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**Women's Leadership as a Symbolic Act of  
Reproduction:  
A Case Study in the Solomon Islands**

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fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

of

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by

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## Abstract

Literature on women's leadership over the last three decades suggests that women's leadership perspectives have been predominantly influenced by either Euro-centric patriarchal views or those of women in economically developed countries. These are significantly different from an economically developing Pacific Island like the Solomon Islands, in particular, its Santa Isabel Island.

The literature, therefore, overlooks the impacts women's indigenous culture may have in order to understand their leadership beliefs and practices. Bourdieu (1977b) argues that people's practices are embodied within their cultures, forming habitus through their past and present experiences, both consciously and unconsciously. I argue that women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices cannot be fully understood without considering these social and cultural norms operating in their specific cultures. My thesis explores the impact of the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture on women's formed leadership beliefs and practices. The main research question therefore is:

How do women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices form in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture? Sub questions arising from this are:

1. In what ways does the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture influence women leaders' beliefs and practices?
2. To what extent does the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture contribute to the formation of women leaders' cultural leadership beliefs and practices?
3. How do women leaders practice leadership in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture?

My research was undertaken using a case study methodology, linked with Bourdieu's (1977b) habitus as a lens for exploring women leaders' leadership practices in Santa Isabel in the Solomon Islands context through using interviews, informal observations and focus groups. The findings were generated through Bourdieu's (1977b) habitus theory for capturing an in-depth understanding of how women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices were formed. Key findings demonstrated that women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices were influenced by their matrilineal culture and early learning experiences in Santa Isabel. The study also revealed that these women leaders used leadership practices appropriate

for their context. As a result, they formed leadership beliefs and practices that demonstrated a symbolic act of reproduction of their cultural habitus that reflected their existing leadership thinking.

The study has contributed to the research field by recognising the impact of cultural embodiment, the habitus and social reproduction of the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture on women's leadership beliefs and practices. It fills a critical gap in understanding women's leadership as a symbolic act of reproduction of their cultural beliefs and practices which has been overlooked in women's leadership literature.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

Those hands so soft held me at birth,  
Nurtured me and made me of my worth.

You sang to my ears,  
You told me stories,  
You were there for all these years.  
You held your dreams with mine,  
You were there within time.

Now it's my turn

To do the same.

For I have learned from you

Grandma.

— Anonymous female Cree youth from Alberta

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part provides an overview of my personal experiences that led to this research. The second part describes my interest in pursuing this study. The third part offers a general background about women's leadership in the Solomon Islands. The fourth part illustrates the overarching question and the sub-questions that guided the processes in this research and the last part outlines the organisation of this thesis.

### **Personal Experience Leading to this Research**

I begin by locating my beliefs and outlining my journey that led to where I am now and, eventually, to the writing of this thesis. I describe my place, my family, childhood, education and career experiences that shaped my views and thinking.

My genealogy links me to the *Koramata Posomonggo* clan, known to all Santa Isabellians by the totem parrot bird. This connection is traced through my maternal great-great grandmother, great grandmother, grandmother and mother who belong to this clan, highlighting reasons why the poem above resonated with me. As the eldest granddaughter and daughter who grew up in a rural Bugotu village on Santa

Isabel Island in the Solomon Islands, I was bestowed with privileges in access to both oral and written information about land custodianship rights, clan genealogies and clan rituals. I was also taught about clan and family responsibilities of care and relationships. Hence, these are likely to have influenced the way I understand and view things today. As a child growing up I remember knowing my great-great grand-mother, great-grandmother and grandmother as *kave-nggu* and address them as *kave*. My great grand-father and grandfather are *kue-nggu* and I address them as *ku'e*. My mother and aunts are *ido nggu* or I address them as *ido* and my father and uncles are known as *tama-nggu* and I address them as *mama*. These were and are the appropriate kinship and relationship terms to use in my clan to honour and respect the responsibilities of care that have continued to exist in our knowledge system for generations.

