

There are two things of note here. First, the teacher's instructions are focused largely on improving children's behavioral expressions and not on any contextual information about the particular practices. While it is possible – as the teacher suggests was the case - that the children are already well aware of the meanings attached, that remains unclear. And with the *ususū*, which is uncommonly practiced where children are present (i.e. kava ceremonies) and forbidden outside of this context, it is unlikely to be true⁷⁵. Moreover, the children's difficulty in performing the actions as directed without following the teacher's demonstrations suggests a genuine lack of competence. The teacher's relative emphasis is very much in line with a Samoan focus on proper behavioral performance over conceptual development in enculturation. It matters far less if one knows why a behavior is performed and the associated symbolic meaning of the action, than it is to actually perform the behavior correctly.

Second, the pattern of teaching described demonstrates the modeling and imitating of correct behavior that I describe earlier in this chapter as characteristic of Samoan pedagogical practice in the primary school. On a few occasions the teacher

⁷⁵ Yet as Valsiner (1997) notes, for some things children need but one observation to acquire a basic comprehension. This may be particularly true for something as novel and marked as the *ususū* in an otherwise very dignified ritual event.

pointed to errors in performance (e.g. facing the *laulau* the wrong way), but more frequently he simply demonstrates the action again and again until the novice performs the action correctly, such as was the case with the presentation of the kava root and the *ususū*.

Informal education in the chief system at the primary school

In addition to the explicit instruction described above, the primary school also provides opportunities to learn about the chief system through informal means in two specific ways. First, children's exposure to teachers and school administrators represents one of their first, most intimate and regular encounters with unrelated, high-ranking adults. Of course, the system of hierarchy in which students, teachers and the principal operate is distinct from and incommensurable with the chief system and other systems of hierarchy found in Samoa. Consequently, children do not learn about the chief system simply by learning how to operate within the context of the primary school with one narrow exception: respectful behavioral practice. As I describe in chapter 7, the majority of respectful behaviors constitute a generalized set that can be used to express deference and respect for a variety of social roles including parents, descent group elders, pastors, teachers, and unfamiliar visitors. These practices include such things as behavioral restraint, deferential postures and seating positions, practices of serving food and otherwise attending to other's needs, allowing higher-ranking persons to initiate and control the flow of social interactions (Ochs 1988), and so forth. Although the teacher and principal's claim to rank, and the nature and scope of their authority is incommensurable with the chief system, children's increasingly experience with this

generalized set of behaviors used in interactions with school officials can translate into greater behavioral competence in other systems of hierarchy including the chief system. Of course, there are fine particularities for each different system of hierarchy in terms of how respect is to be paid (e.g. specialized forms of address, particular responsibilities for attending to the needs of the high ranking figures), but for young children these nuances are not yet as important as the many commonalities of respectful and deferential displays found in most systems of hierarchy.

What makes the classroom and interactions with teachers particularly useful in teaching children this generalized set of respectful behaviors is that the level of contact between the child and the unrelated teacher is far more intimate and regular than any other context the child inhabits. A year one (i.e. first grade) teacher at the local school complained to me in an interview that many of the children initially try to interact with her in ways as if she were “their auntie” (using the English term), a close kin relationship lacking much of the expected respect and deference that is appropriate to the teacher-student relationship. But over time she suggested, children do learn to demonstrate the requisite behavioral restraint, obedience, politeness, and respect.

A second way by which Samoan primary schools provide students with opportunities to learn about the chief system is by regularly holding “Samoan culture days”, beauty pageants, and other events that frequent include performances of assorted cultural routines such as dances and songs. Particularly, with the beauty pageants where the competitors are asked to perform some element of “Samoan culture”, children frequently seize on some aspect of chiefly ritual practice for their “talent”. For example, in both church and school beauty pageants, I have witnessed children dress up as *taupou*

(ceremonial village princess) including the elaborate headdress (*tuiga*) and costume, and demonstrate how to mix kava in the heavy carved, wooden kava bowls. It is unclear what exactly children are getting out of such performances, as the “master of ceremonies” at these events rarely provides more than the child’s and parents’ names as introduction. On the positive side, the children in the audience are able to witness an element of ritual practice that they might not otherwise be able to see regularly and it is clearly marked as an important aspect of Samoan culture. On the negative side, however, such performances are also radically “decontextualized” as they are enacted in a matter of minutes and by a single individual rather than a group. When kava is mixed, for example, it is not served, drunk, nor even mixed for the normative length of time. Moreover, it is not situated in a context of proper usage. In some sense then it is an education in cultural “sound bites” that may only introduce the child to a practice’s existence without actually communicating anything of its larger meanings or purposes.

In summary, while Samoan language and culture is retained as a subject matter throughout primary and secondary education, its specific focus is more limited. The primary focus is on language, particularly grammar. Yet this also includes instruction in the Samoan respect lexicon, which I will show later in this chapter, has a strong effect on children’s competence and demonstrates the school’s concrete impact on children’s development. Other topics of instruction do seem to address specific cultural practices but focus on proper behavioral competence rather than underlying conceptual meanings. Such an emphasis is consonant with the Samoan stress on proper behavioral competence, and thus such instruction is functioning to impart this particular value. The impact of stressing proper behavior but not a conceptual framework on children’s developing

conceptions is harder to determine. We should certainly not assume that it will somehow slow children's conceptual development or prove ineffectual in teaching anything.

Indeed, teaching children the behaviors may in some sense "prime" them to look for such behaviors in chiefly activity, and provide an anchor from which to build conceptual understandings at a later date. Additionally, teaching behaviors may also serve to motivate children's continued attention better than purely conceptual explanations.

While the school's contribution to children's understanding of the chief system through formal instruction is clear, we should also not overlook the school's ability to provide opportunities for children to learn informally via observation and participation. I point to the intimate and regular interactions with higher-ranking, unrelated adults in a formal setting, and cultural performances on a school's "culture days". The former provides concrete practice in refining respectful behavior, while the latter provides some exposure to valuable and defining aspects of Samoan ritual and practice but in a largely decontextualized manner. Finally, I note that the school provides children with exposure to an alternative form of hierarchical system based on individual academic performance. While this does not contribute to children's emerging understanding of the chief system it does point to the complex messages being encountered in the different context of the child's everyday life.

I now turn to children's experiences in the village church, and in particular the Pastor's school, before turning to examine the impact of the primary school on children's emerging knowledge of the chief system and the respect lexicon.

Children's involvement in the church⁷⁶

In comparison to virtually any other segment of the population, children's involvement in the church and its numerous manifestations (e.g. Sunday School, Pastor's school, White Sunday and Christmas preparations, Youth group) is extraordinarily high. The most pronounced motive forces behind parents' promotion of their children's involvement seemed to be the development of their spirituality and morality in their child on the one hand, and public demonstration of the descent group's moral standing on the other. As is the case throughout the Pacific (e.g. Barker 1990; Flinn 1990; Forman 1987; Robbins 2004; White 1991), Christianity plays a central role in Samoan conceptions of the 'moral' person. As the majority of church activities (e.g. Sunday school, Pastor's school) have a pedagogical element, any involvement by the child is felt to promote his or her pro-social and spiritual development. Indeed, it is not uncommon for some families to foster out their adolescent sons to live with the Roman Catholic priest or sons and daughters to the Congregational pastor and his family to attend to their needs. The obvious benefit for the fostered child is proximity to the dignity and spirituality of the priest or pastor. Children's consistently involvement in church activities is also an important sign of the family's continued support for the local church and the relative "godliness" of the child's immediate family and larger descent group.

Church activities involving children are remarkably numerous and diverse. In addition to the actual church services themselves, offered twice each Sunday, there are a large number of other activities in which children are involved. Most notable among

⁷⁶ As I indicated in chapter 4, my involvement with the village churches was largely focused on the local Congregational Christian Church and to a more limited extent the Roman Catholic Church. Consequently, my references to "the Church" should be taken to mean primarily the former of the two. There are numerous differences in theological focus and practice amongst the various Christian denominations, although there are numerous parallels on the level of children's involvement and activities.

these is Sunday school, held one hour prior to the first Sunday service. There are also special seasonal activities including the Pastor's school (four days per week from March – May), *Lotu tamaiti* (Children's Service or "White Sunday" with extensive preparations from August – October), and Christmas (with preparations beginning in November). Finally, there are a range of smaller activities including local fundraisers such as beauty pageants, and Mother's Day events. There are extraordinarily few times during the year when children who regularly attend church are not involved in some other church activity in addition to attending weekly church services with adults and Sunday school.

Informal education in the chief system as part of church activities

Children's participation in the variety of church activities mentioned above allow them to learn informally about the chief system in essentially the same ways as the primary school: (1) opportunities to enrich their grasp of the generalized set of behaviors used to show respect and deference in interaction with higher-ranking individuals, and (2) opportunities to observe chiefly activity and cultural performances. As for the first of these two: as was the case with the hierarchy guiding school and classroom, the hierarchy that structures the relationship of pastor and congregation is distinct from and incommensurable with the *matai* system. There are certainly larger linkages and meaningful contrasts and relationships between the two systems, but those meta-level linkages are beyond the scope of this project and arguably only become meaningful to children later in life once the basic nature of the different systems themselves are more fully acquired.

While children cannot learn directly about the *matai* system by virtue of learning hierarchy of the church, however, children can refine the generalized set of behaviors used to demonstrate respect and deference to figures of rank and authority including the pastor and other church leaders, descent group elders, and the *matai*. What makes the church of particular utility in this regard is that much of children's church-related activities are episodes of teaching, training and rehearsal, including Sunday school class, preparations for White Sunday and other holiday shows, and the Pastor's school. In almost all cases, the individuals who serve as teachers in these different activities are the pastor, the pastor's wife and adult children, and other members of the church hierarchy (e.g. 'ao'aofesoasoani ("lay preacher"), ti'akono ("deacon"), and fesoasoani (Roman Catholic "catechist")). Consequently children are placed in positions where they must put these deferential behaviors into play in interaction with these highly ranked individuals. While dyadic interactions are perhaps less common than polyadic ones, children are nonetheless clearly in a position to observe interactions between other children and church administrators. Moreover, children's opportunities to observe displays of deferential behavior and speech by various community adults, including members of their own descent group and household, after church services and events is also likely to be highly instructive for children.

Of course, children's interactions in the context of church events and Sunday school are not always the picture of reverence and dignity, particularly with the youngest group of children (~ 4 to 7 years of age). Both the Sunday school and Pastor's school can be hectic and wild, with children running around, playing, and talking loudly. Yet when the pastor calls the children together in order to teach a particular lesson, the older

children orient quickly and the various subsidiary members of the church hierarchy quickly insure that attention is paid to his requests. Certainly these corrective actions are another important part of children's acquisition of the generalized package of deferential behaviors.

In sum, the intimate and regular contact between children and members of the church hierarchy provides ample opportunity for observational and participatory learning of respectful and deferential behavior. While simple, such interactions fuel the child's emerging competence in respectful behavior with repeated exposure. As the empirical research on the role of overhearing in language acquisition by Akhtar (2005; Akhtar, et al. 2001) suggests, children's acquisition of words through overhearing are just as robust as words learned through direct, dyadic exchanges involving the child and a parent employing child-directed speech. Effective cultural learning need not necessarily involve complex processes, artifacts, and institutional arrangements.

The church hierarchy presents the Samoan child with exposure to yet another contrastive system of hierarchy distinct from that of the household, school and chief system. It underscores both the very real complexity of the Samoan social world as well as the significance of context, activity and social ecology in determining how individuals orient themselves towards one another with regard to social roles, authority and power.

The Pastor's School (*A'oga a Faiife'au*)

In addition to the informal, participatory learning that occurs as children interact with member of the church hierarchy, there is also some explicit instruction in respectful speech as part of the Pastor's school. The roots of this particular village institution are

tied intimately to early missionary work and the production of ‘good’ Christians by providing children with the necessary skills to attain such a status. Foremost amongst these skills was sufficient literacy to be able to read and study the Samoan language translation of the Bible. In addition to literacy, however, informants reported that over the last several decades a variety of other topics have been taught, including Bible study similar to that found in Sunday School, numeracy and arithmetic, and respectful Samoan speech. It is instruction in this last subject that will be the focus of my attention here.

While some of these seemingly unrelated topics are actually tied to Biblical literacy (e.g. teaching Roman numerals in order to properly identify Biblical chapters and verses), many of these are not. Arithmetic is the clearest example of such a topic of study. Historically, it is likely that the Pastor, who was often the person in the village with the greatest amount of Western education, provided basic primary education in villages that lacked access to a primary school. This portion of the pastor’s contribution to the village has been preserved even after the widespread introduction of Western-style primary schools across the country.

The modern instantiation of the Pastor’s school within the Congregational Christian church⁷⁷ is explicitly modeled after formalized education of Western-style schools. Children are divided into “grades” tied to their current grade in the primary school. The pastor, pastor’s wife, and most Sunday school teachers serve as “teachers”. The artifacts used (e.g. blackboards, text books, notebooks, and written assignments) as well as all the various behavioral practices of maintaining and directing students’ attention are all but identical with those found in Samoan primary school classrooms.

⁷⁷ The pastor of the local Congregational church indicated that the curriculum is fairly similar in most other denominations, with the exception being the more recently introduced religions such as the Latter Days’ Saints and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

While the pastor's school traditionally met throughout the year, its contemporary form in the Congregational Christian Church meets for just three months beginning in March and ending just prior to the large CCC conference held in Malua at the end of May⁷⁸.

Meetings are held on four weekdays for an hour each day, beginning a few hours after the conclusion of school and ending before the beginning of evening prayers (*sa*).

While the earlier curriculum varied considerably based on the instructional interests and skills of individual pastors (e.g. one pastor told me that he had been taught algebra as part of the pastor's school when he was a boy), the contemporary curriculum is far more standardized. Much of this is due to the fact that a system of standardized testing has been instituted in the Congregational Church where all the children take a nation-wide test at the end of the program before the annual church conference in Malua at the end of May. Additionally, a specific curriculum is written by the Secretary (*pulega*) of each region based on meetings with church administrators where collective decisions as to the materials to be included in a given year are made. This curriculum provides considerable structure to the instruction that occur in any of the churches within that Synod. Given the existence of a standardized test, the results of which are revealed publicly at a very large conference of the pastor's peers and superiors, there is strong motivation to follow the curriculum strictly and to teach for the test. This is similarly the case with the primary school and probably means that students are likewise 'primed' to study for the test, rather than to focus on the acquisition of a more generalized understanding of the subject material.

⁷⁸ This change is also likely done to prevent conflicts with the extensive periods of preparation prior to Christmas and White Sunday.

Included within the 2003 syllabus used at the time of my observations is a broad base of skills in reading, writing, arithmetic, and familiarity with Roman numerals. There is also a predictably strong element of Bible study; one of the primary focuses in 2003 was on the Book of John, chapter 15. Students were required to memorize lines of the chapter and extensive practice was devoted towards the proper recitation of these passages. Readings of specific Biblical stories were drawn from both the Old and New Testament, including, for example, the story of King Saul's rise and struggle with the Philistines (the first book of Samuel). Much of the focus, particularly in the younger grades, was simply at increasing children's familiarity with the narrative itself rather than interpretations of the particular segment of text.

While there is no explicit instruction in deferential behavior or the chief system *per se*, there is instruction in the Samoan respect lexicon (*'upu fa'aaloalo*), which can be employed to demonstrate respect to one's social superiors (Duranti 1992b; Milner 1961; Shore 1982:263-7). As these words may encode distinctions meaningful to the *matai* system, education in their proper use may entail some level of instruction in the *matai* system itself. Table 10.1 below provides a summary of the different respectful vocabulary words included within the 2003 syllabus for each of the different grade levels. My conversations with teachers and repeated observations of the Pastor's school suggest that this list of respectful vocabulary words was not meant to be a mere guide, but very much constituted the specific words to be taught. Indeed, several of the teachers used the printed syllabus as a visual guide from which to teach. Given the great variety of topics to be covered in a relatively short amount of time, it is unlikely that any additional material was taught beyond those explicitly mentioned in the syllabus.

Sixth, seventh and eighth grade students shift gears entirely away from explicit instruction in the respect lexicon. In its place is a move to the production of short essays, particularly on contemporary social issues and events in Samoa. Finally, the syllabus includes mention of teaching children how to prepare several less common Samoan foods (specific mention is made of *vaisalo*, *fa'ausi*, *piasua*, *taufolo*, *suaese*, and *suafa'i*), which are commonly prepared only on special occasions including visits from honored guests. By and large the tasks provided to these three senior grade levels can be said to contribute little to children's developing understanding of the *matai* system. But it does highlight the emphasis on teaching Samoan children and young adults how to serve their social superiors.

Table 10.1: Respectful words included in the 2003 Pastor's school syllabus

Grade level	Respectful vocabulary words required
Kindergarten	Please, thank you, excuse me (<i>tulou</i> ⁷⁹), hello, goodbye
First grade	Eye, mouth, church, bathe, sleep, eat, sated, head, nose, leg
Second grade	Sit, earth oven, knife, axe, kava bowl, pastor's house, orator's house, hospital, wash hands
Third grade	Pastor, orator's wife, high chief's wife, cow, cooked chicken, pig, coconut as well as all the words in grade 2.
Fourth grade	Kava, ceremonial headdress (<i>tuiiga</i>), eye, stomach, to cut hair, as well as all the words in grade 3.
Fifth grade	Kava ⁸⁰ , ceremonial headdress (<i>tuiiga</i>), to cut hair, stomach, leg, illness, as well as all the words in grade 4.
Sixth – eight grade	No words included.

Many of the respectful words listed are relatively common in everyday speech between differentially ranked speakers and therefore would certainly be useful for children to learn. This is unquestionably the case with regard to all of the greetings and

⁷⁹ A word used to excuse one's passage in front of another (usually higher ranked) person, the use of which includes lowering one's body (optimally) below the level of the addressee's head.

⁸⁰ Repetition of several of the words in grade 4 and 5 are included in the original document.

polite words of grade 1, respect terms for goods commonly exchanged at ceremonial events (e.g. cow, pig, cooked chicken), as well as the physical states, activities and items that can be used in reference to chiefs (e.g. sit, bathe, sleep, eat, illness, house, wife, kava bowl). Body parts are included because these can be used in polite inquiries after a chief's health and well-being.

But there are also several words that are extremely rare in usage and would seem to be of relatively little practical utility for children. This would include words such as: ceremonial headdress and haircut. This is not to say that these words are never utilized, or that they do not index relevant cultural practices. For example, traditionally the head of a chief was considered to be the most sacred part of his or her body and contact with the head or the things the head touched are prohibited. The majority of haircuts in Silafaga were still conducted by a mid-ranking chief with some skill in cutting hair who owned his own shears. Yet the idea that young children might be best served by learning this phrase as opposed to other more commonly used respect terms can be debated.

Instruction in this limited but diverse set of lexical items could serve a larger pedagogical purpose. Careful examination will note that many of the terms index important distinctions in social statuses of relevance to the chief system. Thus, for example, there is the contrast between the orator's wife and the high chief's wife (grade 3) or between a pastor's house and an orator's house (grade 2), both of which are highly socially relevant and mark key status differences between different categories of persons and their possessions. Instruction that employs a set of previously unfamiliar categories or contrasts could serve to confront the existing perspective of the child in something Wertsch (1985:176) refers to as a "semiotic challenge". By this, he refers to a semiotic

mechanism that forces the child to think about a situation or discursive element in a different way. By teaching children different terms for the wife of an orator and the wife of a high chief, for example, the teacher is implicitly suggesting to the students the existence of a meaningful contrast between high chiefs and orators, which may be entirely novel to the child. In doing so, the teacher is not using words that simply presuppose another's perspective on the social world. Rather, as Wertsch argues (1985:176), these semiotic challenges create a new social reality for the child, both on the inter-psychological and intra-psychological planes.

Yet the potential success of such a teaching strategy is complicated by the fact that most of the contrasts are incomplete. Thus, one should include not only the pastor's house and orator's house but also the high chief's house and possibly the Roman Catholic priest's house. Indeed, there is no explicit mention of the basic contrast between orator and high chief, which is a central pivot to the system of respectful words as applied to *matai*. Thus, while it does provide some information, this particular corpus of respectful words provides at best a very partial portrait. Clearly, these words were not selected to provide a full decomposition of the existing social contrasts in the Samoan social world. Rather they seem to have been selected more opportunistically to demonstrate that at least *some* respectful lexical items are included in an already overcrowded syllabus.

Finally, I should point out that the contrasts indexed by respectful terms as used in Biblical texts and Church-based discourse may not consistently index the chief system and the important categories it possess. In translating the Bible into the Samoan language, translators used respectful lexical items previously reserved for chiefs in reference to God and his actions. Thus, for example, a very common respectful word

used to refer to an orator chief and his oratory is *fetalai*. It is also used in the Bible to refer to instances in which God speaks. For example, in Exodus 20:1-2 when God begins to speak to Moses about the Ten Commandments:

And God spoke all these words:

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.”

Ona fetalai mai lea o le Atua i nei upu uma lava, ua faapea mai:

“O a’u o le Alii lou Atua, o le na aumaia oe nai le nuu o Aikupito, o le mea sa nofo pologa ai.”

Not unsurprisingly, children seem to associate at least some of the respectful words used commonly in Biblical stories and in church events, such as *fetalai*, with the context of the Church and the Bible first and foremost, and do not consistently realize their parallel application in the context of traditional chiefly practice. A poll I took of the children in the oldest group (9-12 years), for example, after hearing an extended discussion of the 10 Commandments in Sunday school about the meanings of *fetalai* and its nominalization (*fetalaiga*), revealed the children to be unfamiliar with the idea that *fetalai* could also be used to refer to an orator’s speaking, or to the orator and his speech (*fetalaiga*; a nominalization of *fetalai*) in addition to the speech and word of God.

It is difficult to interpret the developmental impact of this semantic broadening of the respect lexicon in this way. Presumably it might be easier for children to acquire

such meanings earlier when they have a single clear referent (the orator and his oratory) rather than two (the orator of God and the oratory of the orator). Alternatively, such complexity may challenge the child to construct more abstract conception of the word as a “respectful term for speaking” rather than a more contextualized word used to refer to the speech of a few particular men in the village (i.e. who later turn out to be orator chiefs). Additionally, early familiarity with the word through Bible study may prime the child for quick acquisition in other social contexts. Ultimately, the answers to such questions are beyond the scope of this work.

To summarize, the pastor’s school provides some explicit although limited instruction in the Samoan respect lexicon. The words serve to introduce the children to the basic concept of lexical substitution of honorific words to demonstrate deference and respect as well as indicate the range of areas in which they can expect such words to exist (i.e. ceremonial events and items; states, activities and possession of chiefs; greetings and polite words of request and thanks). Beyond this intended goal, the categories implicitly indexed by these words may also serve to teach children that such social distinctions and categories exist. As the sheer number of words taught is limited and instruction in these categories is not an explicit goal, these categories are covered in a somewhat haphazard fashion as would be expected. The impact of this implicit instruction on children’s developing conceptions remains an open question.

In the remainder of this chapter, I extend an argument proposed in the previous chapter and consider the role of the village primary school as another “leveling mechanism”, serving to widely disseminate competence in respectful speech and knowledge of the chief system across the population of village children without recourse

to household rank. This is a return to the issue of the differential social distribution of competence and knowledge of the chief system.

Public education as a “leveling mechanism” in the transmission of culture

At least through the end of the 1950s, conventional wisdom in American educational philosophy held that public education served as a principal mechanism for the creation of a democratic and egalitarian society (e.g. Cremin 1968). The philosophical underpinning of this position can be traced back to John Dewey (1916), Thomas Jefferson (Hellenbrand 1990) and many others, who held public education to be the very hallmark of a democratic country, providing those born into social classes lacking in wealth with the opportunity to achieve social mobility and full participation in political, social, and economic life. The basis for the achievement of equality was parity in opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills valued in a society and vital to societal participation

This general stance on the role of schools has been widely criticized over the past several decades based on a substantial body of research demonstrating the fundamental lack of equality of opportunity in public education (Brosio 1990). Economists such as Samuel Bowles (Bowles 1977; Bowles and Gintis 1981) and ethnographers such as Shirley Brice Heath (1983), Paul Willis (1977), and more recently Pierre Bourdieu (1996; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) have pointed to the role of schools in the replication of systems of social inequality in the urban, industrial societies of North America and Western Europe. Bowles & Gintis (1981; see also Brosio 1990) argue that schools reproduce labor power for a capitalist industrial order whose jobs are organized

hierarchically. Certain schools produce managers; others technicians or professionals; and the largest numbers generate industrial or clerical labor for the factories or offices of large corporate entities. Bourdieu's (1996) analysis of higher education in France is similar, but perhaps more persuasive in that he points to specific proximate mechanisms. He argues that French institutions of higher education serve to replicate social inequality through their differential socialization of young people into varying command over socially-valued⁸¹ forms of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1996; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). Moreover, schools act to convert the individual's possession of embodied, linguistic, and objectified states of cultural capital acquired through earlier socialization, and further developed in the school itself, into an institutionally recognized one in the form of academic qualifications and accreditation (Bourdieu 1983; 1996).

Of course, in addition to these larger structural forces, the oppositional actions of individuals and groups are also inseparably implicated in the replication of inequality as well. Willis' (1977) account of how British working-class boys (the "lads") create conditions leading to their own inability to get anything but working-class jobs is a classic in this regard. He documents the "lads" unceasing opposition to school authorities, and their refusal to submit to the imperatives of a curriculum that encourages social mobility through acquisition of academic credentials and skills. Truancy, a strong counter-culture stance, and other disruptions of the intended reproductive outcomes of the curriculum and pedagogy of schools have an ironic and negative effect: the working-class boys 'disqualify' themselves from the opportunity to obtain middle-class jobs. They acquire none of the academic skills and attitudes that might allow them entrance to

⁸¹ Bourdieu is careful to note that the valuation of cultural capital varies by the social "field" in which it operates, such that working-class culture may be far more valued in certain contexts (e.g. the pub, sporting event) than middle-class cultural capital, for example.

middle-class employment. Instead, the students produce themselves as rebellious, “uneducated” workers whose only remaining choice is the unskilled and semi-skilled occupations found in manual labor. In this case, the school functions as the field on which social hierarchies are replicated over time through individual action (for a similar example in the U.S., see Macleod 1987).

The Samoan case allows us to reconsider some of these ideas in a potentially novel context. Inequality is built into the fabric of Samoan society with the hierarchical ranking of descent groups, households and individuals and the differential access to privilege and authority. As I described in the previous chapter, there is evidence to suggest differences in children’s relative proximity to chiefly activity. Given a reliance on observational and participatory learning as key modes of social learning, we would expect relative proximity to chiefly activity to translate into relative competence in respectful behavior and knowledge of the chief system following the logic of Bourdieu and the participatory learning paradigm of Rogoff, Goodnow and others. In the previous chapter, I note the ease of observation and the very public nature of most chiefly activity, most notably at various *fa’alavelave*, ameliorates this by allowing children the possibility of observing chiefly activity regardless of their relative proximity to chiefly activity based on household rank. In the following I will consider the primary school as another mediating factor in the intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Specifically, I argue that the notion of the school-as-“leveling mechanism” has some viability within Samoan primary schools in that the school broadly disseminates knowledge in Samoan culture and specifically respectful lexicon without recourse to household rank. I then present some findings relevant to this question drawn from the tests of conceptual knowledge of

the chief system and respectful language. I begin by considering the applicability of the school-as-“leveling mechanism” argument for Samoan primary schools.

Social reproduction and transformation in the Samoan educational system⁸²

While the idea of an educational system operating to provide equal opportunities to all children has been questioned as a contemporary reality in much of American and Western European societies, there are qualities to the Samoan system that make it a more viable possibility. First, the social reproductionist models, provided by Bowles or Bourdieu requires alternative educational tracks, either in the form of alternative schools or alternative “tracks” (i.e. special classes for high- and low-performing students) within individual schools⁸³. In the urban areas of Samoa, we can see the nascent beginnings of such a system with the birth of expensive, private schools catering to wealthy urban elites as well as the foreign expatriate community. For example, the annual fees for year 1 at Robert Louis Stevenson Primary School in Lotopa is more than 125 times higher than cost of attending the local primary year 1 (30 Western Samoan Tala (~ \$USD 7) vs. 2,600 Western Samoan Tala (~ \$USD 962)). These elite schools are increasingly staffed by exceptionally trained teachers and have facilities, teaching materials, and resources unmatched elsewhere in the country.

Yet in the vast majority of rural areas including Silafaga, there are essentially no alternatives either in the form of alternative primary schools or specialized tracks within a

⁸² In an unfortunate oversight, I did not collect demographic information on the child’s religious denomination or regularity of church attendance as part of the test. Consequently, I cannot address the role of the Pastor’s school. In the following analysis and discussion then, references to the impact of “schooling” should be taken to refer exclusively to the primary school.

⁸³ Technically, differential treatment in the classroom would also be a possibility, although neither Bowles nor Bourdieu address this. Heath (1983) and Willis (1977) both point to the powerful way in which this would function to generate divergent trajectories.

given school. Only the pastor of the Congregational Christian Church had the resources (i.e. disposable income and a car for transportation) to allow his children to attend a special primary school in Apia. Compulsory primary education remains almost completely in the hands of government public education, particularly in rural areas. (This does change once children qualify for secondary school as there are alternative schools with differing resources, reputations and educational opportunities, to which one can gain admittance.) In Silafaga then, virtually the entire population of children including both high- and low-ranking families, and materially wealthy and poor households all attend the local primary school. Similarly, enrollment by gender only begins to demonstrate a slight gender bias towards females⁸⁴ beginning in the end of primary school and into secondary school (see table 10.2 below).

Table 10.2: Full-time school attendance by age, gender, and region in 2001

Years of age	Males		Females	
	Samoa	Rural Upolu	Samoa	Rural Upolu
5 – 9	93.0%	92.9%	93.7%	93.6%
10 – 14	94.9%	94.5%	97.8%	97.6%
15 – 19	59.3%	54.0%	66.3%	62.8%

Note: “Samoa” represents the national figures and “rural Upolu” excludes the urban and “urbanizing” area of the north shore of the island. Source: Adapted from table 16 of the 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

Despite these relatively high rates of school attendance at least through age 14, we must not forget the possibility, raised by Willis (1977), of children ‘disqualifying’ themselves from full participation in education as well. While I did not have the opportunity to explore such issues within the classroom itself (please see chapter 5 for the limitations set on my observations within the school), I can make some brief comments

⁸⁴ There is some popular perception that girls’ innate pro-social, reserved and dignified nature may predispose them to performing better in the classroom (as well as the office) than boys.

based on parental interview and observations. Samoan parents do broadly acknowledge that primary education is important. Training in the English language as well as mathematics and reading are seen as opening doors for potential wage employment in the capitol of Apia or overseas. Yet caretakers also tend to adopt a parental investment strategy where it is not necessary for *all* children to attend school regularly as long as there is one child seeking higher education. This is a strategy that O'Meara (1990:90) refers to as the "shotgun approach", wherein parents attempt to distribute children as widely across the economic landscape as possible in order to diversify the household's risk. Accordingly, my experience suggests that parents see how well children perform in primary school and support the single child (or few children) who demonstrates interest and aptitude. Consequently, parents also tend to overlook the child who demonstrates resistance to attending school, which is usually articulated by volunteering to help with housework or in the plantation rather than going to school. As the child is not shirking work *per se*, parents tend to see this simply as an expression of the child's interests and skills and tacitly support it. I have also seen parents show far less support of the educational endeavors of younger children (e.g. repeatedly bring them on trips to the plantation for the sake of company) if an older child is already showing signs of academic success. Thus the statistics of Table 10.2 are likely to disguise some proportion of children who may have relatively spotty attendance records and more questionable commitment to classroom performance.

