REPRODUCING SAMOANS IN AUCKLAND “IN DIFFERENT TIMES”: CAN HABITUS HELP?

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...[P]ractices are always liable to incur negative sanctions when the environment with which they are actually confronted is too distant from that to which they are objectively fitted. This is why generation conflicts oppose not age-classes separated by natural properties, but habitus which have been produced by different modes of generation, that is, by conditions of existence which, in imposing different definitions of the impossible, the possible, and the probable, cause one group to experience as natural or reasonable practices or aspirations which another group finds unthinkable or scandalous, and vice versa (Bourdieu 1977 [1972]:78, italics in original).

Macpherson concluded his survey of Samoan ethnicities in New Zealand in the 1980s with the observation: “If within one generation such a variety of forms of Samoanness can be produced, the forms of Samoanness which may emerge within another generation should be immensely more interesting” (1984:124). Eight years on, he further delineated some of the emerging complexities and stressed the role of the individual life course in the construction of ethnic identity (Macpherson 1991). A generation later, we examine the everyday practices of Samoanness in Auckland as they relate to human reproduction: reproduction as understood in human biology texts and reproduction understood as social reproduction. The sex/gender/kinship nexus at the heart of social reproduction (Bourdieu 1990) is our focus. Questions about social reproduction in times of rapid change raise theoretical challenges for anthropology as well as intensely practical dilemmas for communities and individuals as they raise the next generation, deal with grandparents, manage their own lives and confront new health and social issues. While we draw on the work of Bourdieu, we also ask whether his concepts help us when we are dealing with social reproduction in the context of transnational migration.

The research drawn on here was planned as a contribution to understanding the contexts for reproductive decision-making experienced by Samoan men and women living in Auckland, New Zealand at the end of the 20th century (Anae et al. 2000). Its origin was in medical anthropology and public health.
The initial request for the research came from health authorities and some members of Pacific communities in New Zealand, who suggested a study of men’s attitudes to contraception. Their focus on men’s roles in reproduction was most welcome. They were concerned, among other things, about high abortion rates for women who were classified as “Pacific”, high rates of teenage pregnancy, and with general issues of sexual and reproductive health for Pacific men and women. The study broadened this brief from contraception to reproduction in general and included both women and men, but focused on Samoans. In this article we compare the younger generation in our study with their elders and with the substantial ethnographic literature on Samoa and the Samoan diaspora.

In our approach to sex/gender we agree with Rubin (1975), Shore (1981), Nicholson (1994) and Jackson (1997), among others, that sex and gender are best understood as variably intertwined as “sex/gender”, rather than as sex as a biological substrate and gender as a cultural interpretation of that biology. Following Nicholson (1994:90), we approach “biology” as a cultural category that variably shapes different societies’ understandings of male and female. Yanagisako and Collier (1987) have made a parallel argument for gender and kinship. These are not separate domains of life even though it is necessary and convenient for us to name them separately. Problems with “kinship” as a social or cultural domain infested with biological thinking have led some scholars (e.g., Carsten 2000) to substitute the term “relatedness”, despite its tendency to over-inclusiveness. We acknowledge that there are major cultural differences in how the relationship between kinship and biology is constructed in different societies and in the relevance of biology to kinship. With Yanagisako and Delaney (1995:12), we are not denying the physiology of reproduction, but we are questioning whether gender, sexuality and kinship relations are always conceived of as “fundamentally structured by those physiological processes”. This creates a space to examine how social and cultural processes shape the overlapping areas of kinship/sexuality/gender.

After a brief introduction to Auckland Samoan people and the Samoan “Roles and Responsibilities in Reproduction” study, we discuss our theoretical approach to social and cultural reproduction in this context of a formerly migrant community now producing its third generation in Auckland, while maintaining transnational kinship ties. Our approach to social reproduction draws on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1990, 1998, 2001, 2002). We employ his interrelated notions of habitus, field and capital to examine a change from orthodoxy to heterodoxy. From the ethnographic data one can see that the taken-for-granted values and practices of the generation raised in Samoa are no longer the only values and practices available and deployed.
SAMOAN PEOPLE IN AUCKLAND

Samoans in Auckland are part of a growing community whose origins is usually traced to the wave of Pacific Islands migration that occurred after the Second World War when large numbers of Pacific peoples settled in New Zealand, especially in the cities of Auckland and Wellington, attracted by jobs in the growing economy and opportunities for education, health care and new experiences. Many migrants joined the New Zealand labour force as unskilled or semi-skilled workers. Island-gained professional qualifications were frequently not recognised. Like other Pacific peoples in New Zealand, Samoans (the “Western” was dropped in 1999) were subjected to harassment during the various “overstayers” campaigns, most notably in the later 1970s. With the downturn of the New Zealand economy of the mid-1970s and rapid technological change, this section of the working class bore disproportionate costs of restructuring, and from the mid-1980s, were adversely affected by the reduction in the welfare state (Fleras and Spoonley 1999, Loomis 1991, Ongley 1991). Measures of income, employment, home ownership, education and health indicate that Samoans, in common with other Pacific peoples, are disadvantaged in New Zealand. Yet many have also experienced educational success and occupational advancement and have created a small but significant middle class (see Anae 1998).

According to available demographic figures, Samoans comprise one half of the Pacific population in New Zealand, which at the time of the study totalled around 227,000, or six percent of the national population and seven percent of the Auckland population. Thus Samoans are a numerically significant part of Auckland’s and New Zealand’s ethnoscape. Both immigration and natural increase contributed to the Samoan population growth of over five percent (on average) between 1985 and 1991 (Krishnan et al. 1994:30). Indeed, over half of the Samoans resident in New Zealand were also born here, i.e., are New Zealand-born.

In general, the Pacific population is youthful (median age 20.9 years in 2001), compared with the overall New Zealand population (median age 34.8 years), and is growing faster than either the Māori or Pākeha segments (Ministry of Pacific Islands Affairs 1999:5, Statistics New Zealand n.d.). According to the 1996 Census, over 90 percent of Pacific youth in New Zealand are New Zealand-born (Statistics New Zealand 1998, Tukuitonga 1997). Also, intermarriage with non-Pacific and other Pacific groups means that many Pacific people in New Zealand identify with more than one ethnic group (Macpherson 2001:75).

Fleras and Spoonley (1999:210ff.) have discussed the changing balance between Samoa-born and New Zealand-born and its social, cultural, economic and political implications. Indeed, differences in socio-economic
status between island- and New Zealand-born Pacific peoples are beginning to emerge in recent statistics, although the variable “birthplace” is often conflated with “generation”. While it is important to recognise that “birthplace” and “generation” are often conflated—i.e., the younger generation is New Zealand-born and the older not—there was a correspondence between the two in the Samoan study (see below). These differences provide an important context for this study. New Zealand-born Pacific people predominate in the three percent per year of Pacific tertiary graduates (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs 1999:40). The annual income of New Zealand-born Pacific Islands people is on average $1200 higher than the income of people born in the Islands (Statistics New Zealand 2002) and younger Pacific people, 15-25 years, have similar median annual incomes to the national population (Statistics New Zealand 2002:108).