I understand now that these are some aspects of how leadership is done in Santa Isabel matrilineal communities. For instance, elders were/are kin leaders who played significant roles in shaping us, when young our ways of knowing and being. They were the ones who taught us the language, social norms, values, practices, folklores, rituals and ceremonies. They taught us young girls and boys the appropriate words to use in certain situations and for certain relationships. For example, the words *vanga* or *ima*; mean to eat; however, *vanga* is used in casual situations with family and close friends, while *ima* is used in situations with family elders and visitors. They taught us to weave, to fish and hunt, to gather plants, seeds, nuts and shells and to understand the significance of prayer, meditation and chant that go with each plant and each occasion. I spent as much time as I could get being with my elders, whenever I had the opportunity during my school holidays, since my quest for education took me out of their care and teaching for long periods.

I believe my early introduction to these values and cultural practices is also what I now understand to be epistemological and societal concerns in Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands. For instance, some of these values and cultural practices of respect may have prevented women from not taking up leadership roles in educational and other formal settings. This has led me to want to understand this in new ways of thinking for Santa Isabellians and perhaps Solomon Islanders. The views and thinking that have continued to motivate my actions are located within the Santa Isabel context.

## **My education**

I first experienced Western education in the mid-1960s when it was introduced into the rural communities of the Solomon Islands by the Anglican missionaries. These were junior primary (Grades 1 to 3) and senior primary (Grades 4-7) schools built within and around communities. My first year of formal education was at the age of six in a primary school thirty minutes' walk along the beach during low tide and one hour walk inland during high tide. At this time, too, our home looked and felt like a boarding school dormitory. My parents had accommodated other extended families' children from nearby villages (six girls and nine boys) during the school term (Mondays to Fridays) to enable them to receive formal education. I could confidently say that this was my first taste of leadership. My parents gave us a daily rota of duties to do. For example, a normal day would start at dawn when some of us would prepare breakfast and pack recess and lunch food, while others cleaned and tidied the home and others attended morning prayers in the village church. These were followed by breakfast, washing the dishes and then walking to school. School usually began as soon as the teacher entered the classroom and finished when the classroom became hot. After school, it was rota duties again which ranged from boys going fishing, clearing bush for a garden and firewood splitting with my father. Girls, fetched water, planted or weeded the garden, collected root crops and vegetables or nuts and sea shells and washed clothes with my mother. Evening meal preparation followed next and then evening church service, dinner and then talks with my parents and all of us about school work, issues of the day and then reminders for the next day, bed time prayers and bed time.

At age 9 and 10, I attended a co-education boarding school which was 3 hours paddling and 20 minutes by out-board motor boats from my village. At the age of 12, I attended a senior girls' Anglican primary boarding school which was a full day trip in an inter-island boat or half a day trip in an outboard powered boat. I passed the Solomon Islands Secondary School entrance exam and was very fortunate to be the first female and person from my village to get a placement in the Anglican Secondary School Selwyn College as it is still known today. Selwyn College is located on the island of Guadalcanal and where the national capital is. This means travelling 24 hours or more from my village to Guadalcanal Island in an inter-island boat. The five years of education received in this school gave me the

opportunity to continue to a tertiary teacher education institution in Papua New Guinea and later to South Australia. This was in the late 1980s and very few women had pushed cultural boundaries to receive tertiary education, in particular in overseas institutions.

### **My career**

My six years of tertiary education (three years in Papua New Guinea and three years in Australia) as a home economics secondary school teacher equipped me with the subject content and professional skills to teach in various secondary schools (rural and urban) in the Solomon Islands on my return. As there were very few women with degree qualifications, there were many opportunities for women in the field of education. Thus after three years of secondary school teaching, I joined the School of Education, at the Solomon Islands College of Education (SICHE), now the Solomon Islands National University (SINU), as a home economics and professional studies lecturer. In these early years, I began to question the teacher education programmes that the School of Education was offering. My question was about the relevance and usefulness of the outcomes of education. Thus in the late 1990s when I was fortunate to secure a scholarship to study at the University of Waikato in New Zealand towards a Masters of Education (Professional Studies), I undertook research focusing on understanding higher education leaders' perspectives of useful educational outcomes, entitled; *Really useful educational outcomes in the Solomon Islands: An exploratory study* (Maezama, 2000). This was necessary because until recently, the outcomes of education in the Solomon Islands' schools and tertiary education since independence in 1978 were those developed by missionaries and the English colonial government, which mirrored those of developed nations (Maezama, 2000; Sade, 2009; Sikua, 2002).