While this is an important qualification, it may not have the same impact as with the working-class boys Willis (1977) describes, because children's lack of enthusiasm for school and parents' willingness to allow spotty commitment is not specifically tied to

household rank. Presumably, it is more or less equally distributed across the population and thus is likely not to directly impact the relationship between rank and developing competence and knowledge. Consequently, we do have the basic requirements for the Samoan primary school to function as a source of learning without recourse to gender, household rank, or other factors. In an attempt to explore this possibility, I performed statistical analyses of children's performance on the two multiple choice tests - test of the conceptual knowledge of the *matai* system and the respectful language test - I administered to the entire body of 6th, 7th and 8th grade students (n = 76) at the village primary school (see chapter 4 for a fuller description of these two tests).

The initial and most basic question, of course, is on what basis can we assess the role of schooling in children's developing competence and knowledge based on analysis of these test scores? I argue that we can do so by comparing the relative contribution of schooling (in terms of school grade level in years) to the contribution of age (in terms of years of life) to children's competence in respectful language and conceptual understandings of the chief system. Of course, such a comparison only makes sense if age and grade are independent and separable variables, and in rural Samoan villages such as Silafaga this appears to be the case. While there is governmental regulation stipulating children's regular attendance in primary school through age 14, it is not uncommon for children to be held back from starting school, to repeat a grade if attendance and tests scores do not merit their advancing, or to stay out of school for a year to help the family with work or childcare before returning the following year. Accordingly, there is a wide range of ages in each of the different grades and this can be clearly seen in the sample used in this analysis (see Table 10.3). Given the level of independence of grade and age,

a statistical analysis comparing the relative contribution of years of schooling and years of life to children's competence appears to be entirely valid.

Table 10.3: Ages of school children by grade in sample

Grade	Age (in years)					Mean age (std. dev.)
	10	11	12	13	14	
Grade 6	11	14	4	0	0	10.76 (0.68)
Grade 7	2	12	12	2	2	11.67 (0.96)
Grade 8	0	3	9	3	2	12.24 (0.90)

A comparison of age and grade level also makes the assumption that children are acquiring this knowledge over an extended period of years of developmental time. Such an assumption is relatively common among researchers interested in socialization, particularly by those who are influenced by parallel distributed processing or neural network models of human cognition (e.g. Karmiloff-Smith 1992; Quinn 2005b; Strauss and Quinn 1992; 1997) in which much of learning is argued to occur through extended and repeated exposures to a given phenomenon. Clearly, the acquisition of lexical items is different, in that research has shown that children can acquire a novel lexical item after very few and sometimes only a single exposure (Akhtar 2005; Akhtar, et al. 2001; Bloom 2001; Heibeck and Markman 1987) in a phenomenon referred to as “fast mapping”. Yet research has also shown that the lexical acquisition as a process has a gradual linear shape accelerating slightly over time from infancy into adolescence (Angling 1993; Bloom 2001; Elman, et al. 1996; Ganger and Brent 2001). Even if a single concept or lexical item is learnt quickly, the two tests contain a sufficiently large number of items drawn from a diverse range of areas within the domain of respectful behavior and the *matai* system that the assumption of gradual acquisition over longer periods of time should hold.

The respectful vocabulary test scores (n=63) and conceptual knowledge of the matai system (n=74) were submitted to linear regression analyses by: (1) age in years, (2) grade level in years, and (3) a multivariate model including both age and grade. The relevant results for these three models are provided in tables 10.4 and 10.5 below. In linear regression analyses the R^2 statistic can be artificially inflated by having too few cases or too many variables. Although the sample size was only of moderate size, the ratio of cases per variable does exceed the generally accepted minimum of 20:1 (de Vaus 2002). This did prevent me from undertaking more elaborate multiple linear regression analyses including gender or household rank, for example, in addition to age and grade.

Table 10.4 & 10.5: Linear regression of test scores by children's age, grade level, and age + grade

Table 10.4: RESPECTFUL VOCABULARY TEST					
MODEL	Df	F	Sig.	<i>b</i> (95% CI)	R^2 (Adj. R^2)
Model 1: Age					
Age	1	13.13	p<.01	1.80 (0.81, 2.79)	.177 (.164)
Model 2: Grade					
Grade	1	40.20	p<.001	3.50 (2.40, 4.61)	.397 (.387)
Model 3: Age + Grade					
Age	2	20.15	p<.001	0.36 (-0.69, 1.41)	.402 (.382)
Grade				3.23 (1.87, 4.60)	

Table 10.5: CONCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE TEST					
MODEL	Df	F	Sig.	<i>b</i> (95% CI)	R^2 (Adj. R^2)
Model 1: Age					
Age	1	4.62	p<.05	0.49 (0.05, 0.94)	.063 (.050)
Model 2: Grade					
Grade	1	11.01	p<.01	0.96 (0.38, 1.54)	.133 (.121)
Model 3: Age + Grade					
Age	2	5.59	p<.01	0.14 (-0.38, 0.66)	.136 (.112)
Grade				0.86 (0.16, 1.56)	

Note: Both age and grade levels are given in years. *B* values are the number of test points gained with the addition of each year of education or life.

There were a number of extreme outliers (± 3 standard deviations from the mean) in both data sets (3 very high vocabulary scores and 1 very high conceptual test score). The data provided in the tables include all of those outliers. While extreme outliers can significantly distort the findings of linear regression tests, cases cannot be readily dropped from examination simply because they complicate one's analysis. In this case I ran all relevant tests both with and without the outliers included and found there to be little qualitative difference between the findings (see the results of all the regression tests with the outliers included and excluded appended at the end of this chapter – tables 10.8 and 10.9).

To return to the data presented in tables 10.4 and 10.5, there are two things of particular interest. First, we can point to the differences in the unstandardized coefficient (b) between the three different models. This statistic describes the slope of the line representing the linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Because both age and grade increase in single year increments, we can directly compare the unstandardized coefficients to see which of these variables contributes more to the respectful vocabulary test scores and conceptual test scores per year. In table 10.4, we see that each year of life contributes 1.80 (95% CI= 0.81, 2.79) to the respectful vocabulary test scores, while each additional year of schooling contributes 3.50 (95% CI = 2.40, 4.61). This indicates a far more substantial contribution for each year of primary education in comparison to each year of life. This pattern is replicated, although far more modestly, with the conceptual knowledge test scores found in table 10.5. Each year of life contributes 0.49 (95% CI = 0.05, 0.94) to the mean concept score, while each year of schooling contributes almost twice as much ($b = 0.96$, 95% CI= 0.38, 1.54).

The multivariate model combining age and grade provides the opportunity to disentangle the relative contribution of these two variables to children's test performance. In applying this model to the respectful language test (model 3 in table 10.4), grade continues to contribute a significant amount to children's performance ($b = 3.23$, 95% CI = 1.87, 4.60), while the contribution of age is sharply reduced to only 0.35 (95% CI = -0.69, 1.41), a statistically insignificant amount. This pattern is also seen in the model's application to the conceptual test results (model 3 in table 10.5), where age's contribution is also reduced to statistical insignificance ($b = 0.14$, 95% CI = -0.38, 0.66). Grade's impact on children's performance as gauged by the multivariate model ($b = 0.86$, 95% CI = 0.16 to 1.56), on the other hand, remains comparable to the univariate model of grade alone. These results strongly support the interpretation that age functions largely as an index of the child's grade level (i.e. older children tend to be in higher grades in school), and does not contribute directly and independently to the child's respectful vocabulary score.

Further support for the notion that schooling is the more important contributor can be seen if we examine the adjusted R squared statistic⁸⁵, which is an estimate of the amount of the variation in the independent variable (i.e. the respectful vocabulary test score and conceptual test score) that can be explained by the different models. For the respectful vocabulary test, age explains 16.4% of the variance, a good proportion, but grade explains more than twice as much (38.7%). These results suggest that both age and grade contribute, but that the grade contributes significantly more to the child's relative knowledge of respectful language. This pattern is replicated in the concept test scores,

⁸⁵ The adjusted form of the R squared statistic is the more conservative and more appropriate for use with smaller sample sizes. Both adjusted and unadjusted forms of this statistic are available in tables 10.4 and 10.5

but the relative amount of the variance explained is far more modest, with age explaining a mere 5.0% while grade explains a more substantial 12.1%.

Again, the multivariate model allows us to disambiguate the contribution of both of these variables. The adjusted R squared for age + grade explained 38.2% of the variance on the vocabulary test scores, supporting the notion that these two variables do not contribute in a strictly additive manner. If that were the case then we would have expected almost 55% of the variance to be explained. Instead we see the age + grade model explaining essentially the same amount of variance as grade did alone (38.7% vs. 38.2% respectively), supporting the interpretation that age makes little to no contribution other than via the effect of grade. This is replicated with the conceptual test scores, where the adjusted R squared statistic for age + grade is slightly less than for grade alone (11.2% vs. 12.1% respectively).

One particularly important point to note as well is the difference in the relative contribution of years of schooling to performance on the respectful vocabulary test and the conceptual knowledge of the *matai* system. Schooling contributed over three times as much to children's respectful vocabulary scores as it did to children's conceptual test scores (model 2 adjusted R squared = .387 vs. .121, respectively). Similarly, each year of school added 3.50 points (95% CI = 2.40, 4.61) to children's performance on the respectful vocabulary tests but only 0.96 points (95% CI = 0.38, 1.54) on the conceptual test. This is a particularly important factor in thinking about the role of the school in the dissemination of cultural knowledge, as the evidence suggests a fairly pronounced role with regard to respectful language and a fair more restricted one for conceptual knowledge of the *matai* system.

This differential contribution is also important in assessing the validity of the analyses conducted here. In seeking to understand the contribution of schooling, we need to be sure that we are not simply detecting children's increasing abilities to complete standardized, multiple-choice tests. While this is surely occurring to some degree here, it is important to note the different level of contribution of schooling to children's respectful language scores and their conceptual knowledge scores. If the school's impact in its entirety was merely a matter of steadily improving test-taking abilities, then we would expect fairly comparable adjusted R squared scores and unstandardized coefficients (*b*) for both tests. This was, however, clearly not the case.

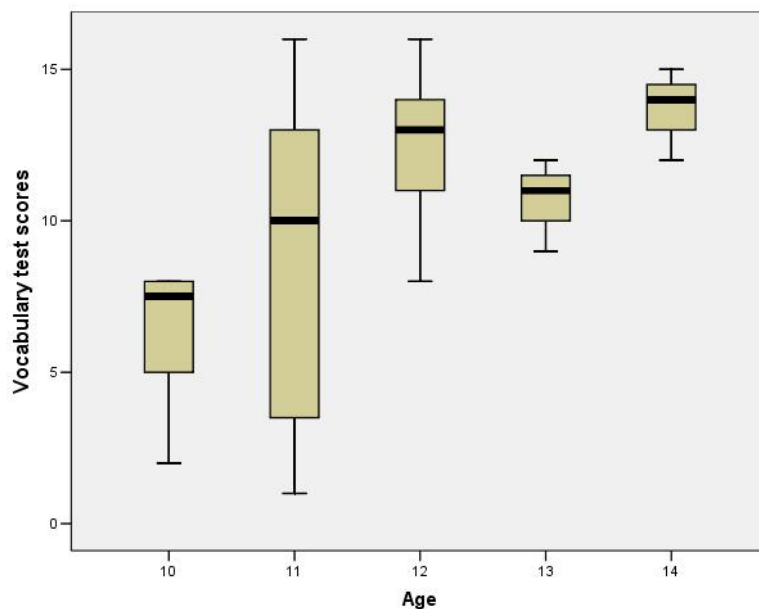
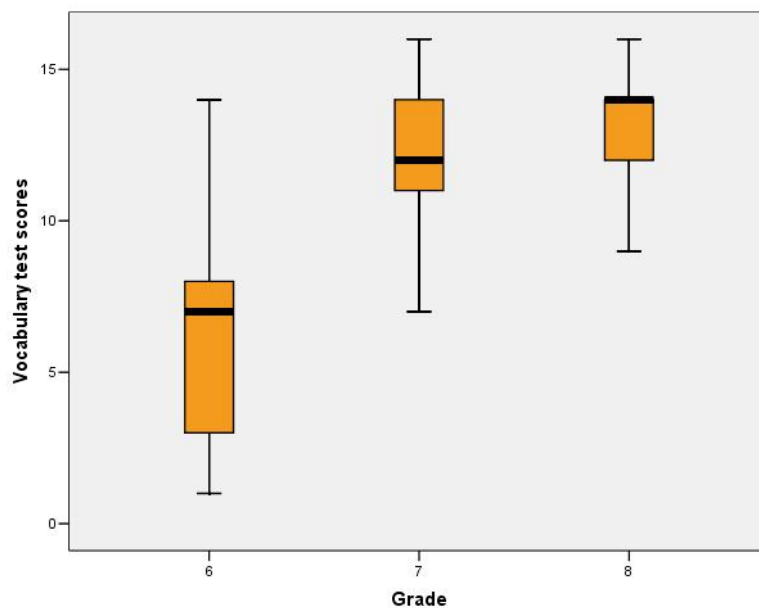
Comparing standard deviations

We can complement and extend the regression analyses described above by comparing the standard deviations in children's test scores by grade and age. Means and standard deviations for the respectful vocabulary scores are reported below in table 10.6 and graphically represented in figure 10.2 and 10.3, while means and standard deviations of the conceptual test scores are in table 10.7 and figures 10.4 and 10.5. As these two tests possess different numbers of questions (concept test: 14 questions, vocabulary test: 17 questions), these measures of dispersion cannot be directly compared. But we can compare the patterned ways in which standard deviations change by grade and by age.

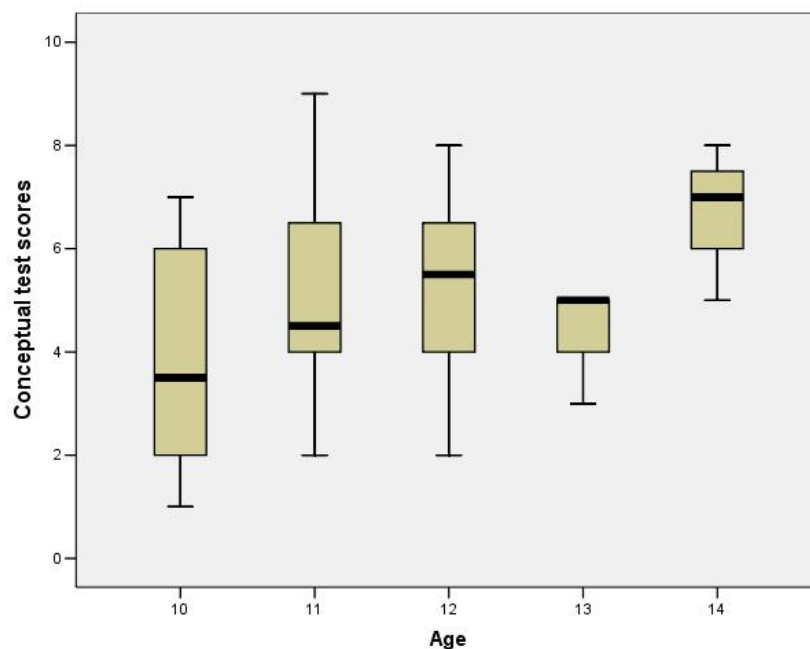
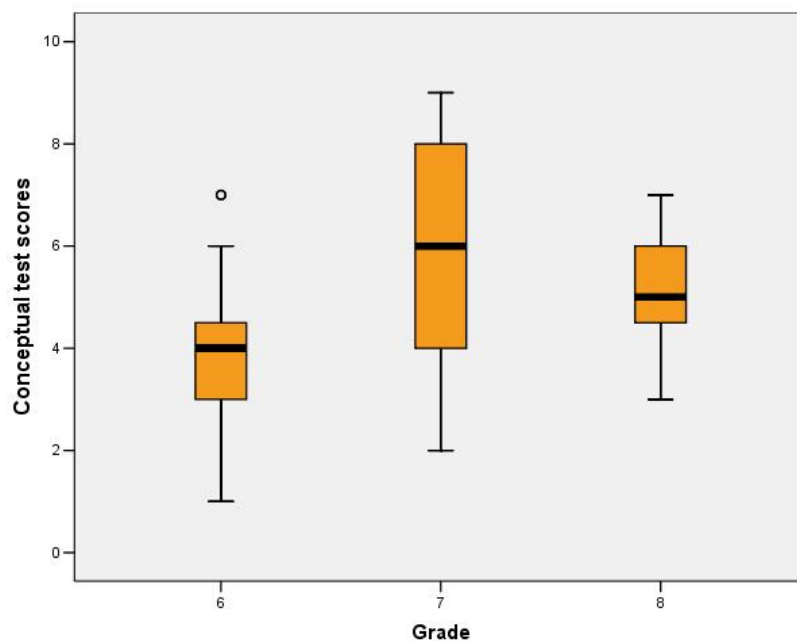
If we focus first on children's performance on the respectful vocabulary test by grade (figure 10.4), we note extremely wide standard deviations in grade 6, where the scores range from some of the highest scores to some of the very lowest for the entire populations of students. Standard deviation drops steadily in grades 7 and 8. By grade 8

the majority of students are scoring within a fairly narrow range. This reduction in dispersion is not an artifact of the test, where increasing numbers of students are simply answering all of the test questions correctly. Only 1 student answered all of the vocabulary test questions correctly, and no student answered all of the concept test questions correctly. While there is some narrowing of the standard deviations as we move from age 10 to 14 (figure 10.3), the pattern is certainly not as consistent as with grade. This again reflects the far more substantial contribution of grade to children's performance on the vocabulary test. This pattern of progressive narrowing of the standard deviations by grade does not occur in the concept test scores (figure 10.5), where the standard deviation is all but unchanged across the three grades.

My interpretation of this progressive narrowing of the dispersion of respectful vocabulary scores is that children are increasingly coming to share a narrower range of competency by virtue of their participation in schooling. This is consistent with an interpretation that the school is serving as a "leveling mechanism" in the dissemination of cultural knowledge. By this I mean that the school's population-level impact is to reduce the diversity of levels of competency in children attending the school. The data supports the idea that children entering grade 6 with relatively little competence are elevated to the level of far more competent children by grade 8. Conversely, children entering grade 6 with fairly high scores do not see comparable improvements, which allows the dispersion of scores to narrow substantially by grade 8. Interestingly, this progressive leveling does not occur for children's performance on the test of their knowledge of the *matai* system. This range of competencies remains remarkably unaffected by grade level and only minimally by age. Thus, the school is acting as a leveling factor for children's

Figure 10.2: Respect vocabulary test scores by age**Figure 10.3: Respect vocabulary test scores by grade****Table 10.6: Means and standard deviations for vocabulary test scores by age and grade**

Age (n)	Mean (95% CI)	Std. Dev.	Grade (n)	Mean (95% CI)	Std. Dev.
10 (12)	8.30 (5.06, 11.54)	4.52	6 (24)	6.71 (5.40, 8.01)	4.07
11 (28)	8.52 (6.40, 10.64)	4.91	7 (24)	12.46 (11.15, 13.76)	2.80
12 (25)	12.68 (11.59, 13.77)	2.46	8 (15)	13.27 (11.62, 14.92)	1.94
13 (5)	12.00 (8.28, 15.72)	3.00			
14 (4)	13.67 (9.87, 17.46)	1.53			

Figure 10.4: Conceptual knowledge of the matai system test scores by age**Figure 10.5: Conceptual knowledge of the matai system test scores by grade****Table 10.7: Means and standard dev. for conceptual knowledge test by age / grade**

Age (n)	Mean (95% CI)	Std. Dev.	Grade (n)	Mean (95% CI)	Std. Dev.
10 (12)	3.92 (2.58, 5.26)	2.11	6 (24)	6.71 (5.40, 8.01)	1.69
11 (28)	5.11 (4.36, 5.86)	1.93	7 (24)	12.46 (11.15, 13.76)	1.79
12 (25)	5.52 (4.66, 6.38)	2.01	8 (15)	13.27 (11.62, 14.92)	1.88
13 (5)	4.40 (3.29, 5.51)	0.89			
14 (4)	6.75 (4.75, 8.75)	1.26			

developing knowledge of respectful language but not for their developing conceptual understanding of the *matai* system.

Discussion

The data does support the notion of the primary school classroom acting as a leveling mechanism in the differential distribution of knowledge, at least with regard to the respect lexicon. This finding cannot be reduced to children's increasing test-taking ability by grade or simply to improving linguistic abilities by age. The population-level impact of the school's instruction in respectful speech is to reduce the diversity in levels of competency in children attending the school, effectively erasing some of the gaps in competence that can be seen in the younger grades. There is some irony to the fact that a substantial amount of some children's learning of respectful language can be attributed to the primary school classroom. A majority of parents perceive the primary task of Western schools is to teach practical skills (i.e. English language, mathematics, and reading) that will increase the chances of gaining more lucrative employment in Apia or overseas. The Western school is largely seen as a route to success in the Westernized sector of Samoan society and not the more traditional one dominated by *matai*. The irony is that their children are also learning some important elements of Samoan culture, which may benefit them in far more immediate and local ways. Indeed, being able to speak competently, coherently and respectfully can gain the individual considerable cultural capital because Samoa society not only demands respect be demonstrated through language, but also values well-crafted oratory.

The primary school's ability to act as a leveling factor with regard to respectful language is less true with regard to conceptual knowledge of the chief system. This is not

to say that the school had no impact on children's developing competence in this area. The analysis did find a statistically significant correlation between children's grade level and their test scores; a positive correlation that explained over 12% of the variance in those test scores. Yet the clear pattern of reduction in variance by grade level observed in the vocabulary test scores was not visible for the test of conceptual knowledge of the chief system.

The reason why the school may act as a strong leveling mechanism for the one area but not the other is difficult to determine with the data I possess, but several possibilities exist. The greater clarity and ease of teaching lexical items as opposed to conceptual knowledge may play a role. The teaching of lexical items may also be an easier task given Samoan pedagogical practices such the "call-and-respond" and the value given to rote memorization. Alternatively, the teaching of respect lexicon may be perceived by teachers as closer to their instructional goals and mandate, and questions on this topic may be more frequently included in the important end-of-year tests. Certainly another possibility is that the radically decontextualized way in which some relevant cultural practices are taught as part of "culture day" may not lend themselves to rapid conceptual development. For example, a demonstration of kava preparation may aid recognition of highly salient cultural elements (e.g. *taupou* in headdress making kava; orator with his symbols of office (*to'oto'o* ("staff") and *fue* ("flywhisk")), but this emerging ability to recognize "culture" remains largely disconnected from meaning and context. One may learn to recognize the *taupou* from her distinctive *tuiga* ("ceremonial headdress") and her position behind the *tanoa* ("kava bowl"), but not clearly when kava is drunk, served, or the symbolic meanings behind its distribution. Yet children's

understandings of the chief system are definitely advancing as a result of schooling, and so the potential ‘problem’ of decontextualization may be overstated. Further research is needed to examine this issue.

There are two important qualifications important to keep in mind when interpreting the data. First, only longitudinal data that assesses children’s competence at different points at time can really tell us if individual children’s developmental trajectories actually fit this model (Miller 1977; Mishler 1996). Cross-sectional data of the sort used here may not accurately represent what is actually occurring in individual lives over time. Second and perhaps more importantly, children’s test scores in the respect lexicon test are only a proxy for their actual competence with that aspect of spoken language. Children’s relative skill in comprehension, production and proper use of these terms may not be accurately represented in all cases by their test scores. Other possible testing procedures were considered, including embedding the terms in sentences or having the test presented orally by a native speaker. Unfortunately the time constraints of the test and the larger project itself precluded both longitudinal work and more elaborate (and likely accurate) test formats.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the opportunities provided by the church and its assorted activities and the local primary school for children’s emergent competence in respectful behavior and conceptual knowledge of the chief system. In both of these institutions of formal education, children learn both “formally” through explicit instruction by teachers, and “informally” (via observational and participatory learning)

through the opportunities organized by the institution. Such a blending of modes demonstrates the impossibility of concretely applying the “formal” / “informal” divide in any consistent way in the real world.

The impact on children’s emerging competence in respectful behavior, including most notably respectful speech, is most obvious in these two settings. Children are provided with the opportunity to engage or observe other’s engagement with unrelated, high-ranking individuals in a more intimate and regular way than is typical in the household. This provides a context to further refine their competence in showing deference and respect with the use of the generalized set of respectful behaviors.

The schools also had a quantifiable impact on children’s command of the Samoan respect lexicon, an important aspect of this generalized set of respectful behaviors. Analysis of tests administered to the oldest three grade levels in the local primary school showed the impact of schooling on children’s relative performance to be substantially more than simply increasing language ability by age. The primary school also served as a leveling mechanism, reducing the diversity in scores and enabling children with relatively less competence to close the gap with those of higher competence.

The schools’ impact on children’s knowledge of the chief system is less dramatic. Statistical analyses showed that the number of years of education explained 12.1% of the variance in children’s concept test scores – less than the 38.7% of variance in respectful speech scores explained by schools (see tables 9.4 and 9.5 above) – yet still notable. In terms of participatory and observational learning, the primary school provides children opportunities to observe and occasionally enact highly salient elements of Samoan chiefly culture, yet as I note these performances are decontextualized. Similarly, the

limited instruction I was able to see in the classrooms featured an emphasis on children's proper behavioral performance (e.g. how to kneel properly when presenting the coconut, cash and cloth as the initial gift in the *sua*). Consistent with a Samoan emphasis on proper behavioral competence rather than on abstract conceptual development, it is a pragmatic education in procedural knowledge and the identification of salient "cultural elements" (e.g. the *taupou*).

One final aspect of interest is that an examination of children's experience of hierarchy (i.e. an asymmetrical mode of social organization arranged around the differential distribution of authority, power, privilege and social value) shows children's worlds to be more complex than one might imagine. As they move outside of the household, rather than immediately being faced with the *matai* system as the predominant and central system of hierarchy in village Samoa, they are exposed to a range of distinct and incommensurable systems of hierarchy in the school, church and domain of chiefly activity. While interconnected and related in meaningful ways to one another, none of these different systems is reducible to another. It certainly serves to stress the importance of context, activity and social ecology in determining the way in which the social world is constituted and negotiated, and the principles at play in its organization.

Appendix to chapter 10

Tables 10.8 and 10.9: Linear regression results for the concept and vocabulary scores including and excluding 'extreme' outliers (± 3 SD)

Table 10.8: Respectful language test scores with and without outliers					
With outliers included (n=63)					
MODEL	Df	F	Sig.	<i>b</i> (95% CI)	R ² (Adj. R ²)
Model 1: Age					
Age	1	13.13	p<.01	1.80 (0.81, 2.79)	.177 (.164)
Model 2: Grade					
Grade	1	40.20	p<.001	3.50 (2.40, 4.61)	.397 (.387)
Model 3: Age + Grade					
Age	2	20.15	p<.001	0.36 (-0.69, 1.41)	.402 (.382)
Grade				3.23 (1.87, 4.60)	
With outliers excluded (n=60)					
MODEL	Df	F	Sig.	<i>b</i> (95% CI)	R ² (Adj. R ²)
Model 1: Age					
Age	1	18.98	p<.001	2.14 (1.16, 3.12)	.247 (.234)
Model 2: Grade					
Grade	1	51.32	p<.001	3.66 (2.64, 4.69)	.469 (.460)
Model 3: Age + Grade					
Age	2	26.55	p<.001	0.61 (-0.41, 1.62)	.402 (.382)
Grade				3.22 (1.95, 4.49)	

Table 10.9: Concept test scores with and without outliers					
With outliers included (n=74)					
MODEL	Df	F	Sig.	<i>b</i> (95% CI)	R ² (Adj. R ²)
Model 1: Age					
Age	1	4.62	p<.05	0.49 (0.05, 0.94)	.063 (.050)
Model 2: Grade					
Grade	1	11.01	p<.01	0.96 (0.38, 1.54)	.133 (.121)
Model 3: Age + Grade					
Age	2	5.59	p<.01	0.14 (-0.38, 0.66)	.136 (.112)
Grade				0.86 (0.16, 1.56)	
With outliers excluded (n=73)					
MODEL	Df	F	Sig.	<i>b</i> (95% CI)	R ² (Adj. R ²)
Model 1: Age					
Age	1	5.18	p<.05	0.47 (0.06, 0.88)	.068 (.055)
Model 2: Grade					
Grade	1	8.24	p<.05	0.79 (0.24, 1.33)	.104 (.091)
Model 3: Age + Grade					
Age	2	4.49	p<.05	0.21 (-0.27, 0.70)	.114 (.088)
Grade				0.63 (-0.03, 1.28)	

Note: Age and grade are given in terms of years for both 9.7 and 9.8. *B* values are the number of test points gained with the addition of each year of education or life.

Chapter 11: Children's developing understandings of the *matai* system

While the previous three chapters sought to explain children's exposure to the chief system in terms of their patterns of participation in social practices and institutions, in this and the next chapter I will focus far more closely to children's developing notions of the chief system. In this chapter I will focus my attention to data collected from interviews and completion of a set of tasks with a smaller subset of children between 4 and 12 years of age, the "focal participants" of the study. I will characterize the kinds of understandings that children of these different ages seem to understand about this complex domain of cultural knowledge. In order to do justice to the level of variation seen in children's understandings I will illustrate my characterizations with reference to brief descriptions of specific children's conceptualizations.

A brief note on research methodology

As I described at length in the methodology chapter, young children have great difficulties completing the same kinds of social science interviews that researchers traditionally employ with adults (Fine and Sandstrom 1988; Tammivaara and Enright 1986). It can be difficult for children to discuss abstract ideas and concepts without some form of scaffolding to structure the conversation and to keep their interest in the conversation alive. One productive way to scaffold the interaction is with the aid of photographs and drawings (Tammivaara and Enright 1986). Use of these media provides the young interviewee with something concrete to talk about, and tends to keep their interest.

The “picture task”, which was the primary source of information for this chapter, consisted of semi-structured interviews using a set of color photographs and ink drawings of various aspects of chiefly activity. The photographs depicted several large *fa'alavelave*, and were taken in villages at some spatial distance from the field site to reduce the chance that children would know the chiefs depicted on a personal basis, a source of potential bias to an assessment of their “generalized” knowledge. In asking children about photographs of persons with whom they were unfamiliar, the children would have to look for contextual cues in the photograph (e.g. symbols of office, roles in a given event) to identify the individual as a *matai* giving a speech, for example.

Several of the drawings included violations of social norms and expectations to see if the children could detect these violations. Some photographs also included oddities with the intention of seeking to determine if children could note the discrepancies. For example, orator chiefs use a staff (*to'oto'o*) and a fly whisk (*fue*) draped over a shoulder as symbols of office when they give important speeches. At one large funeral, one attendee had neglected to bring his. In the place of the staff, the orator used a fencepost he uprooted from the front yard and no fly whisk. I used a photograph of this man delivering a speech, surrounded by fine mats and other exchange goods, with the children to detect whether they understood the symbolism of the fence post. Was this an orator delivering a speech with a *to'oto'o*, or simply a man holding a fence post? Given the ambiguous use of symbols of office, could the children identify his role on the basis of his activities alone? Or do the symbols of office provide an effective scaffolding for children’s developing understandings, which are effectively disrupted in this instance?

In contrast to the “conceptual test” (i.e. test of conceptual knowledge of the chief system) used in the previous chapter, which was intended to assess children’s grasp of more abstract conceptual understandings, the picture task was designed to serve as a probe for both conceptual and more basic associational understandings as well. My logic is that children might not yet be able to articulate specifically why a *matai* would employ a *to’oto’o* / staff, the meanings behind its use, or the specific type of *matai* who would employ one, but with a photograph the child could point to it and indicate that most *matai* used one but they knew little else. In this way it was hoped that the picture task could probe for less refined, procedural understandings.

