A Village in my hand

Olou Nuu I Lou Lima

An analysis of the cell phone on Samoan daily lives

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Abstract

Since its arrival, the cell phone has been transforming culture and the ways in which we live, exist and interact with life. With minimal access to telecommunications, since 2006 it has become ubiquitous in Samoa.

Using observation and semi-structured interviews based within two villages in rural Samoa, this thesis has explored the influence of the cell phone upon Samoan daily lives. It investigates how it came to be in Samoa, what perceptions surround the cell phone and how it is seen to have contributed and influenced daily activities, culture and customs of villagers.

Similar to research and literature into mobile telephony on other cultures, affordances provided through the cell phone such as micro coordination and increased connectedness are also being experienced in Samoa, reducing time and space and facilitating activities that required a fair amount of coordination into activities of micro-coordination, also creating greater access to economic opportunities, such as work and the possibility of entrepreneurship. Nonetheless it appears influences such as locality and social status seem to affect the degree of use for Samoans.

The ability to have greater privacy provided by the cell phone in combination with being able to be perpetually in contact with others across time and space predominantly through communicative methods like SMS or texting seem to be challenging traditional expectations surrounding authority especially around familial relationships. What looks to be the difference between similar experiences in other cultures is the speed to which this technological affordance has been integrated within rural Samoa which had no previous telecommunication availability prior to 2006. This combined with the absolute social and customary expectations placed on the values of obedience, respect, love, selfless service and Christianity appears to be accentuating the 'loss of parental control'.

Traditional customs such as gift giving have been adapted by the service provider and transferred into the use and practice surrounding the cell phone into daily

activity and use by Samoans resulting predominately in the transference of money but does also include the gifting of cell phones.

Crossing multiple disciplines this thesis explores a number of topics surrounding the cell phone and highlights the need for further research establishing a primary base from which to build upon.

Acknowledgement

Foremost, in providing me with the ability to undertake this research I must give thanks to Samoa and the many Samoan people I had the opportunity to meet with. My endearment to this South Pacific Island is truly heartfelt and is the reason I felt it necessary to undertake this work. To my Samoan friends I feel gratitude, respect and love.

My Uncle and Aunty who live and work in Samoa provided for me, the contacts, the nurturing and the hospitality needed to make this happen and to them I am indebted with gratitude.

My family and friends both close and extended have been with me through this process. They have seen and experienced the challenges and the triumphs that go with writing such a document. I would not have been able to do it without you.

 I would like to thank my supervisors who have patiently guided me, even at times when I have wandered from the path, traversing many life challenges between my field study and the completion of this work. Your ability to stay with me and to support me has been fantastic. I would also like to give heartfelt thanks to the Sir Edmund Hillary Scholarship fund for supporting me in these past years.

Lastly to my host families in Samoa, I am humbled and grateful and miss you dearly, you remain with me always.

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1.0   Introduction

Paul Levinson's description of the cell phone and its pervasiveness is likened to the cells in the human body, in that it's generative, travels, creates new communities and relationships and may also destroy them (Levinson, P. 2004). Around and used commercially since 1983 the cell phone has now reached global penetration of around 87% or 6 billion people (ITU. 2012) and through technological advances in infrastructure has entered into countries that were (in the not too distant past) experiencing the digital divide.

Figure 1. Map of Samoa. Retrieved from

http://sapphireprincessodyssey.blogspot.co.nz/2011/10/western-and-american-samoa.html.

In 2010 I travelled to Samoa to film projects undertaken by a local agency who work with Samoan villagers to increase income potential (particularly within the rural areas). While undertaking the film work, all communication dictating where I was going and whom we were meeting to film, was conducted through the cell phone. I was lucky enough to have travelled to outer rural areas and to meet with villagers, local *matai* (village & family chiefs) and pastors. I observed the cell phone even in the remotest environment, being used and carried as a natural part of being, much as it was back in New Zealand. Questioning locals I

discovered that the cell phone had been around for only a short number of years. I had in my naivety, expected Samoa, a developing nation, to be a place with very little technology and experiencing the digital divide.[1] I had not considered that there would be cell phones or the infrastructure available to support their use.

Although at the time, my focus was on filming, as a student of media I was naturally drawn to the subject of cell phones, observing, when opportunities arose, the various nuances around the cell phone and its use, including the prominent advertising that supported its presence and the perceived monopoly of service provision. Upon returning to New Zealand, completing the film project and my honours year, my curiosity on the matter of the cell phone and Samoa had not waned and so it has become the subject of this Master's thesis.

The cell phone has been a global phenomenon, transforming telecommunication accessibility to be based on people rather than location.[2] Mobile or cell phone communications use different technology and infrastructures to that of the fixed landline. Cell phone infrastructure is easier and therefore more cost effective to implement, enabling penetration into global areas not previously given telephony access. This jump in technology is called 'leap frogging' and has been appropriated in many parts of the developing world including Samoa, who have previously had little or no telecommunications access.[3] In Chapter three I explore and provide a brief synopsis at the political, business and technological processes undertaken to enable mobile telephony to operate within Samoa. This chapter highlights the expediency behind the decision to update telecommunications within Samoa and the major political and business influences that enabled the transition and resulting speedy uptake by Samoans of the cell phone.

After my initial visit to Samoa I considered the point that technology can leap without progressive steps (like fixed line telephony) and how this could possibly create a more intense cultural impact over a shorter period of time. I also considered the nuances that surround cell phone use and practise and the varying degrees that these may occur depending upon the culture and customs of a society. Chapter four explores the subject of relationships and the perceived meanings and behaviours around the cell phone, with a particular focus on Samoan relationships between adult and youth and youth themselves. This chapter premises

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[1] The digital divide refers to any inequalities around information and communication technologies.
[2] As experienced with fixed line telephony.
[3] 22% of Samoans live in urban Samoa with 78% in rural areas. (Worldbank, 2010).
Telecommunications were only made available in urban areas until 2006.

the influence of customary expectations that surround relationships and how social values and customs can influence the degree of impact to which a change can be felt.

Chapter five presents anecdotes and a review of other data collated during field work which highlights apparent new affordances gained from the cell phone such as micro coordination, entrepreneurship and safety. This chapter also considers how these might differ from or have similar patterns to those which are currently experienced in other countries. Behaviours and culture are obviously deeply intertwined and Chapter six explores what seems to be the practices undertaken and the services provided which appear to be adapted from or are possibly influenced by Samoan culture and practices such as that of gifting or *me'a alofa*.

In summary this thesis is an exploration of the cell phone within Samoan daily lives and in being so is appropriately a qualitative study. The approach and methodology that I have used is summised in Chapter two detailing not only the process that this study entailed but also the various challenges and changes to the data collation possible through my fieldwork because of the social and interpretive nature of qualitative field study itself.

As the conclusion purports, this thesis is preliminary and explores how the cell phone came to be in Samoa, how it is used, what it is used for, and how it is viewed by the Samoans I engaged with. In particular it investigates my participants' perceptions surround the cell phone and how this technology is seen to have contributed to the villagers daily activities, culture and customs. This should not to be taken as an absolute measure of what is happening, rather an indication of areas for other researchers to explore in regard to this topic.

2.0   Approach and Methodology

Researching the significance of cell phones can focus on a variety of aspects. The technical details or engineering of the cell phone and the infrastructure required to maintain serviceability. Research can also enter into the economy, politics and markets surrounding the cell phone industry, the marketing aspects and strategies used to encourage their continuous use and adoption and the social impact of this new media within everyday lives, including social understandings, values, practices and cultures. This thesis looks at the social aspect and influence of the cell phone on Samoan daily lives, particularly within village daily life and culture. As the cell phone has become prevalent in much social change worldwide, its influence into Samoan daily life may share similar changes and may also differ because of Samoan culture and customs.

Therefore this is qualitative research which investigates what, if any, are the changes experienced in daily social practices and how might both the cell phone and the resulting changes be perceived and understood by Samoans.

I try to understand the influence of the cell phone from the perspective of Samoans in their daily life through the qualitative research design of ethnography, seeing the world from the point of view of the participants. Ethnography documents behaviours within cultures using methods (as undertaken in this research) such as observation and interviewing techniques through fieldwork. The goal of fieldwork is to describe the culture and behaviours the observer sees and hears when people are being themselves. In *Thinking like an Anthropologist* (2008). John T Omohundro describes culture as the 'learned, shared understandings among a group of people about how to behave and what everything means'.

Culture creates behaviours and behaviours can create culture. Behaviour is how one acts or conducts oneself and can be experienced collective or individually, by human, entity, organism or machine. Terry Flew when discussing *New Media as Culture Technologies* (2003) provides a very useful framework which directly informed the discussion in the chapters which follow. He breaks culture into three levels; the first level or common sense definition is being Culture as 'the arts' and aethestic excellence, the second level is 'contextual' and is described as 'ways of life' or lived experience of peoples, communities, or

groups. The third level 'communicative' or 'structural' definitions or the underlying systems that pervade the culture.

Mobile telephony is intimately bound into culture through its own sub cultures like youth with their practices and use surrounding the cell phone. Worldwide cell phones and mobile technology have facilitated cultural and social changes, in-turn creating new behaviours and experiences whilst facilitating the decline of some older practices, like reliance on location to be able to telecommunicate. Through the ethnographic method of fieldwork I hoped to gain a better understanding of how the cell phone influenced Samoan daily behaviours and culture.

My fieldwork involved participating in village life, staying with families that I had met on my previous travel to Samoa, and centred on observing and interviewing participants on the subject of the cell phone. Participant observation is a key method of ethnography and leads to greater naturalness through the building of trust, a relaxed presence and familiarity (Omohundro, 2008). This was heightened further because I had met and stayed with these families on my initial visit to Samoa.

Using data collation methods do not just appropriate techniques such as observing and documenting, interviewing and transcribing, they also encompass whether consciously or sub consciously the effect of such cognitive influences such as inferring and intuition, empathy and evaluating which when possible should be documented as they too have influence on the data and there is an importance when both collecting and reviewing the data (Saldana, Leavy; Beretvas, 2011. p41) to try and be conscious of my own cultural frameworks.

Observation as a key method of ethnography and qualitative research enabled me to 'grasp the actually lived reality' (Ten Have, 2004, p. 108) within the village allowing me to see, if any, repeated actions of Samoans around the cell phone to provide a sense of the cell phone's physical presence in the locals' daily life, connecting[4] between many aspects surrounding the cell phone such as the social and spatial practice and use. However, as discussed by Saldana et al in *Fundamentals of Qualitative Research,* observation does present challenges in that subjects can be aware of the researcher observing them and therefore may change behaviour either consciously or subconsciously which affects the naturalness of the data gathered. As I observe, I may (also) only assume what might be going through my research participants'

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[4] Omohundro, J. (2008). *Thinking like an Anthropologist.* P-69

minds. Because of the nature of the cell phone an observer could only have little knowledge on the aspects of use like the nature or content of the conversation or text. To understand these better I interviewed participants.

> Interviews are the most common form of data gathering in qualitative research studies, perhaps because they directly solicit the perspectives of the people we wish to study. Ethnographic studies about a culture assume that long-term fieldwork and participant observation will be conducted to document social action. And if the statement of purpose and research questions relate to humans' relationship with technology, data such as Internet sites, e-mail, text messages, tweets, and other forms of electronic communication are the sources we must turn to and investigate (Saldana et al, 2011).

Twenty-two 'formal' interviews were undertaken during my field research with participants ranging in age from young teenagers through to village elders. These interviews were a mixture of pre-arranged sessions and those instigated on the spot from an initial casual discussion. This allowed interviews to be carried out in a number of spaces including family *fale*, on roadsides, within a church foyer and in or around the village shop. The interviews were semi structured and the questions were designed to begin with basic information such as how and when the cell phone was acquired, what it was used for (and how), the cost of use for them and also the number of phones within the family unit at home. It was intended that the basic structure of the questions would naturally lead to more casual discussion if the participant felt comfortable to do so. During each interview I would take notes which would be related back to the participant, who would sign their consent form as guided by the Human Research Ethics Committee (The form was also written in Samoan). For the younger generation, the interviews were conducted in English, but many of the older participants in the rural villages spoke only Samoan which would be translated by my guides.

My guides, both female, served as key informants to the research by arranging interviews, translating and reflecting on the interview (as they did with me more often than not) and respectfully providing further context of the family and relationships within the village. Nonetheless, having female guides might also have limited access to the thoughts of younger male youth, who I had great difficulty in getting to participate in this study.

One of the greatest challenges in this research was the limited time available to undertake it, which limited my ability to access data collection from groups such as male youth. My time spent in the field due to personal circumstances was approximately one month constrained further by illness. For ethnographic research to be thorough a long-term involvement with individuals or groups is required and therefore this research is better described as exploratory and scoping rather than providing conclusive findings. By not spending a long time in the field I was also unable to fully immerse myself and participate in the Samoan culture and I have taken this into consideration when reflecting upon much of the data collated. Nonetheless, prior to my fieldwork and already knowing that my Samoan time was limited, a basic grounding in Samoan customs and cultural expectations was required before entering into the daily environments. Although as noted, I had previously spent time there, it was more likely that I would have better success in gaining information and accessibility if my awareness in this area was greater. In search of this knowledge I entered into a variety of topics regarding Samoa and Samoans, including social psychology, anthropology, tourism and law. This interdisciplinary approach provided a general and limited understanding (in a very small amount of time) of what drives belief systems, values and daily life for Samoans, these are particularly highlighted in the introduction of the chapter on relationships (Chapter four).

Completed during September 2011 the location of the research was initially intended to be divided between two villages, one rural and one peri-urban. The proposed rural village was Satitoa in the Aleipata region on the South West side of the main island of Upolu. Satitoa was one of the many villages that were devastated by the Tsunami in 2009. With a population of about 610 people (Samoan Bureau of Statistics, 2011) spread from the beach up into the hill, it is a coastal village with the Main South Coast Road cutting through the lower end and providing the only access to and from the area.

Figure 2. Location of Satitoa. Google. Retrieved from
https://maps.google.co.nz/maps?ie=UTF-8&hl=en. July 2012

Two days after arriving in Samoa I was taken to Satitoa later than the agreed date and time. It was soon apparent that the scheduling I had undertaken was to become a loose guide only, as a mixture of 'Island time' and Samoan hospitality had much rule on the directions and subsequent outcomes of this field study.

The presence of the cell phone and its technology is distinctively visible where I came to stay. It is important to detail my environment and the basic day experienced while in the field so that a physical presence and context of the cell phone can be formed. Saldana highlights the reason to document such environments and I feel it relevant to do so not only for the

context but to highlight the significant 'environmental' difference between the modernity of the cell phone technology and the spaces I entered into.

Participant observation focuses primarily on human action, reaction, and interaction yet will also document the objects and artifacts that participants handle and that surround them within a field setting. A brief discussion of material cultural is warranted to insure that the researcher does not overlook an important and revealing component of social life and thus qualitative data (Saldana et al, 2011).

Built and designed using first world technology the cell phone appears in marked contrast to basic village life. Constructed of block, wood and the roof of corrugated iron, the family *fale* where I stayed is set about one kilometre up the hill just off a dirt pot holed road from the main beach. The lawn and gardens surrounding the property are well tended with the *fale* being prominent with smaller *fale* nearby.