Many immigrants and descendants of Samoan immigrants maintain ties with their nu ‘u ‘home villages’ and with kin who have migrated elsewhere, such as to Australia or the United States. New ties between younger Pacific peoples are also forged through the internet (Franklin 2003). Family sponsored chain migration is common, as are visits in both directions and financial contributions to village affairs, especially by those born in Samoa. Samoan families typically are transnational (Macpherson 1997). Sua‘ali‘i (2001:172-73) argues that in New Zealand ‘āiga ‘family’ is even more important as “a primary organising principle” in the absence of nu ‘u. Churches were, and are, a key cultural institution in New Zealand. To an extent, they stand in for the village (Anae 1998). Around 92 percent of Samoans declared a religious affiliation in 1996. There is an age-related gradient in religious affiliation, with 97 percent of the 45-64 age-group compared with 91 percent of the 25-34 bracket declaring an affiliation (Statistics New Zealand n.d.:4). Of all the Pacific groups in New Zealand, Samoans have the highest reported “mother tongue” language ability, with nearly 70 percent declaring competence in the Samoan language (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs 1999:14). However, this also masks a major difference between New Zealand-born and Samoa-born. Over 80 percent of all Samoan-born people in New Zealand are able to speak Samoan, whereas the ability of New Zealand-born people is much more variable and ranges from about 55 percent to 25 percent depending on age-group (Statistics New Zealand n.d.:3). The focus of this article is to shed light on these generational differences that give rise to the statistics summarised above, and between Samoans in Samoa and those in Auckland. Bourdieu’s (1977:72) concept of habitus as a set of embodied dispositions inculcated especially during childhood appears to be a helpful analytical tool in this context.
The initial Request for Proposals from the Health Research Council of New Zealand asked for a study of Pacific men’s attitudes to contraception. The research group changed this into a study with a single ethnic group, reasoning that on such a sensitive topic researchers would need deep cultural and linguistic knowledge, and further, that even within a single group there would be many dimensions to deal with: gender, age/generation, and where a person was born and raised. Because Samoan researchers were available to conduct the study and because Samoans are the largest Pacific ethnic category in New Zealand, the study was confined to Samoans. Its focus was expanded beyond contraception and attitudes to include “roles and responsibilities in reproduction” in order to provide a more adequate context for analysis. Although men and women were included equally in the study, it highlighted men’s roles and responsibilities as a counter to the prevailing neglect of men in earlier studies of reproduction.2

The study design included focused life story interviews with 80 Samoan adults: 40 with people over 40 (the “older” generation) and 40 with 17-40 year olds (the “younger” generation). Equal numbers of men and women in each age group (i.e., 20) contributed life stories. The participants were selected to give a cross section of the population based on age, suburb of residence, occupation and religious affiliation. The women participants were matched with the men, who were contacted first. Participants were invited to take part through the social networks of the interviewers. The interviewers were matched for gender and age group, as well as by their Samoan self-identification.

In comparing the two age groups of research participants, we were also comparing a generation of Samoan men and women who were almost exclusively born and raised in Samoa (36 out of 40), with a generation in which only one fifth (8 out of 40) were born and raised in Samoa. This is an artefact of migration history and is roughly representative of the community as a whole. Only one percent of New Zealand-born Samoan people were aged between 45 and 64 in 2001 (Statistics New Zealand n.d.). The interviews with older men and women were conducted almost entirely in the Samoan language, with a scatter of English words and phrases, while the ones with younger people were conducted largely in English with occasional Samoan phrases. While 37 of the 40 (92.5 percent) married older people were married to Samoans, of the 24 (60 percent) in the younger age group who were married, only 18 (or 73 percent) were married to Samoans.
Towards the end of the study, five focus groups were held: two with younger men and one each with older men, younger and older women. With a couple of exceptions, focus group participants were new to the research. These groups were convened to get new information and feedback on themes that had been developed from the analysis of the interviews. Finally, approximately 20 key person interviews were conducted to incorporate the perspectives of community workers and professionals, many of whom also contributed personal narratives.

The research project on Samoan responsibilities and roles in reproduction focused on reproductive sexuality, because it was aimed at answering some questions about family planning, contraception and related areas. Everyone who participated identified as heterosexual, although this was not a criterion for inclusion, and there were almost no personal accounts of same-sex sexual experiences. Similarly, no fa‘afafine ‘men acting as women’ (the Samoan third gender) responded to requests to participate. Thus our findings relate only to Samoan adults who identify as heterosexual and are of masculine or feminine gender. This focus on reproductive sexuality largely confines our analysis of habitus to the field of kinship. Clearly the habitus is formed through other fields, such as education, media and the church, on which we have only limited information. A fuller analysis of habitus would include detailed analyses of these fields.

In planning this study, the research team was aware of the irony of conducting through talk a study of an area that is often noted as being “unspeakable” by Samoans in the Samoan language. Even many of the euphemisms that have evolved over the years have, in their turn, become impolite. Mea ‘thing/things’ is one of the few ways of referring to sexual matters. In polite conversation it is impossible to talk directly about sexual relations except in the context of making or forming a family (e.g., fai‘äiga).

As well as being a methodological issue, which led the researchers to seek very careful advice from the elders who were the language and culture advisors, this avoidance is itself a much commented on social fact. Perhaps it is evidence of repression (Freeman 1984), or a means of avoiding surveillance by resisting the incitement to discourse, as Foucault (1990) might suggest. Following Mageo (1998), Tcherkézoff (2001) and Drozdow-St. Christian (2002), we see it as situational and complex in that it relates to fundamental Samoan social and cultural organisation and habitus, as we discuss below.

In the presentation of written and oral material on the study to potential participants, in the interviews and analysis, the researchers had always to be mindful of the context in which they worked and also the contexts that the participants were describing. Through having interviewers who were...
matched with interviewees by gender and age group, the team hoped to produce similar contexts for the interviews. However, because at the request of the participants some interviews were in Samoan and others were in English, the all-important linguistic context differed. Potentially, the younger, English speakers were able to talk politely and seriously about a wider range of issues than their older counterparts. However, rather than this difference being something to control for, it is part of the different contexts in which the two different language groups/generations live their lives. For example, it is possible for young people to talk politely about “dating”, without immediate links to marriage, but for older people, unless meetings between a girl and boy are part of the controlled path to marriage one cannot refer to them politely. As might be expected, more older people politely declined to talk about their own sexual experiences while happily talking about more general topics and their experiences of being parents and grandparents.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL REPRODUCTION

How culture is reproduced, especially in rapidly changing circumstances, is a key question for anthropology and for people everywhere. Yet the concept of culture itself presents problems. Anthropologists have abandoned a bounded, homogenous concept of culture (Lamphere *et al.* 1997), if indeed they ever consistently espoused it (Brightman 1995, cited in Fitzgerald and Park 2003:24 n.4). Lock (2001:488) explained that she found that the concept of culture was a necessary concept for her own research projects, but in other contexts, reference to differing values was more likely to avoid essentialising responses than was reference to culture. However, the Samoan study took place in a political context where a holistic, bounded, culture concept has a lively existence, is often linked with an essentialised, biological understanding of ethnicity, and is strategically invoked for a range of personal and political ends. At the same time, scholars and research participants recognise that “Samoan culture” along with other Pacific cultures is differentiated and differentiating (Macpherson 1999, 2001). Some recent, contested observations suggest that young Pacific people from different island backgrounds may have more in common than a policy focus on “ethnic specific” might suggest (Anae 2001, Fleras and Spoonley 1999), although Anae herself argues that this Pacific rather than specific identification is a phase in the life course rather than a generational change. Others (e.g., Franklin 2003, Lee 2003, Morton 2001) show how the younger generations of the Pacific diaspora are creatively debating and constructing Pacific identities in the spaces created by the Internet.
The relationship of “culture” to “ethnicity” and to “race” is in dynamic flux and becoming increasingly blurred for diasporic Pacific communities (Lee 2003:3-6). To some extent ethnicity has simply become a more acceptable term for the old biologically and geographically understood concept of race. It is possible to see culture participating in this slide also, although in some contexts the culture concept provides more room to accommodate, or at least contest, intra-Samoan difference, such as that based on island or overseas-born. Ethnicity, culture and indeed race are terms used of “Polynesians”, “Pacific Islanders” or “PIs”, as well as in island-group specific ways, e.g., Samoan or Niuean. Constructions of ethnicity and culture can be aspects of positive, volitional identity, but at the same time, they can participate in negative, imposed classifications in the context of a multicultural and multiethnic society. As Lee (2003:5) points out for the Tongan diaspora, some of the positive aspects are acts of resistance to this imposed set of ethnic classifications and cultural stereotyping, where ethnicity is frequently represented in positive cultural terms of song, dance and food.