I was interested in this topic because at the time, the country was in turmoil caused by ethnic tensions. According to Sade (2009) many people held Solomon Islands' education responsible for some of the underlying tensions, since the curriculum was largely academic rather than technical and was seen as contributing to unemployment. Similarly, Sikua (2002), in his study on the establishment of Community High Schools (CHS) in the Solomon Islands, found that many communities that established CHS had concerns about the curriculum and thought

that it was not helping students gain skills for self-employment or village life. Thus it was felt that such education was alienating young people from their own culture and language (Sikua, 2002).

My master's study, using Richard Johnson's framework of really useful knowledge (Johnson, 1988), highlighted concerns for the development of responsible attitudes and behaviour through the inculcation of values, particularly traditional values that emphasised loyalty to family, village and tribal groups. These widened loyalty to and responsibility for the nation as well.

Since then, as Head of School of the School of Education at SICHE in 2007 -2010, I was involved in a partnership programme with the School of Education at the University of Waikato, funded by New Zealand's International Aid and Development Agency (NZAID). The focus of this partnership was on developing capacity in the School and introducing new teacher education programmes and was carried out in three phases: namely, initiation, implementation and institutionalisation. As a result, I was forced to reflect deeply on the content and delivery of our existing programmes and the best way to change them to meet the current needs of schools and students.

However, at times my leadership was questioned. For example, during the initial stage of the partnership my leadership was referred to as "new, less experienced" (McGee & Rodie, 2011, p. 16) and in the implementation stage, students' dissatisfaction with living allowances resulted in a call for my resignation through a public and unruly demonstration. These incidents caused me to reflect, and several such incidents led me to search the literature about women and leadership in Melanesia. Maybe I was experiencing Bourdieu's *habitus*: that I was inside my cultural milieu and I was seeing myself as different because the "rules" were different. *Habitus* is a term I am using to analyse my research data and is explored more deeply in Chapter 4. At that stage of my leadership career, I was not sure what to think, but it seemed most women leaders in this institution have had similar experiences. I needed to know why this might be so.

I also wanted to learn more about why my experience of leadership in this institution was viewed as "new and less experience." Perhaps it was because of the institution's

Western structures and understanding of leadership roles and responsibilities but I was unsure. I was curious to learn what the terms “new and less experienced” in leadership meant and how these may relate to the institutional culture of staging demonstrations when women were appointed as Head of School. Similarly, I wanted to learn that knowingly, that despite these incidences women from matrilineal cultures were still interested in applying and taking up the Head of School positions in this institution.

From these studies and my experiences of leadership, I concluded that among others, aspects of desirable useful educational outcome expected in economically developing countries such as the Solomon Islands was familiarity with the society’s history and culture and a capacity for leadership. In particular, the development of a deep understanding of existing political, educational and social structures and leadership was necessary to underpin people’s ability to be critical of issues that affect their families, communities and societies. A consequence of this ability and knowledge could be the development of leadership capacity.

Therefore, my masters study research combined with my personal and professional experiences, motivated this doctoral thesis.

In recent times, increasing women’s participation in community, education and political leadership has become a priority agenda item in education and leadership reforms internationally. A key concern in women’s leadership research is the need for appropriate leadership learning and practice that is situated in various sociocultural contexts.

### **My research interest**

My leadership interest came from my own personal background within my family. As the eldest granddaughter and daughter in a large rural Santa Isabel matrilineal family, I am a recognised leader not only because of my education but also because of my established identity, which is traced from a common female ancestress. In this case, I receive both the rights of descent and of land and hold valuable group knowledge, specifically of genealogies and represent group interests in exchanges and interactions with others. A role is also to promote moral values, which include acting as mediator and peacemaker in dealing with social conflicts. Hence, I began

to formulate ideas about leadership and articulate a link between family and leadership.

My professional experience with leadership in education stemmed from an unsuccessful dialogue and negotiation over student living allowances which ended in a belligerent student protest in April 2009, during my third year of tenure as the Head of School of the School of Education at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE). My observation and reflection of this chaotic situation showed that most Santa Isabel student teachers and staff did not participate in this protest. Hence, I questioned why, when I had this role, I felt completely able to do it, but experience so much frustrations, roadblocks and antagonism that I had no way of making sense of it. Thus, I needed to understand where I came from in order to understand how women like myself preferred to exercise leadership and where the strengths and weaknesses are in this approaches of leadership.