Figure 3. Russell, P. 2011. The Lean-to where dishes are done.

In the main *fale* I slept in the front gathering area with the matriarch of the family, the mother to the two elder sons living there and grandmother to the two boys of eight and nine also living there. In total there were four adults and two children who resided within the family grounds, although this fluctuated often. To the back of the main gathering/sleeping area was where we ate and just outside was a lean-to consisting of a basic stainless steel bench and an old cold running tap where the dishes are washed. Separate and to the right of the house is the shower and toilet area, tiled and clean but not always guaranteed to have running water. Electricity powered the one dim light bulb in the main gathering area and a light in the eating area and the toilet.

During my time there, I was left to wander the village and where customarily appropriate was invariably included in the activities the family undertook. The elder son of the family whom I had worked with in the past had been recently married and was spending much of his time between the village of Satitoa and his wife's village of Samusu, a few kilometres away. Once the family in Samusu had heard of my presence and because my host and his wife had a village shop operating there on her family plot, it was insisted that I spend time in Samusu also. This is how it came to pass that my research was divided between two rural villages.

Whilst in Satitoa my fieldwork was predominately observational and it was there I returned to sleep each night. The discussions undertaken were with those locals that I happened across. My day would consist of rising with the family when the rooster crowed before sunrise. Mosquito nets would be taken down, bedding would be gathered off the floor and placed away. The boys would dress for school. Breakfast eaten was generally made up of Cocoa Samoa and bread. I would be offered more food variety than the rest of the family, an event I struggled with daily as it was an honour offered and to turn it down could be considered offensive or disrespectful.[5]

Samoan hospitality is customary and explicitly geared towards the guest and it was obvious that it impacted upon my ability to truly participate in daily life. In his discourse on fieldwork Malinowski[6] purports the necessity of an extended presence and the need to be completely immersed, even to the extent of knowing the local language, so that a full grasp of what is

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[5] Samoan custom dictates exceptional hospitality to a guest as a matter of honour.
[6] Malinowski established an ideal for anthropological fieldwork that has remained one of the subject's most widely applied.

going on can be ascertained. My stay within Samoa was unfortunately short and I believe had I been able to stay longer I would have been treated less like a guest and more able to fully participate in daily life.
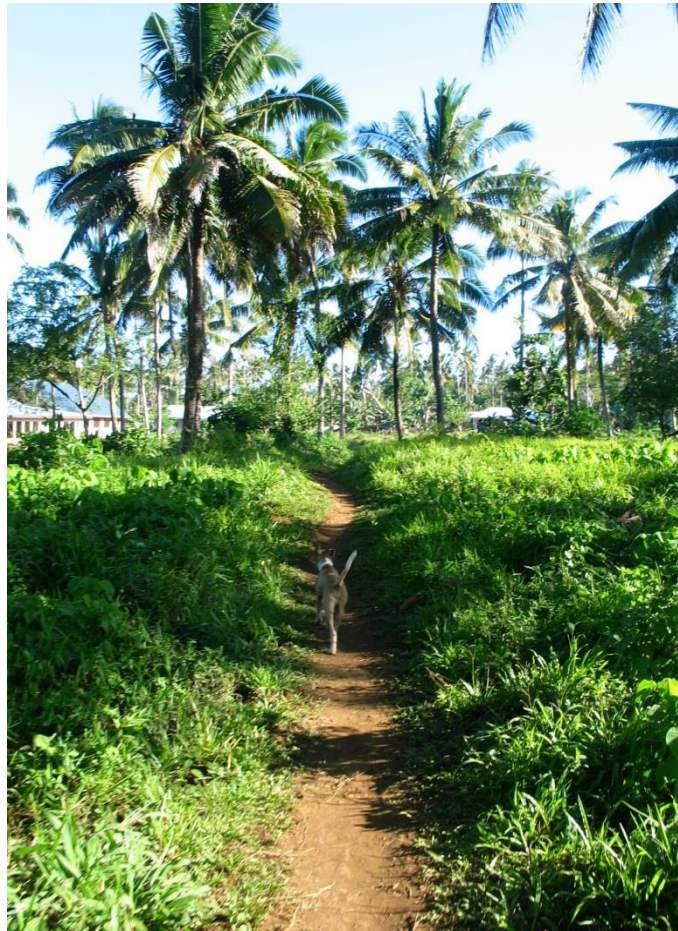
Figure 4. Russell, P. 2011. A path used often in the village

However, after a few days and much discussion from me, I was eventually allowed to participate in some of the chores of cleaning and tending to the care of the property, which included sweeping, washing, and on some mornings the gathering of the fallen leaves using a brush/broom made of sticks and placing the leaves in piles to burn. Upon completion of the morning chores, I would walk with the boys to school around 7.30am and then wander around the village noting the presence and use of cell phones. Around 1pm school would end and after having something to eat I would take the children to the sea for a swim (The number of children grew daily as news spread of this endeavour). Upon our return from the beach and

with the heat of the day upon us, an afternoon sleep was required before the evening preparations began.

Evening preparations would include the feeding of the chickens and pigs and the collection of fuel for the cooking fire. At completion of the evening meal, local teenage girls would appear at the *fale* asking me to assist with their homework. The mother would play the ukulele and the young boys played with their one toy truck each in the dim light offered by the one light bulb in the room. When not playing with the trucks, the boys amused themselves by flicking rubber bands and killing the numerous insects flying about.

Participating in daily life and occurrences led me to experience the reliance of the capital Apia to service in particular the health of villagers as no local medical stations existed within the region. One morning when the elder son awoke with a severely swollen face, I headed with him and his wife into Apia to visit a doctor (there are no doctors available on their side of the island) and this was the only time I left the rural setting for this part of my research.

Although only a few kilometres away, my time in Samusu was different. There I spent a good portion of time in the family run village shop, which enabled my presence and the reason for my visit to become known very quickly. Samusu has a population of about 810 (Samoan Bureau of Statistics. 2011) villagers and is divided by Richardson Road, a main arterial road with village *fale* to either side.

Because of the main road and the village layout, to observe in this natural environment was difficult short of entering into family plots without invitation. This being so, most of the observation undertaken was around the village shop, walking the main arterial road and visiting the local church. Nonetheless, the locals were keen to participate and soon I was being guided by my friend's wife (she would also interpret for me) between local village homes, engaging with villagers, local matai and with the local Pastor who all proved willing to discuss their experiences around the cell phone.

After leaving the rural environment I returned to Apia to undertake research in the peri-urban village of Sinamoga. Upon my return I was to stay for only two days with my family in Vaoloa. However, I became incredibly ill and bedridden. This forestalling my research I contacted my friend in Sinamoga to discover that work had since taken her to the island of Savaii and she would not be returning for over a week. A Samoan neighbour had heard of my

plight and had come to visit. In her late twenties she offered to organise locals within Vaoala to talk with me when I was well.
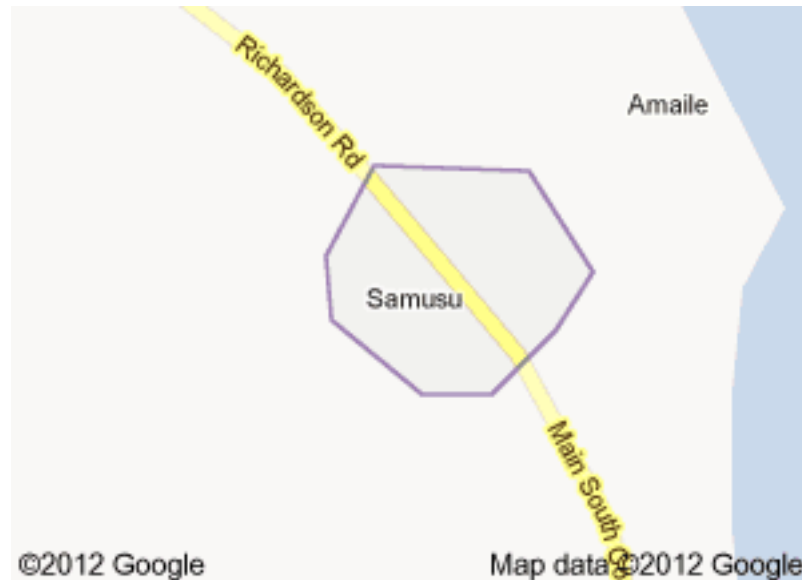
Figure 5. The layout of Samusu. Google.
Retrieved from https://maps.google.co.nz/maps?ie=UTF-8&hl=en , July 2012

Vaoala is an urban village on Mt Vailima about 1km from the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum. Nestled between The Cross Island Road, Avele Road and Tuluinga Road it has a population of 698. (Samoan Bureau of Statistics. 2011). When I was on the mend, my time was spent wandering through the village sitting on the roadside and observing passers-by. When the neighbour and I walked through the village she would make introductions to those we came across and explained what I was doing. Many of the people we met were very keen to talk to with me.

While staying in Vaoala I was invited to a dinner where I had the pleasure of meeting a member from the faculty of Samoan Studies who invited me to talk to students at the National University of Samoa (NUS). This opportunity enabled a discussion around my observations to date and for attendees, both students and faculty members, to add to those experiences. This was particularly beneficial as the nature of the setting was in a lecture room providing an open forum for discussions to be held and heard.[7]

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[7] Because of the public nature of the lecture theatre, private matters were perhaps not entered into.

Figure 6. Russell, P. 2011. A road and a house in Vaoala village.

After the session at the University I spent time in central Apia and while writing notes at a local café in a busy thoroughfare I noticed the high use of the cell phone by passers-by. It was here that I undertook a very basic twenty minute quantative survey discussed further on in Chapter five.

In summary, my time in Samoa was varied and the planned field study soon became a journey of adjustments, providing a wonderful scope from which to analyse and write as reflected in the collation of data and journal entries. Nonetheless there were factors which shaped my fieldwork. Constraints such as the social spaces I entered into, language and time available all having had some impact whether implicitly or explicitly on the data gathered. Factors like being seen as a guest saw that I was treated differently and my hosts and participants adjusted themselves according to their social expected customs and practices.

Whilst I established wonderful and close relationships with many of those I encountered, I undoubtedly did not establish an intimacy that might have been gained should I have had more time and or been Samaon. This would perhaps have provided a far greater collection and depth to the data gathered. Certainly being a *Palagi*[8] female also impeded my research particularly around teenage males which was possibly further imbued by cultural concepts such as respect and shame. Although I was able to view a few recent research findings surrounding the cell phone and developing nations there is little research in this area particularly on the influence of culture and customs on cell phone use & practise. To gain a greater understanding of my observations and how they may assimilate within the study of society, culture and mobile telephony I thus had to refer to literature that predominately focused on those nations that had seen and experienced the technology develop.

Culture and the culture of the mobile phone or cell phones from a social science perspective was identified in one of the first books written on the subject *Perpetual Contact* (2002) collated by editors James Katz and Mark Aakhus. In essays written by a number of key theorists in this field, discussions highlight the pervasiveness of the cell phone and how over many parts of the world (particularly referencing Western culture), it has changed lives both directly and indirectly. Bought to the fore are practices rituals and roles highlighted as new enabled, expanded or enhanced. Appropriately titled this book provides a base of ideas for social research and continues to be highly referenced in this field. For this study it provided a basis to further reflect around concepts such as connectedness and the blurring of time and space, the public and private and effects on youth and or adolescence. Kenneth Gergen an author in the collection of essays talks specifically around the topic of 'absence presence' and how through additional access to technology like cell phones, absence presence is more destructive of social face to face values. While this supposition could be applicable to experiences surrounding the cell phone in Samoa his research does not ascertain the influence of cultural expectations and values that may further impact on how the value of presence may be placed within a social cultural context. This research highlights how they possibly could in Samoan society.

Another contributor to *Perpetual Contact* and a leading thinker in social research surrounding the cell phone is Richard Ling. In *Mobile Connection: The Cell phone's Impact on Society* (2004,) Ling explores in Norway and beyond, key areas that surround the cell phone in

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[8] Palagi is Samoan for European or person of white or fair skin

particular micro-coordination and hyper coordination. Ling also discusses experiences around teenagers and their use and practices of the cell phone. While these two topics are imbedded in other studies, this particular writing is pertinent to this study highlighting cross cultural practices that also surround the cell phone in Samoa. Ling highlights that greater access to transportation provides greater use for co-ordination with the cell phone as too does living within urban geography. He focuses particularly on familial roles and peer groups and does not provide any detailed discussions on how social hierarchy and social status may influence coordination needs. Samoan society operates through several social hierarchies structured across and through kinship, local and national politics and community relationships, all varying in economic income which do seem to utilise the phone to coordinate in varying ways.

Co-ordination is a topic referred to in *Mobile Communication and Society, (Castells et all*. 2006) a handbook and reference guide that culminates much of the study done on the cell phone to the point of its publication through both quantative statistics and qualitative research. Succinct in its delivery it has provided for this research a reference point to begin to understand all areas that pervade this subject. Through articulated chapters it attempts to give guidance on how other cultures are experiencing the cell phone in their daily lives and whilst not specifically referencing cultures similar to Samoa or within the Pacific Islands, it provides trends regarding use and sociality which in turn gives foundation for some thoughts and topical areas for this thesis around social change.

One of the surprising sources for this thesis has been some of the thought patterns reiterated through Valerie Feldmann's *Leveraging Mobile Media: cross-media strategy and innovation policy for mobile media communication (*2005). Aimed at media companies regarding new content and services for cell phone use and development, Feldmann notes evolving patterns in thought and behaviours surrounding the cell phone and offers a persuasive overview. Although not always entirely relevant to this study, the difference between this book and others that I have engaged with is the style in which it is presented due to the market it was intended for. Feldmann is an academic who also works extensively in the telecommunications market. She provides a perspective that is concise, poignant, globally and socially relevant (perhaps because it combines both commercial and academic perspectives). She discusses how the cell phone can change power dynamics through

exclusion and it is this line of thought that I find most relevant to the social customs in this study.

As noted, since 2002 the cell phone has been studied and commented on frequently through academia, particularly in Western and Asian cultures, perhaps because these are countries that have been predominant in its engineering, manufacture and distribution. However, the influence of the cell phone on developing countries although discussed and touched upon in journal articles, had not experienced in-depth research until Horst and Miller undertook a study in Jamaica that formed the basis of the work presented in 2006, *The Cell Phone: An Anthropology of Communication.* Employing ethnographic techniques to gain a more culturally immersed understanding of the cell phone in Jamaican society, Horst and Miller embed stories that surround the cell phone within the story of their research. The book provides a useful grounding in ethnographic writing around the cell phone, but did not (for me) provide clearly stated findings to which I could attribute to the writing of this thesis. Nonetheless it is worthy of note for those studying the cell phone and influence on culture.

Adding to the increased literature on the cell phone in developing nations is *Mobile Phones: The New Talking Drums of Everyday Africa* (2009). This collation of studies uses both ethnographic and historical research to look at the appropriation of the cell phone and its rapid penetration into countries and spaces within African society. The book discusses how the cell phone has reached areas that previously had no telecommunications (through the practice of leapfrogging) which has relevance to experiences in rural Samoa. Secondly it highlights experience of change felt by locals with the introduction of the cell phone, in a context where there was little choice of telecommunication alternatives.