We conceptualise cultural and social reproduction—in this case the reproduction of inter-related explanatory frameworks, values, relationships, institutions, bodies, practices and persons over time and space that are recognised as Samoan—as a result of work and engagement with the changing material circumstances of life. Bourdieu’s (1977:72) theory of habitus, with its emphasis on the formation of habitus in the family in the earlier years of life (Bourdieu 1990:54), seems particularly relevant to the Samoan case. Bourdieu’s intention was for habitus to be understood as a generative, not a determining, set of dispositions and the basis for improvisation, although this has been a point of contention. Habitus itself is open to change throughout life through exposure to the institutions of the wider society, such as schools, occupations, organised religion and popular culture, and through disjunctures in the life course. Habitus is embodied: the structures of society are incorporated and turned into “a durable manner of standing, speaking and thereby of feeling and thinking” (Bourdieu 1977:94, italics in original), and individuals’ actions, based on their habitus, contribute to the maintenance of these structures. Habitus is a quality of groups, as well as individuals, and provides the framework for making distinctions of morality, propriety and taste. Bourdieu (2002) uses the term “style” to indicate the practical unity, despite exceptions and variations, that is characteristic of shared habitus. Principles of fa‘aaloalo ‘respect’ and tautua ‘service’, for example, are part of habitus in a Samoan kinship field. The importance and knowledge of āiga ‘family’ and gafa ‘genealogy’ come to form part of habitus through repeated acts of respect and service.
Moreover, habitus provides a basis for improvisation. In a globalised world where improvisation in the context of a broadened range of possibilities is the everyday experience, the reinforcement of habitus becomes a challenge and requires great effort (Appadurai 1991:200).

Habitus is intimately connected with “field” and “capital”. “Field” is understood as a “field of forces” as well as a “field of struggles” in which agents are engaged. However, actors are not imagined as having a fully conscious strategy of engagement. Where habitus points to subjective dimensions, field calls up the social and material relations in which that subjectivity is enmeshed. Habitus and field need to be considered in relationship to each other. Where habitus encounters fields different from those in which it was constructed, it “acts as a structuring structure able to selectively perceive and transform the objective structure” while it itself is transformed (Bourdieu 2002:31). The concept of field can be helpful in examining the kinds of change experienced in the migration of Samoan people to New Zealand, where, for example, the fields of family, village and church have been largely, but not entirely, subsumed into family and church only, and where the numbers and varieties of other fields have expanded. People are not confined to a single field and fields themselves are interdependent, linked by what Bourdieu (1998:34) calls a “field of power”. A field of power is not like other fields in that it is a meta-field.

Changes in the relations of force between “capitals” are to be expected over time and place. “Capital” takes several forms: economic, cultural, social and symbolic. Economic capital includes wealth, income and all financial assets. Cultural capital takes three forms. It can be embodied, for example, in a manner of dressing and speaking. It can take an objectified form, for example, in the form of valued cultural goods and knowledge. And it can be institutionalised, for example, in educational qualifications or public recognition, such as an honours list. Social capital comprises resources based on group membership and social networks. When these forms of capital are legitimated within any field they become symbolic capital and are accorded power and value (Skeggs 1997:8). Family honour, for example, dependent on the proper behaviour of “good Samoan girls”, is symbolic capital in the field of family and genealogy. Symbolic capital
is field-specific and is common to all members of a group. In this case the whole family gains the symbolic capital.

Bourdieu maintains that the family is the key field of social reproduction and of the accumulation and transmission of capital between generations. But within the family are forces for unity and disunity.

The forces of fusion, especially the ethical dispositions that incline its members to identify the particular interests of individuals with the collective interests of the family, have to contain the forces of fission, that is, the interests of the various members of the group, who may be more or less inclined to accept the common vision and more or less capable of imposing their “selfish” point of view (Bourdieu 1998:70).

McNay (2000), who critiques and draws on Bourdieu’s work, argues that gender has a particular place in social reproduction. She writes, “it is difficult, if not impossible, to have a socially meaningful existence outside of the norms of gender identity, in a way that is not the case for, say, national or religious identities” (McNay 2000:90). Gendered identities involve deep-rooted investments on the part of individuals and groups and, McNay suggests, historically sedimented practices that severely limit their transformability. Although gender is often overlooked in migration studies, migration is always a gendered experience (Larner 1991). Macpherson (1997:89) argues that young Samoan migrants were selected by the elders based on their propensity to identify their own interests with those of their family. Thus “good girls” were ideal migrants, despite the lower wages that they would command in New Zealand, compared with their “less reliable” brothers. In Bourdieu’s terms, girls were seen to have more reliably durable dispositions, and perhaps were more likely to be positioned in familiar and less conflicted fields than their brothers.

In a situation of post-migration, where Samoan families now established in New Zealand confront on a daily basis powerful contradictory values and practices that stem mainly from the pālagi ‘white’ host society, the taken-for-grantedness and value of Samoan “capitals” come under challenge in this new field of power and the labour of social reproduction comes to be seen as such. The Samoan world is shown to be one world among many possible worlds and not the world. Of course, this process of self-recognition has been going on since the first settlement of the Samoan islands, when they were linked by formal exchange networks to Tonga and Fiji in a sea of islands. Kirch and Green (2001:86ff.) argue that despite these historical interactions “various Polynesian groups consciously maintained distinctive cultural and linguistic identities” (italics in original) over hundreds of years.
But in New Zealand, in the 20th century the processes of challenge were more insistent, and not all the structures and fields of Samoan society were replicated in the new location. In addition, as Macpherson (1997:93) has perceptively argued, the circumstances of Samoan migration contained the seeds of change and innovation. In such a situation, to what extent the “cognitive structures inscribed in bodies” are concordant with “the objective structures of the world to which these cognitive structures are applied” (Bourdieu 1998:55) becomes a very real issue for Samoans as well as anthropologists.

A common criticism of Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is that it is static and cannot account for change, that it is “intrinsically doomed to express continuities and to repetition, suited to social analysis in relatively stable societies and stationary situations…” (Bourdieu 2002:27). Bourdieu addresses the question of the usefulness of his concept of habitus, asking, “could we use this concept to understand and explain situations of rapid change and to account for social transformation and for the tremendous change we observe in contemporary societies…?” (Bourdieu 2002:27). Predictably, his answer is yes, we can (and should!). Taking issue with “English-speaking commentators” (Bourdieu 2002:29), who, from his perspective, are responsible for the notion that his articulation of habitus is static, he lays out a counter-argument. Habitus, that system of embodied dispositions, is “long-lasting … rather than permanent” (Bourdieu 2002:27), generative, rather than determinative: “[t]he habitus is not a fate, not a destiny”. Habitus may be changed by history, that is, by “social experience and education” (Bourdieu 2002:29), by the disjunctures that occur when an individual, or a group of individuals possessing the same habitus, are transposed into a new set of structures or objective conditions. Dispositions may also be changed deliberately “by historical action oriented by intention and consciousness” (Bourdieu 2002:29). Can Bourdieu’s concepts help us understand the social reproduction of Samoans a context of migration and social transformation?

“IN DIFFERENT TIMES”

A woman in her 40s, a migrant herself, used the phrase “different times” when contrasting contemporary Auckland with the Samoa of her parents’ generation, collapsing differences of time and place. Her mother-in-law was critical of the fluid division of labour in her daughter-in-law’s Auckland household where her son was just as likely to hang out the laundry as her daughter-in-law. This participant explained to her mother-in-law that “different times” meant that the generation born in Auckland was doing
things differently. In this section we explore several dimensions of these changes, contrasting published accounts of Samoan practices in the relevant time periods with those elicited in our Auckland study and distinguishing between generations where possible.

**Brothers and Sisters**

The sister-brother relationship is the pivotal one for Samoan society and culture (Ortner 1981:394, Schoeffel 1979:370, Shore 1981:200ff.). It is marked by the *feagaiga* ‘a special covenant’. As a sister, the status of a female is sacred in relation to her brother. The brother is responsible for his sister and is charged to protect and control her, especially to guard her purity. A brother must avoid any reference to his sister’s sexuality. It is not that he is polluted by it. Rather, Schoeffel suggests (1979:297), it is she who might be polluted by him: he must avoid his sister and her personal things, such as her sleeping mat, for fear of supernatural consequences. Any attempt to dishonour her is an insult and an affront to him, and to their ‘āiga. In an ideal world, this control and responsibility is passed to the husband and his family at the sister’s marriage. This is a valued example of *amio* ‘individual impulses’ being transformed into *aga* ‘socially controlled aspects of behaviour’ and is a central element of the kin/sex/gender nexus in Samoa (Shore 1981). Although this cross-gender kinship relationship is about “not-sex”, its culmination, when the virgin sister is transformed into a properly married woman, is about the solemn expression of reproductive sexuality and the reproduction of Samoan persons and families more generally. A girl who approaches marriage as a virgin is testimony to the care of her family and brings honour to all concerned.