This experience provided the impetus for my desire to explore how the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture influences women's leadership beliefs and practices and how this knowledge could enhance women's participation in decision-making in both educational and community settings.

### **Background of Women's Leadership**

In the Solomon Islands, Strachan (2009) observes that "sex-disaggregated data is not systematically collected" (p.103) and is quite difficult to obtain. Even so, the representation of women in educational leadership positions is very low (Akao, 2008). For example, out of the 211 secondary school principals and deputy principals, only 28 are female, which equals to only 13% (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2009). A major impediment, I believe lies with the inadequate addressing of the role of culture in shaping attitudes to women's leadership (Whittington, Ospina, & Pollard, 2006). This hunch needed examining. Similarly, despite the Solomon Islands having ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Solomon Island women continue to be relatively absent in educational and formal leadership positions because of the cultural, religious and patriarchal male hegemonic practices that deny women access to equal participation in educational and formal leadership roles.

Based on my experiences and involvement in leadership in both education and community contexts, I have come to know and have lived experiences of the concerns raised by education policy makers, researchers, school principals, teachers, parents, students and the general populace about educational leadership and women's participation in decision making in both educational and community settings. These concerns highlighted leadership practices relating to addressing teacher absenteeism, lack of commitment and motivation and unprofessional behaviour in educational contexts (Taylor & Pollard, 2004; Wrightson, 2005). My involvement in the Solomon Islands Education Sector Coordinating Committee, from 2007 to 2010, alerted me to challenges that limited research-based evidence had on school and women's leadership decisions and policy. I believe that the availability of research-based information could better inform the decisions made by Solomon Islands' education policy makers on these highlighted issues. Hence, I have an obligation to help address this paucity. I consider that the information generated by listening to the voices of women leaders from the matrilineal context provided by this research provides empirical information that could help address the concerns of educational leadership, in particular the absence of women in leadership roles and women's educational leadership knowledge in a wider sense.

### **Overarching Research Aim**

The overarching research aim was to explore and examine the influences of the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture on women's leadership beliefs and practices.

### **Research Questions**

The overarching research question was:

How do women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices form in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture? And the sub questions arising from this were:

1. In what ways does the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture influence women leaders' beliefs and practices?
2. To what extent does the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture contribute to the formation of women leaders' cultural leadership beliefs and practices?

3. How do women leaders practice leadership in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture?

## **Thesis organisation**

This thesis is organised into eight chapters. Chapter 1 has provided a brief introduction drawn from my personal and professional experiences as the impetus for this study and is followed by the research context in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Research Context: This chapter provides a brief description of the context of this study. It includes a brief history of the region along with information about the geography, the socio-cultural, socio-economic context, description and explanation of leadership structures and the educational position of Santa Isabel island where the research is located. It also describes the sites where the research was conducted. This information was collected mainly through anthropological studies, provincial government, national government, nongovernment and international organisation reports. Stories from my grandparents, tribal elders and parents were also used. Information was also generated from my knowledge of direct observation growing up and living in this region.

Chapter 3: Literature Review: This chapter examines and critiques literature relating to women's leadership beliefs and practices. It begins with exploring literature pertaining to some popular women's and educational leadership ideas in developed countries. It acknowledges and reviews the contribution and importance of this literature that relates to women's educational leadership practices. More precisely, social justice principles of leadership and the importance of relational leadership to women are addressed. This is followed by investigating literature on women's educational leadership in economically developing countries. It addresses indigenous leadership, women in indigenous communities, women in Melanesian contexts, women and leadership in Santa Isabel and leadership in matrilineal societies. Finally, leadership theories relevant to the Santa Isabel context, in particular, leadership theories such as spiritual, relational, servant, the village and big man leadership are outlined, and the chapter concludes with a summary.