A 2010 volume *Where are You Africa? Church and Society in the Mobile Phone Age* extends the study of the cell phone in Africa and highlights notions of contradiction around terms such as freedom and enslavement, connectedness and disconnectedness as viewed within African society. These terms are affecting in their description and could be experienced through other cultures with quite differing historical contexts. Such emotive dichotomies resonated with my limited time in Samoa.

Research for this thesis has crossed into many different subject areas because there are so many elements that contribute to the cell phone's presence in Samoa. The methodologies used reflect the diversity of the disciplines entered into and the subject matters discussed.

This is one reason I am hesitant to label the research as ethnographic although it does have a large ethnographic element to it. Data has been gathered through fieldwork although time in the field was limited to one month within which I had to immerse myself in Samoa and experience village existence to gain villagers perspective.[9]

The lapsed time between my visit and now, I believe, has provided an opportunity of great reflection. Standing back I have realised that my time spent within Samoa was too short to fully understand the layers of information that could be gathered. Questions I now feel should have been asked and explored did not occur to me at the time, for whatever reason. My interviews now appear to me to be posturing upon simple introductions and I wonder whether this is likely attributed to the cultural differences between me and the locals and the fact that I was a stranger. Certainly the fact that I was always conscious of not appearing disrespectful perhaps averted me from being too intrusive.

As I trawl through my notes and analyse them, look upon the photographs taken and reflect upon the people I met, I view Samoa from both afar and through memory. My intentions for this thesis while possibly not met in depth still have been achieved to some degree. My aim was to gain a better understanding of how cell phones have influenced Samoan daily lives and to begin to highlight the key themes of this influence.

Figure 7. Russell, P. 2011. Phone use in Apia

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[9] Bronislaw Malinowski notes that 'the goal of ethnographic fieldwork is is to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world'. (1984)

Upon reflection I would have changed the approach and methodology to include a wider participation of the population, conducted in a way where participants would remain anonymous so that more details could be gathered on content of texts and more 'secretive' uses of the phone. This would have provided for the more 'shy' participants who could feel threatened by appearing disrespectful (particularly the young men who nearly all avoided discussing the cell phone with me) to come forth and participate.

Finally, the application and writing of the data collected is reflective of where I have come to view this study and how it has through the process taken on a form of its own. In writing this thesis there is a duty to be impartial and reflexive towards my practice and I have hopefully employed the necessary elements to achieve this. Aware of being respectful to my participants I have, where possible, not gone into depth using names, for at times areas of contention, private thoughts and matters have arisen with regard to the cell phone and I am mindful of the participants' continued existence within their daily relationships. To achieve this I have predominately written from an overarching or broad perspective, rather than in depth on a number of topics.

Lastly I have written this thesis in such a way that allows many of the users of the cell phone access to read it. I am humbled by many of my experiences in Samoa and at times elated and saddened by others, I am grateful for being allowed the opportunity to have these. However, for this work to be of worth, it is only done so in being accessible to those it concerns.

3.0   The Business of Mobile Telephony in Samoa

The social changes associated with cell phones in the developed and developing worlds have been significant. To understand the influence of the cell phone in Samoa, it is necessary to understand how this technology became so quickly and thoroughly integrated into the everyday. These changes involved key internal and external actors, and it is their interactions which have set the scene for the myriad of ways in which the cell phone has become embedded within Samoan society. This chapter explores the political, commercial and economic aspects undertaken to establish access for Samoans to the cell phone, based on an interpretive analysis of available documentation. Both to highlight the rapid change and nature of these developments and because of the limited data which is available, this chapter focuses mainly on the past decade (the years 2000 to 2010).

By the year 2000 Samoa had two telephony operators. Samoa Communications Limited who provided landline services,[10] and Telecom Samoa Cellular Limited (TSCL) who provided a limited cell phone service. TSCL was formed in 1997 under a joint venture agreement between Telecom NZ (90% shareholding) and the Samoan government (10% shareholding) (Ministry of Information & Communications Technology, 2012). Under the initial agreement TSCL would be the sole service provider of mobile telephony for ten years and under this agreement had been providing an analog service since late 1997. By 2000 TSCL had only 2500 subscribers located predominately within the coverage area of the capital Apia. Analog services in much of the developed world had been surpassed by GSM[11] technology (in 1998 there were 100 million GSM Users) and TSCL, comparatively slow in the rollout of the technology for Samoa, was instead providing analog equipment no longer used in New Zealand (Telecom NZ Ltd, 2006). As has been noted more generally of the impact of dominant telecommunications companies;

> Apathy in the area of technology can be facilitated by long- term exclusive agreements that bind a government to a specific provider as there is little incentive to adopt new technologies (Favaro, Halewood, and Rossotto, 2008. p220).

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[10] Also known as fixed line telephony
[11] Global System for Mobile Communications, second generation (2G) upwards

Reflecting disappointment with the stasis of TSCL and its offering, political positioning between the Samoan government and global telecommunications players for the provision of current information and communication technology began.
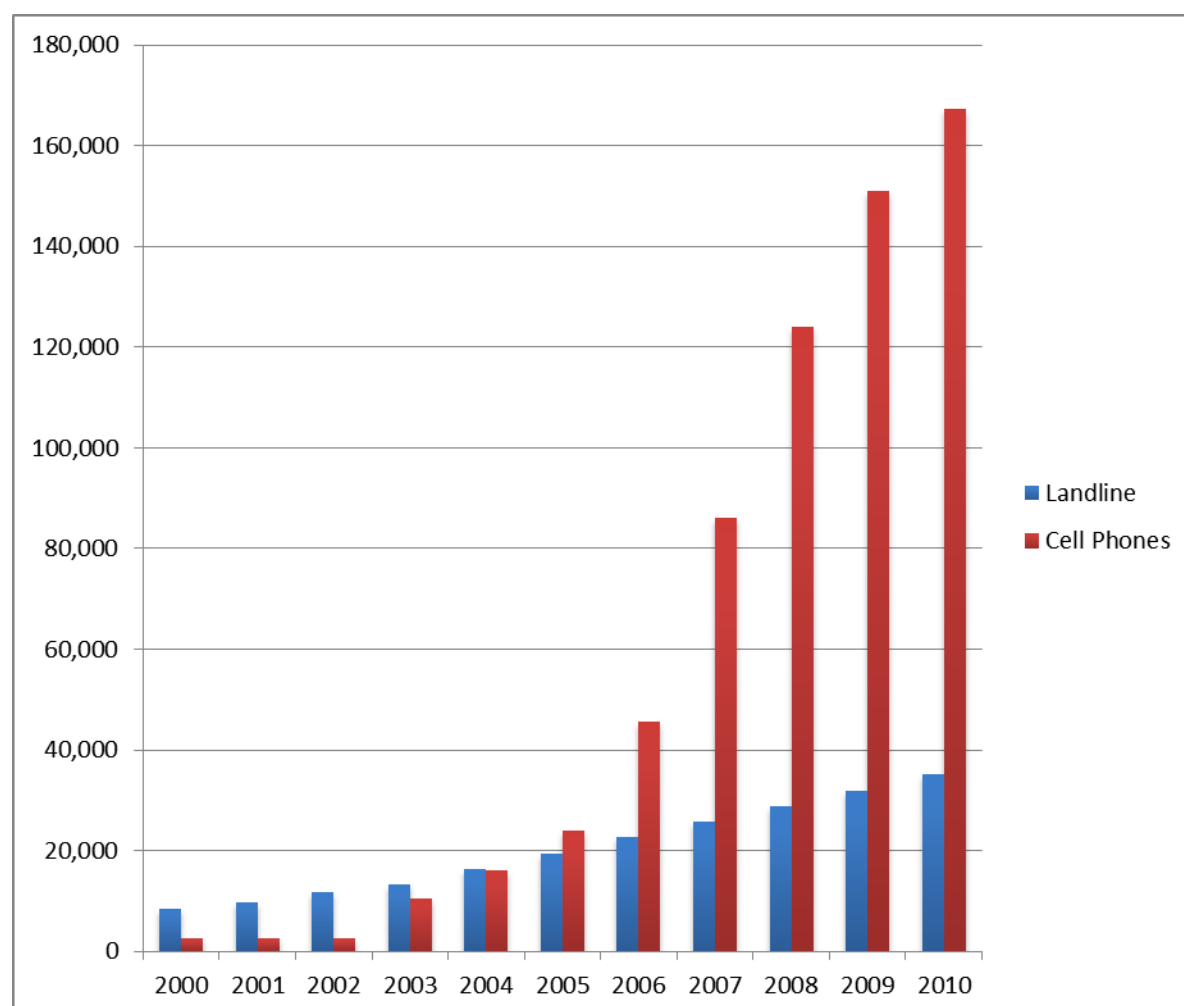
Figure 8. Telephony Service Growth within Samoa 2000-2010. ITU. 2011.

As noted in Figure 8 the significant increase in the number of cell phones begins between 2005 and 2006 while during the same period landlines exhibited little growth. In the discussion which follows we look at how this rapid increase was achieved.

The low growth in landlines is largely due to the cost of implementing and maintaining the required infrastructure, a responsibility of the Samoa Communications Ltd (now SamoaTel). The high cost of implementation in turn equates to high connection costs to the villagers (World Bank, 2010: Macpherson, C & L. 2009). With an average income of $2900 USD ($6364 Tala) or $55 USD per week, (World Bank, 2011) expenditure on telecommunication infrastructure in particular within rural areas is prohibitive. The topography of Samoa with its

mountainous ranges would require extensive investment in labour, materials, time and cost to install landlines throughout rural areas. In comparison, implementing the infrastructure for a cell phone network requires a number of base stations and cell towers, needing only vehicle access and the technical skills to establish them. Hence cell phone networks can be installed, commissioned and producing returns for the service provider within a matter of months, as with the case in Samoa in the year 2006.

Factors such as these underpin and facilitate the provision of mobile communications in many countries, particularly those in the third world, such as India, Africa and Jamaica, which has led to suggestions that this is a 'leapfrog' telecommunications technology (Horst and Miller, 2006). Leapfrogging is where countries can potentially miss a step within the technology development trajectory by gaining from the investment and trials already conducted within industrialised countries. This has been a significant feature in regard to the diffusion of communication technologies globally. Because of the requirements and ease of implementation of cell phone infrastructure this practice of leapfrogging has provided comprehensive telephony access to countries with little or no established telecommunications infrastructure in short periods of time.

Figure 9. Russell P. (2011). Cell Phone Towers on Mt Fimoea near Apia.

Samoa's ability to leapfrog began initially with assistance from the World Bank through the Telecommunications Reform Project in 2002. The project was consistent with the World Bank's telecommunications strategy which called for governments to shift their role from

ownership and operations to policy making and regulation which, it was hoped, in turn would serve to promote competition, quality of service and efficiency (World Bank, 2010).

> The project, a lending operation with substantial grant contribution, is expected to cover the following three components: (a) to increase competition and private participation in the provision of telecommunications services; (b) to strengthen the existing regulatory framework in the area of Information Communications Technology (ICT); (c) to extend rural access and increase diffusion of ICT; and (d) to provide support to the Project Management Unit (PMU). Increase competition and private participation in the provision of telecommunications services. Prepare Samoa Communications Limited for privatization Strengthen regulatory framework. Improve spectrum management and monitoring (World Bank, 2002).

The assumption was that introducing competition into a telecommunications market should stimulate growth in investment and innovation which in turn would result in better quality and priced services (International Telecommunications Union, 2012). The move towards a competitive market structure is usually motivated by stagnant growth in telecommunications due to the inefficiency of complacent monopoly carriers (van Cuilenburg & Slaa. 1995). As noted above, this appears to have been the experience in Samoa. Samoa was aware of telecommunication changes worldwide and we can presume this was greatly emphasised by the huge diaspora of Samoans[12] living overseas and communicating back to their families. By not receiving the same investment in modern telecommunications as many other countries, Samoa was obviously missing out on potential growth opportunities.

In 2002 the World Bank approved the Samoan Government's telecommunications reform project and provided the government with $3.25 million USD to assist with project implementation (World Bank, 2011). As part of the reform project between 2003 and 2005, the Samoan state owned telecommunications sector underwent realignment. Offshore consultants were employed to advise on policy and the legal requirements to meet project objectives (MCIT, 2011). During this period the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) was established to develop and administer policy. Samoa Communications Ltd realigned to become SamoaTel with its mandate to provide only a telephony service rather than including services such as postal.

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[12] More Samoans live in other countries than Samoa itself.

By 2005 the Samoan government had created the Telecommunications Act allowing private competition to enter the market and established an official Regulators office to run independently from the government with obligations as defined under the new Act. In order to be effective, regulators were required to be independent, to have enforceable powers (Horwitz & Currie 2007: Jain, 2006), and have effective independent mechanisms for dispute and resolution (Jain, 2006). The Regulators office was initially funded under MCIT although funding is now through license fees from service providers. The increased rate of access to mobile telephony occurred rapidly after the new Act was implemented. Nonetheless it wasn't achieved without concession. Under the initial joint venture agreement between the Samoan Government and TSCL, TSCL was to be the only cell phone service provider within the country. Their subscribers had now risen from 2500 in the year 2000 to 33,0000 in the year 2006 (ITU, 2011), again primarily within Apia and surrounding areas.

Opening the local telecommunications market to new service providers counteracted the agreement between Telecom New Zealand and the Samoan Government, leading Telecom New Zealand to object to the implementation of the new Act on commercial legal grounds (MCIT, 2007). To mitigate this legal standpoint, the Samoan Government and TSCL negotiated a 'deed of agreement'.

This deed led to the Samoan Government issuing the first GSM license in April 2006 to Digicel, a company owned by Irish entrepreneur Dennis O'Brien, based in the Caribbean and at the time not operating in Samoa. A second GSM license was then issued in June 2006 to TSCL Limited. A third and significant aspect of the agreement was the postponement of the government's own service provider Samoatel to gain a GSM license until *after* both Digicel and/or TSCL had begun provision of their services to the public.

Subsequently, in September 2006, Telecom New Zealand sold its 90% shareholding in TSCL to Digicel for an estimated $13 million (Telecom NZ Ltd, 2007). The sale of TSCL to Digicel included a 'turnkey' project installing an additional 39 cell phone towers throughout Samoa by New Zealand owned company Skycomms (Skycomms Ltd, 2010). Because Digicel is a privately owned company it is difficult to establish whether the sale price included the cost of the turnkey project or the project was in addition to the price sold. Not long after, the Samoan government undertook advice to sell its minority 10% shares in TSCL to Digicel (Favaro, Halewood, & Rossotto, 2008. p231).

In October 2006, a Summary of Proposed Investment was lodged with the World Bank by TSCL and Digicel to roll out the cellular network at a total cost of $41.6 million USD. The investment authorized by the World Bank was $10.8 million USD.

With the current market for cell phone service provision now open to potential investment and funding now gained for the continued implementation of services, in November 2006 Digicel launched its GSM Network. With increased coverage to over 90% of the country, combined with a roll out marketing plan, within the next few months Digicel expanded its subscribers by 66% to 55,000 (Nadkarni, 2010). Three months later, in January 2007, state-owned Samoatel launched its GSM Network under the brand Go Mobil and the total number of cell phone subscribers rose to 70,000. The advent of both companies literally doubled the number of cell phone users in less than a year from 16 phones per 100 head to 31 cell phones per 100 head(ITU,2012).