This cross-sibling relationship, in which sexuality is proscribed, is a cultural template across many Samoan fields. Power, for example, has both female and male aspects, *mana* and *pule*. *Mana* refers to the sacred (feminine) aspect of power that is exercised through proscription and passivity; *pule* is the secular, active (masculine) aspect of power. These dimensions are repeated in the title relationship between the *aliʻi* ‘high chief’ and the *tūlāfale* ‘orator’. The *aliʻi* title is sacred in relation to the *tūlāfale* title which is secular, just as a sister is sacred in relation to a brother. Thus the maintenance of this relationship is fundamental to Samoan society (Shore 1981).

Drozdow-St. Christian (2002:147) describes for contemporary Samoa the respect and support that the brother-sister relationship entails as well as the tensions that this relationship involves. Brothers and sisters must never appear as sexual persons to each other and young people earnestly informed him about this proscription; thus, their development as sexual beings takes
place in a kinship field where their sexuality is virtually denied. He sees
this tension reflected in the harsh joking and name-calling that takes place
between young brothers and sisters as they are growing up, but which
is never, or almost never, of a sexual nature. These internalised ways of
standing, sitting, moving and talking inculcated while children are young
are a crucial part of the formation of habitus.

In Auckland, the brother-sister relationship appeared more muted
(Sua‘ali‘i 2001). Some of the younger people had heard about the feagaiga
between sisters and brothers in relation to life in Samoa, but they were not
sure it had relevance in Auckland. However, even though young people
might not be overtly familiar with the concept or not realise its influence
in their lives, in many interviews and informal conversations, one could
hear its power, sometimes because it had not been embodied by others. For
example, one young woman said that her brother once expressed surprise
to her that his wife was pregnant, because they had used contraception.
He would have gone on to tell her about the type of contraception, but she
hushed his talk on the subject. In another instance a father spoke about his
son who wanted to go to a school social and wanted his sister to pick him
up. But the father would not let him because it would not be appropriate for
his sister to do that. In several other instances it was clear that parents of the
younger people were structuring space in accordance with this feagaiga.
For example, in one two-storied house, the boys and girls were on separate
floors with their own bathrooms. In other instances, boys had been taught
to sit on the floor if they were chatting to their sisters in their bedrooms,
ever on the bed. Several young people told us that if they were watching
TV and romantic or sexual scenes came on their father would tell them to
“cover their eyes” or “kids down the back” (behind the sofa). While this
injunction was partly due to the content per se, seeing it in the company
of cross-sex siblings or cousins would have made it worse. Similarly,
in a conversation about whether church was a good venue for sexuality
education, it was pointed out that it would be awkward when siblings
or cousins of both sexes were in the congregation. Even if no such kin
were present, one pastor said that he tried to bring the young people in his
congregation up to think of one another as brothers and sisters, a common
tactic. Discussions of sexuality would certainly not be suitable in this context.
It was notable that many of the younger people described how embarrassed
they were during sex education classes in school, but they did not specifically
mention that it was because of siblings or cousins in class.5

Some of the younger people discussed brotherly protection of the sister
and its converse, a brother’s dishonour by a sister’s behaviour. One woman
said that she realised that if a girl became pregnant it would reflect on her
parents, but she had not realised that it would also reflect on her brother until she had observed a particular incident in which a brother took the dishonour on himself. One of the younger men reported that he became very protective of his sisters as a young adult because by then he knew “what guys were like, and they are creeps”. One of the younger women recounted how she left home and “ran wild”. She engaged in sexual activity, she said, to get back at her brother.

Thus, although the younger people could not always discuss the *feagaiga* between brothers and sisters in the way that young people did in Samoa as reported by Drozdow-St. Christian (2002), they embodied it in their actions and were aware of some contraventions, displaying “practical mastery” if not theoretical knowledge (Bourdieu 2002:33). One could surmise then that in Auckland this structuring structure does not hold quite the pivotal place that it did a generation ago in Samoa, or even in contemporary Samoa, but, depending on the individual families, it is more or less embedded in the habitus of younger Samoans in Auckland. By analogy with language, one might suggest that this “passive knowledge” might not be transmitted for many more generations. However, this would be to overly stress the verbal rather than the embodied and spatialised nature of this knowledge, and above all, would be to neglect the role of grandparents and other older people in forming the habitus of children in these transnational families.

*The Work of Husbands and Wives*

In Samoa (see Shore 1981), and for the older members in our study, the household division of labour was strictly gendered. A boy entered the male work group at adolescence and did the hard labour of cultivation and other heavy food production tasks, construction of buildings, and the work of the *umu* ‘in-ground oven’. The women worked around the house and within the village, looked after the children, prepared textiles, sometimes cooked and kept things clean, including clothing. Economic provision was, and is, a key feature of masculinity, whereas, for adult women, motherhood and the raising of children is, and was, key. Yet, in Auckland, and in Apia too, many wives and mothers are in the paid workforce. While not all Auckland husbands helped around the house, the sharing of household and childcare chores was quite common in the younger households and was certainly highly valued by women. However, some chores such as laundry, especially hanging clothes outside where others could see, contravened very deeply held values about masculinity. Perhaps more than some other chores, it brought men into contact with “unmentionable” kinds of dirt and clothing as well as contravening the norms of appropriate work in the household where the status of men as husbands was sacred in relation to that of their wives (Shore 1981).
In Samoa and when the older generation of participants were growing up, both as they related and as ethnographies describe, there was little leeway given to adult male gendered behaviour, and if men did not work hard at proper male tasks they were subject to ridicule and criticism. The emphasis on the husband/father as provider and the avoidance of being labelled or indeed taunted as *fia lelei* or *fa'afafine* is evident in the life stories of both older and younger men in New Zealand. Yet in Samoa and especially in New Zealand in recent times, the formal attention given to the husband-wife relationship, the prime gender relationship of the Euro-Christian colonisers, has grown. Our participants were all Christians and told us that the teaching on marriage in many churches in New Zealand, especially the Pentecostal ones to which the younger people are strongly drawn, stresses that husbands and wives should help each other, even though the man is head of the household. In addition, the economic situation, as well as women’s career ambitions, propel both husband and wife into work or study, so changes have been made in gender roles within the family. Sua’ali‘i (2001) argues that just because there is greater fluidity in gender roles, one cannot assume that the primary kinship/family basis of Samoan understandings and practices of gender have shifted. Yet Bourdieu’s work on the formation of habitus would suggest that the children in a family where most tasks are shared by their parents will grow up with different gendered dispositions than those socialised in families with a strict division of labour. That this is no trivial matter and is seen as worth fighting for was driven home by yet another story about laundry, where the family visiting from Samoa were so disgusted by the husband, their son, doing the washing, that they left and went to stay with more “traditional” relatives.

The younger man quoted next felt that he had had an exceptional father, who, contrary to custom, had helped his wife. He planned to follow in his father’s footsteps. However, he was aware that his father’s behaviour was not the norm, and again, with reference to laundry, he said that he was “not ashamed” to do it.

Little ways of cooking for her, opening the door for her, watching out, doing extra work that men normally don’t do. [I disagree with] the whole perspective that the women do this and the men do this. He [Dad] showed it in little ways, going the extra mile…. [It is] always a challenge for us in the Islands that [a man has] a specific role that he plays, but can he play the other role too by being a father. In that role feeling how the lady does that thing and how she takes the responsibility, whether it is ironing the clothes or washing [them]. I remember where there’re times when, there is 13 of us, and my Dad [is] even doing that to this day. That is one lesson that I have learnt, that I just do it today, I still hang out the clothes for my wife and now I
do it for my in-laws now, they are not Islanders. I am married to a pālagi and I do it for them and I am not ashamed of it, that was a lesson.