Chapter 4: Research Methods: This chapter outlines the underlying philosophy, methodology, and my positioning in the research. The first part, explains ontological and epistemological stances that I hold, and how these stances led to an interpretive paradigm. The second part describes the suitability of a qualitative case study methodology in understanding Santa Isabel women's leadership beliefs and practices. It also illustrates my position as a researcher and identifies some potential issues confronted when undertaking my research. The part also explains my analytical lens, the notion of habitus, and the usefulness this has in exploring Santa Isabel women's leadership beliefs, experiences and practices. The third part justifies the selection of specific methods and their suitability for understanding women's leadership beliefs and practices.

Chapter 5: Undertaking the Research Process: This chapter explains the processes in generating data to understand how the matrilineal culture has shaped women's leadership beliefs and practices. First, it describes the case study phases of the research, how data were generated and how I managed outsider and insider issues during the research process. Second, the chapter explains my steps in data analysis, how the key themes emerged, and how these emergent themes helped me to conceptualise women's leadership beliefs and practices in the Santa Isabel context. Third, I describe how I maintained ethical practices during both the data generation and the drafting of the findings. In the fourth section, I explain how I ensured trustworthiness throughout the research process, and finally there is a summary of the chapter.

Chapter 6: Research Findings: This chapter presents findings of the research by addressing each of the research questions with supporting data. It begins with presenting the influences of matrilineal culture on women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices. This is followed by reporting on factors that contributed to women leaders' formed leadership beliefs and practices. Next it presents women leaders' formed leadership beliefs and practices and their formed habitus. Finally, it provides a concluding summary of the whole chapter.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Theorising: This chapter discusses the main findings of this thesis in three sections according to each of the research questions. Each question is answered by providing examples from the findings. These uncovered

important aspects of cultural and institutional influences that shaped women leaders' specific leadership beliefs and practices. This discussion synthesises and analyses data in the light of the literature and Bourdieu's (1977) habitus in order to answer the three research questions.

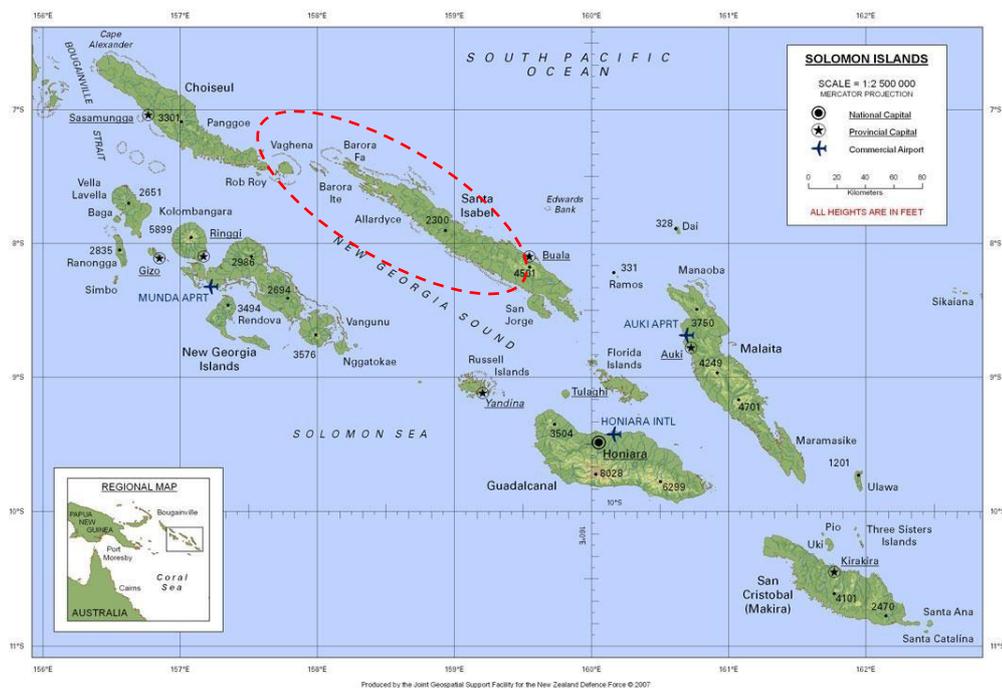
Chapter 8: Conclusion: This chapter provides a summary of the entire research, its limitations, and major contributions. It also includes some recommendations for further study, closing with a final reflection on my thesis.