2005	Feb 06	Apr-06	Jun-06	Jul-06	Sep-06	Oct-06	Nov-06	Jan-07
Act Implemented	Deed Negotiated	GSM license to Digicel	GSM License to TSCL	Regulators Office Established	Telcom NZ sells its 90% in TSCL shares to Digicel for appx $13 million USD	SPI submitted to Worldbank by TSCL. $10.6 million USD authorised	Digicel launches	Samoatel Launches

Figure 10: Russell, P. 2012. A timeline of cell phone business expansion in Samoa.

This rapid rate of penetration, the result of coordinated investment and implementation from both government and private enterprise, closely aligns with the strategy outlined by the World Bank's project information.

> By focusing on the award of a cellular license, the project aims at introducing a strong competitor in the market, with an untapped market to exploit, and an incentive for higher revenues, due to the potential of offering international voice services. Cellular bids, if properly designed and managed, face no obstacle in finding interested investors, and present a low risk of failure […]

> Speed is key to telecommunications reform. Telecommunications reform requires a political-institutional system capable of facing the pressures of the incumbent operator and of other actors which resist institutional change. For this reason, speed is key. Once the agreement to proceed to sector reform is obtained by the government, speed in the implementation of the reform is key to avoid that resistance to change. In an

environment like Samoa, resistance to change can severely harm the development of the sector. The design of this operation is intended to achieve a 'quick win' in the opening up of the cellular market, as a preliminary result that can open the door to further liberalization (World Bank, 2002).

Since 2008 cell phone subscriptions have begun to plateau due (we can assume) to population limits. It has been difficult to establish since 2006 the actual figures on subscriptions and the true market share between Digicel and Samoatel (Digicel as a private offshore company does not share such data). Nonetheless in statements made both in public and through government documents, Samoatel's Go Mobile could not at the time produce enough market-share to be sustainable. What was obvious during my visit to Samoa was the overwhelming marketing presence of Digicel, supporting the assumption that they enjoy the dominant market position. With the state owned Samoatel's failure to secure significant market gains and perhaps because of lack of resources, the Samoan Government subsequently sold Samoatel in July 2011 to Bluesky Corporation, based in American Samoa.

Digicel's dominance within the cell phone market in Samoa was reiterated through interviews with participants. This dominance provides the broader context for the findings from the ethnographic data-gathering that forms the core of the research design for this project. The chapter which follows focuses on some key patterns within family and personal relationships that were suggested by interviewees and observations during the Samoan fieldwork.

Figure 11. Russell, P. (2011). Outside Bluesky Samoatel Offices.

4.0   Take Care of the Relationship: Personal and familial communication

In this chapter I explore the meaning of everyday personal relationships and how the cell phone has come to embed itself within those that exist in Samoan daily life. When referring to relationships, I am referring to the connections between people, be they family, friends or acquaintances. The subject of relationships is vast and it needs to be reiterated that not enough time was spent in the field to provide an in-depth representation of such a complex and dynamic aspect of Samoan society. This chapter discusses two predominant relationships that were highlighted through both observation and interviews as being possibly affected by the cell phone: those relationship connections are between adult and youths, and between youths themselves.

As a *Palagi* entering into another culture and divergent social spaces I was aware that there are differing social structures and customs to those which exist in my own daily life. Apparent very quickly were the hierarchies based on age. While this was also alluded to throughout my field research by participants and companions it wasn't until my return to New Zealand and I had further researched my observations and reflected upon my own assumptions in this area that I was able to provide greater nuance and meaning to the data collated on my field trip.

The contributing elements, systems, values and concepts that undergird relationships and the concept of a 'Samoan self' were initially observed by myself but with no relevant academic context to place them within. Upon returning from my fieldwork I was able to further investigate these, enabling a greater ability to analyse and propose premises as to the possible influence of the cell phone on everyday interpersonal relationships.

Paul Ten Have argues in *Understanding Qualitative Research and Ethnomethodology* that because fieldwork can be quite intense for the researcher and their personality, it's the background and additional information that helps to provide greater contextto that which is being studied (Ten Have, 2004). Certainly the differences in status and hierarchy that I observed did play on my emotions particularly where children and the less well-off were concerned, but this waned as I became more comfortable within my environment and my knowledge of the communal milieu increased. I do understand that Samoan society would have its own negotiations, tensions, conflicting ways of expressing values, differing ways of

reading situations and communications, with or without cell phones and that cell phones might make these more complicated, or make these relationships play out in different ways. Nonetheless a basic understanding of the nature of Samoan relationship values needs to be established so that we might see how the cell phone may be influencing these.

Traditional Samoan society (and that which still governs existence today) is highly communal. There is not often a time that you will observe one Samoan alone. While experiencing Samoan daily life and interaction I felt there was an undergirding connectedness between the self (Samoans), the family, the village and lineage, which created a sense that the Samoan self is a collective way of being, rather than the individualism that appears experienced and typical of discourse on Western culture.

I was intrinsically aware of an unseen and unspoken sense of being.[13] I felt it particularly when in the village, between family members, children playing, neighbours and when in church. Language for me was a barrier and so I was unable to clearly articulate to my Samoan acquaintances this existential element of being Samoan. It is ever present and yet unseen. Troubled by my inability to assign a word to this fundamental element of being Samoan, it wasn't until I returned to New Zealand and conversed with a long-time friend studying social psychology, that she highlighted the possibility of this element being *Va*. Upon her advice I researched its meaning.

Va describes the sense of existence in relation to the other. It has not to date been the focus of significant academic research and so I draw in particular on two papers to ascertain and portray its meaning. One paper written by Karlo Mila Schaaf is on *Va* centered social work and the other a thesis on *The Patterns and Motifs in the Va; A Samoan concept of a space between*, by Leanne Clayton (2007). While these papers are outside my research discipline they both seek to first define the meaning of *Va* and it is through these definitions that I am also able to articulate the felt essence I experienced. Both papers quoted Samoan author, poet and academic Albert Wednt, who in his article 'Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body' (1996) describes *Va*;

> Important to the Samoan view of reality is the concept of *Va* or *Wa* in Maori and
> Japanese. *Va* is the space between, the betweeness, not empty space, not space that

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[13] Intuition as noted in the chapter on Approach and Methodology is an ever present part of the researcher and plays a role in the both the collation of data and perhaps the direction the researcher may undertake. (Keegan,2009: Saldana,2011)

separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things. The meanings change as the relationships/the contexts change. (We knew a little about semiotics before Saussure came along!) A well-known Samoan expression is *'Ia teu le va.'* Cherish/nurse/care for the va, the relationships. This is crucial in communal cultures that value group, unity, more than individualism: who perceive the individual person/creature/thing in terms of group, in terms of va, relationships (Wednt, A, 1996).

Va is felt rather than seen, it is about the space of connectedness. The referred space is not limited to the physical but also includes the mental and spiritual of being. *Va* deems a code of conduct, an order of respect and appropriateness to facilitate the good and harmonious within relationships be they close, distant or within completely different spaces. It is appropriated within all networks of relationships such as family, the village, the church and between friends and work collegues. *Va –tapuia* refers to the conventions and guides for communication within spaces and between certain types of relationships.

While *Va* describes the more unseen and yet underpinning essence of relationship governance (between Samoans), there also is a very visible and practiced element of hierarchy in and between relationships.

I observed children in Samoa, tweens and teenagers generally responding directly to commands instructed by adults. This was not limited to just children but also occurred between adults with and without status. Most of this I saw conducted around meal times and also in the allocation and appointment of tasks to be undertaken.[14]

Whilst all these experiences were conducted in my presence (and my presence could be argued as having influenced the situation and response), it is known to be a common cultural expectation which is noted through the writings of Margaret Mead. She states in *The role of the Individual in Samoan Society* (1928) that 'Status (position or rank) in society governs every interaction in Samoan society.' While this was published some 82 years prior to my

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[14] This was notable to me, in part, because to gain an immediate response and action out of my children when asked to do something is somewhat a greater challenge.

research, it is fair to say, that this, particularly within the rural environment, still seems an accurate observation.[15]

Figure 12. Russell, P. Contributing to family life, opening and defleshing about 50 coconuts to feed the pigs.

Fatal to the prosecution of private plans is the lack of power over one's own time. Only the *matais*, subject to the demands of the village council, can make their own times and occasions; everyone else must suffer continual interruptions without irritation. The young child is subject to every single older relative in the village. This ascendancy of age continues throughout life, cut across by accession to a title for a fortunate man, while the young and unfortunate must accede to the demands of the titled as well as those of their Adults. Village matters take precedence over household, household over individual, the affairs of the older over the affairs of the younger - and

[15] There has been significant controversy over Mead's work which ranges from personal dislike for her methods to claims that she was misled by those she studied (Shankman, P 2009) It is not the intention of this study to enter into this debate or to deconstruct and analyse her findings or any of those such as Derek Freeman (Freeman, D.1983) who are notable for refuting her. My referencing of Mead's conclusions here is intended purely to provide some academic context to support my own observations (and to highlight how little has been published in this area). The status and validity of Mead's work is still a matter of debate and contention (see Shankman, 2013)

all this constitutes a network of exactions through which the young can seldom count upon escaping for more than an hour at a time (Mead, 1928. p488).

Whilst this paragraph of Mead supports my observations the pivotal values that facilitate such roles and actions are more clearly explained through the writings of Associate Professor of Anthropology and Samoan Studies at the University of Samoa, Unasa Va'a. Va'a describes social action within Samoa as being driven by four core values (Va'a, 2009). The first being *Usitai,* Obedience, the importance being utmost in conduct between child to parent, young to old, serving people to the chief, parishioners to Pastor. This is custom placed for the utility of all community members.

Obedience is undergirded by *Faaalaolo*, Respect. Again from children towards parents, brothers towards sisters, serving men and woman to their *matai* and members of the church toward their Pastor. This is shown not only through the speech used but also through action and body language. Third is *Alofa* or love, in relation to family, village, Samoa and indeed all humanity. The fourth core value is *Tautua*, selfless service. Selfless in that it is given to family, village, church, elders and all in the hope that it may one day assist in increasing the giver's social status.

Juxtaposed to the core values suggested by Va'a and often a result of those values not being conducted or met, is shame. Shame has become relevant to this study as it was referred to on many occasions by participants and appears to be an implied and powerful essence in the cause and actions of Samoans. A Samoan saying aptly depicts the influence that shame can have, *sili le oti i lo le ma*: 'death is better than shame' (Macpherson & Macpherson, 1987).

Suicide is the alluded outcome in an anecdote further in this chapter. In their article on 'Suicide in Western Samoa' Macpherson and Macpherson discuss in depth the social structure, relationships and expectations which provide a platform for shame to be an element in (self-)managing behaviour. This is highlighted in the following extract:

> Children are reminded that all acts of any significance will be remembered long after the act itself. As the proverb *e sola lefai 'ae tu'u lefoto*, 'the stingray escapes but leaves behind its barb' suggests, both the good and the bad which one does is remembered by the kin group and village and can become a source of continuing pride or shame to a person's descendant (Macpherson & Macpherson, 1987).

Christianity also underpins the values and expectations of Samoans and their conduct. I observed that churches were plentiful within each village and were frequent landmarks on my travels between villages and into the city. Many participants referred to either the church, God or being Christian and so for the purpose of this study and with particular regard to behaviour I feel that Christian values are intermingled with village and subsequently family life and expectations. This is supported by Macpherson and Macpherson who have studied Samoa far more extensively than I have and who note 'The influence of churches and of Christian teaching in the organization and management of village polities is also significant in the maintenance of order that generally characterises village life in Samoa' (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2011).

All these elements of roles and status, values and expectations within, between and around relationships are significant and relevant around the discussion of the cell phone. Referred to many times throughout interviews and general discussions is the suggestion that previous to the arrival of the cell phone nearly all discussion and communication, particularly in the rural areas of Samoa, be it positive, negative, influential, gossip, hearsay, significant or insignificant, was, generally, held in public, earshot or in knowing that it would and could easily be passed around or heard by others due to its transmission being oral. When conducting communication between each other, interruptions were more than likely seen and generally heard by all parties present and within earshot. Communication was within an open communal environment both in the physical structures of housing[16] and in the lack of communication tools such as landlines to facilitate privacy. When communication was directed, then, the manner in which it was delivered and received would inevitably have been considered. Many participants insisted that these social constraints on everyday forms of communication have been eroded, although they differed on whether this was due to the introduction of the cell phone, and what the longer term implications of these changes might be. My own observations reinforced many of the comments of participants.

In the discussion which follows I portray a few experienced situations that highlight the roles undertaken and expectations held (as just introduced) within and between daily relationships and how the cell phone may be influencing these. Again these observations are by no means meant to be taken as a comprehensive survey of Samoan everyday life, but rather they are an

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[16] Generally open walled.

array of situations which begin to offer a snapshot of the significance on the widespread adoption of the cell phone. I begin with a look at the relationships between adults and youth.

Samoan youth are expected to conduct themselves keenly following the core values of obedience, respect, love and selfless service as requested by any person older then themselves, or of higher rank, without question. Youth behaviours are also influenced by Christian values, Va and shame. Here we explore the Samoan adult's perception that surrounds the cell phone and youth and how they see it possibly influencing those core values and other aspects of their relationship. This theme arose because in many of the discussions held with the adults of the village and families, there was often reference to what they saw as changes occurring amongst their youth, perceived to be because of the cell phone.

While sitting with a family of Samoans in the village of Samusu one adult sister of around her mid-thirties was visiting and upon hearing why I was in village and without any querying on my part launched into discussing openly the trouble she was having with the cell phone and her teenager, "You can see the change in their eyes. You try to discipline them, but, they go into another room or place and you no longer have control over them. They are becoming disrespectful". Three key words came from this discussion which I was beginning to either hear regularly or often be inferred to in some way around the perception of the cell phone and these were change, control and disrespect.

Change was perceived by these participants to begin with the introduction of new technology providing Samoan society with greater accessibility to communicate, although in the anecdote above I cannot assert the change between the behaviour and response of the daughter wholly because of the cell phone. Contributing factors not discussed by the mother could include the natural and emotional changes that teenagers experience during this period in their life. The lack of opportunity to delve deeper with the mother into the topic of natural emotional and behavioural changes of teenagers only allows me to speculate the change the mother is seeing is the ability for her daughter to access communication and others more readily and privately than was possible prior to the cell phone, enabling what was once public now to become private.

The local Pastor reiterated the concern held by parents with statements such as "the parent's voice is getting lower and the voice[17] of the other is getting louder and louder", "Parents are

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[17] Voice, meaning reason, input and influence rather than actual speaking

falling victim. What we see as a tool is also a weapon", and "The close knitted home that used to be, is becoming something of the past." The Pastor had his own cell phone and so did many of his family members. Whilst he held the position of Pastor he also owned a local village shop and a local bus service, both which use the cell phone to operate. The Pastor regularly used the cell phone to contact his family through both text and calling. He also used it to co-ordinate meetings and gatherings for church, business and community purposes.

I was invited to the church for the Sunday sermon and subsequent lunch, after which the pastor discussed with me the revelation he said he had experienced from God[18] around the cell phone.