The limitations for such a method is that it focuses the majority of its attention on chiefly activity in the form of oratory and ritual practices as these are the contexts in which chiefs are most visibly and explicitly marked as such. One cannot, for example, photograph a conversation regarding title succession in a way that gets at the activity. Consequently the majority of the discussion of the chief system emerged based on photographs and questions as to chiefly activity (i.e. oratory, kava ceremonies, seating within the council of chiefs, and the distribution of exchange goods at *fa’alavelave*). As a majority of children’s learning about the chief system occurs via exposure in these contexts – as I argue in chapter 8 – this is not a wholly inappropriate focus. It does make some relevant topics, such as title succession and other more abstract topics, however, more difficult to address as these are topics that cannot be neatly examined using pictorial representations.

I will now turn to discuss three cross-sections examined in this study (4-6, 7-9, and 10 – 12 years of age) in turn.

Basic understandings of hierarchy and the chief system in early childhood

In chapter 7 I detailed five basic understandings regarding hierarchy that the Samoa child acquires through their early experiences in the household and “caregiving hierarchy” (Ochs 1988:81). These five general associations include: first, that the child’s social ecology is organized hierarchically with some individuals having far greater rights, authority, and obligations than others. Second, relative ranking in this hierarchy is indexed primarily by relative age. Third, relative rank varies by the specific social ecology such that the individual’s rank is not a fixed attribute but rather a contextually shifting and negotiated position (e.g. the “pivot positions” (Levy 1968) of the caregiving hierarchy). Fourth, high rank is associated with physical immobility and inactivity, while lower ranks are associated with physical activity. Fifth and finally, children’s early experiences of hierarchical relationships - particularly with contextually shifting rank and occasionally capricious sibling caretakers - provides an experiential basis for ambivalence towards authority figures.

As I noted in chapter 7, these developing understandings are very general conceptions of hierarchy applicable in basic ways to the numerous, different systems of hierarchical ranking found in Samoan social life, including the focus of the research here: the chief system. These general conceptions orient children to social interaction within hierarchically ranked social institutions, and provide some basic building blocks for more advanced understandings of hierarchical ranked systems, including the chief system. For example, the basic association of high rank with physical immobility, which can be seen in the childcare hierarchy, is incorporated over time into the contrastive behavioral styles

of *ali'i* and *tulafale* where the dignity of the *ali'i* is tied to his behavioral restraint while the *tulafale* is the embodiment of a more active, agentive and aggressive power (Shore 1982:241-4). The particular way by which these basic associations are applied, however, will likely vary according to the hierarchical system in question.

Young children's understandings of the chief system, however, are not limited to these more general understandings. Working with the focal participants of this age group revealed three aspects of the developing understandings of children in this youngest cross-section (4 to 6 years of age). First, children of this age range do indeed have some recognition of the *matai* as a social role of some importance in the larger community beyond the child's household. While there are clearly discrepancies and inconsistencies in children's understanding at this age, none of the children were completely unfamiliar with the idea of a *matai*. This is in itself significant. Consider the analogous situation for the five or six-year-old child growing up in a small town in North America, who would likely have relatively little to no awareness of the social actors involved in local governance such as a mayor or city council member. It highlights the fact that while children's contact will be far greater in the coming years, they are nonetheless not sequestered away from community events featuring chiefly activity and are learning from these initial exposures.

Second, children's initial conceptions of *matai* are tightly tied to the visually evocative and highly novel ceremonial activities with which chiefs are associated, such as oration, kava ceremonies, or the elaborate presentation of exchanged goods (*sua*) at *fa'alavelave*. In children's earliest models, chiefs are social roles inextricably tied to the specialized rituals and ceremonies in which these roles are most explicitly and publicly

expressed. The larger and more everyday role played by chiefs in village-level governance and political decision-making remain unspecified at this point. This is not unexpected, for as I noted chiefs are generally not well-marked social roles and thus an individual's identity as a chief is most visibly articulated in the midst of chiefly activity. Additionally, village social and political processes and their concerns represent a domain of concern that does not concretely impinge on the interests or experiences of children at this point in their life.

Third, and again somewhat unsurprisingly, children's emerging cultural models of the chief system reflect a restricted base of experience. There are many parts of the chief system that remain unexamined, unconsidered, and simply unknown for children of this age. As there is little impetus for Samoan children to assert possession of knowledge when none exists as such behavior can be punished, children were very explicit about their ignorance of many topics. Their lack of experience includes not only more complex issues such as title succession and the obligations of chiefs to their descent groups, but also fairly basic concerns as well. Many of the developing concepts children do possess are fundamentally undifferentiated and / or unrefined in nature, meaning that while the child may have acquired a prototypical instantiation for the concept of "chief", for example, there is little understanding of who is and who is not a chief, what does a chief actually do, and so forth. Finally, children of this age range may demonstrate relatively more advanced understandings, but this competence expresses itself as "islands of competencies", which tend to be superficial facts or associations that are themselves not well refined nor integrated with other understandings.

I will illustrate these three basic findings as well as well as provide more concrete shape to what children understand at this period of their lives by describing in some detail an extended case study of a particular five-year-old male focal participant and an episode of imitative play that provides interesting insights into his relative comprehension.

Focal participant: *Leu*

At the time of my assessment of his competence and observations I conducted in his household, Leu was five years old and had lived for several years with his maternal grandparents on a large and densely populated (~30 persons) compound occupied by several different segments of a large descent group. Each of the different immediate branches of the descent group live in their own separate household, but each was involved in the many communal activities serving the group as a whole. No one in Leu's immediate household or in the extended family with whom he had everyday contact held a chiefly title, and so his household was categorized as "lower ranking".

In the late afternoon following the conclusion of a very large and well-attended local funeral, I observed the five-year-old Leu engaged in a lengthy bout of solo imitative play in which he pretended to be a *tulafale* / orator giving a speech in the open space behind his home. For roughly 20 minutes the boy imitated the speech and non-verbal communicative practices involved in presenting a lengthy speech at a *fa'alavelave* or other community event. Leu ended his play suddenly when several of his siblings and younger kin returned to the household with the approach of mealtime. (While I was able to observe Leu from a distance, I did not approach him out of fear that I would either

interrupt him or my interest would embarrass him⁸⁶ and he would stop. Consequently I could not make out much of what he said even though I could hear the intonation used.) There are several details of the bout of play that reveal much about children's developing competence.

First, Leu's choice to imitate chiefly activity after having observed such activity in the village supports my argument in chapter 7 that *fa'alavelave* and other community events function as important sources of learning for children about the chief system. It was pretty clear that this bout of play was triggered by Leu's recent observations of the chiefly activity at the funeral as he had spent much of that day accompanying his grandfather, who ferrying guests and exchange goods around the village by pickup truck.

One should not, however, take the additional step and see in Leu's imitative play a common mode by which this new knowledge is rehearsed or inculcated in other children (e.g. Lancy 1996). In fact this observation represents the only instance during my time in the field when I observed a Samoan child pretending to be a chief or be engaged in chiefly activity. I might very well have missed (or misinterpreted) an occasional bout of such play, but it would be incorrect – at least on the basis of my observations – to see imitative play in a general sense as a privileged and common route by which Samoan children learn about the chief system. Samoan children do periodically engage in solo or social pretend play⁸⁷, but my observations suggest that it is almost never focused on chiefly activity. Rather, the focus of such imitative behavior seems to

⁸⁶ My experience with Samoan children's play is that they are generally afraid of revealing such play to adults out of fear they will be ridiculed. Given parents' generally negative attitudes such play as infantile and a "waste of time", most children simply abandon such play when an adult arrives on the scene.

⁸⁷ I have no quantitative data to support a comparison of rates of imitative play between Samoan children and other populations, but my impression is that such research would find such play to be less common due to parental attitudes as well as an affinity for more physical games.

focus on the activities of sports figures (e.g. professional wrestlers, rugby players), action movie stars (e.g. cowboys, thieves, karate experts), and everyday activities (e.g. teaching school, going shopping in Apia).

Second, Leu used a number of physical artifacts commonly found around his household in his pretend play. He had a shoulder-high stick stripped of all of its leaves that he employed as a staff (*to'oto'o*). In his other hand, he had a 2-3 foot long strip of dried pandanus leaf (*pandanus tectorius*) that he dangled over his shoulder in imitation of an orator's *fue* / fly whisk. Leu had also put on his faded navy *lavalava*, which although it is the most common form of dress for adult males, was relatively uncommon for Leu and many young boys who tended to wear shorts.

The use of such artifacts in pretend play is interesting in itself as it shows Leu's increasingly complex cognitive abilities. In Leslie's (1987) terms, Leu is demonstrating the ability to use not only a "primary" or veridical mental representation (e.g. the stick as a stick) but also a meta-representation (e.g. the stick as a staff / *to'oto'o*) in the context of play⁸⁸. For my purposes, however, what is more interesting here are the particular artifacts with which Leu has chosen to play. His choice to incorporate these particular items (*fue* and *to'oto'o*) into his play rather than the large number of other objects used slightly more frequently by *matai* than the untitled (e.g. briefcase, sunglasses, leather shoes, *ula*, coconut oil, china tea sets) suggests their marked and salient nature in the midst of the *fa'alavelave*. Although I will shortly suggest that Leu does not fully understand the implications of these particular symbols, the fact he has come to focus his

⁸⁸ By considering the secondary 'stick-as-staff' model as a meta-representation, Leslie (1987:415) can get around the problem of "representational abuse" where the two representations in mind conflict with one another. In this instance the meta-representation references the primary representation and indicates that for the present context the child is going to act as if it were not a veridical representation of reality.

attention on these symbols suggests the way in which such physical artifacts can operate as scaffolding upon which children's developing meanings can be constructed.

Children's attention to the use of the novel object of the fly whisk can lead children to consider: who is this person who holds this object? What does possession of this particular object signify? What is this person doing when he uses this object in this way? The artifacts act as points of focus in the continued refinement and differentiation of the larger conceptual understand of the *matai*.

Third, what was visually striking about Leu's play was how very effectively he could imitate the *behavioral style* of the orator giving his speech. His stance and movements were remarkably good imitations of the aggressive yet dignified bearing of a *tulafale* giving a speech. Leu let his pretend fly whisk hang over his one shoulder as he gestured to his pretend audience with his free hand. He emphasized his points by swinging the top of the staff back and forth or out and back, leaving the foot of the staff planted on the ground. Periodically he would stop speaking, grab his pretend fly whisk, and whip it violently at the ground several times as was typical for the more dramatic adult *tulafale*, before returning it to his shoulder and beginning to speak again. The mannerisms, postures, and gestures were very accurate depictions of the particularly aggressive and potent *tulafale*. Thus, Leu was demonstrating not only his interest in this important social role but his grasp of the embodied presentation of self characteristic of the role. It also shows the early acquisition of procedural knowledge associated with this social role.

To return to considering the larger question of Leu's developing understandings of the chief system: Leu's imitative play suggests some of the ways he is learning as well

as the relative advancement of his understandings. While some initial steps have been made these early understandings are partial and unrefined in nature. This reflects children's limited exposure at these early ages as well as an impressive but still developing set of social cognitive skills underlying processes of social learning (Tomasello 1995; Tomasello, et al. 1993).

We can see an example of the unrefined and partial nature of Leu's understandings in the imitative play session, and particularly in the speech style that he employs. While he is able to imitate the various non-verbal behaviors, behavioral style, and use of key physical artifacts in his play, he confuses and blends distinct speech styles. While at times in his play Leu does approximate the intonation contours and speech style of *tulafale* as well as more conversational, everyday speech, his pretend speech frequently employed a specialized speech style used exclusively by untitled men announcing ("*alaga*") the goods that have been exchanged at *fa'alavelave* in a *sua* (see chapter 9 for a more detailed description of a *sua*).

This announcement takes place immediately after the *sua* or exchange has been completed. An untitled man makes the announcement in as loud a voice as is possible on the periphery of the space where the exchange occurred or outside of the house in something very much akin to a town crier making public announcements. The volume, intonation contours, and manner of articulation of the announcement are very distinct and not used commonly in any other contexts. The words are articulated very quickly and in an increasing rate that builds to a breathless yelp at the conclusion of the utterance. There is usually an extended pause between utterances as the individual takes a deep breath prior to articulating the next utterance. From an "etic" perspective, it is a very

marked pattern of articulation and intonation that stands in marked contrast to the other forms of speech present at these events. Additionally, given the strong norms against disturbing chiefly activity (or adults'), this particular style of speech likely draws the attention of children by its very discordance with these norms.

Leu's incorporation of this distinctive speech style into his play, however, is inconsistent with Samoan culture because this form of speech and the act of announcing the exchange is only appropriate for an untitled person and not a *matai*. While performing such an announcement accurately does require a more advanced level of cultural competence, it is not seen as proper given the dignity of a *matai* nor does it respect the division of labor between the *matai* and untitled attendants. Consequently, Leu's inclusion of this particular speech style into his imitation of a *tulafale* is not consistent with Samoan culture in that it blends activities associated with both the *tulafale* and untitled attendants.

One could argue that Leu's blending of different elements of chiefly activity in such a novel way is simply an expression of creative play with cultural forms and individual agency. Corsaro (1997), Hirschfeld (2002), Gaskins (Gaskins, et al. 1992), Goodnow (1990) and others have stressed the often overlooked role of children in the negotiation, creation, and critique of cultural forms. Given the nature of play as activity bracketed away from social reality and its attendant risks (Bateson 2000; Bruner, et al. 1976; Vygotsky 1967), creative play with elements of culture is certainly part of such processes. Yet in this particular case, creative play may not be based on a full understanding of the forms themselves. When I asked Leu, as part of the focal participant tasks, about who could make such announcements he was clear that it was an

activity restricted to “*matai*”. Consequently, this particular instance is less suggestive of creativity play (although it may still contain such motivations) than an undefined notion of who is and who is not a chief, and which activities are associated with which social role. In Leu’s eyes his combination is less the creative union of the activities of two distinct and separate social roles into one, but rather the merger of activities he associates incorrectly with a single social role.

In completing the other focal participant tasks, Leu exhibited a similar lack of differentiation and refinement of the *matai* role. When showed the various photographs and drawings of the picture task, Leu showed little understanding of who was a *matai* and which individuals present at various chiefly activities were *matai* and who were not. He repeatedly insisted, for example, that everyone in attendance at village *fono* were *matai*. This included the various untitled men of the ‘*aumaga* serving the *matai* as well as the female *taupou* preparing the kava. It was the *taupou* and another female *matai* that I included in a drawing of a *fono* that gave Leu pause, as he hesitated to pronounce on whether or not women could hold chiefly titles in what looked to be a novel consideration for him. After wavering on the possibility of female *matai*, Leu’s thinking stabilized on the idea that he simply did not yet know and this remained his response over the remainder of our interactions⁸⁹.

When showed a photograph with two adult male figures and no indications of the men’s status as *matai*, Leu was quick to suggest that the men were “*matai*”. This photograph was included in the set to see if children could indicate in the face of

⁸⁹ This interaction points to a methodological dilemma in longitudinal work of this kind. Will the interviewer’s questions ferment conceptual growth that might not otherwise occur, such that these children will exhibit greater conceptual development on average in later trials than children who had not been questioned?

‘ambiguous stimuli’ that they could not tell if the two men were, and as a spur to conversation to see if they could tell me what they needed to know to identify an individual as a *matai*. Leu was quick to argue that the men were indeed *matai* but could not specify the basis of that knowledge. This would seem to indicate that part of the problem lay with a lack of clarity as to which contextual cues existed to distinguish *matai* from untitled persons, and the specific participation frameworks for chiefly activity that distinguished these two groups of persons.

Although Leu’s play is notable for his use of key cultural symbols, which could be employed by adults to determine the type of chiefly title held by an individual, work with Leu suggested that his understanding of the symbols was far less developed. He could identify the staff by its correct name (*to ’oto ’o*) yet he consistently referred to the fly whisk or “*fue*” as a “*lauga*”, which is the general term for a speech (e.g. ‘*e fai se lauga* – “he made a speech”). Interestingly, “*lauga*” was also the term he used to refer to orators rather than “*tulafale*”; again, consistently and with reference to multiple pictures and events. Beyond merely confusing the terminology, however, Leu seemed to be unclear about the role symbols could play in identifying the chiefs and the relative necessity for chiefs to employ such symbols of office in ritual contexts. In one telling photograph used in the picture task (a section of which is included below in photograph 11.1(left)), an orator has come to an important funeral in which he will be making a public presentation but has come without his *to ’oto ’o* or *fue*. Just prior to the speech he had an untitled man pull a fence post from a neighboring yard and uses it as a staff, but its irregular and rough-hewn shape contrast it with the more typical finely carved and smooth versions of his peers (compare with the orator in photograph 11.1(right) and

figures 8.1 and 8.2 in chapter 8). When Leu is asked about the fencepost-as-“staff”, he cannot see the symbolic use to which this ordinary object is being put and instead describes it as an *amo* or “yoke” used by men to carry heavy objects by slinging it over a shoulder. When asked if the man should have anything else with him to see if he would note the missing fly whisk in the photograph, he responds in the negative.



Photo 11.1: Orator using fencepost as “staff” (left) and orator with staff and fly whisk (right)

Thus, Leu’s play is particularly interesting because he employs these classic symbols of chiefly status in his play and does so with the appropriate behaviors and a budding association of these artifacts with a particular context and pattern of activity (oratory) and social role (*matai*). Yet as of yet these symbols are only objects without

meaning and referents. Leu does not yet see the symbolic nature of the objects and they way that they can be used to parse types of chiefs (e.g. *tulafale* from *ali'i*) and more highly ranked *tulafale* who will participate directly in the event from those who will remain on the periphery and who have not brought their symbols of office. Put most simply, for Leu and other children of this age a king's crown is just a funny kind of hat. Yet with that said, these artifacts nonetheless remain as potent points of focus for children's future refinement and differentiation for their developing conceptions of the *matai* and chief system.

In slightly more advanced understandings, Leu's knowledge was either lacking or exhibit the same pattern of initial but unrefined associations. Thus, Leu exhibited no understanding of the pattern of seating within the chief's meeting house. He also could not specify the larger responsibilities, obligations, or expectations of the chiefs. While chiefs are to be shown great respect as are any elder person, Leu could not suggest that chiefs possessed a distinct set of obligations, responsibilities or tasks beyond the chiefly activities in which he had seen them operate. He could also not specify how one became a chief or the particular criteria that might be used to select a chief. Nor could he indicate what criteria might be used to judge a chief 'good' or 'bad'? In essence, Leu showed an awareness of the social role but relatively piecemeal understandings of the various different aspects of that role.

Of course Leu is only a single child and cannot be said to be fully representative of the entire range of children of this age, as even my small sample exhibited some variation in knowledge. Several of the children between 4 and 6 years of age expressed relatively little beyond recognition of a *matai* social role and some limited association

with chiefly activity. A few other children seemed to possess greater knowledge, but this knowledge was of very specific associations, what I will refer to as “*islands of competence*”. One case that illustrates this point well is that of six-year-old Timu.

Focal participant: *Timu*

As we slowly moved through the pictures and drawings of *fono* as part of the picture task, I asked Timu if he knew who drank the first cup of kava at a *fono*, a cup that is traditionally reserved for the highest ranking chief present. Without missing a beat the young boy, immediately and correctly provided the name of the highest ranking *ali'i* in the village. As there were children twice his age who could not provide that answer (with or without such apparent ease), I was initially very surprised. Yet follow-up questions revealed the same pattern of limited knowledge as with Leu. While Timu could identify the specific chief by name, he could not describe the logic of why this particular chief had such a right, nor who would drink the first cup of kava in the frequent absence of that chief. Moreover, there was ample evidence to suggest that he had no first-hand knowledge of the village's highest ranking chief, because he vigorously denied that women could become *matai* and the current title-holder he named is female. This suggests that he had acquired the fact from some other source than his own observation. As his father was a central informant of mine and we had had numerous conversations about the local political structure in his household, it is certainly possible that Timu had overheard one of our discussions and picked up this specific fact. Such would be consistent with Akhtar's (2005; Akhtar, et al. 2001) interesting finding that young children (in the case of her research, two-year olds) are just as adept at learning new

lexical items from listening to third-party interactions as when directly addressed using the new word.

While Timu's relative knowledge of the issue does not extend far beyond the issue, it does provide a base upon which he can develop a richer and fuller understanding of the chief system. These simple associations will guide his observations of future events, in this case kava ceremonies. It will generate expectations, the violation of which may lead him to generate revised models providing a more adequate explanation. If he is motivated to learn more about the simple association he already possesses, he can build outward from it. Who will drink kava in this chief's absence? Why does this chief receive the honor of drinking the first cup of kava? Does this chief receive other kinds of special treatments and why? And so forth. The child's knowledge of this particular aspect of the chief system, in this case ritual practice, will be constructed by accretions around these "island of competence" as the child builds on what he or she already knows.

In summary then: in addition to the more general conceptions regarding hierarchy that children have acquired by virtue of their experiences in the Samoan household, the data suggests a pattern of initial but limited strides in coming to terms with the chief system. There is a clearly awareness of the "*matai*" as an important social role in the village and occasionally household. This social role is situated very concretely with the specific chiefly activities of *fa'alavelave* and *fono* in which the observations likely occurred. Yet there is little comprehension of this social role beyond participation in chiefly activity (e.g. restrictions on membership to this role, obligations and expectations of chiefs). Children who exhibited slight more advanced understandings also seemed to possess these understandings as islands of competence that are not well integrated to

other understandings or refined in nature, but which likely provide ‘footholds’ for long-term conceptual development.

Developing knowledge of “community children”

As I outline in chapter 6 and then detailed in chapters 8 and 9, the developmental niche transition that commences as the child transitions into public school and other village-level social organizations places the child into far greater contact with chiefly activity than was earlier the case. Children are increasingly able to witness various community events with significant involvement by chiefs including *fono* and church events, as well as observe various *fa'alavelave* such as funerals, weddings and *saofa'i*. These various opportunities to observe from the periphery provide grist for the further development of cultural models of the chief system. What we see in children of this age are increasingly defined conceptions of the role of *matai* within the context of chiefly activity. While understandings of both the *matai* and the activities themselves are increasingly refined, there is little progression in seeing the *matai* in terms of the other activities, obligations and expectations beyond these activity settings. To some extent children can articulate a notion of chiefs in terms of the authority they wield and the village-level decisions they make, but the scope and role of these powers and the scope of authority remains vague. To illustrate this I will describe findings derived from two focal participants: *Esera* and *Toaono*.

Focal participant: Esera

Esera is a 9-year-old boy living in a small household compound a short distance from the local primary school and near one of the main access paths to the large tracts of land where much of the village's plantations. Esera's father worked a variety of jobs in Apia and spent a considerable time away from the household, but I knew the majority of the other members of the household fairly well. Esera was one of the boys who periodically accompanied me fishing, and so I knew him relatively well in a number of different contexts in the village. Although generally subdued when adults were present, he could act aggressively and occasionally belligerently towards his younger siblings, slightly older sister, and peers.

Interviews with Esera and completion of the focal participant tasks demonstrated that his competence with the various chiefly activities was far more fluent than Leu, Timu, or the other younger children. He was able to point to the activities of *matai* and untitled persons in *fa'alavelave* and *fono* with far greater confidence, and to provide details of those activities with greater clarity and specificity. For example, largely unbidden he provided details to photographs of *tulafale* at *fa'alavelave* involved in oratory as they direct the presentation of fine mats and cases of tinned fish, describing the chief's actions as "giving a speech" (*fai se lauga*) and showing a knowledge of the context of the event, the use of the exchange goods, and the *tulafale*'s symbols of office.

He also was able to explain in some detail the kava ceremony that initiates meetings of the village *fono*. For example, he described and demonstrated some of the different actions of the actors involved in mixing and portioning out (*tufatufa*) the kava. He was able to clarify that the preparation was completed by various untitled persons in

contrast to the younger children who described the untitled men and *taupou* as *matai*. He was also able to identify that the first cup of kava goes to the “*matai fa’apitua*”, which can be glossed as the “most important chief”. This last point along shows significant growth in understanding the larger logic expressed in the kava ceremony.

Despite these many refinements there is considerable confusion on a number of important aspects of these activities and the larger understanding of the structure of the chief system they reference. Most notably Esera is not cognizant of the contrast between *ali’i* and *tulafale* describing the orator simply as a *matai* rather than the more specific term *tulafale* or “orator”, which is the way an adult would make such a reference. As I describe in chapter 3, there are two types of chiefs: high chiefs (*ali’i*) and orators or talking chiefs (*tulafale*). While of little immediate relevance on the level of the individual household where a titleholder is simply a *matai*, the distinction between the two types of chiefs is of great importance in the context of chiefly activity where the different chiefs play distinct and complementary roles in ritual activity (Duranti 1981; Mead 1969; Shore 1982).

The conceptual distinction between these two social statuses is rooted in Samoan ethnotheories of power and authority. *Ali’i* are conceptualized as the true sources and repositories of *pule* (authority), while *tulafale* are commonly described as the *faipule* or “the activators of authority” responsible for the agentive and active expression of authority (Shore 1982:241). This conceptual distinction is most directly realized in the *fono*, other village-level ritual occasions, and the chiefly activity of *fa’alavelave*. In these different contexts, the *ali’i* is the true noble with formal authority to command, while the *tulafale* acts in the name of and on behalf of the *ali’i* in a far more recognizably

“political” manner. Prototypically, the *tulafale* does so through formal oratory in which he (or she) speaks on behalf of the *ali'i*. As Mead (1969) notes, the high chief is “ceremonial paralyzed without a talking chief” because of the various ritual actions that the *tulafale* manages while the *ali'i* must remain the placid and immobile embodiment of dignity and behavioral restraint. The different patterns of participation in ritual activity, seating within the chief’s meeting house, level of deference and respect, role within debate of issues, and so forth are all derived from this distinction between *ali'i* and *tulafale*. Consequently the distinction is of great importance to a full understanding of chiefly activity because it structures this activity in numerous fundamental ways. Interviews with Esera revealed that he did not yet have a grasp on this key distinction.

Another important but difficult notion that Esera does not yet command is the use and meaning of space within the *fono*. The use of space in the chief’s meeting house is important as it signifies not only different social statuses (i.e. high chiefs, orators, and untitled persons) but also the relative rank of the different individuals within these different statuses. When asked about how people sat themselves within the *fono*, Esera and most other children this age seemed to be using a pattern of seating that they witnessed occurring in their own home with the arrival of visitors. The guests sit in the “front” of the house near to the central door (usually towards the road or center of the village), while the members of the household greeting them sit in the “back” of the house closer to the bush, ocean and / or rear cooking houses. In this case the ends of the house remain unused. Seating for meetings of chiefs is done along completely different lines with the *ali'i* seated in the ends or *tala* of the *fale*, the *tulafale* arranged along the front of the house and the untitled men and *taupou* producing kava along the rear of the house

(Compare figures 11.1 and 11.2). Esera's and many of the other children this age are simply using what they know about seating in a more formal situation that they have observed as an analogy for what might be occurring (but is not) in the *fono*.

Consequently when asked where this "most important chief" (*matai fa'apitoo*) who receives the first cup of kava sits, Esera places him in the "front" of the house where an honored guest would sit - but not where a highly ranked *ali'i* would sit.

One thing that is interesting about the particular expansion that we can see from the younger children to Esera is the growth in knowledge of many of the details of chiefly activity. When questioned he admitted to only witnessing "a few *fono*", could provide only roughly detail about most other aspects of the *fono*, and yet could provide a fair bit of detail about the kava ceremony in particular. While I could only speculate about the source of Timu's knowledge of the identity of the highest ranking chief in the village, the particular decontextualized nature of Esera's island of competence is likely to have been derived from his exposure to the various cultural performances at the local primary school "culture days" and church fundraisers such as beauty pageants. As I describe in chapter 9, such performances frequently include children demonstrating things such as the production of sennet rope, lighting a fire without matches, a recitation of the local ceremonial address (*fa'alupega*), and preparation of kava by a girl dressed as a *taupou*. As I noted in the previous chapter, these cultural performances are conducted with no real mention of the context in which such an activity would frequently occur and usually only include announcement of the name of the child and his or her parents. While lighting a fire or producing sennet rope would make sense to the children as they have seen the use of these cultural artifacts, recitation of the *fa'alupega* and other more abstracted cultural

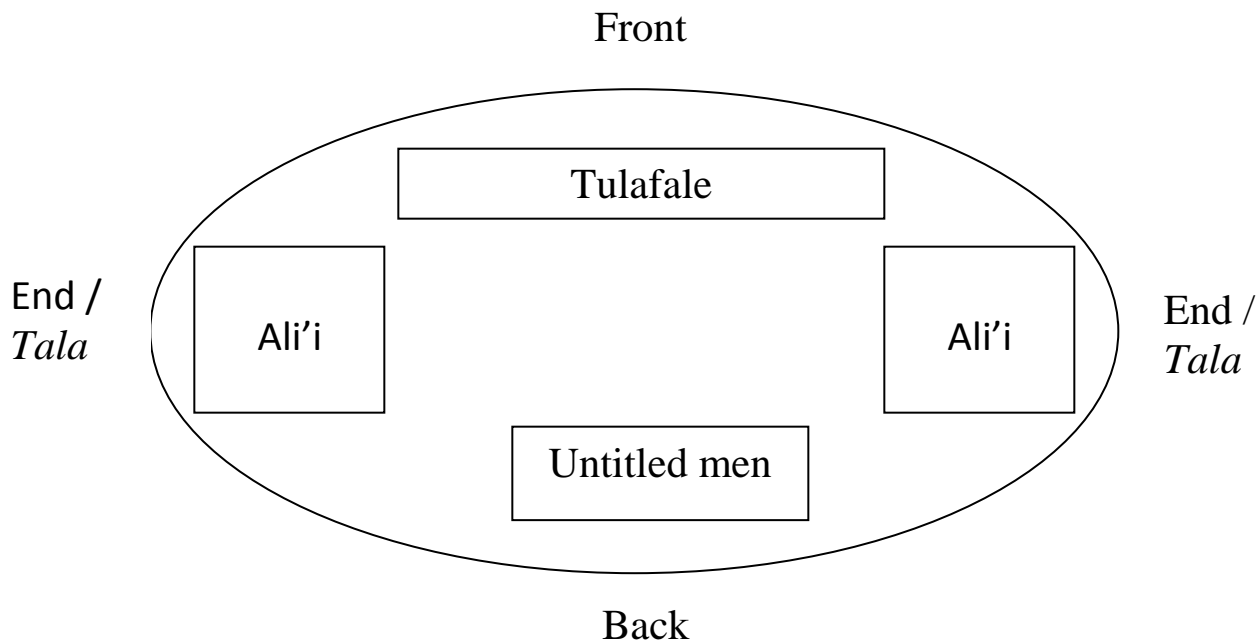
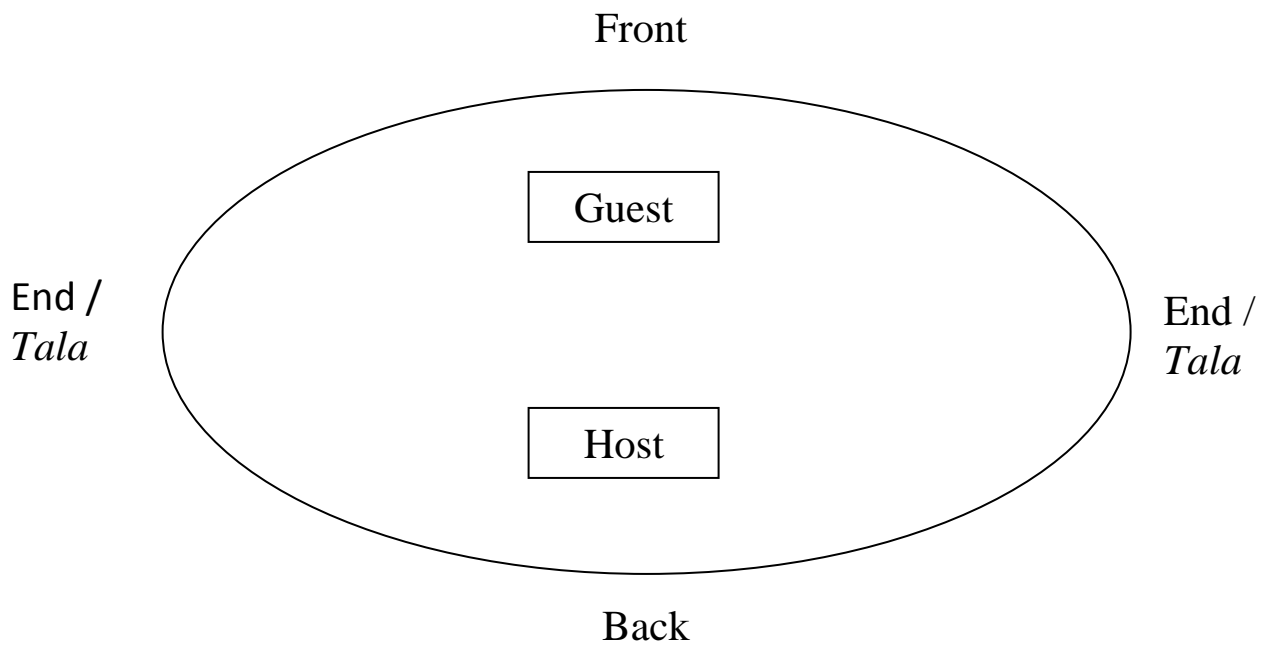


Figure 11.1: Schematic seating plan for a meeting of chiefs (*fono*)

Figure 11.2: Schematic seating plan to formally greet a visitor



performances would make far less sense. A variety of questions would remain unspecified: When would someone use such an address? Who would use the address and who would be the appropriate addressee(s)? What are the referents and meanings of the various metaphors and illusions common in such an address? And so forth.