## Chapter Two: Research Context

This chapter provides a brief overview of the communities in which this research is contextualised. It begins with a brief history and geography of the island of Santa Isabel; next, it gives a brief account of socio-cultural and educational contexts, followed by outlining current leadership structures and the composition of the case study site.

### Santa Isabel Island

Santa Isabel Island is traditionally known as *Bugotu* and has had a history of human occupation for several thousand years before it finally came into contact with Europeans around 1558 (Kinch, 2004). This was when Spaniard, Alvaro De Mendana came upon it on his travels from Peru. He named it Santa Isabel in honour of his patron saint Ysabel, in the late 1560s (Bogesi, 1948; Moore, 2013). Santa Isabel, as it is known now, is one of the six large islands that make up the state of the Solomon Islands, a double chain archipelago with a total land area of 28,369 square kilometres, which is located about 1,900 kilometres northeast of Australia (Figure 2.1).



**Figure 2.1:** Map of Solomon Islands.

Source : [www.mappery.com/maps-solomon-islands](http://www.mappery.com/maps-solomon-islands)

Santa Isabel and the other main islands namely; Choiseul, New Georgia, Malaita, Guadalcanal and San Cristobal, and many small islands make up the nation's nine provinces and 50 electoral constituencies. The nation's capital Honiara is situated on Guadalcanal. All these large islands are mountainous and sparsely populated.

Santa Isabel island, with a total land area of 4,136 square kilometres (Peterson, Hamilton, Pita, Atu, & James, 2012) is a fertile island with a sparsely settled population of about 26,000 people residing in villages that range in size from 50 to a few hundred (Solomon Islands Government, 2011). The Island has minimal overland transport infrastructure, which makes reaching the interior only possible via foot tracks. However, most villages lie on the coast and people usually rely on out-board motor boats, inter-island ferries and traditional canoes for transport.

There are eight language groups and three dominant tribal groups on the island, except for *Zabana (Kia)* speaking people who have twelve sub-tribes. A large number of people are multi-lingual, as they can speak two to three of the seven main languages spoken in the province as well as the Solomon Islands Pidjin (an English-derived creole language) and English. It is interesting to find in this island that 96% of the population belong to a single church, the Anglican Church of Melanesia (Kinch, 2004; White, 1991) and are exclusively matrilineal.

### **Matrilineal society**

In the Santa Isabel matrilineal cultural tradition, women are able to hold positions of power and leadership in their communities. This understanding may relate to cultural beliefs and practices of passing land ownership and descent (birth lineage) through a successive generation of women. This means women ancestors are “traced from time immemorial to the present generation” (Bogesi, 1948, p. 218) when tracing ones' place and tribe. These cultural practices have been practiced on the island for centuries (Bogesi, 1948; Kinch, 2004; Naramana, 1987). Bogesi (1948), in particular, affirms that the existence of the matrilineal culture on the Island can be traced way back before the missionaries and traders landed in the 1800s. Similarly, Naramana (1987) concludes that “people had already firmly established themselves into three tribal systems with women ancestresses under a tribal chief” (Naramana, 1987, p. 42) before traders and missionaries arrived. Hence, embodiment of matrilineal

beliefs and practices of tribal connections, land ownership, roles and responsibilities are in Santa Isabellians' ways of thinking and doing.

### **Matrilineal cultural beliefs**

Land and kinship are the foundation of Santa Isabel, matrilineal cultural beliefs. This is because people belonging to this society trace their land rights and lineage through three tribes (*Posamoggo*, *Thonggokama* and *Vihuvunagi*). These tribes also known by totemic bird forms such as red parrot, frigate and eagle respectively represent people's identity in normal daily interactions. In this society, the seven languages spoken (*Bugotu*, *Gao*, *Cheke Holo*, *Laghu*, *Zabana*, *Kokota*, and *Blablanga*) also identify people to their place (Bogesi, 1948; Naramana, 1987; White, 1991). For example, *Bugotu* speakers come from Bugotu region and *Cheke Holo* speakers come from the Maringe region.