**Girls and Sexuality**

Great attention was given to female sexuality in Samoa, as noted above. This attention was negative in that girls’ sexuality was a cultural contradiction. Girls were carefully guarded and their place was in the fale ‘house’ or in the village. Ideally, a teine ‘girl’ would be a virgin when she married and the blood of her defloration (until the early 20th century) or, later, first intercourse, was carefully noted. She became a woman through sexual intercourse; no longer a teine, she was thenceforth a fafine ‘woman’. Yet in her own village she would continue to be referred to as a teine, not as a married woman. Marriages were marked by ceremonial exchanges between the āiga of the newly weds that were completed only when the first child was born. Signs of pregnancy in the new bride were eagerly looked for. Women generally lived in their husband’s villages after marriage, and a major and definite social distinction was made between sisters and wives, girls and women in village life. They formed separate village organisations, although, organisationally, the distinction was eroded from 1930s, when Women’s Committees composed of both daughters/sisters and in-marrying wives were formed (Schoeffel 1979). Thus kinship/sexuality was strongly marked for women and girls. But when it came to the performance of gender, e.g., the code of dress and comportment, girls were allowed more laxity without being harshly ridiculed, as long as their behaviour was not able to be construed as sexual. For example, Shore (1981:209) reports that a girl could tie her lavalava ‘wrap-around kilt’ in the male way, with a tail hanging out, and it would hardly be noticed. She would not be subjected to the kind of teasing that a man who tied his lavalava in a womanly way would be. However, should she roam about without supervision then she would be suspected of sexual misconduct.

The emphasis on “the Samoan good girl” who supports her family members especially by respecting and serving her parents, does not run around, works hard and is a virgin until she marries is also strong in the stories of participants. Women were acutely aware of the value to their families of their virginity when they married. Several explained that if a girl were to place herself outside the protection of her brothers and other family members, for example, by going about unaccompanied, then she more or less had to accept what was coming to her in terms of sexual advances, including unwanted sexual intercourse. She could not say no. A few women who had been in this position described themselves as valea ‘stupid’ for being in the wrong place. Women who had more than one sexual partner
knew that they ran the risk of being talked about. It was not appropriate for girls to show they had sexual desires or for women to have lovers, in strong contrast to expectations for men (see below).

While some women of each generation were surprised when they found out that not all Samoan girls conformed to this ideal and got pregnant while unmarried and even had abortions, many more were very aware of these facts and told innumerable stories of school friends or cousins and sometimes even themselves in these predicaments. But this is not a new discrepancy between ideal and practice. Half of the older women participants were not virgins when they married, but in nearly all instances their first sexual partners were men whom they subsequently married. Among the younger women, half of those who were married had been virgins when married, and several of the unmarried ones were also virgins. What was different was that four of the women who had had sexual partners had had two or more, and that more of the younger women had remained unmarried into their late 20s or older. Thus the experiences presented by the 20 younger women were much more varied than those of the older women, yet the emphasis on the control of female sexuality, and the costs to young women and their families of not conforming has not greatly changed. One young woman, a pastor’s daughter, who became pregnant when not married, for example, had to make a formal public apology to the whole church.

Boys and Sexuality

In contrast with the attention paid to female sexuality in Samoa, scholars report that there was less concern about male sexuality (Shore 1981) and this also describes our older male participants’ experiences. They held a “natural” theory of sexuality. According to this, the development of interest in the opposite sex was a matter of biology—“cells matured”—or chemical reactions—“chemistry between their body cells”. As young men in Samoa, they were not under close surveillance like the girls, although they did hard physical work and were under sometimes harsh parental discipline. Parents and other senior relatives might encourage the boys to refrain from sexual activity, but there was also encouragement from peers and more general tacit expectation that boys would “experiment”. They could roam around in their spare time. During adolescence and later, having sex with lots of women was seen as natural, “the way of a man” (paua o tamåloa), and it was described as something over which men had no control. Having lots of sex was a sign of vitality and masculinity, of avi ‘sexiness’. Indeed, a number of male participants had fathered several children both before and outside of marriage.
Although Samoan men were (and are) circumcised, this did not come in for much ceremonial attention. Instead the occasion of a boy’s tattooing, which roughly coincided with his entry to the men’s work group, was what was especially marked, with comparisons being made between the process of being tattooed and that of childbirth (Tcherkézoff 2001:33). Beginning his tattoo was a young man’s first step towards becoming a title holder; joining the male work group was a step towards the adult role of provider. No big status or organisational distinctions were made in villages between husbands and brothers. Of course, with mainly virilocal residence, fewer men than women were outsiders and the occasional in-marrying man just joined the untitled men’s group. But in comparison to the relative inattention given to male sexuality, there was little leeway in adult male gendered behaviour.

In New Zealand, our interviews show that the behaviour of heterosexual younger men is shaped by avoidance of being thought of as fa‘afafine. By establishing distance from fa‘afafine, as well as by engaging in sexual activities with girls/women, boys demonstrate their male sexuality. Younger men, like their older counterparts, thought about their sexuality in biological terms. However, there was a range of opinions about sexual expression before marriage, with some of the younger men promoting chastity as a desirable state for the non-married. Others, who had visited Samoa, reported that they were disgusted by Samoan men’s sexual activities: with men, women and fa‘afafine. The younger women’s narratives concur with this. For example, one young woman said that Auckland-raised young men were much more likely “to take no for an answer” than Samoa-raised men. It appears, then, that although biology is still the key in Samoan theories of male sexuality, there has been a change in the link between biology and inevitability. Some younger men believe that it is possible for cross-gender friendships and even romantic relationships to occur without sexual intercourse inevitably taking place, and a few described personal friendships and relationships of this nature. This is a major departure from the beliefs of their elders.

From Boys to Men through Working to Provide

In Auckland, as in Samoa a generation ago, it is not sexual intercourse that transforms a boy into an adult man. Rather it is his establishment of a settled relationship and the economic support he provides to his partner and children, and the wider community. In Auckland, this wider support is most likely to his extended family and the church rather than the village (although remittances may be sent back to Samoa for village purposes). Young men may be tattooed by Samoan tattoo specialists in Auckland or
return to Samoa for this purpose. However, this is more a matter of identity claim than life-stage marker.

To a man, all the younger men cited as their primary role being the provider for their family as did their older counterparts. A younger man currently without a partner said:

As a Samoan man, basically, it’s always just to provide, you know. You know you’re the number one, I don’t like saying it any more, but, “breadwinner”. Even if your wife does work, everything falls in your lap. It’s just the way it is with Samoan men.

However, these younger men were more likely to add other dimensions to this role:

Being a provider, being responsible. The Samoan male should be a strong person to take on responsibilities for the health and safety of the family. Should be able to take care of the kids, being the provider for the family needs. Good morals. That’s how I see it.

While economic support was the key, other kinds of support and sharing were also important to their adult role. Several younger men also contrasted their more supportive and sharing role as husband with that of the more traditional Samoan practice of “having the male decide everything”.

Two Kinds of Sex

Although they approach the topic from different points of departure, both Tcherkézoff (2001) and Drozdow-St. Christian (2002) conclude that there are two different though inter-related modes of sexual being in contemporary Samoa. These revolve around the centrality and sacredness of family, the brother-sister versus the husband-wife relationship, the village versus the bush, and Night versus Day. Twenty years earlier, Shore (1981, 1982) had also analysed these dimensions with similar results.7 Behaviour that demonstrates the control of personal impulses in accord with the strictures of fa’a Samoa is fa‘amālamalamaga, ‘in the light or of the Daytime’. Conversely, behaviour which is outside of control is pōuliuli ‘of the dark or of the Night’.

Legitimate sexual intercourse of husband and wife is accorded dignity and silence, Drozdow-St. Christian (2002:147) argues, because speaking of it is troubling. The marital relationship depends “on the control of loto; those behaviours which are the most resistant to social conditioning, of which sex is the most intransigent”. Indeed the social order depends on the triumph
of *aga* in the continuing struggle over *loto* or *amio*, as both Drozdow-St. Christian and Shore (1981) suggest. In contrast, especially for young men, *ta’alo* ‘play’, or casual sexuality is tolerated, even encouraged, and is the subject of jokes. Young men are expected to roam around like animals. Tcherkézoff (2001:39) observes that the words relating to male-female relationships use the same vocabulary used in war, the hunt and team sports, with males as the *mālosi* ‘strong’ side, who are active and conquer, and women as the *vaivai* ‘weak’ side, who are pursued and conquered. This vocabulary was also evident in the stories of the older men in Auckland.