Esera's detailed description of the different tasks of the kava ceremony arguably reflects learning about it in these contexts rather than from observing the *fono* itself⁹⁰. First, children have relatively limited visual access to kava ceremonies as the heightened formality of the event usually means that children are more regularly excluded to prevent them from interrupting the *matai* present. This could be one reason why his knowledge of the other elements of the *fono* (e.g. seating and the use of space within the *fono*, the different types of chiefs) are far less developed than is his about the kava ceremony itself. Second, Esera was familiar with the idea of a young female (the *taupou*) ritually preparing kava for consumption in a *fono*. This is telling as a female only took the role of a *taupou* in a *fono* twice during my time in the village, at my *saofa'i* (entitlement ceremony) and on the visit of a delegation of Japanese embassy officials at the dedication of the local medical clinic. On every other instance the kava was mixed by a male attendee. If children were learning exclusively from observing the *fono*, I would have expected more confusion about the presence of the female. Yet the production of kava in the cultural performances conducted in the church and school virtually always uses a schoolgirl wearing the elaborate headdress of the *taupou*.

In comparison to Esera's greater fluency in discussing prominent chiefly activities such as the oration and presentation of exchange goods in a *sua* and the kava ceremony,

⁹⁰ Other possible sources of information that I cannot rule out would be the schematized pictorial representations of *taupou* with headdress seated behind the kava bowl that can be found on some government signs and logos, some secondary school logos, and the occasional tourist t-shirts.

he was more hesitant in discussing the larger role, powers and responsibilities of the *matai* in the village. While he could talk about the chief and the *fono* as the *pule* (authority) within the *'aiga* (descent group) and village respectively, he was unclear when or how this authority was concretely exercised. When asked whether his father or his family's *matai* would make different decisions, he could not provide an answer. And Esera and other children his age would generally claim ignorance as to the larger social, political and economic role of chiefs in the village. The clear exception to this tendency was with regard to punishment of infractions of village rules. As I noted in chapter 8 there had been a great transformation and enlargement of the role of the disciplinary committee in village life in the midst of my fieldwork. As all males not attending secondary school were required to don uniforms nightly and police the street bisecting the village during evening prayers, and on Sunday attend a several hour long meeting of the disciplinary committee, children had taken note of this change in village political organization. Weekly meetings of the disciplinary meeting also lead to more fines and far greater publicity of violations as the meetings were always a topic of village gossip. This is likely the reason behind children's frequent mention of disciplining rule violators as part of the authority (*pule*) of village chiefs.

Focal participant: *Toaono*

Toaono was a nine-year-old girl who was part of a small but highly ranked descent group in the village. Toaono and her immediate family lived in a nuclear family household with her parents and her younger brother in a small set of houses at some distance from the village center near to some of the descent group's plantations. There

was some regular contact between Toaono's household and the other descent group households in the village as Toaono's father was responsible for a large portion of the agricultural work for the descent group as a whole, and large plates of steaming root crops with coconut milk could be seen passing down from his household to the main house before dusk each evening. Yet Toaono and her brother did not usually ferry the food between households, and they had relatively more contact with the other children in the immediate area of the household residence who were from lower-ranking households than with the children of her descent group.

Toaono's understanding of the chief system is an interesting contrast with Esera as she also shows advances beyond the youngest group of children, but many of the additional details and information she provided in interviews and in completing the focal participants' tasks are over-generalized. In other words, she has gained increasing details about the role of the chief, but was not yet accurately applying or integrating the growing body of details she was acquiring.

As with Esera, Toaono could correct identify a *matai* on the basis of his participation in chiefly activity at a level generally beyond those of the younger children. In talking about a photograph of an *orator* giving a speech while directing the presentation of fine mats, she correctly identifies the individual on the basis of his activity and his possession of symbols of office. She notes that the other individuals present (e.g. untitled persons presenting the exchange goods) are not themselves *matai*, a mistake that some of the younger children would make. Her knowledge was not perfect, however, as she argued that a photograph of two adult males without any other

identifying context (the “ambiguous stimuli” photo) were definitely *matai*, which would be impossible to determine without additional information.

Nonetheless, she could add additional details to her descriptions. For example, she provided additional information about the kinds of goods that would be exchanged and explaining to me about how it would be culturally inappropriate for the individual giving a speech to wear a shirt while doing so. She was also correct in noting that women could hold chiefly titles, an issue I will discuss in greater detail in the next chapter. As I note there only a minority of children at ages 10-14 correctly indicate that women can indeed hold a chiefly title, so Toaono is ahead of the curve on this point. Yet as she could not name a single female chief in the village, it is unclear where she has come to learn this fact.

In other areas, however, she did not seem to be able to appropriately reconcile the additional details she had come to know. For example, when asked what kind of *matai* the orator presenting a speech was, she correctly and with little hesitation suggested him to be a *tulafale*. While this particular answer is correct, I soon came to realize that she described virtually all *matai* as *tulafale*, as if the terms were synonyms. In identifying other *matai* in other photographs and drawings she inevitably describes them both as *matai* and as *tulafale*. In some instances she suggests an awareness of an alternative category⁹¹ (usually with hesitation in her responses), but was clearly unsure of who or what this second category of chief might be and how they would be identified and differentiated from the orator.

⁹¹ As I mention in the methodology chapter, my repeated questions as to “kinds” of *matai* may very well have lead her to generate a nascent realization of such a contrast; something Wertsch (1985:176) describes as a “semiotic challenge” that could lead the child to revisit their understanding of the situation from a new perspective.

There were also areas of understanding that did not seem to have advanced far beyond those of the younger children. Most notably this was the case with the *fono*. While Esera could identify in broad ways which individuals present at the *fono* were matai and which were untitled, Toaono showed little understanding. As was the case with Leu and other younger children, she over-generalized and argued that every person at a *fono* is a *matai* including the untitled persons seated outside the meeting house itself, those attending to the needs of the chiefs, and the *taupou* mixing the kava.

In summary, “community children” (roughly 6 – 9 years of age) such as Esera and Toaono demonstrate a more robust understanding of chiefs and the chief system on the basis of a history of greater exposure to chiefly activity in various forms in the village. These children exhibit an increasingly good grasp of many of the details of the chiefly activities they witness, such as oratory and the formal presentation of exchange goods at *fa'alavelave*. They also have increasing knowledge of chiefly activity that they may have had less opportunity to observe, such as the kava ceremony that initiates the meetings of village chiefs. Finally, they demonstrate an increasing awareness of the chief individually and council of chiefs collective as figures of authority (*pule*) within the descent group and village respectively. The last of these is an important shift as it entails a set of understandings that are not directly rooted in the context of chiefly activity, and thus implies a move beyond associational learning to increasingly conceptual learning.

There is evidence, however, that many of the new details children are learning at this point are not always well integrated into larger understandings. Toaono’s confusion regarding the *tulafale* is a case in point. She has learnt something of this category of chiefly role, and unbidden and correctly describes a photograph of an orator giving a

speech as a “*tulafale*”. But then she demonstrates that her understanding remains largely embryonic as she does not yet understand the oratory’s complement: the high chief or *ali’i*, in whose name the *tulafale* is speaking. Consequently all chiefs are erroneously described by Toaono as *tulafale* because she doesn’t yet understand where the boundaries for that particular category lie.

The refinements of late middle-childhood

As the children begin to make the transition from late middle-childhood into early adolescence, we can see substantial refinement of their conceptions of the chief system and its numerous elements. In this oldest cross-section of focal participants with whom I worked (10-12 years of age), we can also see a greater degree of meta-representational modeling as children are far more competent in discussing what they know and how they know it. Yet despite the growth, refinement and integration of the various disparate elements found in younger children’s understandings into a more coherent whole, children’s models do not yet approximate those of adults. Additionally, despite the increasing competence, the two brief case studies of Sopo and Faele demonstrate the continued variation that exists in children’s understandings.

Focal participant: *Sopo*

The third of four children, Sopo was the second oldest daughter of the Congregational Christian Church’s local pastor and was one of the most competent and knowledgeable children with whom I worked. As one of the pastor’s children, the ten-year-old was treated with great affection, care and respect by the members of the village.

While we cannot attribute her warm personality solely to growing up in such a context, Sopo was one of the most confident, articulate, and gregarious of the children of this age that I interviewed. Her answers were thoughtful and usually went well beyond the frequently brief responses of her peers.

In comparison with many of her peers (even slightly older ones) and certainly the youngest children, Sopo exhibited a far more refined and increasingly conceptual and reflective understanding of the assorted notions contained with the chief system. The youngest group of children (4 – 6 years of age) could point to the presence of *matai* by virtue of the existence of chiefly activity (e.g. presentation of goods in a *sua*, oratory, kava ceremonies), but could not consistently and accurately identify the specific individuals in the activity as *matai* or not. Leu (6 years) and Toaono (9 years), for example, argue that all persons present at a village council of chiefs / *fono* are *matai*. This included not only the untitled persons preparing and serving the kava as well as the individuals observing from outside of the meeting house seated on the bare ground, a seating position that no *matai* would ever adopt. Similarly, Leu could not decide whether the female depicted as seated in a village meeting of chiefs was a *matai* or not.

In contrast Sopo possessed a far more differentiated model of the role of the *matai* with more refined boundaries as to whom the model applied. She was able to explain the different elements and pattern of events in a segment of chiefly activity, describe the different actions and actors involved, and then provide some of the underlying logic behind the actions. For example, she could detail the specific actions taken in a kava ceremony and then specify what social category of person could complete the action. Thus, she described how the *taupou*, a person she described correctly as the unmarried

daughter of a chief, was the individual to prepare the kava for the meeting of chiefs in the *fono*, and yet the *taupou* was not a chief herself. The kava was served by an untitled man who brought the cups individually to the different chiefs beginning with the highest ranking one present. The men seated with the *taupou* and immediately around the kava bowl / *tanoa* are untitled men, while the others in the meeting house were *matai*. Those observing from outside the meeting house were also untitled men. While Esera could provide specification of most of the steps involved in the activity, he could not specify the actors involved with any accuracy, while Sopo could articulate fairly explicit descriptions. She was also able to indicate “how she knew” who was who in these events, point to the various contextual cues such as types of activity and symbols of office as signs to point to an individual’s social role. This also suggests greater facility in considering and reflecting upon what one knows, a meta-representational skill (Karmiloff-Smith 1992).

Her understanding of the role of the *matai* in village governance was similarly far more refined. The youngest children could mention the chief’s authority only within the specific chiefly activity itself (i.e. in the presentation of exchange goods). Older children could articulate some notion of the chief and council of chiefs as figures of authority in the descent group and village respectively. As with the other older children including Esera, much of the focus on attention in giving examples of chiefly authority was tied up in descriptions of punishing both minor and major infractions of village norms. Given a number of “high profile” violations of village rules (including a few serious crimes) and the rising profile of the disciplinary committee, this portion of the chiefs’ role had been heavily emphasized in public discourse.

Despite Sopo's considerable understanding of the chief system, there are a number of issues that remain underspecified. Many are fine points that will come with time and continued exposure to chiefly activity. For example, Sopo did not yet fully understand the *taupou* actually holds a title which provides the basis for her position and that only certain highly ranked *ali'i* have such titles to bestow. Other conceptions that remained somewhat hazy were more substantial issues. While she does understand the difference between *matai* and untitled persons and can categorize individuals appropriately on the basis of their patterns of participation in different ritual and ceremonial events, she does not yet fully grasp the contrast between the two types of Samoan chiefs – *tulafale* and *ali'i*. This is a substantial and important concern, but as I will describe at length in the next chapter less than half of all children between 10 and 14 years of age make this important distinction, so her failure to do so is not uncommon.

Focal participant: *Faele*

Twelve-year old Faele is a member of a particularly well-known family in the village. Faele's father, Fetu, is a prominent and influential chief, even though his title has historically only been only of moderate importance in the village and is currently 'split' between several different individuals. In chapter three I presented Fetu as an example of a *matai* who on the basis of extensive participation in community and church activities (e.g. lay preacher in the local Congregational Christian church, Sunday school teacher, and village disciplinary committee board member) has elevated the prominence of his title and his ability to influence others and exert community leadership. Faele is the youngest male of Fetu's six children.

As was the case with Sopo, Faele possesses a fairly refined notion of the *matai* as a social and political role responsible for a range of village and descent group decisions. Rather than reiterate the various issues upon which both Sopo and Esera agree I would like to point to two key differences of understanding that exists between them. The nature of these differences again underscores the level of variation that exists even when there are generally great similarities in competence.

Two key differences between Faele and Sopo are questions regarding the possibility of women gaining chiefly titles and the conceptual division between *ali'i* and *tulafale*. Sopo explicitly asserts that women can indeed gain chiefly titles and names current female title holders in the village to support her decision. Faele, however, is just as explicit in arguing that women cannot hold chiefly titles. What is most interesting about Faele's argument is the extent to which he has constructed refined conceptions to support his contention. For example, when Faele is asked who drinks the first cup of kava he provides the name of the highest-ranking *ali'i* in the village who happens to be a woman. When asked why she is awarded this privilege, he argues that it is not because she's a female chief – because women cannot have titles he reiterates – but rather out of respect for her prominent position in the government. Similarly, when asked to identify a female seated in a meeting house in a drawing of a *fono*, Faele describes her as the spouse of a *matai*, who is simply attending the meeting. In reality while family members could attend a meeting to observe and may be motivated to do so if the meeting will make a decision of relevance to the descent group, untitled family members would not be allowed to sit within the meeting house itself.

A second difference is that Faele is aware of the division between *tulafale* and *ali'i*, whereas Sopo has not yet come to terms with this important conceptual distinction. When presented assorted photographs of orators making speeches at events, he clearly identifies them as *tulafale*. When asked how he is able to identify them as *tulafale*, he points to their specific activity of “giving speeches”. Sopo in contrast points to the giving of speeches as one of many activities that identifies *matai* in general but is not able to make a more refined division beyond that. Faele’s description of the *ali'i* is somewhat vaguer but this category remains less well specified in terms of concrete activities and symbols. Although expressing some hesitation, Faele was able to suggest that *ali'i* have relatively greater authority over village affairs than do orators. He also pointed to a neighboring high chief, who was a close friend of his father, and noted the higher level of respect that was afforded him in formal occasions. This relative confusion is somewhat predictable, because the associations of behaviors, symbols, and activities with orators are fairly clearly articulated in *fa'alavelave* where children are more apt to witness. In contrast, *ali'i* play a more public and readily observable role in the *fono* where children are far less likely to be present, and very little distinctive role in most *fa'alavelave*.

Village children at the end of middle-childhood demonstrate considerable understanding of the local chief system. They are able to provide considerable detail about different kinds of chiefly activity, including the social actors involved, the social categories they inhabit and the contextual cues used to identify them. They are also able to take some initial steps in describing *matai* and the village council of chiefs in a more general way outside of the context of chiefly activity and in terms of their larger social and political role in the village. This is a change from younger children who either had

little understanding of what role the chiefs might play and / or saw their role as largely restricted to the ritual and performative aspects of chiefly activity (e.g. providing oratory). Despite their increasingly good grasp of the chief system, there remains substantial variation in the specific points that children do know as is underscored by the contrast between Sopo and Faele.

Conclusion

Despite my repeated mention of disfluencies, the lack of integration and refinement of the various elements of the chief system, perhaps the larger point to keep in mind is the real extent to which children come to acquire a substantial understanding of the Samoan chief system. This is a substantial issue because much of the literature on cultural learning that is inspired by a focus on cultural practice (Farver 1999; Goodnow, et al. 1995; Miller and Goodnow 1995a; Rogoff, et al. 1995) or Vygotsky-inspired, cultural-historical activity theory (Cole 1996; Rogoff 1990; Wertsch 1985) sees the vast majority when not all of learning as occurring in children's everyday activities. Griffin and Cole (1984), for example, talk in terms of a culture's "leading activities" that serve to promote a specific form of development keyed to particular ontogenetic stage in the child and with particular developmental goals. Barbara Rogoff (1998) speaks of cognition and conceptual development in terms a "collaborative process" of more expert adults aiding and supporting the activity of more novice children. And Katherine Nelson argues for an "experiential" perspective to conceptual development, where the "primary cognitive task of the human child is to make sense of his or her situated place in the world in order to take a skillful part in its activities" (1996:5)

I have considerable sympathy for each of these different approaches and would argue that a proportion of cultural learning does indeed occur in such a manner in many instances and societies. Yet the data here points to an alternative situation where children come to acquire substantial competence about a domain from which they are generally excluded. As I describe in earlier chapters, while children can and do observe from the periphery it would be wholly inaccurate to suggest that they are learning about the chief system as participants in chiefly activity. While they exhibit behavioral restraint and respectful behavior in the appropriate contexts, children of this age range (4 – 12 years) do not take part in kava ceremonies, present goods as part of a *sua*, or serve chiefs in the *fono*. And yet despite this limitation, children are coming over time to understand a substantial degree of this complex, frequently opaque and culturally important domain of practice and knowledge. To suggest that Samoan children will learn about this “adult domain” of life when they are “adults” would be to ignore the substantial groundwork that will already exist by that time and which will serve to greatly influence their latter conceptual understandings. Moreover, we must acknowledge the fact that observational learning is clearly a potent mode of social learning that should not be forgotten or underemphasized.

Chapter 12: Children's culture, cognitive heuristics, and the imprint of Samoan culture

Introduction

A basic tenet of cultural psychology and psychological anthropology is that culture and human cognition exist in a mutually constitutive relationship (Bruner 1990; Cole 1996; Greenfield 2002; Harkness 1992; Li 2003; Rogoff 1998; 2003; Shweder 1990; Tomasello 1999a; Valsiner 1997; Weisner 1984; 1996b). I would argue that a particularly powerful way to tease apart the interactions of cognitive processes and culture is to look at their intertwined relationship over time in the lives of individuals in social groups. In previous chapters I have tried to suggest various ways by which Samoa culture - in variable manifestations of the developmental niche, in patterns of caretaking practice, in the social organization of child care and everyday activities, and in ethnotheories of learning - influence children's developmental trajectories and the ways through which social learning tends to occur. In this final chapter I will discuss some of the ways in which children's developing conceptions of the chief system may reflect the "imprint" of this cultural constitution of child development and learning.

There are two main issues to be considered in this chapter. First, do children's conceptions of chieftainship exhibit sufficient consensus (i.e. inter-individual agreement) across the population of children in the village to be considered "culture" rather than idiosyncratic, individual models? And if these understandings are indeed widely-shared across children in the village, do these cultural models match those of Samoan adults? Almost by definition, cultural learning is concerned with the (more or less accurate) intergenerational transmission of knowledge and practice. Fidelity in such learning is a basic requirement for some measure of continuity in cultural forms over time. From this

perspective, we would expect children's developing understandings to increasingly approximate those of adults over time. An alternative perspective is to focus on children's relative agency in cultural learning, and ask if children's learning is tied more to their immediate interests and needs rather than goals of a future competence. What does the child need to know to successfully negotiate their social position and interact with others at that particular juncture in time? If those contemporary needs and interests induce children to generate different conceptions, then we may see a contrast between children's and adults' models. As both of these possibilities are likely to be operating to some degree, the question can be framed in terms of the relative *balance* that children's understandings strike between: (a) concerns with social reproduction and accuracy in the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge, and (b) the role of children's agency in creatively adapting and interpreting cultural resources for their own contemporary needs.

I will examine these issues by submitting children's responses to the test of conceptual knowledge of the chief system (hereafter, as in other chapters, referred to as the "conceptual test") to *cultural consensus analysis* (Romney 1999; Romney, et al. 1987; Romney, et al. 1986). This analytic method is a particularly useful tool for examining these issues of consensus and variation quantitatively. Additionally, these analyses can be seen as testing and extending the findings of the previous chapter, which relied upon a smaller sample of focal participants, by analyzing data derived from a larger sample of village children.

The second issue to be considered in this chapter emerges from a key finding of the first: that a significant proportion of children's consensus responses are at variance

with those of adults. By this I mean that on several conceptual issues, a majority of children agree with one another on a particular conceptualization of the chief system, but that this consensus response differs from that of adults. This is an interesting issue as it does not necessarily reflect simple ignorance on the part of the children. A lack of knowledge would be reflected in children's responses to test questions as a range of different responses (i.e. random guessing) with little inter-individual agreement. In many cases, however, there is a high level of agreement between children on their "correct" response, which is at odds with the "culturally correct" or consensus response of adults.

To explain this event, I advance the hypothesis that these contrasts between children's and adults' conceptions reflect a bias of the cognitive heuristics that are acquired as part of socialization. Bateson (2000) argued that a foundational aspect of cultural learning is "learning how to learn", by which he meant that the individual has to acquire habitual ways of attending to the physical and social world that rendered those worlds both individually and culturally meaningful. I will argue that while enormously powerful, some of the modes of orienting one's attention (i.e. cognitive heuristics) that are acquired in the Samoan context can occasionally generate a characteristic pattern of bias that I refer to as a "*high frequency / high visibility bias*" given the appropriate circumstances. More specifically, I argue that the focus on first-hand observation and the most frequent and visible occurrence of a phenomenon can generate biases when the underlying reality differs in marked ways from the most visible and frequent manifestations of that phenomenon. The discordance between children's and adults' models, I suggest, arises out of the biases occasionally generated by children's habitual mode of learning and attending to the social world around them.

I will stress at the outset and again later in my discussion that all modes of social learning and the various cognitive heuristics that guide our attention while learning possess both strengths and weaknesses. Thus, my discussion of ‘bias’ here should not be taken to suggest that the Samoan approach to social learning is somehow flawed, inappropriate, or limited in nature as this is certainly not the case. The biases observed in children’s earliest models of the chief system are only transient ‘blindspots’ in conceptual development where certain aspects of the phenomenon remain slightly more difficult to learn or are oft overlooked. It would be my strong prediction that *all* patterns of social learning occasionally generate some variety of bias, because culturally-specific cognitive heuristics occasionally ‘run aground’ upon the complex social and physical world they (usually) help us render meaningful.

Considering children’s culture: Social reproduction and child agency perspectives

The notion that children lack an understanding of many aspect of the culture in which they live is an assumption basic to the very idea of enculturation (Lancy 1996; 1990; LeVine 2003; LeVine and Norman 2001; Mead 1963; Schwartz 1981). It is undeniably true that over the course of developmental time children do acquire many of the core beliefs, values, skills and conceptions of their social and cultural group. Viewed in its larger ethological and evolutionary context, Tomasello (1999a; Tomasello, et al. 1993) has stressed the importance of the cumulative nature of human culture. While innovation and change are also clearly important to human success as a species, “faithful social transmission” of knowledge, skills and practices is of central importance to

cumulative cultural evolution by ensuring that substantial portions of a culture need not be reinvented anew by each generation (i.e. the "ratchet effect", Tomasello, et al. 1993).

A focus on social reproduction will view children's cultural competence and relative grasp of cultural knowledge largely in terms of its distance from the end state of full adult cultural competence. We would expect any stable and developed understandings to generally match those of adults per the focus on faithful social transmission. Any gaps or differences from adult consensus views would be seen simply as areas that will develop or will continue to develop over time; essentially 'deficits' or gaps in children's understandings.

Corsaro (1997) has criticized a focus on social reproduction in children's learning as overly deterministic. He argues that it lends itself to a view of the child as something apart from society that is shaped by external forces in order to eventually become a fully functioning part of society. Moreover, it denies the active and innovative role of the child in social reproduction and change (see also Briggs 1992; Gaskins, et al. 1992; Hirschfeld 2002; Kulick 1992). This line of criticism argues that we must acknowledge the possibility that individuals may adapt their behavior to current circumstances and contexts, and do not consistently focus their activities towards long-term goals. A future-oriented, social reproduction perspective can obscure these more immediate contextual demands on and interests of the child, and lead us to overlook the understandings that children actively develop to manage these ongoing concerns. A "child agency" perspective would concentrate its attention not only on contemporary concerns and needs, but also highlight the child's more active role in fashioning their own understandings to address these ongoing issues. In acknowledging this agency, we must allow for the

possibility that the child may come to fashion understandings and meanings at variance with the consensus models of the adult generation and the larger culture.

Although not widely investigated within anthropology (but see Hirschfeld 1998; Quinn 2005b; Strauss and Quinn 1992; Toren 1990), the possibility of a distinction between children's and adult's cultural knowledge, practices and values can be seen at least since Margaret Mead's (2001) work among the Manus. This research critically examined the idea that children's cognitive development moved them through a universal stage of thinking that was "animistic" (i.e. attributed spiritual qualities to objects), an position proposed by developmental psychologists, including most notably Jean Piaget (1966; 2002). Combining ethnographic research with empirical tests⁹², Mead (1932) demonstrated that Manus children showed no tendency towards animistic thought and indeed seemed to resist such explanations, preferring concrete and mechanistic causal explanations. This was in contrast to adults who used animistic conceptions extensively in thinking about and explaining causality, illness, and misfortune (Fortune 1965; Mead 2001). Mead argues that although adults use animistic thought regularly, it was not successfully transmitted to children nor were they held accountable for such conceptions until they reached puberty. Specifically, she notes that:

[Manus children] are not given any instruction in the social and religious aspects of adult life... They are not required to conform to the wills of the ghosts; when they are ill it is for an adult sin, and they are neither told nor expected to

⁹² Mead's Manus research was remarkable in part for its early demonstration of the possibilities of combining ethnographic observation of children with quasi-experimental manipulations. To test for animistic thought in children she questioned children on their spontaneous drawings, standardized ink blots, and physical stimuli designed to provoke animistic responses (see Mead 1932:176-9).

understand the intricacies of the religious life. They are permitted at ceremonies but take no part in them, regarding all social, economic, and religious ceremonials as tiresome things which adults do, but from which children are exempt.

(Mead 1932:188-9)

Due to the lack of social and cultural factors promoting children's utilization of animism, children tend not to learn nor employ animistic thinking until they reach adulthood. The lack of specialized instruction in local religious understandings, children's relatively limited involvement in adults' activities and concerns, and the lack of intrinsic motivation to attend to the ceremonial aspects of social life leads to a situation in which markedly different but *fully refined* models of everyday causality exist. It's not that children don't yet have any understanding of the spirit world. Mead's (1932) research revealed children's familiarity with a range of supernatural actors and magical charms such as the *ramus* (charms that influence others to give you what you request), *tchinal* (mischievous land devils), "sir ghosts" (deceased male ancestors who protect the living), and an assortment of other spirits and magical implements. But Mead suggests that children understand these entities and causality in a fundamentally different way from adults with relatively marginal impact on their lives and activities. Given a relative lack of structural forces promoting children's adoption of animistic thinking, children develop and adopt an alternative perspective clearly demonstrating the role that children's agency can play in their developing cultural conceptions.

Perspectives focused on either social reproduction or child agency are both valid ways of approaching problems of cultural learning and enculturation depending upon the

specific research question being asked. Indeed, any robust understanding of child development must include considerations from both directions. They do present different expectations, however, for what children's knowledge will look like over the course of development. Do children's models of the chief system generally match those of adults, except where their understandings are lacking and undeveloped, as predicted by the social reproduction perspective? Or can we find evidence for children possessing fairly refined models of the chief system that diverge in important ways from those of adults analogous to Mead's description of children in Manus and in line with the child agency perspective? And if so, what constellation of contemporary concerns and needs do these divergent understandings address? In the following I will examine which of these two perspectives describes children's understandings of this particular domain of cultural knowledge with greatest accuracy. As the reader might predict, the answer is a bit of both, but the investigation is important as it provides insight into where the balance between social reproduction and individual agency is set for Samoan children of this age range and for this particular domain of cultural knowledge and practice.

Cultural consensus analysis of children's knowledge

While in the last chapter I sought to describe children's understandings at various points in development, in this chapter I will make more explicit comparison of those understandings with those of adults. One way to explore this issue is through the use of cultural consensus analysis (Romney 1999; Romney, et al. 1987; Romney, et al. 1986). Strictly speaking, "cultural consensus" refers both to a theory about the nature of culture and a formal mathematical model with multiple distinct applications. The basic

assumption guiding both is that culture exists in the mind of members of a population, and there is variability among these individuals in how much they know about various domains of the culture (akin to Sperber's epidemiological model of culture, see Sperber 1985; 1990).

A reading of the cultural consensus literature can suggest a definition of culture in line with Goodenough's (1957:167) definition of culture as knowledge (i.e. "whatever it is one must know in order to behave appropriately in any of the roles assumed by any member of a society"). Most cultural anthropologists (including myself) would likely find such a definition too narrow. I would argue, however, that cultural consensus analysis simply focuses its attention on the cognitive side of culture, but does not necessarily deny that physical artifacts, bodily practices, and unconscious or non-cognitive aspects of our mental life are also part of a "culture". The formal mathematical modeling techniques of consensus analysis simply cannot address these elements, and this limitation should be considered in the analysis.

Cultural consensus analysis' mathematical model was developed to help "describe and measure the extent to which cultural beliefs are shared" across a population of informants (Romney 1999:103). The analytic method does so by using the pattern of agreement (referred to as "consensus") among informants to make inferences about their differential competence in a particular domain of cultural knowledge. Consensus analysis can be used to examine certain forms of systematically collected data (e.g. true-false, fill in the blank, rank order, multiple choice) (Romney 1994:274). The correspondence between the answers of any two informants is a function of the extent to which each is correlated with the culturally "correct" or typical responses (Romney, et al.

1986:316). Consequently, two of the most basic uses of the formal mathematical model have been to: (i) estimate how much of a given domain of cultural knowledge each individual informant ‘knows’ (i.e. their relative cultural competence), and (ii) to estimate the culturally ‘correct’ response to questions asked about a given domain of culture (Garro 2000; Romney 1994).