> I was driving in the van along the road and noticed many black birds on a telephone wire, a van of youth was driving underneath and the birds flew down and started attacking the van, I stopped my van to help them, the birds turned and started to attack me. I asked God why this is happening and he spoke to me. The black birds represented the evil, and the wire represented technology. The technology is bad for the youth and is attacking their thoughts, I am to try and save them, to help.

Figure 13. Russell, P. 2011. The Village Pastor and friend, who is using a cell phone.

After relaying this revelation the Pastor explained he now passionately preaches to his congregation on the right and wrong uses of the cell phone. Known locally for his passion

and drive for education surrounding the cell phone, this was one of the reasons I was invited to meet with him.

The Pastor was a formidable man who seemed intelligent and greatly respected amongst the villagers I encountered. His position as preacher provides a requirement to perhaps be topical and engaging on subjects that are relevant and concerning to his congregation. This in turn could motivate a heightened and increased awareness to make connection between visual occurrences, God and the cell phone. While he saw both benefit and evil in the cell phone, from my perspective it seemed that he was using the pulpit as a means to educate on the appropriate use of the cell phone with particular emphasis on youth as this is where the community and himself apparently believe there is the most change in social behaviour. My reading of this situation is that the position he holds as a community leader provides the foundation and perhaps necessity for this direction and stance which is delivered through a highly valued Samoan practice, church going.

Before I had lunch with the Pastor, I gained an opportunity to speak with his seventeen year old daughter. She told me of her parent's concerns around the cell phone and used much of the same terminology in highlighting its dangers. When discussing the use of the phone she referred to it as a tool and stated that "depending on the person and their using it, it can also be like a gun", and "You must learn to use it well and to control it". Even so, she goes on to explain her loss without it and this is discussed further in the next section of this chapter. This part of our discussion highlighted for me the influence her father and his teaching have and I was mindful of her position as daughter of the Pastor (as perhaps was she), which more than likely created a greater awareness of what she should and could say.

There were similar sentiments repeated by a number of village adults.

> "….not good for teenagers as it confuses their mind"

> "I see my son texting but I do not see who he is talking too, this is stressful."

> "Cell phones are not good as teenagers are not concentrating"

> "The phone is good and bad but it is teaching kids bad skills like the way they talk and the swearing".

One mother described a situation when after she had disciplined her daughter verbally for not obeying her, the daughter fled to her room (this family is of high status within the village and therefore have a house with rooms). There she texted her friend about the situation. The mother knew this because soon after the daughter came out of the room telling her mother that her disciplining her was not right, as her friend's mother did not discipline her for the same action. When the Mother asked how her daughter came to know this, her daughter replied that she had texted her friend. The mother completed her conversation with me on this incident by stipulating that in the past the daughter would never have done that (questioned her authority).

From this interaction two things are highlighted to me. The first is the ability of the daughter to communicate to her friend without her mother overhearing her discuss her frustration at her mother's actions. This is not to say that this couldn't have occurred without the cell phone present, but, because the venting of frustration would have been more open to public knowledge I assume the action would have been more considered before being expressed. Secondly the immediate access[19] to another and their response and viewpoint on the situation gave reason for the daughter to question her mother's authority by providing an example of a different outcome to a similar situation. The point of the anecdote was obviously to suggest that the cell phone fostered the daughter's disobedience.

This small case above echoes findings in cell phone research elsewhere. Richard Ling discusses extensively the use of the cell phone to both integrate with and gain support from within youth peer groups.

> Peers provide self-esteem, reciprocal self-disclosure, emotional support, advice, and information. They allow the ability to be vulnerable among equals, sensitive to the needs of others, and generally, perhaps for the first time, to acquire insight into social interaction outside of the family. Peer groups are largely protective of their members; they can draw a symbolic boundary around themselves and resist the intrusion of others (Ling, 2004. p96).

Based on the accounts of other participant's accessibility, the cell phone also appears to be influencing other behaviours surrounding adult and youth relationships. On many different

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[19] Prior to the cell phone, unless her friend was present with the daughter, she would have had to wait to see the friend to discuss the matter. The cell phone now provides the ability to have immediate communication.

occasions during the field study whether I was in a family *fale*, at the village store, on a bus, at the beach or outside a church, I noted youth looking into their cell phones while adults were talking to them.

On one such occasion I was sitting in the eating *fale* of a family. Chickens, a kitten and dogs ran freely under our feet. Food was being prepared by the mother and daughter for lunch using the fire and rudimentary cooking utensils. Once we were seated and prayers spoken, the daughter received a text while her mother was talking to her. As her mother continued to speak, the daughter would nod and reply all the while responding backward and forward to the text on the cell phone.

In a differing but similar experience, a Samoan academic, having previously lived in Australia talks of blending daily cultural and customary expectations with a more Western style of living. Nonetheless, acutely aware of modernity and the subsequent changes experienced he tells of a recent time when he took his son to the movies. It was an occasion for them to spend time together. During the whole movie the son proceeded to text and wait for responses. "He watched the cell phone screen more then he watched the screen in front of him" and concluded that "I was upset so I took the phone from him".

These experiences are obviously similar to those which are seen and practiced worldwide between not just adult and youth but between most social interactions where cell phones are present. However, the significance of this for Samoa is perhaps highlighted because of the customary expectations that are generally held and experienced when in the presence of another. This is not to say that in western culture the same respect was not expected, rather that we have over a period of time adjusted with modernity to the presence and changes that technology can determine and the resulting expectations (not all)[20] of behaviours and change become more feasibly accepted as practice.

The act of entering into the private space of a cell phone has been referred to in academia as absent presence. Absent presence is where one is present in a given space but is absorbed in another be it a book, listening to music, watching a movie or using a cell phone (to name a few examples), rendering the person emotionally and cognitively distant from those around them yet present in the same space. In his article on 'The challenge of absent presence'

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[20] With my own family all members could be on a communication device at a family gathering and my father considers it to be highly disrespectful.

(2006), Kenneth Gergen talks about the disruption that absent presence causes to broadly valued traditions (p.227). With the capability to become completely absorbed by the cell phone, the values ensconced around face to face relationships diminish.

Figure 14. A visual portrayal of absent presence. Quite some time had passed between the first and second image yet the girl had not moved and was still active on her phone.

From my observations and through talking with participants, absent presence in rural Samoa is less likely to have been previously experienced through items such as books, individual music devices or movies, as these items are few, considered a luxury and if possessed, are generally communally shared. [21]

It is possible that being absent in the presence of a Samoan adult and not giving your full attention when required may well reduce the values around respect, so too may it infringe on the true essence of *Va* as harmony within the relationship is not whole, as it is diverted and split between two spaces. The adult is not as included in the communication of their youth as they may have been prior to the cell phone when communication was conducted usually verbally and openly. When youth use SMS texting as a method of communication the adults are not (generally) immediately aware of who the conversation is too, nor what it is about. For a society that is traditionally collective, communal and inclusive particularly where communication was concerned, the communication undertaken by youth amongst each other

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[21] When in Satitoa and Samusu the only book I saw within the households I entered into was the bible. TV's were not readily available as the infrastructure was not available to provide the service.

through the cell phone, may give for Samoan adults the impression of being undermined which was certainly the impression that many of the adult respondents were keen to share with me . As Feldmann suggests, 'The change in creation of power through the cell phone is driven by exclusion' (Feldmann, 2005. p203).

Changes regarding access to communication within relationships have been occurring from the time when cell phones and the cell phone service became readily and nationally available in 2006. Prior to the cell phone there was no telecommunication service available in the rural areas and therefore perhaps the change is far more greatly felt, both positively and negatively. The cell phone has highlighted a variety of contradictory changes. Access to intimacy has been increased particularly with family members (as discussed in the following chapter). However, it has also opened spaces that have been not been previously available within the close familial context. Spaces that are witnessed to exist by the other but cannot be accessed even though physically sharing the same space.

The ability of adults to be prepared for the influences afforded to their youth does not appear to have been a consideration in providing access to what they apparently initially deemed as a tool to allow for communication. The response to such changes has been highlighted in the local media and portray a growing disquiet and anxiousness that is seemingly formed around the use of the cell phone and adult and youth relationships. During my field study two reported suicide cases were published in local media. These are not representative of actual changes in society, but they do reveal the growth in discourse expressing anxiety about the technology.

A teenage girl had been missing for two weeks after an argument over cell phone use. It was later reported that she had been texting a particular boy. Her father had reprimanded her for her cell phone conduct (the extent of the reprimand was not publically revealed) and she had not been seen since. The police had found some of her clothing by the sea where it was presumed she committed suicide after the incident. The boy whom she was texting was later taken in for questioning by the police. The next day he was found dead, presumably also by suicide.

While there appears to be a relationship between the two youth we do not know to what extent. In placing some critical thought around this case we can establish the key areas that made this news worthy. Two youth were communicating to each other through cell phones

which afforded greater privacy. The parent of one of the young parties was not happy with the conduct and reprimanded them. They disappeared, presumed to have committed suicide. The police questioned the remaining youth about the incident. After being questioned, that youth committed suicide. Concern surrounding the phone was communicated by both the father and the police. Yet it appears that the teenager's response to the situation was extreme. Such a case puts forward a potential notion that some Samoan adults do not have access to knowledge on how best to deal with the types of issues that surround the cell phone in a way that creates safety for all.

A different scenario around adult response to youth and their cell phone use occurred near where I stayed. A young girl of about sixteen years of age had a relationship instigated through the cell phone. The relationship soon became physical resulting in a pregnancy. The resulting pregnancy was the first time the family was aware of the relationship and it bought great shame on the family and the girl was subsequently punished. This tale highlights a number of issues and for the purpose of this research, the greatest being the ability of the girl to conduct a relationship without her parents knowledge. The participants who told me this story insisted that prior to the cell phone, while this may still have occurred it would have proven to be difficult to hide.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter Samoans have traditionally carried out their social interaction and relations based on the four core values of Obedience, Respect, Love and Selfless service. These were underpinned by a collective adherence to the sense of *Va*, Christian values with pride of the village and family held in regard and the expectation of bringing honour rather than shame to family (immediate & extended) and village. This has by all accounts functioned effectively in the face of little access to communication technology.

The rapid integration of cell phone technology into Samoan everyday life quickly provided affordances never experienced before by Samoan youth. By most accounts the cell phone seems to have provided them privacy and the ability to say (both through voice and text) what they want, to whom they want, when they want. It is my opinion that through this enabled access Samoan youth could be experiencing a found sense of freedom and subsequently adults not knowing who their youth are engaging with, what they are saying and doing maybe feeling a sense of disempowerment, all perhaps reshaping in particular, the expectations of obedience, respect and service and resulting in occurrences deemed as being shameful.

Youth too are sharing in the changes and influences that the cell phone appears to be having and while many of these are similar to the adult experiences they seem to differ in perspective and in some cases understanding. What follows are some of those experiences reported to me by pre adult Samoans particularly surrounding youth to youth relationships. I briefly begin by highlighting the observed differences of cell phone use by youth in the rural and urban villages.

During my stay in the rural villages of Satitoa and Samusu, there appeared to be a distinct lack of youth individually owning a phone, rather it was obvious that this is a shared item amongst family, a constraint dictated by family income. Youth within higher status (and higher income) families in the rural villages seemed to have a greater possibility of owning their own phone.

Notable was the increased visual presence of the phone amongst youth at dusk. It was at this time they begun to gather on and around the main road walking up and down. Phones were visibly held playing music for all to hear as they walked, talked and laughed amongst each other. As an observer I could liken it to the gathering of teens at a mall, but here the scape in which the youth gathered was surrounded by beach, warm hues of colour, south pacific island wind and the occasional vehicle. The music from the phones was prominent because there was no other white noise to blend it out. Occasionally you would see the teenagers enter into a text discussion but by all appearances the communication was centred around face to face and the phones were present to play music. [22]

When in Vaoala Apia, around dusk there is a similar occurrence, with the increased presence of youth wandering the main road holding their phones playing music. I observed that more youth are seen to be texting. I now wonder upon reflection whether the increased texting is linked to the greater dispersement of peers. There are a larger number of schools in Apia and students attending can come from many different villages. Whereas there are less schools in the rural areas of Samoa and they are attended by children in and around the village. It is unfortunate that this is a question I have not been able to have clarified in this research.

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[22] My observations occurred from sitting by the wayside rather than interacting with the youth, primarily because I did not want them to adjust their behaviour with my presence being more pronounced.

Figure 15. September 2011. A Bluesky Samoatel advertisement explicitly targeting youth.

In talking about the cell phone with youth from the urban village, the most immediate difference to their rural peers that was suggested to me is the increase in individual ownership. The following is a brief summary of discussions I held with some urban youth.

Cia has had her phone since she was 11 and is now 13 years of age, her friend gave her the phone. She mostly texts using English to improve her English. Most of her friends send godly messages on the phone as they are in Christian fellowships. [23] She likes to discuss her homework using the phone by sharing answers. She spends around $5T per week with her parents transferring her credit to use (this is discussed further in the following chapter). She liked being able to contact her sister in Christchurch when there was the earthquake as she liked knowing that she was okay. Her concern around cell phones centred on the calls from people she did not know[24] and tales of bullying amongst the boys.

Bullying amongst boys was an experience offered by a parent I interviewed. His son had received constant bullying through the cell phone to the point that the father was concerned for his wellbeing and safety, so he removed the phone. The boy while affected by the bullying felt out of touch without the cell phone and soon it was given back to him with the number changed. Bullying was not a subject raised by Apelu who is a young man and is one of the very few boys I was able to engage with. He shyly stated he used the cell phone only to

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[23] I wonder when participants mention comments like this, whether this is only partly truthful. However, it is very common for Samoans to bring terms such as God Bless into cell phone communication.
[24] I experienced the same thing almost on a daily basis, with random calls and text from people I did not know and who did not know of me.

meet up with rugby friends, family and the village. Sometimes he tried texting a girl but they cut him (didn't reply).

It is important to note that the area of youth male relationships facilitated by cell phones in Samoa is in need of research. One evening while attending dinner at a local 'restaurant' I was assisting some young male staff to set the table. They asked why I was in Samoa and after mentioning my research into the cell phone they both shied from comment. As the night progressed and they got more comfortable with me and I found myself explaining the difficulty I was having in gaining youth male participation for my research. The response was "boys would use the phone for many things some of it sexting and that is shameful so they do not want to discuss that with you". The content of texts was a subject avoided by Pualani, a young female who had recently had her phone taken from her when her parents discovered she was always texting her boyfriend. She was not allowed to have a cell phone during study time as it took her away from her schoolwork. She liked to text 24/7 especially when it was free. Most of the time was spent texting her boyfriend and she liked to text as if she was talking face to face. She tended to only call adults, mainly because they do not know how to text. She felt the phone was addictive, "it becomes like God, you ignore everything to be with the phone". For the first three days without a phone she did not like being out of touch but now she felt free.

Deborah liked her phone for the speed of communication and like Pualani insisted that she texted her friends regarding homework and gossip using English as writing Samoan is too long and hard to shorten. She talked of kids learning English through texting on the phone.[25] She is a Christian so this influenced how she communicated. Part of the lunch money she was given went on credit for the phone. In her family, there are seventeen people and about fifteen phones. They can always communicate with each other; "We are of the technology age and so we know how to use it but we have to help our parents". Helping parents to use technology is a behaviour change experienced worldwide. There tends to be a shift in power dynamics when parents require the assistance and guidance of their children with new technologies (Katz & Aakhaus, 2002). Samoa appears to be experiencing the same shifts, albeit for only the moment that the assistance is required.