As we have seen, the tolerance of casual sexual activity accorded to young men does not extend to girls. The derogatory term *pa‘umutu* ‘broken’ (referring to the hymen, implying promiscuity) is applied to a young woman who roams around too freely and is suspected of illicit sex (Drozdow-St. Christian 2002:154). She is no longer a *teine* ‘girl’. Conversely, to mistakenly refer to a *teine* as *fafine* ‘woman’ is to deliver a deadly insult. For young men there is no such linguistic distinction, and any epithets used to describe boys’ sexual exploits are likely to be admiring. Tcherkézoff (2001:37) argues that young men may move relatively easily between Day and Night but this is not so for girls whose virginity is of such interest to their families, as through their proper marriages and through the sister-brother relationship, the good name of the family is continued. He explains that it is not the sexual act itself that is proscribed, but the body of the women (“*le corps des femmes*” [Tcherkézoff 2001:48]) who are daughters of the family. As virgin brides they can produce the sacred children, linking them to the founding ancestors, continuing the reproduction of the *‘āiga*, its name and title.

In Bourdieu’s terms, the marriage of a virgin daughter creates crucial symbolic cultural capital for the girl’s family and for the family into which she is being married. This symbolic capital is produced in a field in which there is constant tension within and between kin groups competitively protecting daughters and expecting sons to “roam”, as well as between the expectations of the girls and boys themselves.

In the life stories of our participants, including the younger ones, there were many examples of these ideas and practices which show that Night and Day structure sex in New Zealand in ways similar to the Samoan accounts. Very often, linked Christian images are used—*pōuliuli* ‘darkness/heathen’ and *mālamalama* ‘light/enlightened’. What is notable in our study is the willingness of some of the younger people, compared with their elders, to talk in English about their marital sexual relationships and what these meant to them. In doing so, the serious/sacred aspects as well as the humour and pleasure of socially sanctioned sexual expression were readily apparent.
But we both knew that we weren’t gonna engage in sexual intercourse until you know, we felt that we both believed that that was meant for marriage, that God created it to be a sacred thing for marriage and so that was something that we did not experience until after marriage.... [F]or me, I suppose I took it for granted that “Oh it’ll be alright, you know it’ll be fine. I’ll be okay, it’ll be a good experience for both of us”. But it was actually a really difficult experience for me. I don’t think it’s ever a bad experience for guys in the sense that there’s nothing hard about it for them. But for me, having to be, having been a virgin all my life and having to have sexual intercourse was a major thing.... Praise the Lord for my patient, ever patient husband, my poor darling. He was really good about the whole thing and it meant that we had to continually talk about it because it’s such a big part of marriage. It’s not the foundation of our marriage but it’s, oh for me I believe it’s a big part of any marriage, the sexual intimacy bit and so because it took me a while to be comfortable with the whole idea of it, it meant that we needed to talk openly about it: my fears, our expectations of each other and all that sort of stuff.... It wasn’t until probably a few days into our marriage when on our honeymoon, our first week on our honeymoon that um I was officially broken as a virgin. Yes and I cried, (laughs) I just burst into tears and I guess you hear myths like “Oh you’ll bleed,” and I expected a lot of bleeding but it was only a little bit but when I saw the blood I just burst into tears and I felt this emotional surge come over me. Thinking “this is it” you know, “I’m no longer, you know, a virgin.” It’s something that I’d always held on to, no matter how tempting it was in my relationship. I always knew that I could never give that up until I was married yeah and I’m so grateful, I did, more so, so grateful I had a husband who waited for me.

But a few girls did not manage to achieve this goal.

It was horrible,... yeah, it was horrible (laughs). I was young so I didn’t know but maybe the guy that I was with, like I was 18 you see. My mum won’t listen to this will she? (laughs) And I was 18 and he was older but you know I was on my own so I was just stupid I guess, but you know after I realised what we had done you know I really regret it even from this day cos usually they say it’s special. It’s supposed to be special yeah, as your parents say... but like I’ve seen the guy but I can’t look at him because he knew what he was doing. He was much older than I was young and I didn’t know and I was valea you know, but I didn’t like it. Like sometimes I don’t like thinking about it. So I regret it, I really regret it. [Were you scared?] No, no I wasn’t. I wasn’t scared, no. Because I was on my own. I think my family was in Auckland, if I was in Auckland I don’t think I would have done it but it was because I was down there you know.... If I didn’t go down I’m sure it wouldn’t have happened. I had taken off for a reason that I was angry at my mum so I just had taken off and that time I was going out with this guy yeah, and it was just to get back to my mum.
The young men’s stories show the parallel structuring of Day, in the first quotation, followed by Night in the second quotation from a different person.

Yeah there were a lot of fears.... It was hard because I never really experienced it [sexual intercourse] and being the guy I was so worried about hurting her and I gradually came along and you know there were a lot of fears.... But it was special. It was very special for both of us, we both experienced the same thing and I’m glad I shared it with her and not someone else. It’s been an amazing journey, through experiencing sex, and when I became a Christian I was educated Christian-wise that sex was a gift from God and that you treated it in a special way, and cherish the one you love. And now I have three wonderful kids which I hold on to right now.

We were in a gang. I remember us drinking one night and we had a group of girls drinking with us. Basically we decided that we would basically sleep with these girls. Basically we would call it rape. So one of them would grab this or one would grab that. There was a particular girl who I went with so that was the first girl. But I remember, having sex with this girl and all of a sudden I felt awful and basically I then jumped up to go…. It was an awareness that, why was I doing this to this girl? Because it was something that really made me frightened, cos I was always in an environment where I saw it modeled. I would see my brothers trying to force the girls and I would see some friends trying to do that too, and just observing them…. Yeah, I could remember all night feeling so embarrassed, and I never felt that way… feeling a sense of that I actually did something wrong. But afterwards I actually did say sorry and that I shouldn’t really have done that.

The two examples of non-consensual sex related by younger men, including the one above, show girls in the wrong place. However, in both instances there is a suggestion that the males could and should have acted otherwise. The rape is not seen as an inevitable outcome of male nature.

An older man remarked that in New Zealand, where nearly all the young people go about without supervision, most young people’s relationships are really fa’apōuliuli ‘of the darkness, clandestine’. These relationships are outside of the older generation’s fa’a Samoa, although, of course, this is a Samoan classification. This leaves the young people without guidelines in a situation where there is a mismatch between habitus and “different times”. A young man confirmed that this was indeed the case by saying that his parents did not want him to have girlfriends, and if he did, they did not want to know about it. “If they see a girl [with their sons] they think we are getting cheeky or something and they sort of slap us around and they wanted us to be shamed in front of the girl”. Although the younger women
were acutely aware of the possibility of pregnancy, and some were sexually active, it was difficult for them to “be prepared” by carrying condoms, or being on the Pill, as this would indicate an intention to have sex, which was not at all compatible with the performance of being “a good Samoan girl”. It was also very difficult for them to require male partners to use condoms. So in initial sexual encounters they tended to “hope for the best”, though the “morning after” pill was an important recourse for some. Some of them described circumstances in which sexual experiences were not fully consensual, but because they were alone and without family protection, they were unable to prevent intercourse taking place, much less ensure that condoms were used.

In contrast, some of the younger parents, especially those raised in New Zealand, encouraged their children to be open with them about their romantic attachments, rather than “running round in the dark”. In the young men’s focus group and in several interviews, the ages of 20 to 25 were noted as a time when a young person might be able to introduce a possible marriage partner to the family without being cheeky. At that time a young man could go and say “Hi” to his girlfriend’s parents. Before that they are “still on the road”. It is something of a delicate judgement for the young people to know when is the right time to tell their parents about a relationship or introduce their partner.

Just as ideas about the inevitability of men’s premarital sex were not held by the younger people, younger women did not subscribe to the “he can’t help it” view of marital infidelity. More of the younger men, too, held that settling down included not only economic provision but an idea of sexual fidelity. The older women were aware that some husbands had extra-marital affairs. While most advised tolerance and forgiveness because this behaviour was men’s nature and it was the wife’s role to ‘onosa’i ‘be patient’, others were less “understanding”. Nevertheless, most of the older women also included sexual fidelity as one of the characteristics of a good husband. Neither men nor women mentioned women’s sexual fidelity: it was simply assumed. Even within marriage, some women felt it was not seemly for women to be too overt about sexual enjoyment. However, women were not expected to ever refuse their husband’s sexual advances. Compared with their older counterparts, younger women in Auckland showed a decreased tolerance for men’s extra-marital sexual exploits, along with a preference and admiration for men who were supportive of their wives and helped around the house, as well as contributed to the household income.