Most relevant to the research question here, however, is the use of cultural consensus analysis to determine whether or not children’s pattern of responses can be appropriately described as a coherent cultural domain. Although there cannot be a firm “cut-off” level above which there *is* a culture and below which there is *not*, the presumption is that if the mean consensus for a particular domain is relatively low and fails other expectations of the cultural consensus model that I will detail below, then a domain is likely not best described as representing a single coherent cultural domain for a specific population of individuals (Boster 1986; Caulkins and Hyatt 1999; Romney, et al. 2000). Caulkins & Hyatt (1999:6-8) have pointed to a number of possibilities for such non-coherent domains including: “weak agreement” domains in which consensus exists but is extremely low; “turbulent domains” in which knowledge is haphazard and disorganized; and “multicentric domains” in which there are two or more centers of agreement that may be in opposition to one another. Certainly lack of knowledge of a domain must also be considered a possibility when examining children’s developing concepts.

To examine the questions I have detailed above I submitted students’ responses to the test of conceptual knowledge of the *matai* system to cultural consensus analysis using the ANTHROPAC software package (Borgatti 1996, version 4.98). As I have described

in previous chapters and in greater detail in chapter 4, the conceptual test was administered to all of the 6th, 7th and 8th grade students present at the local village primary school present on the date of administration. Five of the 73 tests were dropped because children answered less than half of the questions or answered in such a way that the test could not be scored (e.g. circled all of the answers), leaving a total sample of 68 children between 10 and 14 years of age.

A crucial first step is to determine if children's answers as a whole suggest the existence of a single consensual domain. We can do so by examining the degree to which children's responses as a set satisfy the basic assumptions of the cultural consensus model (Romney, et al. 1986). The model relies on the assumption that within a given domain of knowledge there is a culturally "correct" way to respond, and that the degree to which two people are similar in their responses is mediated by their respective ability to give the correct response (i.e. their level of competence in that domain). It also assumes that individuals respond independently of each other (local independence), and that informants' competence is constant over all of the questions. Minimal residual factor analysis of the agreement matrix provides a check on whether these conditions have been met. The eigenvalue for the first factor should be at least three times that for the second factor, indicating that a single factor is far more important than any other factors in accounting for systematic variation in the matrix and informants' responses (Romney, et al. 1986). Additionally, individual loadings on this first factor should all be positive, indicating general agreement across all of the respondents for this single factor. Both of these checks of the model are satisfied by the conceptual test data here. The ratio of the first and second eigenvalue is 3.74 (see table 12.1), and individual loadings on the first

factor were all positive. This suggests that that we can consider children's responses to be a single coherent cultural domain (Caulkins and Hyatt 1999) shared in varying although substantial levels by the different children.

Table 12.1: Eigenvalues of Conceptual Test Responses

Factor	Value	Percent of Variance Explained	Cumulative Percent	Ratio
1	18.18	66.9%	66.9%	3.74
2	4.86	17.9%	84.8%	1.17
3	4.14	15.2%	100.0%	

While the basic conditions of the cultural consensus model are met, it is important to note that the level of consensus among children is on the low side of much of the published research (mean = 0.49, SE of mean = 0.02). For example, Reyes-Garcias et al.'s (2003) examination of 511 Tsimane' household heads found a mean consensus of 0.83 within individual villages and 0.62 across the 59 different villages from which the respondents were drawn. Boster and Weller (1990:175) found mean consensus values for hot/cold categories of food among a population of Tlaxcalans ranged between 0.66 and 0.75. Finally, Weller and colleagues' research on ethnomedical beliefs regarding a range of illnesses including asthma, AIDS, diabetes, and folk illnesses such as *mal de oyo* and *empacho* among Guatemalans, mainland Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and Mexican-Americans demonstrated levels of mean consensus that ranged from 0.52 to 0.67 within each national group and an overall consensus of 0.49 for their entire body of informants drawn from the four distinct countries (Pachter, et al. 2002; Weller and Baer 2001). Given that the Samoan children in this study all originate from a single village and have a fairly comparable body of experiences, we would have expected a higher mean consensus level. The studies mentioned here, particularly Weller's large cross-national study,

comprise quite diverse and spatially distributed populations and still exhibit relatively higher mean consensus scores than do the Samoan children.

So how are we to interpret these findings in light of the focus of this chapter? First, the analysis suggests that there is a sufficient level of consensus or interpersonal sharing of knowledge for this to be considered a domain of culture. Of note, however, is the fact that this level of consensus is not particularly high in comparison with other domains of culture in other societies that have been examined with cultural consensus analysis. This means that while there is sufficient interpersonal agreement in children's answers to judge the knowledge as "cultural", there remains a substantial level of variation in these conceptions across the village's children. Commonality of experience is likely responsible for much of the sharing, but there are limitations on the extent to which variations in children's associations, meaning and understandings are removed. By this, I mean that the limited extent to which children share and use their developing understandings of chiefs with others, and the limited extent to which cultural knowledge of the chief system is explicitly taught or monitored (except for gross violations of respectful behavior) likely allows for considerable variation in the models that children construct. These factors are likely to be the cause behind the relative high level of variation that is observed.

Finding consensus in children's answers, however, does not by itself provide an answer to the question of which perspective – social reproduction or child agency – is the most accurate description. Children's consensus responses could match those of adults as predicted by the social reproduction perspective *or* diverge from adults' in line with the child agency orientation. These initial results only demonstrate some level of shared

consensus on cultural knowledge between the children tested. To further untangle this issue we must compare children's responses to individual questions to those of adults.

Cultural consensus analysis of responses to individual questions

Cultural consensus analysis can be applied in a slightly more novel way to assess the level of similarity in children's and adult's cultural knowledge by comparing the responses of these two groups to specific questions included in the conceptual test. As I mentioned earlier, one of the earliest uses of cultural consensus analysis was to estimate the culturally 'correct' or consensual response when presented with different assertions by informants (Boster 1985; Romney and Weller 1984; Romney, et al. 1986). In considering the chief system of Samoa, however, we have an extensive ethnographic record that provides extensive documentation of the culturally 'correct' or consensus response. Additionally, there is broad agreement across adult Samoans on the general core ideas of the chief system as I note in chapter 3. While particularities of the local chief system (e.g. local histories and mythologies, distant genealogical ties of locally represented descent groups, local variants in ritual practice) are complex and may not always be widely known, there is broad consensus and awareness of the most basic aspects of this local chief system (e.g. the identity of the locally most important high chiefs, the respectful term of address for the village's '*aumaga*')⁹³.

Given that the ethnographic record and contemporary accounts provide the adult consensus views on this domain of knowledge, we can compare these responses with children's responses to specific questions and note similarities to or discrepancies from

⁹³ This broad consensus was reaffirmed when I pre-tested the test of conceptual knowledge of the *matai* system on a small sample of local adults, who scored between 94% and 100% correct (16 or 17 correct out of 17 questions).

these culturally normative responses. If children's responses to a specific question exhibits little consensus (i.e. there is some support for all of the different possible answers to a question), then it appears that children as a group do not yet understand the specific issue addressed in the question and are guessing randomly. In such a case the "social reproduction" perspective is likely the better description, as we have evidence for a 'gap' or 'deficit' in children's knowledge as a group. If children's responses, however, exhibit consensus around a single specific, culturally '*incorrect*' response, then we may have evidence for children's development of a conception divergent from the consensus or adult model. In line with the "child agency" perspective, children may have developed a conception in order to make sense of and negotiate their contemporary situation. If the data suggests that children are repeatedly developing consensus understandings at variance from those of adults and the cultural norm then we must consider the possibility of some pattern of sub-cultural variation (e.g. Caulkins and Hyatt 1999) along the lines of what Mead (2001) reported for the children of Manus.

Out of the fourteen questions included in the consensus analysis, six of the questions showed a match between adult's and children's consensus responses. These questions are included in table 12.2 below ranked in order of the percentage of the children who answered the question correctly. The reader will note that consensus among the children does not necessarily translate into unassailable majorities selecting the 'correct answer' in each case. The percentage of children who answered these questions in culturally normative ways ranged from 39% to 78% (weighted 46% to 84%), suggesting notable levels of intra-population variability for this age group even when consensus answers did match the cultural norm. This underscores the variation in

children’s conceptions that we see in the modest mean consensus level for the group of children as a whole. With regard to the *weighting* of frequencies and percentages in the discussion and tables to follow: cultural consensus analysis weights the response of individuals with higher overall competence more, such that the responses of more culturally ‘knowledgeable’ respondents are weighted more than less knowledgeable ones (see Romney, et al. 1986 for more details). It is the weighted score that ANTHROPAC uses to judge which response is the consensus response.

Table 12.2: Children’s consensus responses that match adults’ culturally normative ones

Question [Topical area]	Percentage correct	Weighted percentage correct
Who is the “sacred family” in Silafaga? [Village origin myth reference]	78%	84%
Who is the most highly ranked local chief? [Local hierarchical rankings]	71%	79%
Who drinks the first cup of kava? [Chiefly ritual practice]	63%	71%
What are the orator’s symbols of office? [Chiefly symbols]	53%	59%
Who is the high chief’s attendant (<i>agai</i>) at the <i>fono</i> ? [Chiefly ritual practice]	47%	51%
Who sits in the ends (<i>tala</i>) of the meeting house? [Spatial ordering of hierarchy]	39%	46%

There are discrepancies between adult consensus / culturally normative responses and children’s responses on the remaining eight questions. Three of these eight discrepancies cannot be readily explained with reference to the context or children’s experiences. Rather they seem to be more adequately explained simply as testing artifacts and common errors in logic. For example, when asked which portion of the pig

is distributed to an orator on ritual occasions⁹⁴, children’s consensus (47%; weighted 55%) but culturally incorrect response was *tuala* (“pork loin between shoulder and rump”), a section of the pig that is reserved for *ali’i*. There is no clear indication why many children would have selected this particular incorrect answer, except that it was the first possibility out of the multiple choices answers (i.e. answer ‘A’). Similarly, children’s consensus yet culturally incorrect answer to the question: “what is the respectful name of the village’s untitled men’s association or ‘*aumaga*?” (39%; weighted 51%) included mention of a prominent local chief in the answer, while all of the other answers including the correct response were otherwise unfamiliar. This name recognition likely made this answer particularly appealing, and generated the appearance of consensus.

Children’s consensus but culturally incorrect response to the question: “why does the chief possess authority (*pule*)?” is interesting as this was also a question that a small number of adults who pre-tested the text missed as well. The culturally correct response is that possession of a chiefly title provides the authority, but only 11% (10% weighted) of children provided this answer. The consensus response for children was “a history of service to the family” (43%; 57% weighted), which was also the incorrect answer chosen by the few adult pre-testers who answered the question incorrectly. The selection of this incorrect answer reflects awareness of the strong cultural value placed on the individual’s service to one’s descent group, household, and chief. And as I note in chapter 3, a history of service is frequently included as a factor in considerations of title succession, because as the well-known Samoan proverb states: “the path to power is service” (*‘o le ala i le*

⁹⁴ Different segments of the pig are traditionally reserved for different social groups including high chiefs, orators and the untitled men.

pule 'o le tautua.) Consequently children's association of a history of service to title succession does reveal a grasp of an important cultural logic. Yet, service in and of itself is not sufficient. Many individuals will dutifully serve their descent group and *matai* for years, but will never be awarded any measure of authority over the larger group's affairs nor be allowed to represent the extended family in the village council of chiefs. Such authority can only be obtained through formal conferral of a chiefly title. Children's (and the occasional adults') selection of this answer is likely due to the strong public emphasis on service, particularly among adolescents and young adults, as well as the not infrequent logical error of mistaking the important but insufficient for the sufficient and proximal.

Thus, three of these answers seem to exhibit consensus largely due to the test itself rather than to some experiential or cultural factor that might be leading children to frequently select this particular culturally 'incorrect' answer. Children picking a particularly attractive distracter answer, selecting the first answer provided when guessing, and common errors in logic are likely generating the appearance of consensus in these cases. The remaining five questions (listed below in Table 12.3), all of which exhibit consensus responses at odds with culturally normative responses, however, cannot be explained away as test artifacts. Rather I think that we can see in children's consensual but non-normative responses the cognitive impact of the particular pattern of social learning emphasized in the Samoan context. Specifically, I will argue that the great cultural emphasis placed on observational learning as a predominant form of social learning creates a bias towards learning from the most frequent and readily observable aspects of a phenomenon; a bias I will describe as a "*high frequency / high visibility bias*". While such an orientation to learning can be quite effective in many instances, it

can also lead to some characteristic errors in conceptual development that are exhibited in the divergence of children's consensus understandings from those of adults. I will elaborate on this argument once I have discussed these specific questions in some detail.

Table 12.3: Children's consensus responses that contrast with culturally normative responses

Question [Topical Area]	Culturally normative		Children's consensus	
	Answer	Wtd. freq.	Answer	Wtd. freq.
1. Who selects a new titleholder? [Succession decisions]	' <i>Aiga potopoto</i>	18 (27%)	Oldest male	36 (53%)
2. How do you address <i>Agafili</i> ? [Local respectful practice]	<i>Lau susuga</i>	10 (15%)	<i>Lau tofa</i>	29 (43%)
3. Can women be chiefs? [Nature of chief role]	Yes	27 (40%)	No	41 (60%)
4. Can pastors be chiefs? [Nature of chief role]	Yes	15 (22%)	No	53 (78%)
5. What are the two kinds of chiefs? [Nature of chief role]	<i>Tulafale & ali'i</i>	23 (34%)	<i>Ali'i & tamali'i</i>	26 (38%)

The first of these questions (1 in Table 12.3) is one of title succession: "When a *matai* dies, who selects the new titleholder?" The culturally normative or 'correct' answer is the '*aiga potopoto* (glossed as the "collected descent group"). The term is meant to convey the consensus expected of this occasionally contentious decision and the collective support and loyalty that will be directed at the new titleholder. The term likely also alludes to the conceptual split in the descent group between the *tamatane* ("child of the male"; descent group members related by descent from a male titleholder or any of his brothers) and *tamafafine* ("child of the female"; descent group members related through descent from a sister to a chief), both of whom contribute to the larger decision. In most typical succession decisions the leading members of the *tamatane* nominate an individual after consensus is reached within the different factions of the decent group. Leaders of the *tamafafine* side essentially exercises a veto right by either supporting or

denying support for this nomination (Shore 1982:237-8). The nuances of this decision-making process are complex and are not readily open to elucidation by simple observation or overhearing, but rather require more substantial experience and arguably some explication or explanation⁹⁵. The notion of the “entire descent group” making such a decision in an exercise of democratic spirit, of course, is not literally the case despite the term used. Rather, these critical decisions are made by the most senior decision-makers in the family including *matai* and family elders in the name of the larger descent group they represent.

The distribution of children’s responses and their consensus answer to this question are included in Table 12.4 as well as the adult consensus response. While 29% (weighted 27%) of the children provided the culturally ‘correct’ answer, their consensus response was “the eldest male in the descent group” (46%; weighted 52%). While culturally incorrect, the answer is based on an objectively accurate read of many decision-making contexts in which relative age and male gender contribute to an individual’s greater authority to make decisions. While elderly women can and do have substantial input on a variety of decisions, particularly with regard to issue of child care, health care, domestic concerns, and other issues, ultimately many decisions fall to elderly males in this patriarchal society. This is particularly the case with important and politically loaded decisions. And as I described in chapter 7, authority over decisions impacting the descent group as a whole rests in the hands of *matai*, who are

⁹⁵ Given the complex relationships and claims that are frequently part of title successions and the infrequency with which titles change hands, it is my impression that the younger generation of adults (roughly 20 to 40 years of age) learn the specifics of title succession as they witness the negotiations and events leading up to a title actually changing hands. The senior generation (who has witnessed these negotiations at least once before) tends to lead the negotiations, preparations, and politicking that is involved in these occasions. Additionally, as adults are somewhat more able to ask questions when faced with such a novel and important occasion there is likely to be more explicit discussion that will facilitate adults’ learning.

predominantly elder males. Consequently, a child’s assertion that title succession decisions are made by a senior male – while not culturally accurate because of the specialized nature of this particular decision-making process - would have been a reasonable extension of their repeated experiences and observations of older males wielding disproportionately great decision-making authority in comparison to other individuals within the household. Similarly the possibility of a somewhat ‘democratic’ decision made by the collective members of the descent group together would have been markedly foreign to the child in light of their previous experiences.

Table 12.4: Children’s responses to: “When a chief dies, who selects the new titleholder?”

Answers	Consensus Responses		Frequency (n=66)	Weighted Frequency (n=68.1)
	Adult	Child		
Entire descent group / <i>‘Aiga potopoto</i>			19 (28.8%)	18.4 (27.0%)
Eldest male in the descent group			30 (45.5%)	35.7 (52.4%)
Friends of the deceased chief			9 (13.6%)	9.4 (13.8%)
The Samoan government			8 (12.1%)	4.6 (6.8%)

Note: “Adult” refers to the culturally normative response, while “child” is the children’s consensus response according to cultural consensus analysis.

The second question is a question of respectful behavior specific to Silafaga. In chapter 6, I introduced a particularly important talking chief in the village named Agafili, who is the father of one of my focal participants. He is one of the most prominent, influential and important chiefs in the village and across the larger district. He is one of the three most senior *tulafale* in the village, and is widely considered to be one of the most knowledgeable and dignified personages in the village. He is almost inevitably selected to speak on behalf of the village and the local Congregational Christian Church congregation for larger social occasions, and is always in attendance at local *fa’alavelave*

where he is an imposing presence. Politically, he is a dominant force in the *fono*, village disciplinary committee, and other social groups in which he is involved by the strength of his personality and the great influence he wields.

Samoaan respectful language includes specific terms of address that index a number of important social statuses, including high chiefs (*ali'i*) and orators (*tulafale*). Proper use of these respectful terms of address is an important aspect of linguistic competence and respectful practice and demonstrates the speaker's familiarity with local chief system. In the majority of cases an *ali'i* (high chief) is addressed with the phrase "*lau afioga*", while *tulafale* (orator chief) is addressed with "*lau tofa*"; both of which can be glossed as "your honor". At some historical point⁹⁶, the bearer of the orator title of Agafili received the honor of being addressed using a contrastive respectful term of address ("*lau susuga*"), which served to further differentiate the titleholder from other orators and chiefs more generally. In contemporary Samoa this term of address is more typically applied to office holders such as teachers and government officials. It was locally considered a sign of great disrespect and ignorance to use the latter as it implied a lack of awareness of local political organization and the particular importance of Agafili's title. I distinctly remember being made aware of this subtle nuance early in my stay by different chiefs in the village on occasions where it was likely that I would come into contact with Agafili so as to avoid making this mistake.

As Shore (1982:196-7, 210-1) notes, relative rankings within social statuses (e.g. orators, high chiefs, brothers, villages) are ambiguous and largely unmarked in the Samoaan context. As I mentioned in chapter 3 this provides fertile ground for

⁹⁶ The historical timing of the granting of this honor is difficult to pinpoint, but it occurred at least several generations prior to the present titleholder.

considerable competition between individuals who occupy the same social status (for a far more nuanced discussion of this phenomenon see Shore 1982, especially chapter 11). Although uncommon, there are instances in which rank differences are more clearly and explicitly conveyed, and these differences are usually expressed in changes to normative patterns of respectful behavior. Addressing Agafili with an atypical term of address to mark his high rank within the social status of orator is but one example of this phenomenon. For instance, the highest ranking *ali'i* in Silafaga was attended to by a special attendant (*agai*) who was himself a titled chief rather than by the untitled men of the *'aumaga*. And in previous generations this highest ranking *ali'i* would not eat in front of the other chiefs gathered at a *fono* because the consumption of food violated the expectations of profound behavioral restraint expected of this particular *ali'i*. These and other various alterations in respectful practice - be they subtle or elaborate - serve to mark and establish rank differences in profound ways (see Keating 2000; Keating and Duranti 2006 for a similar phenomenon in Pohnpei).

Of the 10 – 14 year old children who were asked which respectful term to employ when addressing this particular chief, only 14% (15% weighted) knew the culturally 'correct' response readily provided by adults (see Table 12.5). The majority of children (40%; weighted 42%) was cognizant of his specific social status in the village as an orator and used the respectful term appropriate to that particular status (*lau tofa*). But this group is not yet aware of the special honor due him through the use of a specialized term. As with the previous question, the majority of children in the village (54%; 57% weighted) seem to be aware of Agafili and the specific role that he plays in the village. This reflects growing familiarity with the local political order, yet only a minority of this

group has taken note of the special honor afforded this individual. The outline and generalities of the local system have been acquired by many but the nuances, particularities and exceptions have been gained by a smaller minority of children.

Table 12.5: Children’s responses to: “Which respectful term of address do you use with *Agafili*?”

Answers	Consensus Responses		Frequency (n=63)	Weighted frequency (n=68.1)
	Adult	Child		
Your honor <i>Lau susuga</i>			9 (14.3%)	10.4 (15.3%)
Your honor the orator <i>Lau tofa</i>			25 (39.7%)	28.7 (42.1%)
Your honor the high chief <i>Lau afioga</i>			17 (27.0%)	15.8 (23.2%)
The most sacred <i>‘O le sa’ofa’apito</i>			11 (17.5%)	12.8 (18.8%)
Your honor the pastor <i>Lau susuga le fa’afeagaiga</i>			1 (1.6%)	0.4 (0.6%)

Note: “Adult” refers to the culturally normative response, while “child” is the children’s consensus response according to cultural consensus analysis.

The third and fourth questions that exhibit consensus answers divergent from the cultural norm are true / false questions about whether women and pastors are allowed to possess chiefly titles in Samoa. As I describe in chapter 3, a *matai* is traditionally a social role held by males. Females traditionally possessed considerable rank and influence as sisters and daughters in their natal villages as the embodiment of their descent group’s dignity (Schoeffel 1978; 1980; Shore 1981). When married and outside of their natal village, women take the rank of their husband. If he happens to hold an important chiefly title, she will be afforded influence and may possess a comparable leadership role in the Women’s Committee. So in terms of traditional social practice, women’s social roles are primarily considered in terms of daughter, sister, and wife,

rather than as *matai* (Schoeffel 1978; Shore 1981). Yet women do receive chiefly titles and have done so historically. Although the Court of Lands & Titles, the governmental agency responsible for registering chiefly titles, does not have data on the percentage of titles held by women, Meleisea's (1987) review of a subset of claims submitted over several years led him to estimate that approximately 10% of all registered titles are held by women. Certainly within Silafaga chiefs and older adults could point to a small number of chiefly titles held within the village by women without trouble. And the village was unique in that the most highly ranked *ali'i* title in the village was held by a woman. An important governmental official, she resided in Apia for the majority of the year but made visits to the village several times per year on special occasions or when village affairs required her presence. Additionally, one or two chiefly titles were awarded to women residing overseas during my time in the village. Consequently it is factually and culturally 'correct' to suggest that both men and women may hold chiefly titles, even when the social role is more consistently associated with men.

The ability of pastors to hold a chiefly title is a more contentious and rarer occurrence. The general opinion of many was that a pastor should not hold a chiefly title as there was some potential for conflict of interests between the role of the pastor and *matai* in the village. Because pastors can be called into mediate particularly bitter conflicts and struggles within a particular household or descent group, pastors should stand beyond local political concerns and conflicts. Informants were firm that an individual most definitely not hold a chiefly title and serve as pastor within the same village, but noted that some pastors did hold chiefly titles in other villages⁹⁷. Yet as with

⁹⁷ In virtually every case of which my informants could recall the individual had obtained a chiefly title in early adulthood and then later had attended theological school to become a pastor.

women, it is both factually and culturally ‘correct’ to suggest that an individual may be both a pastor and a *matai* as long as those two social statuses are kept distinct in practice.

Table 12.6: Children’s responses to: “Can a *woman* become a chief?”

Answers	Consensus Responses		Frequency (n=64)	Weighted Frequency (n=68.1)
	Adult	Child		
Yes			24 (37.5%)	27.0 (39.6%)
No			40 (62.5%)	41.0 (60.2%)

Table 12.7: Children’s responses to: “Can a *pastor* become a chief?”

Answers	Consensus Responses		Frequency (n=63)	Weighted Frequency (n=68.1)
	Adult	Child		
Yes			19 (30.2%)	14.5 (21.3%)
No			43 (68.3%)	52.9 (77.7%)

The divergence in adult’s and children’s responses to these two questions can be seen in Tables 12.6 and 12.7. While almost a third of the children provided the adult or culturally normative response (women: 38% (42% weighted), pastor: 30% (84% weighted)), the consensus response was clearly that neither women nor pastors could legitimately receive a chiefly title. Again, this pattern of response demonstrates both children’s developing competence as well as their difficulties with the finer details of the system. In suggesting that only men can be chiefs, the majority of children are demonstrating their awareness of the gendered association of the chief’s social role. Considering the actual observable distribution of chiefly titles by gender in the village, it is hardly surprising that children would have developed such an understanding. While the proportion of female titleholders may be as high as 10% as Meleisea (1987) suggests, the frequency of women’s involvement in chiefly activity at *fa’alavelave* or *fono* is far less. With the exception of the single high-ranking female *ali’i*, who did attend village

fono and *fa'alavelave* in the village a few times per year and a *saofai* (entitlement ceremony) in which a female was receiving a title, I did not witness female *matai* participating in any chiefly activity in the village at any time except in their own *saofa'i*. Given the “invisibility” of women in this social role in observable chiefly activity and the high reliance on observational learning it is little wonder that a majority of children would assert that women simply cannot hold a chiefly title. Children’s belief that pastors cannot hold a chiefly title is likely due to much the same reason. If pastors only hold chiefly titles in village spatially removed from the village in which they serve as religious practitioners, then it is unlikely that children will be aware of the possibility as they have no experiential basis to consider such a possibility. Given no firsthand experience of an individual being both a pastor and a chief and the rarity of such a state of affairs, a strong majority of children argue that it is impossible.

The fifth and final question exhibiting a contrast between adults’ and children’s consensus response addresses the typology of chiefs found in the Samoan chief system. As I describe in chapter 3, there are two types of chiefs: high chiefs (*ali'i*) and orators or talking chiefs (*tulafale*). While of little immediate relevance on the level of the individual household where a titleholder is simply a *matai*, the distinction between the two types of chiefs is of great importance in the context of chiefly activity where the different chiefs play distinct and complementary roles in ritual activity (Duranti 1981; Mead 1969; Shore 1982).

The conceptual distinction between these two social statuses is rooted in Samoan ethnotheories of power and authority. *Ali'i* are conceptualized as the true sources and repositories of *pule* (authority), while *tulafale* are commonly described as the *faipule* or

“the activators of authority” responsible for the agentive and active expression of authority (Shore 1982:241). This conceptual distinction is most directly realized in the *fono*, other village-level ritual occasions, and the chiefly activity of *fa’alavelave*. In these different contexts, the *ali’i* is the true noble with formal authority to command, while the *tulafale* acts in the name of and on behalf of the *ali’i* in a far more recognizably “political” manner. Prototypically, the *tulafale* does so through formal oratory in which he (or she) speaks on behalf of the *ali’i*. As Mead (1969) notes, the high chief is “ceremonial paralyzed without a talking chief” because of the various ritual actions that the *tulafale* manages while the *ali’i* must remain the placid and immobile embodiment of dignity and behavioral restraint. The different patterns of participation in ritual activity, seating within the meeting house (*fale fono*), level of deference and respect, role within debate of issues, and so forth are all derived from this conception distinction between *ali’i* and *tulafale*. Consequently this distinction is of great importance to a full understanding of chiefly activity because it structures this activity in numerous, fundamental ways.

For the sake of brevity and simplicity, on the test children were merely asked to identify the two types of chiefs as an index of their understanding of the conceptual division⁹⁸. Their pattern of response is included in Table 12.8 below. While a slim majority of the children did actually select the correct answer (22 out of 61; 36.1%), consensus analysis uses the weighted frequencies to calculate the consensus response⁹⁹.

⁹⁸ Admittedly the wording of this question required children to not only understand the conceptual division but also know the terms for the two different chiefs. Yet it was not felt that this added undue complexity to the question, and it yielded a simpler text question than other possible alternatives.

⁹⁹ Consensus analysis generates a probability score for each of the responses. This question was the single question in which the probability score that the consensus answer selected was less than perfect. Yet the probability rating was so high (99.7%) that I have treated this response as the consensus one.

In this case it meant that a response including mention of *ali'i* (one of the two correct types) and *tamali'i* (a respectful synonym for *ali'i*) was judged to be children's consensus response (26.4 out of 68.1; 38.8%). Yet even if we focus our attention on the unweighted frequencies it is clear that there remains considerable confusion regarding this very fundamental distinction at the heart of chiefly activity.

Table 12.8: Children's responses to: "What are the two kinds of chief?"

Answers (Translations)	Consensus Responses		Frequency (n=61)	Weighted Frequency (n=68.1)
	Adult	Child		
<i>Ali'i</i> and <i>tulafale</i> (High chief and orator)			22 (36.1%)	23.3 (34.2%)
<i>Ali'i</i> and <i>tamali'i</i> (High chief and high chief (pol.))			21 (34.4%)	26.4 (38.8%)
<i>Tulafale</i> and <i>fetalaiga</i> (Orator and orator (pol.))			9 (14.8%)	9.8 (14.4%)
<i>Matai</i> and <i>faiifeau</i> (Chief and pastor)			9 (14.8%)	8.6 (12.6%)

Given the importance of this conceptual division in organizing chiefly practice within the village, how might we explain children's confusion on this point? I would argue that it is not consistently displayed in obvious and readily observable ways, which makes it relatively difficult to acquire because of Samoan children's heavy reliance on observation as a mode of social learning. As I noted in chapter 8, an individual's status as a chief is unmarked in many everyday situations, and this ambiguity extends to include the type of chiefly title he or she holds. This ambiguity is even found in situations where there is fairly explicit marking of the types of chief.

It is within the context of chiefly activity at the *fono* or as part of a *fa'alavelave* that an individual's status as a *matai* is most clearly and publicly expressed and enacted. While participation in these activities – even when peripheral – does mark participants

as *matai*, the specific type of chiefly title held – *ali'i* or *tulafale* – remains underspecified and ambiguous for most chiefs. I will give brief examples of how this is the case drawn from the two contexts in which chiefly activity are particularly prominent: *fa'alavelave* and the *fono*.

The very prominent and stylized activities of the orator at *fa'alavelave* would seem to provide the greatest number of explicit opportunities to 'publicize' their specialized social status given the prominent and marked role they play in chiefly activity. Several *tulafale* will make speeches at every *fa'alavelave* and others chiefly events. As I described in chapter 8, these activities are the focus of the attendees and certainly function to direct attention to the activities of these individuals enacting these specialized roles. Additionally, at *fa'alavelave* those *tulafale* giving speeches and taking part in ritual practice also frequently use symbols of office that further mark their status as orator chiefs (see photograph 8.2). (And as my analysis earlier in this chapter reveals, most children are aware of the meaning of these symbols (see table 11.1)). Yet despite the fact that some *matai* are explicitly marked as *tulafale* on the basis of their active participation in ritual activity, only a minority of the total number of *tulafale* in attendance participates. The large majority simply takes up more peripheral positions and will not provide a speech or participate in any but the most subsidiary way. This majority will also not bring or wear any symbols of office; (indeed, I did not witness any *tulafale* bring a *to'oto'o* or *fue* to an event who did not use it).