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[25] This point is interesting and indeed appears to be common. However, it is upon reflection of this research that I wished I had delved into this further.

Like some others, Mulimai is sixteen and has had her phone since she was thirteen. She uses the phone to stay in contact with her friends and family using Samoan and English for texting depending on who she talks too. English was used mostly with her friends. She likes to keep up with homework using her phone. However, her cell phone had recently been taken from her by her parents as it was distracting her from her studies. Mulimai emphasised the point that the cell phone was bad for spreading gossip and how bad it was for the school when gossip got out. Not long after speaking with Mulimai and walking down the road of Vaoala, we came across Treena who was on her way home from work. Treena has just turned 20 and has had her phone for three years now. She liked calling 'because you can hear their voice', but she texted for unimportant stuff and for organising. She used her phone to contact friends and family and especially her family overseas. She knew parents were having problems with younger kids as they don't know what they were doing. She used the phone to meet up with her boyfriend and her family wouldn't know. Treena mentioned the bullying of both girls and boys using the phone; "they joking about you".

Gossip, the speed in which it spreads and the use of the phone to create negativity in peer groups, was greatly highlighted just before my arrival in Samoa. [26] A year twelve student from St Mary's Catholic College had made a sexually explicit video of herself using her cell phone. She had intended the video for her boyfriend and had sent it via her cell phone through to him. The video was then somehow[27] shared quickly amongst Samoan youth and posted on YouTube.com. These actions resulted in the girl being punished by her parents and being expelled from school. However, the nuns from the school still had to care for the girl as they had feared for her safety. Subsequently a riot had broken out between the school of the boyfriend and the brother school of St Mary's, St Josephs, which resulted from the on-going taunts to the St Mary's students from students from other school. In addition to the negativity being played out between the two schools the relatives of the girl were concerned over the ramifications[28] to the village because of the incident (Talanei.com, 2011; *Samoan Observer*, 2011; Stuff.co.nz, 2011).

This one incident highlights several aspects of the cell phone and its influence changing the daily life of Samoan youth. Firstly the girl had easy access to affordable technology that produced a moving image, this technology has enabled an affordance that was once restricted

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[26] The ramifications of such were still being spoken of and highlighted in the local media.
[27] The truth about how the video got into the public sphere was unclear.
[28] More than likely to be shame as discussed earlier.

to an expensive movie camera. Secondly, the production of media was done with the intent of gaining the attention of the boyfriend without considering the greater and wider implications of the content being accessed and distributed globally with excessive ease and speed, creating repercussions affecting not just the girl and the boyfriend, but whole communities, the village, the two schools and all extended family. As I have not spoken to the girl, the premise that she was aware of the implications could be argued. However, that aside, upon reflection the reaction from the affected communities displayed an element of intense response in the managing of this type of situation.

In many countries around the world youth and teenagers tend to be the most enthusiastic users of cell phones (Ling, 2007). Cell phones have become a mode of socialising, particularly in developed countries (Katz, 2003) and it appears that Samoa too is experiencing this phenomenon with its youth. In an article published in the *Apia Financial Review* (2012) the youth interviewed spoke of feeling bored, lonely, crazy, and even depressed when without their mobile phones. One spoke of the cell phone being like a friend and even a partner. Mobile Youth a market research company who focus specifically on youth and the cell phone state that "the level of emotional attachment to cell phones by youth is unparalleled by other electronic devices with many youth surveyed reporting feelings of detachment or loss when they lived 24 hours without their mobile phones. Some even reported feeling 'depressed' or 'panicky'(2011)

Figure 16. Samoa Observer. (August 11, 2011)

The discussions with Samoan youth around their cell phone use show many similar instances as experienced with youth in other cultures. Mirroring the finding of studies (Holland, 2009; Ling, 2007; Castells et al 2004) into youth culture and the cell phone, Samoan youth tend to maintain their social networks using the cell phone. They are creating personally initiated networks where communication is more intense and novel forms of communication codes are established (Stadler, 2007) rather than maintaining more traditional forms of networks (and communication codes) such as through families. It appears that they favour texting particularly between each other not only for its affordability but because it is seen as a means to communicate thoughts and feelings without having to voice them, which for youth has a higher risk of embarrassment (Feldmann, 2005). This study has also highlighted the change in language used when texting, with English at times being favoured because it seems to be easier to shorten when texting.[29] Rather than categorically state that this is a finding, it

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[29] I believe that English also provided greater privacy especially where English was a second language to their parents or the parent has little knowledge of English.

certainly shows merit to stand as an area for further research across a greater cross section of youth.

Most significant during this field study is the silent communication between youth which circumvents the ability of the adults to easily know what is going on. Parents used to know a greater deal about who their children were interacting with and how their children were interacting.

Figure 17. Russell, P. 2011. Images of youth using the phone.

This is not to suggest that there were never times when adults didn't know these things but they apparently were far fewer than what they are experiencing now. But it appears that the cell phone is providing youth with privacy that they previously did not have and perhaps through that a sense of personal freedom.

Sitting with a group of youth after church service, there were no visible phones but when I raised the subject, the group became more animated. Many didn't have a phone but had access to one. And offered statements such as "having a phone was a good thing, to stay in touch with family and friends, to know what's going on", "It can be dangerous, for doing the wrong things", and "I text my friends all the time to know what they are doing. We arrange to meet up with the phone, yeah with boys, I have it on silent mostly when at home".[30] (Reflecting on this conversation and reviewing my notes I perhaps needed to delve further into why the phone is on silent when at home. Was it the increased privacy that this provided or was it out of not wanting to contribute a disruptive factor to the aural soundscape?).

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[30] Youth participant from higher status family in the rural village. Both her teenage brother and herself attend school in Apia. She has her own cell phone.

What appeared obvious to me was the ability of youth to now form their own networks with less influence or perhaps control from their elders. This could be likened to personal individual villages created through networking using their cell phones through which the communication undertaken is both reinforcing and destroying relationships.

While I believe there are significant gaps in this research not least because of missed opportunities for me to delve deeper into conversations with participants, many of the gaps have come to the fore through review and reflection of the discussions held and the data collated. As highlighted, relationships permeate being Samoan and while they are the foundation of many aspects within Samoan daily life, daily life also has many intricacies woven into its way of being. What the cell phone appears to enable during the day with regard to activity is what we explore in the next chapter, looking first at how it has created greater connectivity.

5.0   It's Good to be Connected : Affordance & connectivity through cell phones.

I begin this chapter by first reiterating the significant growth of access to the cell phone and the afforded ability to communicate at any given time. By 2011 and with 165,000 cell phones in Samoa, the phenomenon of being in constant contact now permeates this society. During a 20 minute period (while sitting in Apia),[31] of the 175 people that passed me by, 35% of them visibly held cell phones. We can assume that many who were not noticeably holding a phone could have them stored within clothing pockets and bags, accessories more frequently seen within Apia's urban lifestyle than in rural Samoa. In contrast to the city, in the rural village if you have a cell phone, it is generally carried around in the palm of your hand, with some women carrying the cell phone in their bra, due to the lava lava[32] not having a place to store items. It seems Samoans, like users in other parts of the world, carry their cell phone as though it is an extension of the body,[33] demonstrating the notion of always being connected.

After a speaking engagement at the University of Samoa, I shared my observations with my University host, an administrator within the University and an academic herself, to which she replied "Samoans don't like being alone and the cell phone provides connection to family and friends". As described by Katz and Aakhus (2004) perpetual contact is the essence of being constantly connected and therefore contactable. Cell phones as a mobile device allow for connection through space and time facilitated through persons rather than through a location as with fixed line telephony.

While the previous chapter focused around relationships and explored the perceptions surrounding the cell phone affecting relationships, this chapter views some of the aspects which appear to have arisen for the Samoan people with regard to always being connected, ones that were highlighted often in my research through both my observations and discussions with participants. In writing this chapter and as often seen throughout this research there are clear complicating factors and nuances based on social status and income which complicate any generalisation my own data might suggest.

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[31] A counting survey undertaken on the20th of September 2011 at Sydney Side Café, Apia, at an outside table for 20 minutes
[32] The lavalava is a traditional 'skirt' worn by both male and females.
[33] Interestingly the Nordic word for cell phone *Kannayka* means extension of the hand

Significant to principally rural Samoans has been the sudden and increased accessibility and constant communication through the advent of the cell phone. Until 2006, landline infrastructure and fixed line services had centered in and around the urban area and villages of Apia, as too had the limited analog technology provided by TSCL. Therefore residing within the urban area was advantageous. During this same period, rural Samoa had no local access to telecommunications. From 2006 telecommunications fundamentally changed for the rural areas.

Throughout my discussions with some of the rural villagers I established that communication use prior to the cell phone was generally through people passing on information or messages.[34] The passing of messages inherently portrays the communal systems at work within village life. With communication such an integral part of relationships, care taken in the exchange of messages ensured 'a common goal', which was the receiver gaining the message as intended, in turn ensuring the continuity of a reciprocated service amongst all villagers. Alessandro Duranti notes that the common Samoan phrase *teu le vaa* (take care of the relationship) expresses the focus of relationships grounded in experience (Duranti, 1984).

The oral exchange of a message was relatively easy to instigate within the local geography of the village and other villages within close proximity. Open communication also increased the likelihood of nearly everybody 'knowing your business'. The private in many cases was public. In discussing this form of communication with one of my guides she stated "With people knowing what was going on in your life, you were pretty careful about what you did".

Prior to the advent of the cell phone in rural Samoa, contact outside of the village or local geography required a number of different approaches. A few villagers, in discussing this recent past, mentioned using the bus driver to deliver messages to family or friends within the city. When queried on how this worked it was explained that the bus driver was well versed in the organisation of village families and associates. When given a message to pass, they would know who they could pass the message on to for it to reach the intended receiver, but only if they weren't able to deliver it personally.

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[34] While much has been written on the oral traditions of Samoa, they are focused on the passing of historical events, by Orators specifically , or of legend. It has been difficult to find an academic source that refers to the daily passing on of messages. Therefore, the accounts of this occurring in this research have been given only by participants.

As a researcher I found this form of communication very interesting to consider. My initial thoughts centered around the undergirding trust between the two parties to ensure the information was passed and that it was passed as correctly as possible. Trust would also be a considered aspect as to 'how public' that message could become[35] particularly if it was of a confidential nature. Second was the reliance upon knowledge of family networks, relationships and the ability to navigate these respectfully, all highlighting the importance of the bus driver (at the time) as a pivotal role for the village communities. These are only my assumptions gained from reflecting on the process and are not independently validated, but inherently I believe they still suggest important aspects to maintaining such a method of communication effectively.

That being said, the bus is the principal means of transport for villagers to undertake the near two hour journey from the South West region, where I was staying, into Apia if they needed to call their family in other parts of the world. An alternative to calling was letter writing, which was described to me by some participants as being a very slow process, both in the writing and the letters being delivered and received by each party. [36]

On my previous visit to Samoa in 2009, a comment from one of my Samoan hosts was "that the biggest export from Samoa is Samoans". Supporting this comment is the dispersion of Samoan people worldwide, which is greater than the current population of Samoa with the greater concentration of Samoans tending to be in New Zealand, Australia and America (Samoan Observer, 2010). With families dispersed over greater geographical areas, the importance of family connections is still paramount.[37] For a rural villager, to contact family overseas either meant writing a letter or a journey into Apia either by car or bus, waiting in line to use a public telephone, making and paying for the call and then returning by either car or bus with the bus taking a little longer.[38]

The excursion undertaken to achieve communication with overseas family would take the better part of a day, with some Samoans having to stay in the city overnight depending upon the availability of the public phones and the availability of the family member they were

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[35] It is my opinion based on observation that Samoans like to know the business of others
[36] The postal service differs greatly to New Zealand in that there are no mail boxes.
[37] Connection to family is also important to ensure the continuation of remittances, a needed form of income for many rural villagers and discussed further in this writing.
[38] As experienced during this research, bus rides can include un-timetabled stops determined by passengers, such as stopping at the supermarket to buy groceries or to buy an ice cream.

calling. One villager commented that the trip was a minimum of $30 to $60T[39] and therefore was a carefully considered event. Families both in Samoa and overseas would sometimes work on agreed times for communication to limit the prospect of the event not occurring.

Figure 18. Russell, P. 2011. A typical Samoan bus

The cell phone and the ability to be 'constantly connected' has enabled villagers to communicate with friends and family at any time, with the communication now centering around the person rather than the location. For many this has been a positive affordance of the cell phone. Being able to hear the voice of the other[40] at any time has also created greater family connectivity, allowing continuity of family relationships that are foundational to Samoan values. Participants' comments supported the proposition that remote relationships with family and friends is now localized within the framework of the cell phone, seemingly reducing the isolation of family members (Holland, 2008). With family placed around the world and between the two islands of Samoa, one could argue that fixed line telephony also afforded such support. Nonetheless, for rural villagers the use of the fixed line enabled connectivity only after a great investment in time and money, all of which was dictated by the availability of the service.[41] Based on my research, the perpetual connectedness extended through the cell phone has allowed for a reduction in that time, allowing villagers to make

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[39] $30T is a significant amount for some families, who may only earn a total $100T a week

[40] To 'hear' the voice is a term often used by Samoans when referring to the cell phone and cell phone use. Although this research did not bring forth significant findings around it, it does present an area for further research.

[41] It was often said by participants that the landline system was unreliable.

and receive contacts with family and friends from within their own determined spaces, at what appears to be a reduced cost per call.

The money spent on making calls using the cell phone varies between village families. At 85 *sene* per minute, for the poorer families, calls or *vili* are limited and maybe reduced to a SMS[42] text, which is generally at the same cost as a local text of 20 *sene*.

Figure 19. (Digicel. 2011). A Digicel Flexi Guide.

The use of a text to ask a family member to call is apparently common. Families that have a constant income, or are of a higher status, appear to make more frequent use of calling. One family I interviewed owns a banana chip business run from a basic open *fale* next to their family *fale*. They speak daily with relatives in American Samoa and Hawaii, emphasizing the importance they felt in doing so for the family and because of the family business. When discussing this topic with a small group, a local *matai* purported to spend much time calling,

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42 Short Message Service

stating his cell phone costs are in the region of $200T per week.[43] They had four cell phones within his family.

Upon reviewing this information these costs seems substantial and it wasn't respectful of me to further query the *matai* on this matter at the time. However, to highlight the significant differences between cell phone ownership, use, income and status within a village, the family who spoke regularly with their family in American Samoa and the *matai* who spent the proposed $200T all lived within close proximity[44] to a family who only had one cell phone between a family of 6 Adults and 8 children all sharing an open walled *fale* no bigger than an average new Zealand lounge room.

Figure 20. Russell, P. 2011. A rural village fale that sleeps 8 adults and 4 children

The topic of always being contactable, money and the cell phone was highlighted in a different light when discussing the positivity of accessibility with an audience at the National University of Samoa. During feedback an audience member was keen to point out the negative impact of being always contactable. With nearly every Samoan having a family member in some or other village, the ability to always be contacted has also created extra stress. Samoan culture obligates the gifting of money by family members when notified of an event such as a wedding, funeral or christening occurring. Now that you can always be

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[43] An unsubstantiated claim

[44] About 500 metres or less

contacted, the obligation to gift money has increased and with this, also the stress.[45] (The aspect of giving within Samoan culture is discussed below). Stress or 'less time to relax' was a recurring theme when discussing the cell phone with Samoan adults.