Understandings of some aspects of male sexuality appear to be being transformed. However, we do not have sufficient evidence from this study to comment about female sexuality. Nonetheless, the structuring tension
and change between Day and Night, **aga** ‘socially controlled aspects of behaviour’ and **amio** ‘individual impulses’ can clearly be observed in its effects on the lives of younger people in Auckland, particularly among the younger men. Through religious and health-based education their relationships with girls and women are being shaped by **pālagi** ideals of responsible relationships and consensual sex, as well as marital fidelity. At the same time, the admiration of **avi** ‘sexiness’ still remains. Younger women also juggle relatively new ideas of cross-gender friendships or romantic relationships formed through school, workplace and leisure activities with family concerns about their good name and strictures on their freedom to go about alone.

**Learning and Teaching about Relationships and Sex**

The parents of men and women in the older age group had not talked to their unmarried children about sex and relationships, nor did the children ask. To ask would be cheeky and presumptuous, as they were not at the stage where such information is appropriate. The Samoan concept of **tautalaititi** is often translated as ‘cheeky’. Its literal translation is to “speak more than one’s age entitles one to” (Milner 1978). It has connotations of impudence and is a term frequently used in relation to children’s behaviour (Mageo 1991). In this regard, the appropriate age for discussion of sex would be after a son or daughter had settled down with a partner and had had children. Rather than learning from their parents, adolescents had picked up information mainly from eavesdropping on the conversations of somewhat older boys or girls, often their same-sex relatives. Boys would never talk with their sisters about such things.

As parents themselves, most of the older men and women had found it difficult or impossible to talk to their children about sexuality. However, they were in favour of the next generation breaking through the silence between parents and children on these topics. In this context a few parents noted their specific concern about protecting their children from AIDS, as well more general issues, such as wishing to teach their children about responsibility in relationships.

With few exceptions, the younger people had not learned about sexuality from their parents. Many recalled basic sex education at school but had not been exposed to discussions of relationships and responsibilities. They were determined that their children would be better prepared than themselves, even though some doubted their ability to talk with their children about these matters.

Teaching children by teasing, ridicule, verbal reprimand or physical chastisement after the event was the norm for the Samoan parents in our
study. It was how they were brought up. Their experience was identical with that described by Meleisea and Schoeffel (1998). If their comportment as children was not what was expected, if they talked back or if they did not do the work they should be doing, they would be punished. Frequently, no explanation was given. Our study shows that there is change in this intimate area of socialisation that is so crucial to the formation of habitus. Several parents and almost all the younger non-parents who talked with us about their ideas of parenthood either were preparing or intended to prepare their children in advance of becoming adults for some of the trials and tribulations of late adolescence and early adulthood. This included discussing with children topics such as friendships and romantic relationships, sex and sexual relationships.

Among the younger women were some mothers who were trying to ensure that the dark messages about sex that they had picked up were not conveyed to the next generation. For example, the mother quoted next had grown up in the belief that sex was always bad. She wanted her daughter to know that in the right context, that is, in marriage, sex was a beautiful thing that God had made for humans to enjoy. It was a great effort for her to talk with her daughter, but she was relieved that her daughter took it all in her stride and when their conversation had finished said “Oh yeah, thanks very much” and went off to play. The mother explained:

> It’s almost as if I was grown up [thinking] that it [sex] belonged to the devil and I mean I’d like to take away that kind of spookiness behind the taboo kind of thing, um sex. And I wanted her to know that it’s an enjoyable thing and it was intended to be enjoyable.

Many parents felt ill-equipped for the task and clearly had to steel themselves, but their intentions to do things differently were clear. On one occasion, parents seized their chance when a child brought home a consent form from school for a class in sex education. At other times, a family event such as an unplanned pregnancy or hearing of an abortion helped bring the topic into the realm of talk. In other families, simple discussions with children began when they were very young, so broaching the subject was easy as the children grew older. In their discussions of their desire to prepare their children, these younger adults referred quite specifically to the risks of unintended pregnancies and to sexually transmitted infections. They recognised that young people might and do have sexual relations and therefore need to be protected before the event. Although teaching children about sex and relationships through discussion can be justified as part of being a good Samoan parent “in different times”, it signals a marked
change in parent-child relationships, in ideas about training and discipline, in ideas about children’s relative status and being ‘cheeky’, and it is a tacit acknowledgement of the sexuality of girls.

Thinking of children

Like the older people, the younger ones thought of children as God’s blessings who should be accepted. However, more men in this group were inclined to stress that to look after these growing blessings required more economic resources in New Zealand. Consequently, families needed to be spaced and limited in size, so that the children could be looked after properly. Younger parents also talked about spacing the children so parents had time to give to each one and would have some time for each other. A large proportion of both sexes in the younger age groups believed that contraception was a shared responsibility. This contrasted with the older age group where, if contraception was used at all, it was the woman’s responsibility.

The direct care by parents of young children, rather than indirect parental care via slightly older siblings or other young relatives is a change from the way the older generation was brought up. Along with this is a sense of investment in each individual child of time and money and effort so as to give them advantages.

Man… I totally support contraception, eh. For me, when it comes down to planning a family, I feel that contraception is the way to go. Not so we can have sex all the time but basically planning a family. I’ve seen so many Polynesian families where they end up with too many children and not enough to feed them, clothe them and school them and they struggle. And I don’t want the same thing and hopefully one day it’ll change and Polynesians will take interest in contraception and will use it.

And another:

We use contraceptives cos we want to make sure that we can bring these kids up in a way that they are able to learn and move on and experience the good things in life, rather than struggle in poverty, struggle in the things we used to struggle with. I can honestly say that I’ve not experienced that struggle in poverty but my wife has and she’s experienced a great deal of it and shared that with me and I take that in consideration when we bring these kids in the world.

These younger parents were espousing recognisable late modern ideals of both marital and parental relationships. However, into their calculations of time, energy and financial commitments they were also factoring in unstated commitments to church and the wider family.
Carrying on the *fa’a Samoa* ‘Samoan way’, especially a sense of family obligations and values, was an important theme in the context of bringing children properly for both generations. In the discussions of the younger generation, however, there is a real sense that this is a choice even though the values and practices are thoroughly embedded for them.

Definitely I’d like to pass on the Samoan culture to them like the language, just what, where their ancestors came from, where their grandparents came from, just what the *fa’a Samoa*’s all about, yeah. I’d like to show them everything that I’ve been shown and then I guess give them the choice to choose you know, whether they choose to carry it on in their families. Yeah,... (pause) the one thing I like with *fa’a Samoa* is that family network. The support, it’s just always there. Like the many phone calls I get (laughs). Yeah, just that support is always there through thick and thin, oh, that’s what I’ve experienced, through thick and thin. I know some of my other Samoan friends haven’t experienced that but I think through what I’ve learnt in my family that it’s through thick and thin you know, like the saying “blood is thicker than water”, you just stick together yeah. Other values I’d have to pass on to children would be um love, honesty and respect. I guess the same things, it’s funny. I guess it is the same thing that my parents taught me but I guess not, maybe not as strict or well the way that they came across is being strict (laughs).

Another participant contributed:

Okay, the family values that we were brought up with is the whole concept of extended family and *alofa* ‘compassion’ and *fa’aaloaalo* ‘respect’. To respect those that are older than you regardless of whether or not they’re your main caregivers and things like that, and also the whole aspect of sharing what we have with others you know, extended family. When we were always growing up, it’s like you know when they come over from the islands, like we all have to give up our beds or stay up to midnight and have to do a *to‘ona‘i* ‘Sunday banquet’ and all this family thing. Just a lot to do with sacrifice and service, I think those are the two principles like we’ve learnt through this family value thing, yeah. Sacrifice and service.

Sleeping on the floor and going without sleep to entertain visitors are ways in which *fa’a Samoa* values are embodied and become part of the habitus of individuals and the generation of younger people who count themselves Samoan. But so too is planning to space the births of children so that each one will be able to be provided with an education and sufficient parental care in accordance with the current dictums about family responsibility and modern (Christian) parenting, and so that the parents will have time with each other, in accordance with popular ideas about good relationships.
As Sua‘ali‘i (2001:178) has argued, a shift in gender responsibilities, including a greater sharing of household labour and a shared responsibility to provide income between husbands and wives, does not by itself imply that there has been a fundamental change in Samoan understandings of gender identities. She argues that gender is still firmly based in Samoan understandings of reproductive sexuality and in Samoan genealogical social theory, which underlies the ‘āiga. This review certainly supports her position, but it indicates that within that cultural constellation of sex/gender/kinship, changes are taking place. Some of these changes are quite subtle and certainly fulfil Macpherson’s prediction that succeeding generations will find a range of interesting ways of being Samoan.