There are also a number of ways in which the typology of chiefs is realized and included in chiefly practice at the village *fono*. Yet arguably the ways in which chiefs are parsed into one or the other category as *ali'i* or *tulafale* remains underspecified and

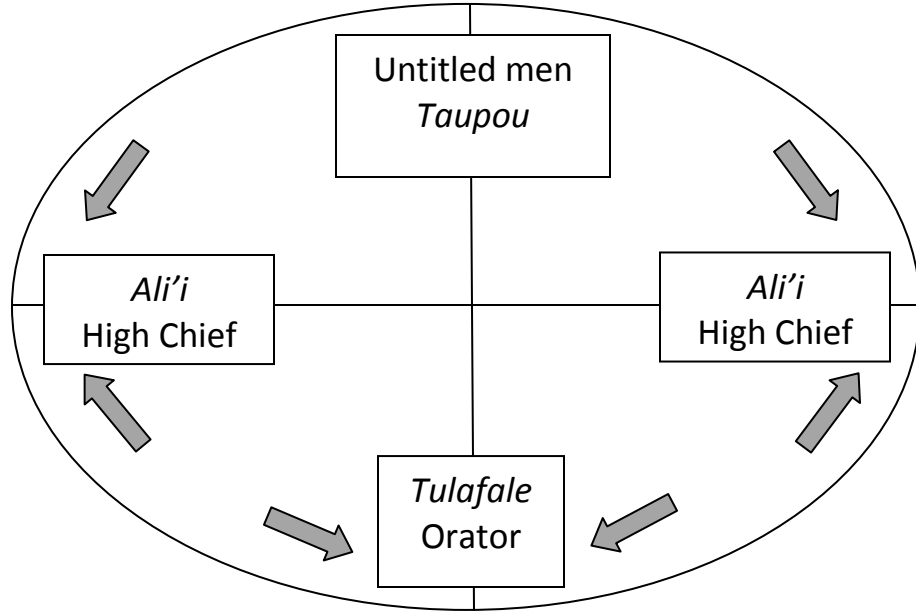
ambiguous. More specifically, the relative rank and type of chiefly title are carefully specified for the most senior chiefs of both types present, but with considerable greater ambiguity for mid- and lower-ranking chiefs. For example, there is a distinctive way in which a cup of kava is passed to orators and to *ali'i* that I describe in chapter 9. High chiefs receive the cup of kava from a server facing the seated chief and passing the cup from the right side of his body in semi-circular path towards the anterior-medial axis of the body. *Tulafale*, on the other hand, receive the cup of kava from a server standing perpendicular to the seated chief with the server's right shoulder as the closest point between the two. The cup is passed starting at the ventral-medial axis of the server's body and moving outwards towards the chief with the dorsum or back of the hand leading the cup.

While most untitled men and *matai* are clear on this subtle distinction in practice, it is most explicitly maintained only for the first dozen of cups served when the relative formality of the event is strictly enacted. At this point when the highest ranking chiefs are being served the first several will make speeches and the attention of all present is fixed on the ongoing service. After the initial dozen or so cups of kava have been served, however, there is a noticeable reduction in formality. Individuals receiving kava will not make speeches, the relative pace of the service is increased, and occasionally some informal conversation between individuals seated next to each other will occur. With this reduction in formality the servers tend simply to hand the cup of kava to the recipient without the additional flourish by which he signified that the cup was being served to a *tulafale* or *ali'i*.

Another ethnographically well-documented way in which the different types of chiefs are publicly articulated is through seating within the *fono*. As Shore (1982:79-81) and Duranti (1981; 1992a; 1994) have described at length, seating position within the meeting house is an important way by which both social status as a *tulafale* and *ali'i* as well as one's relative ranking within these social statuses is enacted. In the meeting houses *ali'i* sit in the *tala* (ends) of the meeting house, while *tulafale* sit opposite the untitled men in the long ends of the house (see Figure 12.1 below). The problem of course is that there is no clear division where seating shifts from *tulafale* to *ali'i* in the corners of the house. If there is a larger number of *ali'i* present at an event, we will find them seated along the length of the *tala* and down the side usually reserved for *tulafale*. On the other hand, should a large number of *tulafale* be present, they may begin to crowd the space in the *tala* usually associated with the *ali'i*. Should a larger number of chiefs be present and relatively little space to accommodate them, less prominent chiefs may be forced to sit in portions of the meeting house normally inappropriate for their status. Similarly, when the different titleholders for an important title has been split and is held by different individuals attend an event, it is usually only the most senior of the different titleholders that will sit in the position considered to be appropriate to that title. The other titleholders in attendance may sit in a more junior position or in a position otherwise inappropriate for their status. For example, a senior *ali'i* title was split and it was not uncommon for two of the titleholders to frequently attend. The older and more experienced of the two would take up the typical position in the *tala* or end of the house, while the other would far more commonly sit on the side of the untitled men at some distance from the *tala* opposite his senior. My point is that although all chiefs have to

Figure 12.1: Schematic drawing of seating by rank and social status in a meeting of chiefs (*fono*)

Note: Boxes denote where the different social statuses (high chief, orator, untitled men and taupou) are expected to sit in a meeting of chiefs. Shaded arrows indicate the increasing gradient in relative rank within these different social statuses. The highest ranking orators and high chiefs will sit on the center line of the building itself with lower ranking chiefs radiating outward from them.



occupy a space in the meeting house and in theory their choice could fairly readily identify the type of chiefly title held, there is certainty only at the highest level of chiefs in the village. For the other chiefs present, their seating position does not always and unambiguously index the type of chiefly title they hold.

My larger point is that while participation in chiefly activity does index the type of chiefly title held, in practice it does not do so consistently for the majority of individual chiefs in the village. While there is considerable clarity and marking of the type of chiefly title held for the highest-ranking chiefs in the village, this is not the case for the majority of chiefs in the village. I would argue that this inconsistent marking renders it more difficult to acquire this concept on the basis of observational learning.

To return to the larger question posed earlier in this chapter: cultural consensus analysis of conceptual test scores suggests that children's answers exhibit moderate levels of consensus. In an attempt to determine whether children's answers would more closely approximate those of adults or vary randomly (as predicted by a social reproduction perspective) or contained culturally contrastive conceptions (child agency perspective) the individual questions were analyzed. The results supported both perspectives to some degree. Children's consensus answers to six of the fourteen questions matched those of adults and the larger culture. This suggests that various components of the chief system are in fact being successfully transmitted from generation to generation to a majority of children in this larger sample.

Yet coupled with this finding of effective social reproduction is the finding that there were a number of questions (five of the fourteen) where children's responses

exhibited consensus but contrasted with the culturally consensus responses of adults. This result is far more in line with a focus on child agency, where children are developing cultural models in more idiosyncratic but shared ways, and runs counter to the long-term goal of social reproduction. The question of course is what factor or factors is leading children as a group to construct widely shared cultural models at odds with the larger culture? One possibility is that these contrastive models could have been created to manage more immediate and ongoing needs and goals. This does not seem to be the case in this situation, however, as children of this age play at most a peripheral role in the chief system. Consequently, as long as children demonstrate the minimum level of respectful behavior towards figures of respect in the village including *matai*, there are few expectations or exogenous demands for children to learn more. An alternative possibility that I will pursue in the remainder of this chapter is that the characteristic pattern of social learning that children adopt – observational learning – makes certain conceptual features somewhat more difficult to acquire leading to a transient but noticeable bias in children’s developing conceptions.

Deuterolearning, cognitive heuristics and biases

There are a number of useful concepts in considering the impact of a specific socio-cultural context on children’s conceptual development. At the most general level, there is Gregory Bateson’s (2000) notion of “deuterolearning”, which is usually defined as the process of “learning how to learn” in a particular social and cultural milieu. Bateson’s argues that there are diverse “habits of thought” that lead persons of different cultures to parse streams of behavior in different but equally meaningful ways. He

writes: “In the old jargon of psychology, [these habits of thought] represent different ways of apperceiving sequences of behavior, or in the newer jargon of gestalt psychology, they might be described as habits of looking for one or another sort of contextual frame for behavior” (Bateson 2000:162-3). The ongoing rush of everyday activity that surrounds each of us is populated by diverse actors with varying perspectives, motivations and interests, who employ diverse physical and symbolic artifacts. Such a flow would be overwhelming to an individual lacking the resources to render such a flow meaningful. Consequently, over developmental time the individual comes to acquire habitual ways of attending to and orienting themselves within the physical and social world. In terms of learning, developmental psychologists have referred to this as the “problem of induction” (Markman 1990). Resolution of this problem comes through the individual’s possession of some set of constraints to guide and focus their attention on which aspects of a phenomenon are significant and must be attended to, and which are not and may be ignored. I will refer to these constraints as “heuristics” because I favor considering them as cognitive tools or artifacts that are habitually applied but which can be set aside or revised (with effort) when they prove inappropriate (for similar conceptions, see Cole 1996; Hutchins 1995a; 1999; Vygotsky and Luria 1994). Additionally, heuristics is a term associated with “prospect theory” (Tversky and Kahneman 1974), a body of theory that examines the way in which simplified frameworks for decisions-making can both facilitate rapid choices under uncertainty but can also bias such decisions when misapplied.

In a general sense, “cognitive heuristics” act to direct the individual’s attention to particular aspects of objects and activity to allow him or her to parse them in meaningful

ways. A concrete and somewhat classic example of such heuristics and their value comes from the literature on lexical acquisition. One of the most basic questions of this area of research is how children are able to successfully learn an association between a lexical item and its referent from a stream of discourse. Markman (1989; 1990) postulates the existence of three heuristics that children use to aid lexical acquisition: (1) the “whole object assumption” which leads children to interpret novel terms as labels for objects—not parts, substances, or other properties of objects; (2) the “taxonomic assumption” which leads children to consider labels as referring to objects of like kind, rather than to objects that are thematically related; and (3) the “mutual exclusivity assumption” which leads children to expect each object to have only one label. Markman (1990) argues that with these heuristics provide concrete means to minimize the problem of induction by narrowing the field of possible referents and increasing the probability that the child can learn the correct lexical item out of a stream of discourse.

Of course, heuristics are also likely to operate in orienting attention within the individual’s social ecology as well. Children do not (and cannot) learn from all of the available social actors that surround them in an undifferentiated manner. Heinrich and Gil-White (2001) have proposed a rank-biased pattern of social learning where individuals seek proximity with and orient their attention to higher status social others. Boggs’ (1985) has documented Hawaiian-American children’s characteristic focus on peers rather than adults in the primary school classroom¹⁰⁰. In contrast to Henrich’s argument for an evolved mechanism, Boggs argues for social learning, pointing to

¹⁰⁰ Boggs’ (1985) research was focused on why part-Polynesian children appeared to have great difficulties in primary school classrooms. His argument is that the middle-class, European American expectations for children’s behavior and interactional style which dominate these classrooms conflicts with many aspects of Hawaiian-American culture and norms of social interaction.

children's long experiences with sibling child care and adults' active discouragement of their attempts at help-seeking. Both of these are examples of types of heuristics that direct children's attention to particular segments of their social ecology.

Of course, what may be cognitively useful in one context may also generate discordant outcomes in others. As has been most famously described by the economists Tversky and Kahneman (1974), many commonly used cognitive heuristics systematically bias decision-making under certain conditions. For example, the so-called "availability heuristic", for example, is where the individual bases predictions of outcomes on the relative vividness or emotional impact rather than on actual probability (Tversky and Kahneman 1973). While useful in many instances (see also Damasio 1994), the heightened salience and emotional charging of some events can lead to biased decisions in some instances (e.g. comparing the risk of travel by air vs. by car following a disastrous airline crash).

Ultimately, the distinction between a cognitive *heuristic* and a cognitive *bias* is an artificial and arbitrary one as they are flip sides of the same coin¹⁰¹. The relative value or burden of a particular cognitive artifact very much depends upon the specific context of use. For example, as I have describe in earlier chapters Samoans frequently operate with an epistemological heuristic that focuses their attention on the level of behavior and which makes them relatively hesitant to speculate about the motivations and internal states of others (Shore 1982). I came to terms with this heuristic myself in my first few months conducting field work as I repeatedly phrased my questions about other's

¹⁰¹ Research by Gerd Gigerenzer, David Funder and Joachim Krueger has suggested that it may be incorrect to reject "biases" as errors in logic. They argue that many of these heuristics are really "approximation shortcuts" that are expedient and cognitive "cheap", and do not generally lead to costly errors in practice.

behaviors in terms of their motivations and intentionality. My informants would characteristic respond (eventually with clear frustration) that they could not speculate on what others might think or feel, or the motivations behind a specific decision or act. In such a cultural context, I think you could accurately describe my stereotypical North American epistemological focus on internal states rather than concrete behaviors as a “bias” that complicated my social interactions with my informants.

While work on cognitive heuristics and biases, typically going under the rubric of “prospect theory”, has focused on decision-making under circumstances of uncertainty, I believe these related concepts can be used to consider learning and conceptual development as well. Per Bateson’s (2000) argument for deuterolearning, children come to acquire habitual ways of attending to the social and physical world and characteristic patterns of learning from them. While the cognitive heuristics acquired are useful in rendering certain concepts, associations and meanings, they can also render other aspects of the phenomena relatively more difficult to acquire. It is important to note that I am not making the strong (and untenable) claim that certain things are impossible to learn by virtue of certain cognitive heuristics / biases. Rather I am advocating a far weaker version that the application of specific heuristics can make aspects of certain concepts simply more difficult to acquire. This is not a claim about ultimate outcome. My opinion is that children can come to learn any concept by any number of possible routes, but that some routes may be more circuitous than others for certain kinds of knowledge. One could learn to competently juggle, for example, through either observation or concise verbal explication without demonstration, but it is likely that the former will lead to more rapid acquisition than the latter.

Heuristics of observational learning and a high frequency / high visibility bias

In chapter 7, I described the social and cultural organization of learning that occurs in the Samoan child's household. Observational learning and to a lesser extent imitation and participatory learning are the promoted modes of social learning in this context for a variety of reasons, including: parents' and adults' avoidance of active instruction and scaffolding as threats to their relative rank vis-à-vis children; an epistemological disinclination to speculate on other's inner states or motivations; and an ethnotheory of knowledge acquisition that equates knowledge with prior observation. While Samoan caretakers and other adults do provide some forms of scaffolding to children, it tends to focus on terminating "misbehavior" rather than providing instruction on the underlying logic of the correction, facilitate children's operation at a higher level of competence, or other interventions that might more readily aid conceptual development. While there are clear variations in how social learning is realized in other context (e.g. peer group, primary school, Sunday school) depending upon the context's social ecology, central activities, and so forth, these early experiences in this household predisposes children towards viewing and interacting with the social and physical world in a particular way with an impact on social learning. It is in the acquisition of these early habitual ways of attending to, interacting with, and orienting oneself within the world is the process of "learn how to learn" (i.e. deuterolearning, Bateson 2000). These habits and stances are reaffirmed in other contexts over the course of development, and being "over-determined" (D'Andrade 1992) in this way, have considerable motivational force.

I would argue that it is possible to identify three closely related heuristics that are acquired as part of deuterolearning in the Samoan context. First, immediate, first-hand observations are privileged sources of knowledge for conceptual development. As I described in detail in chapter 7, there is a strong association in Samoan, and Polynesian epistemologies more generally, of knowledge with observation and visual perception. There is also a stress in observational learning on individual agency, as one does not learn by passively ‘witnessing’ events, but rather through the active perception and recognition of patterns of significance in what one sees (for further discussion of Pacific epistemologies, see Borofsky 1987; Koskinen 1968:168-9; Levy 1973: chapter 8; Shore 1982). Of course, this does not mean that Samoan children (or adults for that matter) will refuse to learn from the experience of others, or that they will not attend to hearsay or second-hand reports¹⁰². Such a heuristic is realized only in terms of a preference and privileging of first-hand observations as a particularly important and valid source of knowledge.

Second, individual agency is highly stressed in both learning and conceptual development. By this I mean that the child does not expect extensive instruction or intervention from social others, nor do they attempt to elicit it from them. While there can be extensive correction of children’s perceived disrespectful behavior – particularly with the shift in expectations that occurs as the child’s developmental niche transforms (see chapter 6 and 7) – but these corrections operate primarily on the level of behaviors. Once children have learnt to adopt their behaviors appropriately to avoid punishment, there is little to no additional scaffolding or instruction to continue to refine children’s

¹⁰² Although see Bogg’s (1978) account of Hawaiian-American boys vigorously attacking the reported observations of peers because they themselves had not actually witnessed the reported event.

understandings or provide external motivation for them to refine and build upon their existing understandings. Children will also avoid asking direct questions of others in most instances, particularly from those of far higher rank or relatively similar rank. The former group, including parents and caretakers, can view questions as an affront to their rank and actively discourage such behavior. Consequently, children tend to avoid providing anything but the most subtle cues to elicit parental attention (e.g. standing in close proximity to the parent and an unknown object) or avoid such attempts altogether (on analogous behaviors among Hawaiian-American children, see Boggs 1985; Gallimore, et al. 1974; Howard 1974). Ironically, children also avoid seeking help from peers or siblings close in age (individuals who are of a relatively similar rank) as this would imply ignorance and generate some basis for the other's assertions of rank.

Third and finally, in observational learning the most visible and frequent manifestations of a phenomenon are stressed over the underlying and less common¹⁰³. By this I mean that children will tend to construct meanings, associations and ultimately concepts out of the most visible and most common manifestations of a given phenomenon and tend not to consider relatively underlying features. Such a heuristic will likely be acquired over time through interactions with caretakers, adults and other household members as part of language socialization (e.g. Ochs 1988; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986b), where verbal exchanges and narratives will focus on behaviors and activity rather than the underlying motivations, intentionality and inner states of the social actors.

While a focus on the readily visible manifestations of a phenomenon may seem to be an 'automatic' entailment of a cultural emphasis on observational learning, this need

¹⁰³ It is important to acknowledge that some emotionally evocative experiences may bias learning and later probability estimates because of their heightened salience; what Tversky & Kahneman (1973) called an "availability bias".

not necessarily be the case. Consider, for example, the strong association of secrecy and knowledge in Papua New Guinea, particularly in the male initiation rites as described most famously by Barth (1987; 1989), but also Tuzin (1980) and most recently Herdt (2003). In these contexts, that which is readily visible may not necessarily reveal the ‘truth’ or ‘reality’ of the thing-in-itself. As Barth (1989) explains in his comparison of the “guru” of the Great Asian traditions and the Melanesian “conjurer”, the ritual Melanesian elder who directs the initiation ritual operates within an epistemological system that sees knowledge as hidden and obscured, and which can only be transmitted and “revealed” with great care and considerable risk. While observation likely continues to play a powerful role in cultural learning among these Highland Papua New Guinea groups, the heuristic that guides their children’s attention is likely to be markedly more complex and see the phenomenon as only partially and imperfectly represented in visible manifestations.

As I have repeatedly stressed, observational learning is an exceedingly effective mode of social learning, and the heuristics associated with observational learning are very powerful in directing children’s attention in ways to effectively learn much about their social and physical ecology. Yet as I note in the earlier section, by directing attention in particular ways heuristics can obscure other aspects of some phenomenon. More specifically, I argue that it can generate biases in children’s developing conceptions when children face phenomenon whose overt and visible manifestations do not consistently match the underlying reality. In this case the heuristics are directing the child’s attention to an aspect of the phenomenon that does not accurately represent its central meaning or reality.

As evidence for the operation of such a bias, consider the five questions I detailed earlier where we saw children's consensus response at odds with the consensus response of adults and the larger culture. Each of them consists of an underlying reality that contrasts with its most visible and most frequent manifestation. The clearest example of this is with regard to the questions on whether or not women and pastors may hold chiefly titles. While women may technically hold chiefly titles, very few women actually do so and with very rare exceptions they do not take part in observable chiefly activity (e.g. participation in a *fono*, oratory at *fa'alavelave*). Moreover this role contrasts with the more salient and common social role of the women as spouse of the chief, the *faletua* or "back of the house". This is similarly the case for village pastors, who must take great care to not create discord and by allowing his role as a religious leader to conflict with possession of a chiefly title. Focused on the very visible and most frequent manifestations, a majority of children even in the oldest group (10-14 years) will argue that these two groups of persons cannot be chiefs.

This is similarly the case with the specialized form of address for Agafili and the nature of title succession decisions. All orators in the village are addressed with one particular form of address (*lau tofa*, "your honor") with the exception of this one highly ranked and particularly prominent individual. Children have learnt the general norm on how to address orators with the appropriate respectful phrase and a majority has even identified this particular local figure as an orator, but yet only 10.5% (see table 11.3) correctly take note of the exception that exists in addressing this particular orator. Similarly, children have come to understand well the importance of relative age and gender in household and descent group decision-making. Yet this conception conflicts

with the more exceptional ideology guiding title succession decisions, which describe such decisions as being made by the “entire collected family” (*'aiga potopoto*).

Finally, children tend not to note the important conceptual divide between the two types of chiefs featured in the Samoan system. I must admit great initial surprise at this finding, given the centrality of this conceptual division in organizing chiefly activity. Yet again, as I describe earlier in this chapter there is little clarity and consistency in this division if one approaches and tries to understand chiefly activity from the periphery. It also highlights the difference in my own acquisition of this concept: from reading ethnographies where chiefly activity is highly schematized into abstract concepts. Samoan children approach chiefly activity from a completely different angle and with a different set of cognitive artifacts to guide and assist their learning.

As a set these different examples do suggest that the powerful heuristics guiding children's cultural learning, a legacy of the social and cultural construction of social learning in the Samoan context, do on occasion generate biases in conceptual development. Of course, this is not how conceptual development ends. There is no adult Samoan that cannot point to the contrast between the two types of chiefs and the extensive and contrastive meanings associated with the two types. Indeed the findings suggest that a minority of children are already coming to adopt the consensus views of their elders. What is important here is that we can see the transient impact on children's developing concepts of a particular social and cultural construction of social learning.

Limitations of the findings

It is important to note the limitations to the argument being made here. The conceptual test was created to test children's relative knowledge of this system as it is known and understood by adults. It was not explicitly designed, however, to test for children's responses that reflect the proposed high frequency / high visibility bias by offering that as a response to each question in addition to the culturally correct responses of adults. Rather my analysis detailed above is a *post hoc* interpretation of children's patterns of 'mistakes' on the test as reflective of an underlying conceptual bias. Given the lack of explicit testing of this hypothesis, there were only a relatively small number of questions that could have revealed a bias in children's developing conceptions. Consequently, I am not able to rule out alternative explanations for children's 'mistakes' and must consider the finding only a tentative hypothesis.

The most likely alternative explanation is that these 'mistakes' simply represent more complex or difficult aspects of the chief system and it takes relatively longer for children to acquire them. This is certainly a possibility as analogues exist elsewhere in children's development. Consider the example of past tense overregularization in child language acquisition (Marcus 1996; Marcus, et al. 1992; Maslen, et al. 2004; Plunkett and Marchman 1993). Most English verbs form their past tense regularly, by adding the suffix *-ed* (e.g. *walk-walked*). About 180 verbs are exceptions, however, and form their past tense idiosyncratically (e.g. *sing-sang*, *shoot-shot*, *break-broke*). Overregularization occurs when the regular *-ed* suffix is applied to an irregular verb (e.g. *run-runned*).

These errors occur as a regular part of language acquisition, and disappear with time as children learn the exceptions¹⁰⁴.

It could be argued that we have a comparable issue here. Rather than a conceptual bias operating we simply have a more difficult cultural concept. It is problematic, however, to simply judge exceptions to be particularly difficult for children as there are some exceptions that seem less difficult to acquire. As I reported earlier in this chapter, a majority of children could identify the specific individual who serves as the ceremonial attendant (*agai*) for the highest ranking chief in the village (see table 11.1). What makes this particular exception to the norm - only one *ali'i* in the village receives this kind of treatment - relatively easier for children to learn? The ceremonial attendant only fulfills his duties during the service of kava and food at the village *fono*, which as I described in chapter 8 is not a domain of chiefly activity that is consistently easy for children to observe. Ultimately the question will only be resolved with further research.

Conclusion

I began this chapter with two questions. Did children's developing conceptions of Samoan chieftainship exhibit sufficient inter-individual sharing for these cultural models to be described as "culture"? And if children's understandings are sufficiently shared, did they match those of the larger culture in which they lived or did they reflect children's more idiosyncratic and agentive construction of meanings and associations? I framed these questions as debate between complementary perspectives of *social*

¹⁰⁴ Although many English-speaking adults continue to make some overregularization errors (e.g. strive – strived), which suggests language changes (i.e. the loss of the less common past tense “strove”).

reproduction and *child agency*. The perspective of social reproduction is concerned with the accurate and consistent transmission of cultural knowledge and practice across generations, and would expect children's understandings to move from ignorance to eventually match the understandings of the larger society. The child agency perspective underlines the ability of the child to creatively adapt and interpret cultural resources in more idiosyncratic and immediately useful ways.

Cultural consensus analysis of children's responses to the test of conceptual knowledge of the chief system provided a complex answer. Children's responses did exhibit sufficient consensus to be judged as a domain of "culture" and yet the mean consensus was relatively low in comparison with other domains of culture (i.e. ethnomedical understandings of disease, ethnobotany) suggesting a fair level of variance. Analysis of individual responses also suggested that children's understandings showed significant match with those of adults, which supports the social reproduction perspective. Children (in this case, 10-14 year olds) are moving incrementally but markedly towards understanding the basic conceptual understands of the chief system in ways that match those of earlier generations. This is strong support for the idea that observational learning is an effective mode of social learning not only for motor skills and other embodied forms of cultural knowledge but also complex, conceptual understandings as well.

Analysis of individual responses also showed, however, a significant number of responses in which children's consensus responses explicitly contrasted with those of adults and the larger society in which children live. Certainly one possible explanation is that children's more idiosyncratic models are an expression of their agency and tied to

their adaption of cultural resources to better serve their more immediate interests and needs. While this is an important consideration, it does not seem to be the case here. Children's extremely peripheral role in chiefly activity leaves them with little need or opportunity to do much with greater conceptual understandings and competence. As opposed to the children of Manus who had good reason to develop a conception of causality, there seems to be relatively little external motivation for children to seek to develop their conceptual understanding of the chief system. Children do not face sanctions if they fail to understand the system conceptually, nor are there any immediate rewards if they do exhibit greater cultural consensus. Except in very narrow contexts and ways, children demonstrating such understanding in an explicit way would be called *fiapoto* ("conceited", literally "want to be smart") and punished. And I feel that it is extremely unlikely that a 12 year old child would have sufficient foresight to try and understand the chief system so as to position him or herself to obtain a chiefly title.

Rather than an expression of children's agency I have argued that this interesting phenomenon – children's consensus responses contrasting with those of adults' – is the result of the particular way in which learning is socially and culturally constructed. Building on Bateson's notion that a key aspect of children's socialization is to learn habitual ways of attending to, interacting with, and orienting oneself within the world and the notion of cognitive heuristics / biases derived from prospect theory, I have advanced the tentative hypothesis that certain heuristics Samoan children learn and use can obscure certain aspects of the chief system resulting in biased concepts at this point in development. Specifically, they tend to focus their attention on the most visible and most common manifestations of a given phenomenon, which may provide complications when

these most visible manifestations contradict with the underlying reality of the concept. Of course, children do overcome these complications in time and adopt the cultural understandings of adults, and we can see these initial incremental steps in the results described above for individual questions. In this way, 'bias' needs to be seen as a transient impact rather than a lasting gap in conceptual development. While this analysis only generates a tentative hypothesis that must be investigated further it is valuable as it demonstrates the influence of culture and context on cognition, both in terms of how learning proceeds but also on the very concepts that develop.

Chapter 13: Conclusion

The study of childhood enculturation was recognized as crucial to anthropology by the founders of our field and by many of their successors. Now that it is truly feasible [because of the advancements in developmental psychology in the second half of this century], anthropologists seem to have lost interest in it. Whatever the reason for that unfortunate development, enculturation remains crucial; it must be at the top of an agenda for psychological anthropology.

Robert A. LeVine “An agenda for psychological anthropology” (1999:20)

Few major works in anthropology focus specifically on children, a curious state of affairs given that virtually all contemporary anthropology is based on the premise that culture is learned, not inherited. Although children have a remarkable and undisputed capacity for learning generally, and learning culture in particular, in significant measure anthropology has shown little interest in them or their lives.

Lawrence Hirschfeld “Why don’t anthropologists like children?” (2002:611)

The research project described in the past several chapters has sought to better understand the relationship of the individual and society by examining the processes by which the individual becomes a culturally competent member of society. I would argue that this issue of cultural learning and enculturation is a basic and frequently unexamined aspect of much of social theory. Examining the processes by which cultural beliefs, values and practices are learnt, come to motivate action, are open to contestation, challenge and creative revision, and are tied to conceptions of self and identity, for example, are basic issues with relevance to a wide range of contemporary work in the

social sciences. “Children are theoretically useful”, to quote Hirschfeld’s (2002), because they provide an opportunity to conduct basic research on the nature of these important ontogenetic and cultural processes in their earliest and arguably most fundamental state. Children’s lives should also be of general interest to anthropologists who more frequently than not work with demographically young populations where the young are usually the largest age group. Yet as LeVine (1999) and others (Gottlieb 2000; Hirschfeld 2002; Toren 1993) have noted, research on children and cultural learning has not been a sustained area of interest within contemporary anthropology. The primary contribution of this study can be seen as movement towards this larger goal.

The route I have taken to consider processes of cultural learning has been to examine in detail how a single important domain of cultural knowledge is acquired in a particular social, cultural, and historical context. Sociocultural anthropologists have long studied social stratification and systems of inequality, and anthropologists of the Pacific have put substantial effort into considering the nature of hierarchy, chieftainship and socio-political organization in these diverse island societies (Goldman 1970; Kirch 1984; Marcus 1980; 1989; Sahlins 1958; Sahlins 1963; Strathern 1971; White and Lindstrom 1997). Cultural models of hierarchy influence the organization and structuring of virtually all social interactions and social institutions in Samoa (even if it is through the forceful exclusion of such rankings in more egalitarian peer groups (i.e. Boehm 1993)). Yet hierarchy and inequality are also categories so broad and sweeping in scope as to be almost meaningless in terms of directing a specific research project. Samoa possesses a set of different, largely incommensurable systems of hierarchy that employ a range of different criteria to differentially rank individuals and groups, including: age, chiefly title,

cultural competence, genealogical relatedness, technical skills, educational achievement, material wealth, physical size and strength, and relative “Westernization”. Consequently, as I noted in the introductory chapter, I have focused my attention in this study far more narrowly on children’s developing understanding of Samoa’s chief system, because it is particularly salient, culturally marked and frequently serves as a template for other hierarchically organized social systems, such as the village’s Women’s committee.

In this concluding chapter I will briefly review the study’s findings to the four framing questions posed in the introduction. I will then discuss the various contributions of this study before reviewing some of its limitations.

How is cultural knowledge of the chief system acquired?

The first question is one of process and mechanism: what are the means by which children learn about the chief system? Patterns of social learning are heavily influenced by cultural values and practices as well as the social ecology, institutional histories, and activities of different social institutions and contexts in which the learning occurs. Thus, the question of process necessarily entails an investigation into how different modes of social learning are informed and organized by these various social and cultural factors as well. This includes noting which forms of social learning are culturally promoted or marginalized in specific contexts and activities (e.g. imitative and observational learning vs. explicit instruction), and considering the particular way in which these different forms of learning are realized in a specific context (e.g. observational learning focused on behaviors vs. observational learning focused on the observed actor’s underlying intentionality). Of course, which type of social learning used can also vary according to

more pragmatic concerns of which is more viable within a given domain of knowledge (e.g. dance movements vs. legal codes). By attending to these different factors we can provide a more robust and culturally, socially and historically sensitive account of cultural learning that moves beyond universalizing and over-generalized models of enculturation.