As experienced within many cultures of the world, the blurring of the public and private space is taking place because of technologies such as the cell phone. Communal living within the village already blurs public and private space, so the most notable change for Samoan participants within this study around the public and private socio-spatial aspects of place and time appeared to be that of employment or work (instigated through communal institutions such as the church and the village) and the place and time with family.

Figure 21. Russell, P. (2001) Receiving a call on the way to the office?

Work phone calls are now extending into the family home or *fale,* or, are being taken while on the move. While this allows for greater flexibility, having a cell phone enables an 'always on' way of being. Not being able to switch off from either community networks or work appears to be not as easy as prior to the cell phone's arrival. While someone is at work, it is not uncommon for family or community members, such as the Church leaders, to contact the worker. I observed this both when in the presence of a participant while working and in the

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[45] This a summary of the voiced concern

presence of family who were calling other family members who were at work. These practices were also referred to by participants on many occasions not as a direct answer to a question but when describing the context in which they use their cell phone.

In my experience of Western culture, contact with family in the workplace is generally limited to emergency or micro co-ordination.[46] Micro co-ordination is discussed below and does occur through the cell phone during work time within Samoa, but discussions can also include and easily extend into (as described by participants) organising a family or community event, general gossip and ensuring the wellbeing of each other. To ignore such a call would be considered not right or disrespectful.

The issue of respectful cell phone behaviour was highlighted when I attended a local village meeting regarding a Recognised Seasonal Employment (RSE) scheme. Recognised Seasonal Employment Schemes facilitate groups of Samoans to regions within New Zealand to assist in seasonal work such as fruit picking for up to seven months of the year. The scheme fulfils a labour gap for this type of work in New Zealand and provides income for Samoans and their families who at times experience little employment opportunity. Once work is completed in New Zealand, the groups return home (Samoan Bureau of Labour, 2010).

The meeting concerning this village RSE scheme was to discuss passport and immigration expectations of the workers and was held in a village meeting house *fale tele.* In attendance were approximately fifty males and three females including myself with the *matai* discussing the requirements for the villagers to participate in the work scheme. During the meeting I noted a number of cell phones held or placed closely by the meeting participants. As the *matai* was speaking, texts were received and replied too, in addition, two cell phones rang and were answered, (although the participants eventually removed themselves). After the meeting I queried the *matai* on his thoughts on the cell phone use in the meeting. He replied that he found it very disrespectful and that it occurs often throughout many meetings and even during church services. He himself turns off his cell phone or places it on silent prior to meetings.

The theme of cell phone access and use during formal events was common both throughout rural and urban villagers, many stating that cell phones being used during gatherings of importance like church or village meetings was disrespectful. Nonetheless many of those

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[46] Expounding the individualism that Western culture purports

same participants also admitted to doing it themselves. The reason most used to justify the conflicting behavioural patterns was 'not wanting to miss out'.

Seemingly Samoa is undergoing similar changes as felt generally in the rest of the mobile world, an expanding blur between time and space, particularly felt in places where previously it was not experienced. This blurring is a cross over created by communication being mobile and not based on the location of the fixed line. Adjusting and determining expectations within varying environments such as meetings and sacred spaces will be path of the course for Samoa as it begins to adapt to this new found sense of being.

Figure 22. Russell, P. (2011). Sweeping the fale.

Always being contactable, while perhaps influencing a variety of practices in both public and private spaces, is also apparently allowing a greater ability to co-ordinate, and particularly micro-coordination.

> Micro-coordination is the nuanced management of social interactions. [It] can be seen in the redirection of trips that have already started, it can be seen in the iterative agreement as to where and when we can meet friends, and it can be seen, for example, in the ability to call ahead when we are late to an appointment (Ling, 2004. p160).

Richard Ling discusses micro-coordination in a number of papers and articles of research. In essence he explains it as achieving adaptability through the mobility of communication and that our emphasis is no longer generally on an exact time, rather time softens with the facility to call ahead, change locations, or make requests all while in transit from one place to another. His observations are from numerous studies but more specifically study undertaken on micro-coordination and 'hyper co-ordination' in Norway. His observations of trends even though predominately in Europe, appear to be similarly experienced in Samoa. To ground my observations around co-ordination it is important that I first describe the representative daily life that I observed while in the field.

In the rural village the typical day began at first light, with the family rising when the roosters crow (although they do crow all night). Daily chores within the village are set to and accomplished where possible in the morning and later in the cooler part of the day. Chores will include; feeding of the animals, starting cooking fires, food collection and preparation, washing clothes by hand, sweeping of the *fale*, placing away sleeping mats and mosquito nets, sweeping the yard of leaves and burning such. If a member of the family is in paid employment, they generally will be up, have eaten and be gone to the city by 7am.[47] Organisation of the day, including such arrangements as co-ordination via the cell phone can start as early as 5.30am, including the alarm being set if the worker anticipates they may sleep in.

Discussing co-ordination with the elder son (of the family I was staying with), he spoke of the time previous to the cell phone, where the co-ordination of tasks was either discussed prior to a person leaving the village, or was left until the next viable opportunity. This is supported by other conversations I had throughout my study and for the practical reason that there was little other way that this could have been achieved otherwise. Hence the Samoan people had presumably attained the required patience for the organisation process to occur. But, with the arrival of the cell phone, this form of co-ordination has become micro.

One such instance involved the acquisition of petrol, for petrol is only intermittently available in the South West side of the island. [48] After running out of petrol, using his cell phone, a villager contacted a friend in the city, who while out and about obtained a large container,

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[47] This depends upon how far away from the workplace the villager lives. For example, Satitoa is approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours from Apia.

[48] The local petrol provider was open only two days

filled it with petrol and placed it on the bus with instructions to the driver where to drop it. Without the cell phone, the acquisition of petrol would have had to wait till later the next day, all dictated by the times and availability of transport.

Micro co-ordination such as picking up items like butter when out and about in the rural villages is less likely to be organised by the cell phone because of the presence of village shops. The village shops are dotted throughout the village and are by and large run by families providing easy access to daily requirements such as items of food or grocery, albeit at a higher cost than to purchase the item in town.[49]

Figure 23. Russell, P. 2011. A Village Shop in Samusu.

On spending time in the village shop, I was able to observe the frequency and types of purchases made by villagers. By all accounts, the village shop appears to service the need of villagers who live day to day on the availability of cash to purchase food, with the shop providing easy access to gain the immediate or 'need now' items.[50] Combined with many of the village children attending and walking to the local school, facilitated micro co-ordination generally around organising and establishing agreed times for travel or access outside of the village to items not available within the local geography. This is more likely enhanced because it appeared that not all rural village families have cars and therefore transportation and the arrangement of such required such co-ordination.

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[49] The cost of some items is doubled or some packet items are broken down and sold individually.
[95] My observation of the role of the village shop is supported by the findings of Nicholas Courtney and his Masters Thesis '*Faleoloa Laititi, The role of small shops in developing Samoa*' , published in 2006.

This research appears to show differences between the micro co-ordination activities of rural villagers depending upon the income, social status and or education level of the family. The families I met within the village that had higher education, income and social status were inclined to have more cell phones. If you were of higher status being a village *matai*, church leader or business owner you have more reason to co-ordinate activities such as meetings, and other requirements.

The village pastor in Samusu frequently organised daily requirements for the church, his village shop and bus service through his cell phone, both with church members and his family, including his wife who also had a cell phone. Another local shop owner was able to leave the shop under her mother's watchful eye. When queries arose, her mother was able to call her immediately through the cell phone and co-ordinate expected times of return and possible closing time for the shop.

From my research, there are also differences of micro co-ordination between the rural and urban villages. In the urban village and within the capital Apia, micro-coordination appears to extend more around family or friend activities; who is doing what where, the need of collection from and to and tends more towards the need of items on the way to and from destinations. Whilst there are village shops within the urban villages, the accessibility to the local supermarkets and stores of many types provides the increased opportunity for the need to be fulfilled at reasonable cost. The increased number of cell phones within a family[51] also facilitates greater connectedness between each other and therefore opens more opportunity for micro co-ordination to occur. Ling discusses the impact the increased access to transportation has on micro co-ordination; in urban settings, greater access to motorisation and vehicles increases social distribution and the need or requirement for co-ordination is enhanced. These conclusions support the seemed differences of co-ordination between rural and urban localities in Samoa.

Access to easily co-ordinate with another as shown in this study and other social research undertaken on the cell phone is a valuable affordance of the cell phone. This extends into the ability to create opportunity through co-ordination, and as recent research (Donner, 2010; Heeks & Jagun, 2007; Sinha, 2012) discusses, the increased accessibility to entrepreneurship, micro financing and economic spin offs within developing countries. My observation

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[51] Observations and interviews with participants highlighted a significant difference between the number of cell phones in the rural families compared to the urban families. This is discussed later in chapter two.

surrounding the subject of economic development was how the cell phone appears to be providing rural villagers with a greater ability to organise work, particularly as work can be available on an ad hoc or temporary basis - some villagers may only know they have work the day or night prior. This was supported (but not limited) by the organisation that occurred with the family I was staying with in Satitoa.

Figure 24. Russell, P. 2011. Casual workers on their way too work

The son and father in law were temporarily employed to assist in building a *fale* in the city for a business. The son[52] of the family co-ordinated the workers and did so on an as required basis, calling and texting them the night before they were needed, generally while on the two hour journey home. Work would require the son to leave by 7am in the morning and return at times later than 9pm. The cell phone allowed him to co-ordinate work, church[53] and family activities on his journey to and from the village. Prior to the cell phone and with no other means of telecommunication within the village this would have been achieved orally taking greater time and requiring greater preparedness.

Extending from general employment is the opportunity to create wealth for one's self through entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship amongst the Samoan people has been limited, one reason possibly being inaccessibility to communication. While staying within Satitoa I was able to experience the impact of the cell phone on enterprise.

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[52] The son is in his early thirties and is the primary income earner for the family.
[53] He was a very active member in the church

It was about 9pm and while sitting in the *Fale* with family, the son received a call from his brother who works at the local resort restaurant. A *Palagi* tourist had asked where and how they were to gain a true Samoan fishing experience. The son is a partner in a fishing boat with his father-in-law, so upon receiving the call from his brother, called the father-in-law to discuss how to proceed. Upon agreement on price and how they would move forward with this potential opportunity, the participant called his brother back and provided the price and possible arrangements for leaving times to pass on to the tourist. The brother passed the information on and by the next day the father in law took the tourists fishing, catching a number of tuna and gaining over a week's wages for a morning's work plus petrol. The event culminated in a second trip with the same tourists gaining the same income. By the end of the week the son and his father-in-law had a poster created[54] and placed in the local accommodation (10 kms away) for tourists to see. This was a business opportunity that began from one cell phone call.

Without the cell phone, the brother would have had to wait till the other brother came home after work to discuss the opportunity. They then would have had to arrange to see the father-in-law before agreements could be made on price (This may not have happened till the next day depending upon transport availability). Once the price, time and general organisation of the event was decided and all information then provided to the brother, he would then have given the information to the tourist upon returning to work. It would have taken nearly two days for the event to be arranged and actioned and by taking this amount of time, the tourist may have decided to do something else and the opportunity could have passed. The cell phone was absolutely instrumental in facilitating this enterprise so quickly and will also be integral to its continuation.

The cell phone also provides a means of contact for farmers[55] to know the market price for their produce, not that this was overtly visible but was alluded to in one interview with a participant who likes to know the price of Taro before he takes it to the market. I also came to know through general discussions around village activity that local groups such as Women in Business Development Incorporated (WIBDI) and the truck that collects Noni juice co-ordinate pick up times for produce using the cell phone and texting.

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[54] This had to be done in Apia

[55] Farming in Samoa is generally small-scale (average farm size of 6 acres), dependent on family labour and predominantly focused on subsistence staples such as taro, banana, taamu, breadfruit and coconut with surpluses to farm household needs being sold in local markets (Food & Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations. 2011. P28).

Access to communication has enabled greater opportunity to gain income explicitly seen in the rural areas but this does not mean that all villagers take advantage of this, as many other aspects such as drive, personality and a whole multitude of aspects contribute to being the likes of an entrepreneur and reliability, skill levels assist with this kind of employment. However it is the now created access or increased connectedness to opportunity that is most prevalent and as discussed in the following increased access to communication or increased connectability also possibly enables other aspects of social well-being, such as safety.

Safety is a common theme throughout the body of research on the cell phone and is often highlighted as one its positive affordances. However the subject of safety did not arise as it has during previous research literature focused on other parts of the world (Castells et all, 2004. p.175). Comments by participants in regard to cell phones and children within Samoa were around being able to contact and connect with them rather than around safety. However, two key incidences regarding the cell phone and safety came through field discussions, one being the use of the cell phone for tsunami alerts.

Since the September 2009 Tsunami, Samoans are very conscious of such a disaster event happening again. While staying in Samoa for this research, a rather large earthquake was experienced on Sunday the 4th of September. A *matai* I met is connected to two Tsunami alert systems through his cell phone. One is a system operated through the government and the other operated through a private foreign practitioner (his friend) with new software and data analysis equipment.

Having slept through the earthquake, the *matai* was awoken by the beep on his cell phone. It was the private practitioner's advice on the earthquake and that there was no need for alarm. The next was a call from his daughter asking if he felt the earthquake. The third a text (two minutes later) was the system sanctioned by the government advising to head for higher ground. The *matai* discussed with me the many times that this occurs and inevitably the private practitioner's data tends to be correct. Nonetheless, at the time the *matai* then called his sister using his cell phone and discussed what, if any, action they should undertake. Upon viewing the ocean (they live right upon the shoreline) they decided to take the advice of the private practitioner. Not having access to the private practioners alerts nor willing to take chances, other villagers had decided to heed the warning they received from the government sanctioned system and headed for higher ground. Subsequently no tsunami occurred and all remained well. The use of the cell phone was extensively used both in the issue of warnings

and in the subsequent co-ordination between parties on the actions to be undertaken. The cell phone became a tool affording information in the form of a warning system enabling decisions to be made with regard to safety. Nonetheless, it could also have potentially created confusion and it was only because of the experience of the *matai* that this was avoided. [56]

A differing incident occurred where the cell phone was highlighted as a possible tool affording safety. This story was recounted to me when casually discussing the impact of the cell phone with a village *matai* who resides on the village *fono* or council. The *matai* attended a council meeting convened for a hearing on an act of an accused rape and recounted the story to me.

A family had returned to see a young man in their daughter's sleeping area. The young man was said to have absconded when seen by the returning family. The issue was now before the council whereupon the daughter was queried on her relationship with the young man. The girl informed the council that the boy was her boyfriend, they had been texting and had had 'relations' prior to this instance. The girl on that evening had asked the boy (through her cell phone) to come to the *fale* to be with her as she was afraid that the step father had wrongful desires and she needed the boyfriend for safety. Nonetheless, when the parents including the stepfather saw the boy, he fled. The council upon hearing the girl's explanation then called upon both the boy and the step father to each attend a hearing for consideration. The boy had validated the girl's story when spoken to by cell phone but now could no longer be contacted and it is rumoured he is away with the girl (also no longer contactable). The stepfather could no longer be contacted also and is said to have returned to another country.