Parents have a deep interest in the transmission of their Samoan cultural capitals through the reproduction of good Samoan sons and daughters, via the inculcation of the durable set of dispositions that enables their children to follow the fa’a Samoa as they understand it. Appadurai, commenting on habitus in the context of globalisation wrote:

There has been a general change in the global conditions of life-worlds: put simply, where once improvisation was snatched out of the glacial undertow of habitus, habitus now has to be painstakingly reinforced in the face of life-worlds in flux (1991:200).

In Auckland, a more muted version of the brother-sister relationship is being reproduced than is described for contemporary Samoa, yet it is more or less embodied in the younger generation, even if they are unable to articulate it. In contrast, the husband-wife relationship is much more clearly articulated in the life-stories of the participants. However, although husbands and wives share a greater range of household chores and both are likely to bring in household income, the economic provision role of the husband and the maternal role of the wife are still emphasised. Consultation between husband and wife in intimate matters such as family planning and contraception was much more likely in the younger couples, along with a new emphasis on the husband’s sexual fidelity.

At the same time that parents are working on reproducing reliably durable dispositions in their children, they are also trying to prepare them for adulthood in “different times”. They realise that their children need to acquire other cultural capitals, especially Western education, and that they will engage in social and economic foreign fields. Educational success, marked by elaborate graduation rituals, has become a Samoan cultural capital. Yet many parents strenuously resist their children’s embodiment of
some *pālagi* practices, such as questioning adults or “talking back”, which they see as “cheeky”, but which is a valued practice in their children’s educational field (see Mavoa *et al.* 2003 for a Tongan parallel). The Samoan principle of respect suggests that it is the adults who ask the questions or make statements (Meleisea and Schoeffel 1998).

While fundamental cultural capitals, such as the relationship of girls’ virginity at marriage to family honour, are maintained in Auckland, some Samoans acknowledge that girls as well as boys might have romantic and sexual relationships before marriage and concede the impossibility of girls being always under family protection as they pursue their busy lives in the city. Instead, younger parents are inclined towards protecting their children through teaching them about relationships with the opposite sex before they are involved in such relationships. This teaching, tacitly or not, acknowledges the sexuality of both boys and girls and departs from the educational practices in which the parents were raised. Young men’s expression of their sexual impulses continues to be seen as natural, but being “natural” is no longer as closely linked with being “not in one’s control”. As a result, Auckland boys were thought to be more likely “to take no for an answer” than their Samoan-raised contemporaries.

On the younger people’s part, the transmission of culture is imagined as a more conscious process. For example, some talk of picking and choosing among the aspects of Samoan and *pālagi* culture, following *fa’a Samoa* but with “not too much [fa’alavelave]” (see also Macpherson 1997:94), and taking “the best” from *pālagi* culture. Others have a range of cultural heritages to draw because of their parents’ and/or their own intercultural marriages.

In considering the attitudes and experiences of different generations of Samoans in Auckland in relation to matters of sex, reproduction and kinship, we can see both continuity and change. From a Bourdieuian perspective, these changes can be accounted for in terms of differing “modes of generation” (Bourdieu 1977:78). New Zealand-born Samoans have grown up in, and are located in, very different social, political and historical contexts than the Samoan-born older generation, and as such, in Bourdieuian terms, are positioned in, and operate within, different fields. The contradictions and dilemmas that disjunctions between habitus and one’s current environment create can be seen in the conflicts and accommodations between generations of parents and children.

The deepest layers of habitus are laid down during childhood and as such, Bourdieu argues, dispositions inculcated within the family are the most durable and least able to be brought to consciousness and reflexivity. Fundamental aspects of *fa’a Samoa* are firmly sedimented in the New
Zealand-born generation’s habitus, even if they are articulated differently or are unable to be articulated, as in the feagaiga between brother and sister. But other social institutions also form habitus. As the child moves out from the family into new environments, new layers are laid down. Some dispositions are reinforced—the Samoan churches buttresses facets of fa’a Samoa, such as respect, for example. Other dispositions are challenged when new potentialities are suggested, such as a wider range of possibilities for relationships between young people.

In new environments habitus shifts to fit the new set of circumstances. Bourdieu notes that “… practices are always liable to incur negative sanctions when the environment with which they are actually confronted is too distant from that to which they are objectively fitted” (Bourdieu 1977:78). Habitus alters as an outcome of strategies to avoid the negative sanctions that practices no longer well fitted to the new environment attract. Social and cultural capitals that have value in one field may not find value in another.

As Bourdieu (2002:29) explained, habitus may be changed by social experience and the tensions that occur when fields change. He acknowledged that people also intentionally work on their dispositions. It is possible to see both of these processes at work among Samoans in Auckland, changes in habitus wrought by their being positioned differently and in different fields, and changes in habitus more or less consciously fashioned through reflexivity. Samoan attitudes to sex, reproduction and kinship show both strong continuities and considerable transformation, and a Bourdieuan framework is useful precisely because it addresses both continuity and change and assists in keeping both in focus simultaneously. Fa’a Samoa in Auckland encompasses several different, but recognisably Samoan “ways”. Service providers, community leaders and members and anthropologists would do well to recognise and accommodate this increasing richness and diversity.

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NOTES

1. An appendix by Statistics New Zealand in the Report of the Abortion Advisory Committee (1997) for the years 1995-96 showed that while 100 “all New Zealand women” were likely to experience 51 abortions in their childbearing years, 100 “Pacific” women were likely to have 100 abortions. The general abortion and fertility rates for Pacific women in 1996 were 32 and 108 respectively, compared with 17 and 70 for all women. (These rates are measured per 1000 women in the 15-44 age group.) The calculations come with a caution about denominator/numerator compatibility. The age-specific fertility rate in 1996 for Pacific women aged 13-17 years was 17 per 1000, nearly twice the average rate (Ministry of Health 2003), and the age-specific abortion rates for Pacific women aged 13-19, 20-24 and 25-29 years were 27, 59 and 49 respectively, compared with 22, 31 and 22 (rounded) for all women. The Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy (MoH 2003:7) notes that Pacific people in New Zealand experience a high level of bacterial sexually transmitted infections and a higher incidence of multiple infections. However, these are clinic statistics rather than population surveys and thus rely on people coming for testing and treatment. HIV infection recorded between 1996 and 2000 show that only three percent of the new cases were in people of Pacific ethnicity (MoH 2003).

2. This tendency to assume that reproduction equals women is discussed in Anae et al. (2000:1-2). See also Singh (2000) and Park et al. (2002) in a paper based on the Samoan study devoted to men’s perspectives and experiences.

3. This contrasts with the study by Peteru (1997:118) of young Samoan men in Samoa who described same-sex sexual experiences.

4. The importance of this point to the Mead-Freeman debate has been emphasised by many scholars, see, for example, Grant (1995) and Tcherkézoff (2001) for careful discussions of aspects of context and language.

5. An anonymous reviewer pointed out that this is a common strategy that would be effective only with those who understand Samoan culture and language. It may be less effective with those whose brother-sister models are derived from television or observation of their pālagi friends.

6. Great attention has also been given to Samoan sexuality in the academic and popular literature. We do not proposal to canvass the complex issues here, important as they are to anthropology in general and to Pacific anthropology and sex/gender studies in particular. See Schoeffel (1979), Côte (1994), Grant (1995), Shankman (1996) and Tcherkézoff (2001) for key contributions.

7. It should be noted that Drozdow-St. Christian critiques elements of Shore’s theoretical formulation.
8. Intergenerational silence on matters sexual in older age groups of New Zealanders is of course not confined to Samoans, see Smith (1991:90-91).
9. Fa‘alavelave was used by participants to mainly refer to ceremonial occasions which called for contributions of time, money and other resources, e.g., weddings, funerals etc.

REFERENCES