In chapter 7 I argued that a variety of factors serve to promote observational learning as well as imitation and participatory learning as the “proper, right and effective” ways for children to learn about many different domains of cultural knowledge including the chief system. These different factors include: adults’ assertion of social distance from children, their activities, and the focus of their attention; an epistemological focus on the level of behavior rather than underlying intentionality; and an ethnotheory of knowledge acquisition that equates knowledge with prior observation. These factors exert an organizing influence by promoting certain modes of social learning as right, proper and effective, accepting others as appropriate when used occasionally, and marginalizing still others as culturally inappropriate. There are also variations in how social learning is realized in the various contexts in which Samoan children are situated (e.g. peer group, primary school, Sunday school), depending upon the social ecology, characteristic activities, and so forth. My example of learning to fish highlighted this last point by demonstrating how observation of the actions of more expert adult fishermen is complemented in this case by children’s later imitation and independent experimentation because fishing equipment was made available for small groups of older boys’ use.

My account of cultural learning thus sought to take the ‘middle road’ between the universalizing and the culturally specific. Universalizing accounts that argue for a single

general model of cultural learning (e.g. children's increasing participation in everyday activities) tend to inappropriately minimize the impact of specific cultural practices and beliefs, and social institutions. "Culture" is important, these accounts suggest, but only in the general sense as these theories provide little analytic space to attend to the meaningful cultural difference in learning that can be found, for example, in comparing the Samoans, Guatemalans and the Navajo. On the other hand, culturally specific descriptions of enculturation, which underscore difference and particularity above all else, often fail to note the many commonalities and parallels that do exist in children's learning cross-culturally. Although ethnographically rich, these accounts do not allow us to make cross-cultural comparisons or drive the development of even mid-level theory, because they are fundamentally rooted in close descriptions of a single social, cultural, and historical context. I have attempted to strike a balance by arguing that all modes of social learning are likely employed by Samoan children, but that various social, cultural, contextual factors serve to promote the use of some modes and marginalize others, as well as influencing the particular shape that a given form of social learning will take. An example of this last point can be seen in the contrast I drew between a Samoan form of observational learning focused on the level of behavior and a Highland New Guinea version that is made far more complex by the stress placed on secrecy and hidden realities in these cultures(e.g. Herdt 2003).

My discussion of Samoan children's development has also sought to point to specific developmental experiences of relevance to their learning of the chief system and hierarchy more generally. In my account of development within the household (chapter 7), I pointed to two specific, particularly significant experiences. First, I argue that the

process of learning respectful behavior serves as an important means by which children learn basic associations about social conduct in hierarchically arranged social systems. Ochs and Schieffelin have argued persuasively that the acquisition of language goes hand-in-hand with socialization (a process they refer to as “language socialization”) as the child must learn the relevant social norms, cultural values and important local conceptual divisions to use language competently (Ochs and Schieffelin 1984; Ochs 1988; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986a; 1986b). I argue that this is similarly the case with regard to respectful and deferential behavior, as children must learn not only the physical enactments of such behaviors but also *who* to act respectful towards as well as the *contexts* that demand such displays of deference. This includes learning complex local hierarchies as well as the “contextual cues” (Gumperz 1992) that signal when the context requires one to act in a deferential manner towards one’s social superiors.

A second particularly rich source of experience of life in hierarchically organized social spaces is the “caregiving hierarchy” (Ochs 1988). Caretaking is widely distributed amongst household members, and these different caretakers are arranged hierarchically with their relatively contributions to childcare determined by their relative ranking. Persons of relatively higher rank adopt supervisory roles with minimal active involvement and frequently adopt a disinterested distance from the activity. Persons of lower rank, on the other hand, take on the active and physical aspects of care. As I note in chapter 7, the individual’s specific position in the hierarchy shifts contextually as the constellation of individuals presents changes. This is particularly true of children in middle childhood (~ 6 - 11 years of age), who occupy what Levy (1968) termed “pivotal positions” in the caregiving hierarchy. These experiences as an interactant and as a

“pivot” in the caregiving hierarchy – one minute issuing directives and the next submitting to them – provide a number of central, very basic understandings about life in a hierarchically organized society.

Of course, these initial experiences within the household are of limited value in educating the child about the chief system, which may not play a substantial role in the everyday life of all households. It is only once the child begins to move about the village community in a more able, regular and socially ratified way via their participation in the local primary school, Sunday school and other church activities, as well as community-level events such as *fa'avelave* where we start to see more substantial strides in their learning about the chief system. As I note in chapter 8, the opportunities for learning vary across the different social institutions with some presenting far greater exposure to chiefly activity than others. Specifically, I pointed to the *fa'avelave* as particularly rich opportunities for learning because the “performative intensity” of chiefly activity in this context draws that draws children’s (and adults’) attention, and children are allowed far greater physical proximity than in most other settings. In contrast, fears that children will disturb the chiefs serves to restrict their opportunities to observe chiefly activity within the *fono*, rendering it of comparably little importance at this stage in children’s lives. Located between these two poles are the formal pedagogical institutions - local primary school and Pastor’s school - which I detail in chapter 9. While certainly not their primary goal, both of these educational institutions do provide explicit instruction in restricted aspects of the chief system, and exposure to aspects of relevant ritual action (e.g. kava ceremony) through cultural performances.

In sum, a variety of experiences and different social institutions are implicated in children's learning about the chief system. Certainly some very basic and general understandings of hierarchical systems are acquired via children's experience in the household. Far more pronounced learning occurs when the children begin to move within village-level social institutions and on the periphery of community events such as *fa'alavelave*. The particular modes of social learning employed vary across these different contexts, but there is a general tendency to rely heavily on observational learning, the most promoted form of learning in Samoa.

What cultural models of hierarchy do Samoan children possess at different ages?

I have used the term "cultural knowledge" in this dissertation as a collective term of reference for the entire range of mental representations associated with a given domain of activity including the most embodied of skills and perceptual habits to the most abstracted and conceptualized of meta-representations. Thus, it refers to a far broader typology of mental representations than is typically the case. This is necessary not only because it accurately describes the nature of "knowing" in general (Karmiloff-Smith 1992; Mandler 1998; Mounoud 1993; Nelson 1996), but also because it more precisely portrays the full range of models associated with this domain of Samoan culture.

Procedural knowledge is clearly a pronounced part of some of the child's earliest learning in the household and family. In this context, children learn a set of behaviors including bodily postures, seating positions, intonation contours, and eye gaze avoidance, which are part of a generalized set of respectful behaviors. I have described these behaviors as "generalized" in the sense that they are employed in very similar ways by

the child to show his or her respect for a wide range of persons including parents, descent group elders, school teachers, Sunday school teachers and chiefs. While there are differences in the degree to which respect and deference need be shown to some of these figures and particularities in how respect is exhibited for some of these social roles, for young children there are many more commonalities than differences.

Hand-in-hand with this developing body of procedural knowledge, young children also come to acquire a set of five general hierarchical associations through their early experiences in the household and the caregiving hierarchy, detailed in chapter 7. First, children come to realize that the social ecology is organized hierarchically with some individuals having far greater rights, authority, and obligations than others. Second, relative ranking in this hierarchy is indexed primarily by relative age¹⁰⁵. Third, relative rank varies by the specific social ecology such that the individual's rank is not a fixed attribute, but rather a contextually shifting and negotiated position (e.g. the "pivot positions" (Levy 1968) of the caregiving hierarchy). Fourth, high rank is associated with physical immobility and inactivity, while lower ranks are associated with physical activity. Fifth and finally, children's early experiences of hierarchical relationships - particularly with contextually shifting rank and occasionally capricious sibling caretakers - provides an experiential basis for ambivalence towards authority figures. When these associations are initially fashioned, many are not necessarily consciously accessible, nor readily open to articulation (Karmiloff-Smith 1992; Mandler 1998; Nelson 1996; Perner 1993). As I noted in chapter 7, these developing understandings are very general

¹⁰⁵ Of course, "age" is indexed for young children through things like physical size, social and cognitive competence, and so forth. It's not uncommon for children to not know their age or birthdate.

conceptions of hierarchy applicable in basic ways to the numerous, different systems of hierarchical ranking found in Samoan social life, including the chief system.

The younger cross-section of community children (roughly 6 to 9 years of age), who have begun to move beyond the household and into the village community more consistently, demonstrates a more robust grasp of the chief system in comparison with the youngest cohort. In particular, they exhibit an increasingly refined conception of the role of the *matai* within the context of chiefly activity. Children can point to an individual's participation in specific activities and symbols of office as evidence for the individual's status as a chief. And children were aware of some of the particularities of these ritual events themselves. Yet there is little progression in seeing the *matai* outside of these highly marked ritual contexts in terms of their larger activities, obligations, and responsibilities. Some children could articulate the idea of chiefs as figures of authority (*pule*), but there was little understanding of the scope of this power and the domains in which it was exercised.

The oldest cross-section of community children (10 to 12 years of age) exhibited considerable refinement beyond the younger cross-sections. They were far more fluent and competent in discussing many of the details of the chiefs, their activities, and the other contextual cues used to identify them. They are also able to take some initial steps in describing *matai* and the village council of chiefs in a more general way outside of the context of chiefly activity and in terms of their larger social and political role in the village. Despite the considerable breadth of their knowledge, it is not yet equivalent to those of a 'modal' adult, and there remains a number of issues that children were not yet able to talk about with much competence. Examples of as of yet unrefined areas include

describing the use of space within the *fono*, the possibility of women holding chiefly titles, and the important conceptual divide between the two types of chiefs.

Finally, I noted that some children may demonstrate considerable competence on a particular narrow aspect or association of the chief system, a phenomenon that I described as “islands of competence”. These islands represent points of competence beyond their more global level of competence across the range of issues and concepts as a whole. These patches of competence are most typically not incorporated into existing cultural models, but rather stand alone as a lone ‘fact’ about the chief system or chiefly practice that the child knows. I have suggested that these islands may serve an important role in conceptual development by functioning as ‘anchors’ or points of support for children’s developing understanding by focusing their attention to specific aspects of the chief system. It is also an aspect of individual variation in children’s conceptual development as these islands of competence did not seem to occur across all children of the different cross-sections.

What is the effect of the social and cultural organization of learning on conceptual development?

In examining children’s developing understandings over time and in a specific sociocultural environment, I was able to consider the possible ways in which the social and cultural organization of learning and children’s experiences may have an impact on their conceptual development. This takes us beyond a consideration of how children’s socialization and learning can be directed by types of “leading activities” (Griffin and Cole 1984) or “developmentally instigative” aspects of the social and physical

environment (Bronfenbrenner 1993) to consider the impress of cultural factors on the actual representation of cultural meaning. In the context of this study, the specific question of interest is: does the cultural promotion of observational learning have an appreciable impact on the mental representations children develop regarding the chief system?

I examined this issue most directly in chapter 12 and sought to frame the issue in terms of deuterolearning and the acquisition, use, and potential biases of cognitive heuristics. The basic idea of Bateson's (2000) concept of deuterolearning is that a foundational aspect of cultural learning is "learning how to learn", by which he meant that the individual has to acquire habitual ways of attending to and orienting themselves within the physical and social world that rendered those worlds both individually and culturally meaningful. I strove to operationalize these "habits of thought" with reference to specific cognitive heuristics that act to focus the learner's attention on certain aspects of the social and physical world as significant and away from other aspects as usually unimportant. I described three heuristics: (1) immediate and first-hand observations are a privileged source of knowledge; (2) individual agency is stressed in both learning and conceptual development; and (3) the most visible and frequently occurring instances are stressed over the less common and underlying aspects of the phenomenon in question.

Of course, as economists and others social scientists working with "prospect theory" (from which the notion of cognitive heuristics originates) have long pointed out, heuristics can occasionally generate biases (e.g. Tversky and Kahneman 1974). While enormously powerful, I argue that observational learning as it is shaped by these three

heuristics in the Samoan context¹⁰⁶ can occasionally generate a characteristic pattern of bias in certain instances that I refer to as a “*high frequency / high visibility bias*”. More specifically, I argue that the focus on first-hand observation and the most frequent and visible occurrence of a phenomenon can generate biases when the underlying reality differs in marked ways from the most visible and frequent manifestations of that phenomenon. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the question as to whether or not women may hold chiefly titles in Samoa. While women may acquire chiefly titles, very few actually do so (~10% of titles). Moreover, it is very rare for females to take part in observable chiefly activity as a chief (e.g. participation in a *fono*, oratory at *fa’alavelave*). In interviews and on the conceptual tests, children tended to argue (sometimes vociferously) that women were barred from holding chiefly titles. I argued that the level of consensus in children’s responses to this question suggested their possession of a cultural model of the chief that had been developed with use of a heuristic that privileged the *most frequent* and *most observable* inhabitants of these chiefly roles, which in this case were males.

To seek additional evidence of this bias I examined a set of consensus responses that primary schoolchildren (10-14 years of age) provided to the conceptual test of knowledge of the chief system, which were at odds with the responses of adults. The level of consensus seen in children’s answers suggested that children were not simply guessing, but rather were selecting their answers based on shared understandings that stood at odds with adult conceptions. Analysis of this subset of questions showed that the

¹⁰⁶ As I note in chapter 11, there are likely to be variants of observational learning depending upon the particular contribution of cultural value, practice, and ideology. In the New Guinea Highlands where epistemological notions associate knowledge with secrecy (Barth 1987, Herdt 2003, Tuzin 1980), for example, we are likely to see a very different pattern of application and potential bias.

majority of questions tested for knowledge of a conceptual association that differed from the phenomenon's most visible and frequent manifestation. While this analysis does not provide definitive proof of an occasional bias arising from application of a culturally derived cognitive heuristic because the body of data is too small, the findings are suggestive of one way by which social and cultural organization in the form of such heuristics can influence the very mental representations individuals bear.

It is important to understand the implications of suggesting a bias in cultural learning. As I note in chapter 12, these bias are likely experienced as transient 'blindspots' in conceptual development where certain aspects of a phenomenon remains slight more difficult for children to learn or are oft overlooked initially. As I underscore in the chapter, this is not to argue that such biases are: (i) permanent, (ii) universal, or (iii) evidence of the inadequacies of cultural learning in Samoa. The findings clearly show children's increasing competencies by age with errors being corrected over time. Moreover, the data never exhibited a pattern where all children of a certain cross-section succumb to the bias. Samoan children, as is the case with all children, never rely on a single mode of social learning, but rather apply a diversity of methods of learning that will overcome the weakness and capitalize on the strengths of the different forms of learning. Finally, talk of biases in Samoan learning runs the risk of suggesting that such a pattern of cultural learning is somehow flawed in comparison to other cultures that privilege other forms of social learning. Nothing could be farther from the opinion here. Observational learning is enormously effective and relatively 'cheap' in terms of social expenditures. Moreover, all modes of social learning and cognitive heuristics possess an array of different strengths and weaknesses. While the particular balance of strengths and

weaknesses of Samoan cultural learning may be different from those of other societies, no truly objective comparison of ‘quality’ is possible or appropriate (see Levy 1996 for a similar argument regarding a comparison of teaching and learning in Nepal and Tahiti).

What is the effect of the Samoan patterning of social learning on the differential distribution of knowledge?

The existence of substantial levels of intra-cultural variation, even in small-scale societies, has long been acknowledged within cultural anthropology, including such prominent early figures such as Ralph Linton (1936), Edward Sapir (Mandelbaum 1985; Rodseth 1998), Margaret Mead (1973), and Anthony Wallace (1961). More recent work by researchers such as Barth (1975; 1987; 2002), Boster (1987a; Boster, et al. 1986), Romney (Romney and Moore 2001; Romney, et al. 1986), Schwartz (1978a; 1978b; 1989), Sperber (1985; 1990), Swartz (1991) and others have sought to examine this phenomenon and its meaning for culture theory. I argue that by examining processes of cultural learning over developmental time we can gain a privileged perspective on some of the mechanisms and processes involved in generating and promoting variations in knowledge and competence across a population. One aspect of the research project has been to consider this possibility.

In chapter 9, I argue that the promotion of observational learning in Samoa generates a set of circumstances that are of particular relevance to the differential distribution of competency in the chief system. Children’s heavy reliance upon observation as a mode of social learning of the chief system means that their relative proximity to chiefly activities could translate into differential opportunities to learn. My

ethnographic observations and the existing ethnographic literature suggest that proximity to chiefly activities varies by gender and the household rank of the child.

Household rank exerts an influence on children's opportunities to observe *fa'alavelave* and other forms of chiefly activity, because these events are disproportionately held at higher ranking chiefly houses even when the *fa'alavelave* is held for an individual who resides in a lower-ranking household. Gender acts in a more complex way to mediate the impact of household rank. Given a gendered division of labor, considerably greater mobility afforded to boys to move about the village, and a cultural expectation that girls are the embodiment of the descent group's honor and need to have this honor protected, girls' relative movements within the village are far more restricted than are boys. Boys' mobility allows them the relative freedom to attend and observe *fa'alavelave* within their respective descent groups and to some extent beyond. While there is obviously still great benefit for a boy to reside within a higher-ranking household, lower-ranking boys are able to visit households when *fa'alavelave* are being held. Thus, the lower-ranking boy's relatively great mobility enables him to overcome the potential limited proximity to chiefly activity that I have suggested exists in lower-ranking households.

For girls, however, gender mediates the impact of household rank in a different fashion. Girls' restricted mobility means that girls of higher-ranking households are kept within the orbit of the household and thus have consistently good proximity to chiefly activity. Girls of lower-ranking households, however, are kept close to a household that has little to no chiefly activity. While her brother's mobility allows him to overcome this deficit with his mobility, the greater restriction on girls' mobility further enhances this

deficit. Thus, gender *reduces* the impact of lower-ranking households' lack of proximity to chiefly activity for males, but *enhances* that impact for females.

To test out these hypotheses, I tested for the impact of household rank and gender on children's scores on the test of conceptual knowledge of the matai system (i.e. the "conceptual test") using t-tests of independent samples, and a model combining gender and household rank using a factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA). These analyses failed to provide any support for the three different hypotheses as they failed to find any statistically significant differences between the different groups being compared. In seeking to explain the discrepancy between these statistical analyses and the ethnographic observations I rely upon the notion of a "*leveling mechanism*", which I defined as a pattern of social practice, social institution, or ecological variable that serves to widely disseminate knowledge and cultural competence, and undercut more restrictive forms of intergenerational transmission. My argument is that there are a set of leveling mechanisms in the Samoan context that operate to broadly disseminate cultural knowledge without recourse to household rank, enabling children of lower- and mid-ranking families the opportunity to learn what might otherwise be primarily the province of the higher-ranking families. In chapters 9 and 10 I describe five different leveling mechanisms at work in Silafaga: (1) a relative high visibility of chiefly activity; (2) great permissiveness towards other's observations of one's activities; and (3) a focus on behavioral rather than conceptual competence that allows high ranking children to "opt out" of learning. The final two leveling mechanisms are (4) the local pastor's school and (5) the village primary school, which both serve to provide some formal and informal

instruction in aspects of the chief system to village children without recourse to gender or household rank.

The question of differential distribution of competency in the chief system is a particularly complex one that resists easy explanation. It is also a particularly important issue as it clearly relates to the replication of inequality over time. As I note in chapter 3, competency in the chief system can contribute to one's chances to obtain chiefly title. The possibility of a "straightforward" replication (i.e. children of higher ranking households knowing relatively more than children of lower-ranking households) is undercut, however, by the various leveling mechanisms I describe. These leveling mechanisms serve to level the playing field in a way that is highly consonant with the competitive "openness" of the Samoan chief system (Goldman 1970). While genealogical connections are frequently central to title succession claims, the individual's history of service to the descent group and *matai*, and their relative cultural competency are also extremely important. Consequently, individuals who are motivated to serve and learn in this society have considerably greater chance at achieving a title within their descent group.

Contributions of the study

In addition to the general findings of the study reviewed above, I would highlight a number of different contributions of the study.

Culture, cognition, and development

The study's most significant contribution is in furthering our understanding of the interaction and interplay of human cognition, processes of social learning, and a specific social and cultural context over developmental time. I located the proximal influence of Samoan culture on child development in the form of developmental niches, and described the influence of population-wide changes in these niches on children's experiences and opportunities to learn about the chief system (chapter 6). As I will mention in the next section, the work sought to situate processes of learning more directly within their social and cultural context (chapter 7), and by doing so critically engaged consensus views on socialization and cultural learning. Finally, as I noted in chapter 2, the work is unique in that it describes changes in cultural models over time and relates these changes to variations in children's social ecologies, patterns of activity, and the behavioral expectations directed at them. There has been little previous work in cognitive anthropology on children's acquisition and refinement of cultural models over time.

I have also underscored the analytic value of considering developmental processes in thinking about the generation and organization of intracultural variation in cultural competence across the population of children in the village (chapters 9 and 10). Rather than focusing strictly on the typical developmental trajectory and the modal Samoan child, I have considered the role of gender and household rank in shaping children's opportunities to learn about the chief system. Certainly the picture is far more complex, as exogenous and endogenous characteristics, such as the child's temperament, household size, and attachment relationships (see the case of Sina in chapter 9) could all exert some influence on children's relative competence. While I chose two factors that were of

particular significance in the Samoan context, future work will have to consider other variables and mechanisms that could influence the course and direction of children's developing skills and knowledge.

Reconsidering 'scaffolding' and the role of participatory learning

Within the developmental sciences, consensus has crystallized around the notion that enculturation occurs through the child's increasing participation in everyday activities (Bugenthal and Goodnow 1998; Cole 1996; Goodnow, et al. 1995; Miller and Goodnow 1995a; Rogoff 1990; 1998; Rogoff, et al. 1995). The logic of this cultural-historical "participatory learning" perspective is that the child begins to learn from the periphery of the activity; or what Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as "legitimate peripheral participation". This peripheral participation provides the space for children to learn the basic format and structure of the activity. As the novice continues to observe the actions of more experienced participants, imitates their actions, and occasionally receive advice or correction, they will begin to adjust and refine their actions and understandings. As their abilities and understandings grow, the child will begin to participate more directly in the activity itself. According to this position, as their participation grows so does their understanding until their skills and conceptions approximate those of the more expert participants (Goodnow, et al. 1995; Rogoff 1990; 1993; Rogoff, et al. 1995).

From this perspective, there is a postulated large role for social others in the process of learning. More specifically, novices are assisted or "scaffolded" by more experienced individuals in various ways, which enabled them to operate on a level

beyond what they could do alone (Cole 1985; Rogoff 1990; Stone 1993). This aspect of the participatory learning is heavily influenced by the work of Vygotsky and his concept of the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD), which represents the differences between what novices can do alone and what they can do with guidance from more expert persons, as well as research on tutoring and language acquisition conducted by Jerome Bruner, David Wood and colleagues (Bruner 1978; 1982; Wood 1986; Wood, et al. 1976; Wood and Middleton 1975), who actually coined the term “scaffolding”. Typical forms of scaffolding described in this literature included such actions as: segmenting the larger tasks into smaller sub-tasks, marking critical features of the task, motivating the novice, providing verbal directions and reminders that could function as mnemonic devices, and so forth (Wood, et al. 1976). In essence, these actions serve to adjust the task’s difficulty in line with the novice’s capabilities and conception of the task at hand (Wood 1986). The amount of scaffolding provided is reduced over time as the novice’s skills and understandings of the task increase.

The participatory learning paradigm provides a particularly useful theoretical model for understanding many aspects of cultural learning as has been documented by these various authors cited above. Greenfield’s (2004) and Rogoff’s (1990) work on young girls learning to weave in Chiapas and highland Guatemala respectively are classic case studies in this regard. These concepts were of great utility in orienting my own examination of cultural learning in Samoa as well. Yet the study here suggests three important qualifications for the applicability of participatory learning as an overarching model for enculturation and cultural learning.

First, the social relationship of expert and novice as it is usually described in this literature may not sufficiently account for cultural variations. As Goodnow (1990:279) notes: “the standard picture is one of willing teachers on the one hand and eager learners on the other. Where are the parents who do not see their role as one of imparting information and encouraging understanding?” In chapter 7 I note the wide rank differential that exists between Samoan children and their adult caretakers. Samoan adults’ motivation to preserve their relative rank vis-à-vis their offspring leads them to avoid the more active forms of scaffolding that are frequently cited in these studies as common in middle-class Anglo-American populations. Adopting the perspective of a lower-ranking person – a key element of this more active form of scaffolding – is not considered to be culturally appropriate for higher ranking persons as noted earlier by Ochs (1982) and further documented here in chapter 7. This is not to suggest that Samoan parents do not provide any scaffolding. They certainly do act in ways that facilitate children’s learning, particularly with regard to the learning of respectful behavior. But the pattern of scaffolding is influenced by local cultural beliefs, practices and norms. I have suggested that it tends to be more “behaviorally oriented” (i.e. aimed at correcting behaviors rather than underlying conceptual elements) and aimed at extinguishing rather than correcting inappropriate behavior than is usually described in the developmental psychology literature.

Second, the implicit assumption of the participatory learning paradigm is that cultural learning requires considerable support and effort by more expert social others. Certainly one reading of this literature suggests that children’s own contributions to their development are limited. The study here notes the great success Samoan children have in

learning about the chief system despite limitations on the degree to which adults and more expert social others, including the chiefs themselves, are willing to actively engage, instruct and promote children's learning in this domain. It is also important to remind the reader of the sheer complexity of cultural knowledge regarding the chief system. While there remains considerable room for further refinement into early adolescence and beyond, children's initial achievements in this domain are impressive.

Third and finally, participatory learning suggests that children's learning will be largely bound by children's specific set of everyday activities. Indeed, their relative competence and knowledge is often described in terms of their relative level of participation in the activity (i.e. full participation = full competence). While I do not dispute the idea that children's understandings will often be intimately tied to their specific interests and ongoing needs and activities, it does not mean that their learning will be necessarily *limited* to these activities. The study here provides an example of children's successfully learning about a domain of cultural life from which they are at most peripheral observers until they are older than 18 or 19 years of age. Quite clearly, cultural learning can and does occur beyond the narrow frame of children's everyday activities.

In sum, the study described here has sought to contribute to the literature on socialization and cultural learning by engaging the consensus view regarding participatory learning. The findings here do not undercut the larger applicability of the theoretical positions or concepts, but rather highlights a number of ways in which the concepts can be more adequately developed to better situate them within the social and cultural context being examined.

Understanding the worlds and meanings of children

As I discussed in chapter 4, research on the lives of children presents particular methodological problems. Much of the qualitative research conducted on young children research has relied upon external interpretations of processes of socialization and life experiences of children. While such interpretations are a regular part of ethnographic research with adults, with adults they are almost always complemented with other methods that allow for independent verification of those interpretations (Bryman 1998; Jick 1983). Standard social science interviews and questionnaires, however, are often ill-equipped to provide insight into the conceptions, perspectives and life-worlds of young children for a variety of reasons (Fine and Sandstrom 1988; Gaskins, et al. 1992; Mayall 2000; Tammivaara and Enright 1986). Consequently, much of the research on children, particularly those focused on the meanings held by young persons, frequently does not have these safeguards (for recent discussion of mixed-method approaches to the study of childhood, see Weisner 2005). In this study I have adapted methods that would enable such “methodological triangulation” (Denzin 1970; Jick 1983; Olsen 2004).

Of particular utility to the study was the “picture task”, a series of photographs and ink drawings, about which the focal children and I could talk over the course of the interview. The method was adapted from a suggestion by Tammivaara & Enright (1986) to use material objects in interviews with young children to increase their interest and render discussions less abstract, general, and hypothetical in nature. This was certainly my experience with the approach as well as both young and old children found it to be more interesting and easier to complete.

The method's other benefit is that it provides some possibility of gauging children's developing procedural knowledge¹⁰⁷. By definition procedural knowledge remains out of conscious consideration and resists easy verbal articulation, and yet its role in serving as a basis for developing more elaborate conceptual understandings has been articulated by a range of scholars (Bickhard 1987; Karmiloff-Smith 1992; Mounoud 1993; Nelson 1996). By using photographs I was able to ask children about particular postures, seating positions, movements, the use of implements, or patterns of eye gaze, for example. While such a method cannot determine the child's relative ability to enact these behaviors, it can gauge their visual recognition of them. Moreover, it provides some visual representation that the child can point to and describe as "appropriate", "improper", "respectful", and so forth, without needing to articulate some larger, frequently abstract conceptual logic for the behavior. Additionally, as I noted in earlier chapters a small number of photographs included culturally inappropriate elements (e.g. a *tulafale*'s use of a fence post in place of staff) to determine if children would note the discordance or violation of expectation. While imperfect, the method does enable children to demonstrate some competence in procedural knowledge without needing to be able to articulate that knowledge at the level usually required in a more stereotypical social science interview.

A second method that proved useful in examining children's cultural knowledge was cultural consensus analysis. It was applied in two slightly novel ways in chapter 12, which may prove to be of value to other examinations of children's enculturation. First,

¹⁰⁷ The "social play" task (see chapter 4 for a description) offered greater possibility of getting at children's actual competence in enacting procedural knowledge of certain elements of the chief system and respectful behavior. Unfortunately, it proved quite difficult to get children to pretend, for example, to be chiefs and the untitled persons serving them at a *fono* as there was very little interest in such play.

it was used to assess whether or not children's answers on a bounded set of issues were sufficiently shared across the group to be appropriately described as "culture". This could be applied in any number of ways within studies of enculturation to determine the extent to which processes of socialization are successful in disseminating cultural knowledge of a particular domain. And if children's responses exhibit only limited coherence, Caulkins and Hyatt (1999) have pointed to a number of possible situations that might be detected using cultural consensus analysis. These include "weak agreement" domains in which only very low levels of consensus exist, "turbulent domains" in which knowledge is haphazard and disorganized, and "multi-centric domains" in which two or more centers of agreement may be in opposition to one another. Future work could seek to correlate particular outcomes observed for different forms of socialization, for example. A second and related use of cultural consensus was to quantify the extent to which children's models matched those of adults. In chapter 12 I briefly reviewed the discussion regarding the possibility of children's culture being at odds with the culture of adults (see especially Corsaro 1997), and this method offered one way of quantifying the relative level of concordance between the two groups.

The meanings children make of their physical, social, and cultural worlds remains a difficult yet certainly not insurmountable problem for ethnographers who are willing to adapt measures creatively to the circumstances. The study described here used a number of methods and analytic techniques that could prove useful in other research projects.

Schooling and cultural transmission

Much of the work on schooling in the Pacific has focused on the social transformations wrought through the introduction of Western pedagogical institutions and modes of instruction on traditional society and more traditional modes of cultural transmission. For example, Watson-Gegeo (1992) argues that Western schools have been a major agent of social change in the Solomon Islands by institutionalizing a class division between the children of urban elites who succeed in school but have little command of the traditional culture, while the poor quality of rural education means that few if any rural children make it into secondary schools and later positions of economic and political power. Falgout (1992) stresses the epistemological changes that have occurred with the introduction of Western education to Pohnpei, noting the rise of conceptions of knowledge as impersonal, static and objectively given as opposed to local epistemologies that locates knowledge in persons and relationships, and ties them to states of authority, purpose, and physical well-being.

Similar profound changes can surely be detected in an examination of schooling in Samoa (see, for example, Sutter 1980). Yet it is also important to note the ways in which Western schools serve as modes of transmission for more traditional knowledge, values, and epistemologies as well. As Flinn's (1992) research on primary schools in the Pulap Archipelago (Micronesia) shows, these pedagogical institutions can also serve as a new route for the propagation of traditional values and practices. The study described in the last several chapters supports Flinn's point with the somewhat surprising finding that schools are a source of learning about respectful speech and the chief system. I describe this as "surprising" as it runs counter to parental expectations that Western schools are a

route to learn English language and other forms of Western knowledge, which are thought to increase one's chances of securing wage employment in the capital city or overseas. Few parents suggested to me that children could learn traditional culture from these schools, despite the existence of a Samoan language and culture curriculum.