As the participating *matai* stated, even though the truth of the matter convened before the village *fono* could not be established and the case remains open, the incident does highlight the role of the cell phone in creating possible safety, or preventing wrong doing, or just the basic ability to contact anyone or not.

This is an unverifiable anecdote, on a number of levels, but it offers the (tenuous) suggestion that while safety is not an important reason for acquiring the cell phone, it has out of its presence enabled greater access to it. As Katz and Castell discuss

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[56] Having experienced first-hand the 2009 Tsunami and since being active in the administration of warning systems and knowledge of such disasters.

Hence, while the emphasis is on safety,[57] once the device is available, its uses proliferate. Understanding that a phone in the hand is a great on-ramp, as it were, to the sale of persistent services, there is much joint enthusiasm on the part of the marketer and the customer to work together to buy and use mobile technology.

Next we look at two services that seem to be integral to Samoan's use of the cell phone and how the marketer of services appears to target, design and adapt services to meet or integrate with culture and customs (Katz & Castells, 2008).

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[57] Now enabled rather than emphasised as a reason for purchasing the device in Samoa

6.0   My Gift to You: Gift giving practices using the cell phone

Culture, traditions, customs and values all shape the societies in which we live providing guidance for how to act, communicate and use tools within the society in which they appropriate. Culture and customs also change with the inputs of others, be they invited or not and include (but are not limited to) language, philosophy, religions and technology (including materials and tools) . Samoa has experienced the influence of others from 1722 with the documented discovery of the islands by Bouganville, who referred to them as the Navigator islands. However, significant change began to occur with the arrival of Reverend John Williams in 1830 and the conversion of Samoa to Christianity. In 1899 possession of Samoa was divided between Germany (Western Samoa) and the United States (then Eastern Samoa, now American Samoa). At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, New Zealand occupied Western Samoa and administered the islands until 1962 when Samoa gained back independence (TeAra. 2012). During these periods of time and now those that have come into contact with the islands, be it just visiting, with the view to trade or to enjoy a holiday, all influence whether intentionally or not, in some part upon the Samoan culture and customs.

This chapter explores in particular the aspect of Samoan culture or customs that have been adopted or transferred in some way to the cell phone. It looks at how Samoans are positioned in relation to a number of practices by the local service providers of the cell phone. The custom we explore is gift giving which is a custom which has been described often in accounts of Samoa, since in fact Bouganville first came to the islands.

Gift Giving (*mea'alofa*) is an important aspect of Samoan culture.

> The gifting process is seen by Samoan people as the "physical embodiment of the giver's feelings towards the receiver" (Sio, 2006). That is to say, through the physical (visible) act of gifting, the sometimes invisible (yet evident) attributes of human emotions, psychological capacity and reasoning, social and relational community, and the spiritual make-up of the two parties are connected through the *mea'alofa* exchange (Seiuli, 2010).

There are several points engaging this custom and its application to the affordances of the cell phone. The first is in the acquisition of the cell phone. While further study needs to be

undertaken in this area, nearly all of those interviewed received their cell phone as a gift from someone else,[58] generally between family members, both internal and external to Samoa.

There was also, however, more limited evidence of an exchange of phones between friends, which could be attributed as a confirmation of the relationship such as in the following statements from participants:

> "I don't allow my kids to have a phone but they get them from their friends"

> "I lost my phone so my friend gave me another one to use. Sometimes we trade phones cause we get bored"

While gift giving is generally the gifting of a physical object to another, Feldmann discusses the mediated interactions undertaken by youth using the phone as forms of gift giving and how it raises questions around the exchange and obligation of reciprocity. While Feldmann's observation is made with reference to Western culture, there is sufficient evidence in my finding to flag this for further research into whether Samoan youth, having traditional obligations ensconced around gift giving, transfer these rituals and practices into their practices around the cell phone.

There are examples in particular of many Samoan youth becoming attached to the cell phone and its high use to mediate social networks. The exchange of content is a means of expressing the relationship between the sender and receiver within a social network. The need to respond to communication, particularly between peers, could be assumed to be more intensely felt due to the undergirding values that surround gift giving. This said, this is a premise that is purported from analysis and reflection of observations rather than something highlighted by those observed and interviewed, therefore providing, again, an area for further research.

As shown gift giving as part of Samoan custom possibly influences the nature in which acquisition of the phone is facilitated and also in the generation and sharing of communication. Additionally, gift giving has been one cultural aspect that has adapted to the service *Credit U/Credit Me* available by provider Digicel. *Credit U/Credit Me* allows users to extend credit from their phone to another's Digicel phone. It also enables users to request someone to give them credit. During my stay in Samoa my phone number was given out.

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[58] Most phones were given by family members. Not one participant mentioned purchasing their own phone. This does not mean to say that they didn't.

After having visited some places I would receive texts requesting credit. I was unsure how best to handle the occurrence presenting in itself a personal dilemma which I managed by choosing to ignore the messages all together. This I found to be an explicit example of cultural difference and my inability to decide upon respectful response resulted in avoidance altogether.

Requesting credit is a regular occurrence for Samoans who often feel obligated to fulfill the request, possibly motivated by the embarrassment if they do not as this could be seen as disrespectful. Whether intentional by Digicel or not, the undergirding customs of the Samoan people enable the uptake and continuous use of this service. Through my own experience and as far as I can ascertain, this is not a common undertaking by cell phone users within western culture.

Extending from *Credit U*/*Credit Me* was the launch in March 2011 of Digicel *Mobile Money*. Access to banks is not readily available to rural villagers with all banking institutions being in Apia. The introduction of *Mobile Money* provides Samoans both rural and urban, with the ability to transfer money to family or friends who are on the Digicel network, between the two islands of Savai'i and Upolu. The person receiving the money is able to use it straight away to Top Up, [59] pay bills or withdraw the cash from any Digicel agent creating a mobile wallet (Digicel 2011). Fees are generated for the service provider from both sending the money and the withdrawing of the money. Holding the funds within the Digicel network until withdrawn also purports an opportunity for Digicel to gain equity from the interest paid while the money is in their holding account. Digicel works with the *Central Bank of Samoa* to provide this service, which is enabled through the technology developed by KlickEx, an online currency exchange platform developed in New Zealand.

By October 2011 Digicel *Mobile Money* was extended from the internal market to the external market to facilitate the transfer of remittances back to Samoa. A remittance is money sent from a family member who is working overseas back to their family in Samoa. In a profile on Samoa presented by the Migration Policy Institute in 2010 Samoa received $143 million dollars (more than any other form of income) through remittances from 120,000 emigrants scattered predominately throughout New Zealand, Australia and America. In the year 2000 they received $45 million dollars (no statistics were available of the scale of the diaspora for this year). In the space of ten years the value of remittances tripled. Prior to the

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[59] 'Top Up' is the term used to place credit on your phone

cell phone the transfer of money was conducted through traditional banking networks which had high fees and could take days at a time. However, the cell phone now affords the transfer of money between parties to be instantaneous and (comparatively) more cost effective.

As this is a relatively new service to Samoa I was unable to determine or observe with great depth the nature of any social influences this new technology might be creating. The increased access to communication through the cell phone and now the increased access to readily transferred funds, I propose, will have significant influence on Samoans both within Samoa and internationally. It is a subject area deserving of research raising possible questions around obligation, access and economics.

Whilst gift giving has been adapted and adopted to both the service, use and practice around the cell phone another behavioural influence on adaption and adoption is available time and Samoans who are not regularly employed tend to have a lot of time available. Availability of time also changes behaviour as we adapt to having more or less time, busy or quiet times. Services provided can also entrench easily within customary lives and be facilitated through customs, law, economies and time. Once such example that explicitly differs to my experiences with cell phone service provision in New Zealand is the gambling (purporting to be 'games') marketed to users within Samoa. These games (while I was using my phone), came through daily in text form, asking me 'to be in to win', or play a quiz game where you had to pay to advance each level. Upon asking some participants about the games, their perceptions and comments varied from concern at how often people were playing and the money they were spending, to a sense of gratification for the opportunity it provided to fill down time. [60]

To follow is an example of some text for a game.

> To play, customers text "HUNT" to 4868. You will receive a text telling you what type treasure you've found, how heavy it is, the total weight of your treasure and where you're ranked amongst the rest of the Treasure Hunters. The more you text, the better your chance of acquiring loads of treasure. The winner will be the person who has the heaviest treasure at the end of the Treasure Hunt. Your Treasure Hunt will

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[60] There is much downtime particularly during (for the most part) the heat of the day and because of contributing factors like subsistence living and lack of employment as it is viewed in the West.

take you too many different locations around Samoa. But be wary of Jack Sparrow, he will steal the treasure you acquired in the past 24 hours (Digicel, 2011).

This was a concerning element most likely because of my own knowledge of the ramifications of gambling. Both gambling and the addiction and other consequences it can cause are widely advertised in New Zealand and it was surprising to me that there appeared to be no restrictions around accessibility to playing the games. I made the subsequent discovery that there were no laws around the governance of gambling in Samoa and therefore it was deemed legal. That being said it would presumably be deemed to be unacceptable behaviour, on the grounds of violating key values within Samoan society and the Christian faith.

Figure 27. Advertising for a game in the local paper.
Note in the small print 40 sene per text.

In completing my research and keeping an eye on local media. I noted that the effects of accessibility to such games have reached a parliamentary level of concern.

"I have seen children as young as five years old gambling on phones," Lealailepule[61] tells the *Weekend Observer*. "It's a dangerous sign to see children in that state and it's costing our community unnecessary costs. I have seen people topping up every day and yet they are struggling these mobiles are a major social problem to the community" (*Samoan Weekend Observe*r, 2012).

While Lealailepule is referring not only to gambling, it is his last line that aptly depicts I believe (as observed), the anxiety that parts of Samoan society is feeling towards some of the issues presenting themselves around the now entrenched presence of the cell phone and the influence it is having on Samoan in general.

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[61] Lealailepule Rimoni Aiafi is a Samoan politician

7.0 Conclusion

This research aimed to explore how the cell phone has influenced the daily lives of Samoans, to understand how it has drawn from, helped to generate, contributed to, and shaped the daily activities within villages and Samoan daily culture and customs, based especially on the perceptions of Samoans from two villages. This research only allows a snapshot of complex, ongoing changes within the relationship between technology and the social in Samoa, and was inevitably constrained by a number of practical and social factors (not least my gender and status as a visitor and outsider)

Many participants of this study highlighted that the cell phone is both a 'tool' and a 'weapon', and this ambivalence was expressed in different contexts and for contrasting reasons. And so I find it appropriate to conclude this thesis in a similar way. We begin by first looking at the cell phone as a tool.

Tools are enablers; they are typically assumed as having a positive influence on the Samoan way of life. As a tool the cell phone appears to be enabling connectivity across different spaces and times, local and international, between all types of relationships including familial which my participants emphasised is fundamental to being Samoan. The cell phone appears to have reduced the time and cost spent in communicating with those they wish to connect with, particularly those that are not placed within their immediate geography. The cell phone facilitates the ability to communicate more quickly, creating greater opportunities around work and enterprise and at least for some users has transformed activities that required a fair amount of planning into activities requiring micro co-ordination. The cell phone has, based on research conducted in other countries, enabled a greater feeling of safety because of the ability to be able to contact another. This was not a subject that was highlighted by participants in this study, although safety was raised in relation to Tsunami warnings.

It appears, as has been reported globally, that the cell phone has created greater privacy for Samoan youth permitting them to form their own personal and social networks minimising the involvement of adults. Whilst this for youth seems to be a positive, for the adults it seems to be disconcerting as a loss of knowing the relationships of their youth appears to be on the rise. Ultimately, it could be proposed, this challenges the customary relationships of power

and certainly the cell phone as perceived by some of the adult participants interviewed in these terms.

The core social values of Samoa seem to be undergoing new tensions, particularly from youth who, as experienced globally, use the cell phone to create their own forms of communication and networks of which exclude adults. Prior to the cell phone it appears that most Samoan adults knew a great deal about what their children were doing and who they were communicating with; life and communication were generally inclusive. However, greater access by youth to peer support and increased access to outside knowledge have possibly (based on this research) contributed to an implicit feeling, for the Samoan parent, of being undermined. This is such a strong feature of my interviews and participants encounters that it warrants further investigation.

While the cell phone creates a (virtual) communal space into which to enter, connect and share over time and space, that space is only generally shared at any given moment between two people or entities. This perhaps is seen and felt to be in contradiction with the Samoan perceptions and uses around (physical) communal spaces which have customarily been more open, inclusive and vocal rather than the closed, exclusive and at times silent sharing that appears to be enabled by functions such as texting.

The cell phone has created the potential for a more seamless integration between the local and global economy particularly through the more immediate connections it enables to the Samaon diaspora. While the cell phone promotes an opportunity to create wealth and provides greater access to transfer money, it also provides unexpected costs in doing so. The ability to request credit and to ask for money combined with the traditions and values around gifting and respect were reported as issues that raise concern and highlight greater need for more detailed research to truly understand the nature and scale of such behaviour. Secondly there appears to be a dominance surrounding the provision of these services and cell phone connections and the majority of the wealth created going to a private and off shore company. While the initial reason for enabling cell phone communication by the Government and international bodies was to increase opportunity, it was also to increase fair market competition and it seems that this objective is not being reached with the majority of revenue created through cell phones being controlled by one key player.

There are many similarities between what Samoa is experiencing in relation to the cell phone and what is being experienced in other parts of the world. As highlighted through this study these areas are micro co-ordination, youth, connectedness and increased opportunities in work, safety and finance through increased access to communication. However, what differentiates Samoa from other countries is the local culture that has for the most part permeated daily Samoan life, traditionally reinforcing a particular set of values founded on a recognition especially of concepts of status, respect, obedience, love and service, and reinforced through the structures of family, village and church. It could be argued that the influence of the cell phone is blurring and challenging expectations and boundaries in these areas.

This research has identified, although only in the broadest terms, the differences between rural and urban contexts in shaping perceptions, uses and practices around the cell phone, more often than not intersecting again with established divisions based on status and wealth. However, perhaps most importantly, it has implicitly highlighted a lack of local knowledge in how to manage fundamental change that is both directly and indirectly affecting Samoan daily lives. Perhaps the one definite proposition put forward from this thesis, is that there is an absolute need for discussions and education to increase in this area within the Samoan community as a whole. The speed in which the cell phone has given Samoans access to new forms of communication was enabled by leapfrogging the growth and development steps generally experienced with technology in other parts of the developed world. This perhaps did not provide or allow for the changes to culture to migrate incrementally and thus creating a greater feeling of loss of power or control, particularly for elder Samoans.

Finally this qualitative research emplued an ethnographic design but with minimal time and its fair share of challenges. Therefore we could categorise it as exploratory which espouses premises that are yet to be confirmed through more extensive or longitudinal research. Nonetheless this project demonstrates the value of qualitative research into this kind of change in order to develop a rich and nuanced understanding in the ways in which people within very different social, political, economic and cultural contexts are engaging with and appropriating such technologies in their daily lives.

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