The research reported here did point to a substantial impact of primary school on children's knowledge of the chief system and respectful behavior. More specifically, linear regression analyses of children's test scores suggested that the number of years of schooling could explain 38.7% (adjusted R^2) of the variance in children's respectful vocabulary test scores and 12.1% of the variance in conceptual test scores, an amount well beyond simply increasing years of life. While the research did point to the impact of primary school on children's knowledge, many related questions remain. Certainly the issue as to the difference in success in promoting respectful language as opposed to conceptual knowledge of the chief system is an important one and worthy of further investigation. Additionally, there is the question of the relative impact of the *decontextualized* nature of the cultural performances and the classroom instruction. On the basis of the data here I am unable to disentangle the impact of learning about respectful terms and ritual practice outside of their contexts of use. I note the possibility that instruction or exposure, even if it is decontextualized, might serve to create "islands of competency" on which children may anchor developing knowledge. The alternative possibility is that it may complicate or impede children's understanding by creating representations of idealized and decontextualized practices that will distract from the cultural reality, which can be at variance from the idealized version. Future longitudinal

research focused on the impact of this particular form of instruction could further disentangle this issue.

Limitations of the study

I discuss the limitations of the study in terms of research design and methodology in chapter 5, and in several of the substantive chapters I discuss the limitations of specific findings. I will not revisit these again here, but rather will only touch on some larger points of concern with the study as a whole.

Sample size

It almost goes without saying that a single village study using a relatively small number of focal households and focal children, who were not selected at random, creates the potential for bias. Given the demands involved in building rapport and trust with community members, the households of study and the children themselves it is unlikely that a multi-sited study with a larger sample population could have been conducted without additional funding to support other researchers and / or a larger staff of local research assistants. The quantitative instruments, including the parental belief and practices questionnaire and tests of conceptual knowledge and respectful language, were included to supplement and qualify the qualitative work conducted on a smaller sample of children. Nonetheless, caution should be taken in interpreting the results of the study based on the relatively limited sample size.

Inter-village variation in social and political organization

When discussing my research project with a young *matai* from a village on the north shore of 'Upolu, he urged me to be sure to “remind my readers” that my description of the chief system was only applicable to the village where I had conducted the research. He stressed the degree of variation that existed in terms of village-level social and political organization, and the ethnographic record supports his point. For example, Shore (1982:25,285-6) notes the particular political organization of the village in which he conducted research, in which two orators (rather than high chiefs) were the senior ranking chiefs, and argues that it generated a highly competitive rivalry between the two titleholders. In Silafaga, I would point to the rapid expansion of the role of the village disciplinary committee during the course of the research period (see chapter 8) in which it moved from a fairly minor role of disciplining minor infractions of village protocol to considering serious and politically-charged village conflicts that would surely have been a matter for the *fono* only months earlier.

Of course, village-level variations in political organization only matter in thinking about children's conceptions of them to the degree that we can locate an impact of such variations. Yet as I note in chapter 10 when asked about the specific responsibilities and activities of *matai* in the village, older children tended to point to disciplining violations of village norms. One could see in such a response an issue that is easier and more interesting for a 10 year old to consider than land tenure, or explain it in terms of children's developing abilities in moral reasoning. I would argue, however, that the children of Silafaga tended to present such an example given the recent, prominent changes in everyday practice that the rise of the disciplinary committee occasioned. Any

activity that removes all village males from the household for a span of time each day and several hours each Sunday will draw the notice of children in the household. Certainly the indirect effect of heightening village gossip and discussion with regard to minor violations of village protocol could also draw children's attention and consideration. My larger point is that village-level variations do likely exert some impact on the relative shape that children's exposure and learning take. Consequently there are limitations to the extent to which research conducted in a single village can reflect larger processes of social learning and conceptual development that might occur in other parts of Samoa.

The chief system as an atypical domain of cultural knowledge

One could argue that the study's findings on cultural learning of the chief system cannot be generalized to the learning of other domains of cultural knowledge in Samoa or to cultural learning in a more general sense, because the study focused on an atypical domain of culture. It is "atypical" in that the domain stands at considerable distance from the everyday lives, concerns and interests of children, and represents a fairly arcane body of information of little concrete utility to children's goals and tasks. I would counter that while the domain is admittedly not located directly within children's everyday activities, it is far from trivial. The decisions, actions and works of chiefs and the village council of chiefs can have an immediate and pervasive impact on the lives of villagers. Certainly the daily participation of untitled men in the *'aumaga* and *leoleo* (curfew "police"), women's near constant preparation of fine mats for exchange, and the frequent village *fono* and *fa'alavelave* means that chiefly activity is never far removed from children's notice. To consider chiefly activity truly external to or separate from the

lives of children may be to artificially isolate the child from larger descent group and village processes.

I am far more sympathetic to the idea that different domains of cultural knowledge may have particular characteristics that influence specific manifestations of learning in a given context. Certainly, learning within male initiation ceremonies, Christian Sunday schools, and the household will vary perhaps dramatically by context and I have asserted as much in several places in earlier chapters. Yet it is also erroneous to suggest that there will be no parallels between the different contexts as well. The task of the analyst is to determine the particular constellation of social, cultural and institutional factors involved: cultural values and beliefs; social institutions involved in disseminating knowledge of this particular domain; ethnotheories of learning; social ecology and norms of interaction; and so forth. Given this reality, I would certainly acknowledge the limitations of this study as I feel that it is a limitation of all studies of socialization and cultural learning. To overcome this particular limitation, we need greater theorizing as to the particular ways in which these different factors may interact to give shape to processes of social learning.

Meaningful relations between different systems of hierarchy

As is the case with all societies, Samoa possesses a variety of distinct systems of hierarchy that inform and structure different social institutions, contexts, and practices. Examples that have been mentioned in this dissertation in addition to the chief system include the caretaking hierarchy, and the systems informing the local church and local primary school. These systems are largely incommensurable, and thus individual

systems cannot be reduced either into one another or into some generalized 'master' model of hierarchy. While distinct from one another, these systems of hierarchy may still inform and influence one another. The disciplinary committee I discussed in chapter 8, for example, possessed a hybrid organizational structure derived in part from Western-influenced committees with a president, general secretary, and committee members as well as the village council of chiefs that contributed norms about the types of individuals who ought to hold the individual roles. The disciplinary committee also featured practices such as attendance and roll call voting common to Western models of committee practice as well as the overarching value of consensus decision-making found in the *fono*. Additionally, systems of hierarchy can gain meaning by the way in which they are set into opposition or contrast with other systems. The relationship of pastor and *matai*, for example, is informed to a certain degree by the culturally salient relationship of brother and sister, both of which are described with the term *feagaiga* (covenant).

One potential limitation of the study is its narrow focus on the chief system and exclusion of other system of hierarchy from consideration. Such an approach may have led me to overlook the way other systems of hierarchy inform children's developing understanding of the chief system. Certainly this was the case with the one additional hierarchical system that I did examine in some detail in chapter 7: the caregiving hierarchy. With regard to children, the most likely candidates for other systems relevant to the chief system are the school hierarchy and the different hierarchies within the various church organizations. Future research would be needed to determine if significant different meanings emerge from children's accounts once comparisons between the systems are included in the instruments. My personal impression is that

there would be little additional yield, as such meaningful contrasts between systems are likely emergent properties that occur only after the development of the individual systems of hierarchy themselves. But only further research will be able to tell for certain.

Cultural learning of the chief system in early adulthood

It is clear that knowledge of the chief system continues to develop well into adulthood. Thus, the account provided here of children's models is limited, and can at most be taken as only one portion of a far longer developmental process. To fully understand the nature of adult models and the impact of precursors beginning in early childhood would require a continued examination through adolescence and into adulthood. Arguably this is particularly the case for models of the chief system as there are substantial changes in proximity to chiefly activity that occur in early adulthood as young men become members of the untitled men's association or '*aumaga*. As I describe in chapter 8, this group attends to the chiefs as they meet in the village council and thus have immediate and unparalleled proximity to chiefly activity. This is a marked shift from the situation for young children that are largely kept at some distance from these events. As participation is obligatory for all untitled males not attending secondary school, we can also consider the '*aumaga* as yet another leveling mechanism at work in the village. Of course, it functions as a leveling mechanism only for males, as females are excluded from the '*aumaga* and so do not experience the change in proximity to chiefly activity that young men do. Its impact on the differential distribution of cultural knowledge is likely to be particularly important, and a fuller appreciation of the gender dimensions of cultural competence would certainly require more detailed research on the

impact of this social institution on young adults men and women's developing understandings.

The complex relationship of physiological, linguistic, and conceptual development

While this research project has attempted to emphasize the importance of the social and cultural context in understanding children's social learning, it is important to stress that children's conceptual development cannot be characterized purely in terms of external dynamics and changes. There are a range of physiological and psychological changes occurring over the length of childhood, which develop in interaction with external forces and processes but which cannot be reduced to them. Changes as diverse as the development of locomotion (Adolph, et al. 2003; Campos, et al. 2000), "theory of mind" (Tomasello 1999a; Wellman 1990), and autobiographical memory (Nelson and Fivush 2004), for example, are not purely products of socialization and cultural learning but rather entail the maturation and development of underlying physiological systems as well. One potential limitation to the research findings presented here is the relatively sparse attention paid to the development of these endogenous systems and the potential impact their development might exert on children's conceptual development. It is certainly reasonable to suggest that the maturation of some physiological systems might not only support children's continued conceptual development, but may also promote some aspect of it. Further research, particularly research focused on more limited periods of childhood and on the development of specific biological and psychological systems associated with social learning is necessarily to more adequately attend to the relationship

of biological, psychological, social and cultural elements of children's development and enculturation.

Long a focus of researchers interested in its role in cognitive development and the acquisition of culture (Cole 1996; Nelson 1996; Tomasello 1999a; Vygotsky 1978; 1986; Vygotsky and Luria 1994; Wertsch 1985; 1991), language development is certainly of relevance to children's conceptual development and is a good example of the limitation of which I speak. The acquisition of linguistic abilities represents a particularly complex developmental process as it entails the maturation of cortical systems and the refinement of conceptual structures to support the comprehension and production of speech as well as increasing participation in a specific sociocultural world via language (Nelson 1996; Tomasello 2002; 2005). It is also a process that has a lengthy developmental trajectory with the acquisition and refinement of lexical items and semantic domains, for example, beginning in early childhood and continuing well into early adulthood.

Most importantly for the discussion here, however, is the role that language acquisition could play in furthering children's conceptual development, as language operates not only as a *medium* for the communication of concepts but also as a cognitive *tool* (Clark 1998; Nelson 1996; Wertsch 1991). In essence, acquiring language provides 'clues' as to how one's culture partitions the world as well as referencing important cultural abstractions such as "*matai*" (chief), "*tulafale*" (orator) and "*fa'aaloalo*" (respect). Children's acquisition and use of these words (or "voices", Wertsch 1991) may provide an additional tool or space for conceptual development as a word's initially narrow, highly contextualized, and often incorrect semantic loading are refined, improved, and abstracted over time. While I did consider the development of certain

forms of linguistic competence (e.g. knowledge of respectful vocabulary) and behavioral expectations in this study, no analytic attention was paid to the more general process of language acquisition. Consequently the study may be limited by my neglect of the role that children's increasing competence in using everyday lexical items and patterns of speaking about *matai* and their actions may have influenced and even independently promoted children's developing conceptions of the chief system. While my impression that observational, imitative and participatory learning are predominant modes of social learning in this society stands, I lack the data to be able to properly disambiguate language's relative contribution.

A study able to properly consider the role of language in children's conceptual development would have required a far more lengthy longitudinal study of children's language development so as to be able to detect substantive associations between lexical and conceptual changes. Such a lengthy project was simply not feasible at this time. Moreover, such a study would also have necessitated the intensive analysis of a far smaller sample of children (see, for example: Ochs 1988). Such a research design would have conflicted with the study's interest in considering the impact of household rank and gender on children's learning. In sum, while theoretical treatments of the role of language in conceptual development are common, empirical examinations of the specific contributions of language to children's developing conceptions in a specific domain of cultural knowledge remains an important gap in the literature.

The promise and challenges of mixed-method research

Although there has been a long history of using qualitative research methods to advance theory regarding children's development – consider, for example, Piaget's meticulous studies of his own children and the detailed case studies of Freud and Erikson – child development as a field of study has been largely dominated by quantitative methods. Increasingly, however, there has been growing recognition of the value of a “mixed-method” approach to the study of child development that blends quantitative methods with qualitative and ethnographic methods (Gaskins, et al. 1992; Harkness, et al. 2006; Jessor, et al. 1996; LeVine 2003; Mishler 1996; Weisner 1996b; 2005). The use of mixed methods improves our ability to describe and account for coherent and meaningful patterns in the lived worlds of children, and allows us to overcome the inherent biases and limitations of any single methodology.

While the research design of this project included both quantitative and qualitative methods, the blending of these two was occasionally uneven with relatively greater emphasis being paid to the quantitative in some chapters. Part of this was due to logistics. The local village primary school, for example, was a good source of quantitative data (in the form of test scores of conceptual knowledge of the chief system and respectful vocabulary). But there were difficulties in obtaining more substantial access to the school for the sake of completing ethnographic observations within that context. Consequently, chapter 10's argument regarding the school as a leveling mechanism in the distribution of cultural knowledge is based largely on analysis of children's performance on the tests and some more limited observations and interviews. More substantial ethnographic work needs to be completed to supplement these findings

by exploring the ways by which respectful language and speech are taught, demonstrated, framed and used in the classroom and school more broadly.

The foregrounding of quantitative data was also important on occasion because of the particular arguments being made. Analysis of the differential distribution of cultural knowledge, for example, can only be made with reference to quantitative data that expresses or describes that distribution. Other chapters that examined the actual mechanisms of distribution and the cultural organization of social learning, where attention to patterns of practice and belief were relatively more important, tended to be more substantially ethnographic in nature.

In other instances, however, the unbalanced blend of qualitative and quantitative is more the result of the rhetorical strategies I adopted in crafting the arguments. One always writes texts such as these with a specific audience in mind, and in some instances this audience has been populated with anthropologists and developmental psychologists who privilege quantitative research to the exclusion of much else and who can occasionally criticize (and occasionally dismiss) ethnographic descriptions of children's lives as 'anecdotal'. Certainly I disagree with such a characterization and firmly believe in line with many others (Gaskins, et al. 1992; Jessor, et al. 1996; Lancy 1996; LeVine 1999; Ochs and Schieffelin 1984; Weisner 1996b) that good ethnography can make a substantial contribution to our understanding of child development in varied social and cultural context. Despite this conviction, however, there are instances in this document in which quantitative data was made an enduring focus while the more ethnographic receded into the background. In the next iteration of this work, I will take steps to more properly and consistently blend the ethnographic with the quantitative in all instances.

Appendix 1: Parental Belief and Practices Questionnaire

Note: An English language translation of the questionnaire follows the Samoan language version. Specific details on the questionnaire and its administration can be found in chapter 4.

SAMOAN Language Version

‘O le Aoaina o le Fanau i le Aganu’u Fa’asamoa.

Fa’amolemole e fia maua se tou finagalo i le mataupu ua ta’ua i luga. E le manaomia lou suafa na’o tali i fesili. Fa’afetai tele lava i lou fesoasoani mai.

(1) Lio lau tali: Ali’i Tama’ita’i

(2) E fia ou tausaga?

(3) E toafia lau fanau?

(4) O le a lau ekalesia?

(5) E iai sou suafa matai, po’o ‘o oe ‘o se faletua po’o se tausi? Lio: Ioe
Leai.

(6) E te nofo faatasi ma se matai i lou fale? Lio: Ioe
Leai.

(7) E ao ona aoao atu le aganu’u faasamoa i tamaiti, po’o le aoao tamaiti i le aganuu e latou lava?

Lio le numera o lau tali:

- (1) E ao ona aoao atu le aganu’u fa’asamoa i tamaiti.
- (2) O isi vaega o le aganu’u e tatau ona aoao atu, a’o isi e a’o lava e i latou.
- (3) O le tiute lava o le tamaititi o le aoaina o le aganu’u.
- (4) Ou te le iloa.

(8) E fa'apefea ona aoaoina le fanau i le aganuu faasamoa?

Lio au tali e sa'o 'uma:

- (1) E fa'alogologo ma matamata.
- (2) E fesili pe 'afai e lē malamalama po'o fia iloa.
- (3) 'O le faatonuga a matua ma le aiga.
- (4) 'O le aoaoga i Aoga Aso Sa, le autalavou, ma lotu.
- (5) 'O le aoaoga i Aoga faapāpalagi
- (6) Isi mea (faamolemole faamatala):

(9) E faapefea ona e fa'amatalaina amio lelei a tamaitiiti?

(10) E faapefea ona e fa'amatalaina amio lelei a matua?

(11) O a ni amio e te mana'o e fai e lou atali'i pea matua? Fa'amolemole tusi ni amio aupito taua se tolu:

(12) O a ni amio e te mana'o e fai e lou afafine pea matua? Fa'amolemole tusi ni amio aupito taua se tolu:

(13) O le a le tāua o le malamalama o tagata Samoa i le fa'amatai?

Lio na'o le tasi:

- (1) Tāua lava. (2) Tāua feololo. (3) Tāua la'itiiti
 (4) Le tāua (5) Ou te le iloaina.

(14) O le a le tāua o le iloa atu o le faamatai e tama nai lo teine?

Lio na'o le tasi:

- (1) E sili lava le tāua e iloa tama i lo teine.
 (2) E sili teisi le tāua e iloa tama i lo teine.
 (3) E tusa pau le tāua e iloa tama ma teine.
 (4) E sili teisi le tāua e iloa teine i lo tama.
 (5) E sili lava le tāua e iloa teine i lo tama.
 (6) Ou te le iloa.

Aisea? (Faamolemole, tusi sau tali i inei.)

(15) O le a le tāua le iloa o 'upu fa'aaloalo a tagata Samoa?

Lio na'o le tasi:

- (1) Tāua lava. (2) Tāua feololo. (3) Tāua la'itiiti
 (4) Le tāua (5) Ou te le iloa.

(16) O le a le tāua o le iloa o 'upu faaaloalo e tama nai lo teine?

Lio na'o le tasi:

- (1) E sili lava le tāua e iloa tama i lo teine.
 (2) E sili teisi le tāua e iloa tama i lo teine.
 (3) E tusa pau le tāua e iloa tama ma teine.
 (4) E sili teisi le tāua e iloa teine i lo tama.
 (5) E sili lava le tāua e iloa teine i lo tama.
 (6) Ou te le iloa.

Aisea?

(17) O fea ma e faapefea ona aoao le tamaiti i le faamatai i lona nuu?

(18) O fea ma e faapefea ona aoao le tamaititi i upu faaaloalo i lona nuu?

(19) O le a le auala e te fa'aaogaina e a'oa'i ai lau fanau pe 'afai e sese?

Lio au tali e sa'o 'uma:

- (1) Sasa.
- (2) 'E'e.
- (3) Fa'amatala.
- (4) Otegia.
- (5) Fa'amata'u e sasa.
- (6) Fa'atonu
- (7) Fa'aluma.
- (8) Isi mea - Fa'amatala faamolemole:

(20) Aisea e masani ona e a'oa'i ai lau fanau?

Lio au tali e sa'o 'uma:

- (1) E le faia feau
- (2) Le ususita'i
- (3) Ulavavale
- (4) Amio le pulea
- (5) Faalogogatata
- (6) Gutu oso
- (7) Palauvavale
- (8) Pepelo
- (9) Le faaaloalo i matua ma tagata matutua
- (10) Fufusu ma isi tamaiti
- (11) Isi mea (faamolemole faamatala):
- (12) Ou te le iloa.
- (13) E le masani ona ou a'oa'i lau fanau.

(21) E te fa'alogo i lau fanau pe 'afai e fa'amatalaina atu sana mea sese na fai?

Lio na'o le tasi:

- (1) Ou te le fa'alogo.
- (2) Seasea 'ou fa'alogo.
- (3) Fa'alogo pea.
- (4) Taimi uma.
- (5) Ou te le iloa.

(22) O le a le matua e tatau ona 'amata ai le a'oa'iga o tamaiti e matua? Aisea?

(23) E tatau ona faaviivina po'o tau i se tamaiti pe 'afai e fai se mea lelei?

Lio na'o tasi:

- (1) E le tatau ona faaviivii ma tau e matua le tamaiti.
- (2) Seasea ona faaviivii po'o tau.
- (3) Faaviivii ma tau so'o.
- (4) Taimi uma.
- (5) 'Ou te le iloa.

Aisea?

(24) E fa'apefea ona fa'ali atu e se tamaiti lona faaaloalo i ona matua?

(25) E fa'apefea ona fa'ali atu e se tamaiti lona fa'aaloalo i matai ma faifeau?

(26) O le a le matua e tatau ona fa'ali atu ai e le tamaititi lona faaaloalo?

(27) E tatau ona fa'aaloalo atu teine i lō tama?

Lio na'o le tasi:

- (1) E sili le tāua o le fa'aaloalo o teine.
- (2) E tutusa pau.
- (3) E sili le tāua o le fa'aaloalo o tama.
- (4) 'Ou te le iloa.

Aisea?

(28) E tatau ona sili atu le fa'aaloalo o fanau a matai ma faifeau nai lo fanau a tauelelea?

Lio na'o le tasi:

- (1) Ioe. E tatau ona sili le fa'aaloalo o fanau a matai ma faifeau.
- (2) Leai. E tatau ona sili atu le fa'aaloalo o fanau a tauelelea i lo fanau a matai ma faifeau.
- (3) Leai. E tutusa pau. 'O tamaiti 'uma e tatau ona fa'aali atu le faaaloalo.
- (4) 'Ou te le iloa.

Aisea?

Fa'afetai tele lava i lou fesoasoani mai.

Parental Beliefs and Practices Questionnaire ENGLISH Translation

Note: The following is meant only as a translation and does not provide sufficient space for respondents to provide answers.

We would like to get your answers to the following set of questions. We are very interested in your opinions but your answers will be kept strictly anonymous. Thank you very much for your assistance.

- (1) Circle one: Male Female
- (2) How old are you?
- (3) How many children do you have?
- (4) Which church do you attend?
- (5) Do you a chiefly title or are you married to a chief? Yes No
- (6) Do you live in the same house as a chief? Yes No
- (7) Is it essential that Samoan culture be taught to children or do children learn it on their own?
- Circle the number of your response:
1. It is essential that Samoan culture be taught to children.
 2. Part of the culture is taught and part is learnt by the child.
 3. It is the child's duty to learn the culture.
 4. I don't know
- (8) How do children learn Samoan culture?
- Circle all of the following answers with which you agree:
1. By listening to and watching others
 2. By asking questions when they don't know or don't understand
 3. From Sunday school, the church's youth group and church services
 4. From the Primary school
 5. I don't know
- (9) How would you describe "good behavior" in children?
- (10) How would you describe "good behavior" in parents?
- (11) What do you want your son to be like when he grows up? Please write down the three most important behaviors.

(17) Where and how does a child learn about the chief system in his or her village?

(18) Where and how does a child learn respectful words in his or her village?

(19) How do you admonish your children when they do something wrong?

Circle all of the following that apply:

- (1) Hit
- (2) Yell
- (3) Explain
- (4) Scold
- (5) Threaten to hit
- (6) Instruct
- (7) Shame
- (8) Other (Please specify in the space provided)

(20) Why do you usually have to admonish your children?

Circle all of the following that apply:

- (1) Doesn't complete chores
- (2) Disobedient
- (3) Naughty
- (4) Uncontrolled behavior
- (5) Does not listen
- (6) Talks too much (inappropriate context)
- (7) Swears
- (8) Lies
- (9) Shows disrespect to the elderly
- (10) Fights with other children
- (11) Other (please specify in the space provided)
- (12) I don't know
- (13) I don't usually admonish my children

(21) Do you listen to your children when they explain why they did something wrong?

Circle only one:

- (1) I do not listen.
- (2) Rarely listen.
- (3) Sometime listen
- (4) Every time
- (5) I do not know

(22) At what age should parents begin to admonish children? Why?

(23) Should you praise or reward a child when he or she does something good?

Circle only one:

- (1) Parents should not praise or reward the child
- (2) Sometimes praise or reward
- (3) Frequently praise or reward
- (4) Every time
- (5) I don't know

Why?

(24) How does a child show respect to his or her parents?

(25) How does a child show respect to chiefs and pastors?

(26) At what age should a child begin to show respectful behavior?

(27) Should girls be more respectful than boys?

Circle only one:

- (1) It is more important for girls to be respectful.
- (2) It is exactly the same
- (3) It is more important for boys to be respectful.
- (4) I don't know.

Why?

(28) Should children of chiefs and pastors be more respectful than children of untitled persons?

- (1) Yes. It is more important for children of chiefs and pastors to be respectful.
- (2) No. The children of untitled persons should show more respect than the children of chiefs and pastors.
- (3) No. It is exactly the same. All children should behave respectfully.
- (4) I don't know.

Why?

(5) Pe'a fa'asoa le pua'a, 'o le a le vāega a tulafale?

- (1) 'O le tualā
- (2) 'O le 'ō'ō
- (3) 'O le alagavae ma le alagalima
- (4) 'O le ulu o le pua'a
- (5) Ou te le iloa.

(6) Pe afai e maliu le matai, 'o ai e filifilia le matai fou?

- (1) 'O le aiga potopoto
- (2) 'O le tamaloa aupito matua i le aiga.
- (3) 'O le Mālō o Samoa.
- (4) 'O uso o matai 'ua maliu.
- (5) Ou te le iloa.

(7) E mafai ona avea ma matai faifeau?

- (1) Ioe. E mafai. (2) Leai. E lē mafai. (3) Ou te le iloa.

(8) E mafai ona avea ai ma matai fafine?

- (1) Ioe. E mafai. (2) Leai. E lē mafai. (3) Ou te le iloa.

(9) 'O ai e inu le ipu 'ava muamua pe'a e fai se fonu a le nu'u?

- (1) E le afaina.
- (2) 'O se tulafale.
- (3) 'O le taupou.
- (4) 'O le tamalii
- (5) Ou te le iloa.

(10) 'O le a le upu fa'aaloalo 'ave mo Agafili?

- (1) Lau afioga Agafili
- (2) Lau tofa Agafili
- (3) Lau susuga Agafili
- (4) Lau susuga le faafeagaiga Agafili
- (5) 'O le sa'ofaapito Agafili
- (6) Ou te le iloa.

(11) 'O ai e muamua i le fa'asologa o matai nei i Silifaga?

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)
- (5)
- (6) Ou te le iloa

(12) Lio le igoa o le aumaga o Silifaga?

- | | |
|-----|--------------------|
| (1) | (4) |
| (2) | (5) Ou te le iloa. |
| (3) | |

(13) [Question regarding a key reference in the village ceremonial address (*fa'alupega*)]

- (1)
 (2)
 (3)
 (4)
 (5) Ou te le iloa.

(14) 'O ai el agai a [title name of village high chief]?

- (1)
 (2)
 (3)
 (4)
 (5) Ou te le iloa.

'O le a le uiga o le upu faaaloalo? Lio le tali sa'o.

(1) 'O MAOTA

- (a) 'O tagata (e) 'O fale (i) 'O ma'umauga (o) 'O toalua (u) Ou te le iloa.

(2) E TAUMAFa

- (a) E ola (e) E 'ai (i) E moe (o) E tapena (u) Ou te le iloa.

(3) 'O MANU PAPALAGI

- (a) 'O pua'a (e) 'O maile (i) 'O moa (o) 'O povi (u) Ou te le iloa.

(4) 'O TAUSI

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| (a) 'O toalua a tulafale | (e) 'O tuafafine | (i) 'O alii |
| (o) 'O atalii | (u) Ou te le iloa. | |

(5) 'O FOFOGA

- (a) 'O vae (e) 'O mata (i) 'O lima (o) 'O manava (u) Ou te le iloa.

(16) 'O MATUA O FAIVA

- (a) 'O faiaoga. (e) 'O kāmuta. (i) 'O faifa'ato'aga
 (o) 'O 'aveta'avale (u) Ou te le iloa.

(17) E MAIMOA

- (a) E usita'i. (e) E moe. (i) E matamata. (o) E faamāsima (u) Ou te le
 iloa.

(18) E FA'AFUGA LE AO

- (a) E faafou le pā. (e) E fai le mea'ai (i) E 'oti lou ulu
 (o) E talatala le upega (u) Ou te le iloa.

(19) 'O FETALAIGA

- (a) 'O falesā (e) 'O talanoaga (i) 'O tulafale
 (o) 'O ulumatua (u) Ou te le iloa.

(20) 'UA TO'ATAMA'I

- (a) 'Ua fa'anoanoa (e) 'Ua ita (i) 'Ua mimita
 (o) 'Ua lotoleaga. (u) Ou te le iloa.

ENGLISH Language Translation

How old are you?

Circle one: Boy or Girl?

Do you live together with a chief? Circle one: Yes No

PART I: Test of Conceptual Knowledge of the Chief System

Please circle the number of the correct answer:

(1) Why is the chief the authority within his or her descent group?

- (1) Because he is the oldest person in the descent group.
- (2) Because he has obtained a chiefly title from his/her descent group.
- (3) Because the chief is the first born male in his descent group.
- (4) Because he/she is the most intelligent person in the descent group.
- (5) Because he/she had served the descent group.
- (6) I don't know.

(2) What are the two kinds of chiefs?

- (1) Orator and orator (synonym)
- (2) High chief and high chief (synonym)
- (3) High chief and orator
- (4) Chief and pastor
- (5) I don't know

(3) What are the orator's symbols of office?

- (1) Cup and kava bowl
- (2) Tattoo and flower necklace
- (3) Fly whisk and staff
- (4) Flower necklace and staff
- (5) I don't know

(4) Who sits in the ends (*tala*) of the meeting house during a village council of chiefs?

- (1) Untitled person
- (2) Ceremonial princesses (*taupou*)
- (3) High chiefs
- (4) Orators
- (5) I don't know

(5) When a pig is ceremonially distributed, what portion goes to the orator?

- (1) The loin
- (2) The shoulder
- (3) The foreleg and hind leg
- (4) The head
- (5) I don't know

(6) When a chief dies, who selects his or her successor?

- (1) The entire descent group (*'O le aiga potopoto*)
- (2) The oldest male in the descent group
- (3) The Samoan government
- (4) The brothers of the deceased chief
- (5) I don't know

(7) Can a pastor become a chief?

- (1) Yes. It is possible.
- (2) No. It is not possible.
- (3) I don't know.

(8) Can a woman become a chief?

- (1) Yes. It is possible.
- (2) No. It is not possible.
- (3) I don't know.

(9) Who drinks the first cup of kava during a village council of chiefs?

- (1) It doesn't matter
- (2) Any orator.
- (3) The ceremonial princess
- (4) The high chief
- (5) I don't know

(10) Which respectful term of address do you use with Agafili?

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)
- (5)
- (6) I don't know

(11) Who is the highest ranking chief in Silafaga?

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)
- (5)
- (6) I don't know

(13) What is the name of Silafaga's untitled men's association?

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)
- (5) I don't know

(13) [Question regarding a key reference in the village ceremonial address (*fa'alupega*)]

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)
- (5) I don't know.

(14) Who is the ceremonial assistant to [title name of village high chief]?

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)
- (5) I don't know.

Part II: Test of Knowledge of Respectful Vocabulary

What is the meaning of the respectful word? Circle the correct answer.

(1) HIGH CHIEF'S HOUSE

- (a) (e) (i) (o) (u) I don't know

(2) TO EAT

(3) COW

(4) WIFE OF ORATOR

(5) FACE

(6) TO WASH ONE'S HANDS

(7) TO KNOW

(8) PASTOR

(9) ABDOMEN / STOMACH

(10) COOKED CHICKEN

(11) PIG

(12) THE OPINION OF AN ORATOR CHIEF

(13) DEATH OF A HIGH CHIEF

(14) KAVA

(15) TO AWAKE

(16) CARPENTER

(17) TO WATCH

(18) TO CUT HAIR

(19) ORATOR

(20) ANGER

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