Furthermore, members of the three tribes could have ancestry connections, customs, beliefs and leadership that may be similar in nature. Thus, it is expected in Santa Isabel that the three tribes situate people in specific locations in the different regions on the island based on the earliest women settlers (Bogesi, 1948; Maetala, 2008; Naramana, 1987). Accordingly, how the three tribes came into existence were through the wombs of three women. I have my elders' permission to narrate my tribal legend to explain this point. This legend is a well-known evening story by elders for all *Posomonggo* tribe members in the Bugotu region.

In the beginning, in the cave in the bush (*hothoho*), a snake made a huge nest and laid a large egg.

The baby in the egg grew and became a woman.

She got married and had a daughter.

Her children became the red parrot (*Posomonggo*) tribe.

(M. Guri, personal communication, October 31, 1964).

This legend illustrates firstly, the significance of "place". It tells the location: a cave in *hothoho* referring to the bush which now becomes the tribe's sacred place (*padagi*) defined by piled stones (*tiitili*). There are also special plants planted demarcating the tribal land area. The Bugotu-speaking people believe that this snake's daughter is a *Posomonggo* who is the ancestor of the *Posomonggo* tribe.

There are similar legends for the *Thonggokama and Vihuvunagi* tribes that began with women ancestors.

Secondly, it metaphorically means that the *Posomonggo* tribe in Bugotu could have originated from one woman's womb. Nevertheless, it is also common to find other *Posomonggo* tribes existing in other regions or in the same region in Santa Isabel that do not come from my *Koramata Posomonggo* tribe. This is one of the reasons for aligning leadership with land and genealogy rituals and responsibilities, which are mostly done by elders (grandparents and parents). It is crucial in the social structure of co-existence that people know their place and relationships within the extended family structure as well as within the tribal structure. This is why the after birth ritual of burying the placenta and/or cord stump back into the ground is so important.

The burying of the placenta or the cord stump is a ritual that symbolises the connection generations of people have with their place (land) and tribe. It is interesting that in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture, this connection comes through women. This belief in the placenta and cord stump connection to the land and tribe signify uterine origins. For example, the womb or *belly* in Bugotu is called *kutu*, which descent groups (tribes) are typically referred to, signifying their uterine origins, whereas genealogical segments descended from male relatives are sometimes termed *babase thehe* ("dead branch"), branches that are customarily pruned from oral and written genealogies to maintain the significance of the female genealogy through different generations.

Nevertheless, the tenet for the three tribes' genealogical link to land and kinship upholds that all children born (both male and female) belong to one of the three tribes, as well as having automatic common ownership to one of the three tribal lands. For example, my maternal great-great-grandmother, great-grandmother, grandmother and mother trace their genealogy to the *Koramata Posomonggo* tribe. Therefore, all children born to these generations of women, including my children and my sisters' children have automatic ownership to the *Koramata Posomonggo* tribal lands and belong to this tribe. However, my brothers' children do not, because they trace their tribe and tribal ownership to common land through their mothers who are likely to be from the other two tribes (frigate bird or eagle bird).

In Santa Isabel society, genealogical links are also significant for marriage purposes. In this society, the rule of exogamous marriage (marrying outside of one's own tribe) is a tradition that is strongly enforced. This means that any person, who has sexual relations with someone in his or her own tribe, faces heavy penalty such as being ostracised from the tribe. However, numerous cases of endogamous marriage (marrying within one's own tribe) still occur and strong feelings about its inappropriateness remain.

Marriage therefore, is exogenous to the clan and matrilocality applies with husbands compelled to live with the wife's extended family. That is why knowledge of genealogies to trace common ancestry is critical in relation to shared ownership of land and sea and for marriage purposes. Women leaders in a matrilineal society take on the roles of conflict resolution and decision-making, particularly, on matters relating to the land in terms of how families use land for personal purposes and when land is required for logging and development, as their advice is valued.

In the matrilineal system, men and women play specific roles to sustain their livelihood. The role men and women have in feeding the family is one classic example. In this society, it is normal in garden making that men cut down trees, clear the bush, lay sticks in rows, and make holes in the ground while women plant taro tops and weed the garden. Similarly, women collect root crops, vegetables, fruits and nuts from the garden and/or bushes daily for cooking and eating while men go fishing or hunting.

The recognition of co-existence in society in the balancing of roles between men and women extends to the wider Santa Isabel matrilineal culture social structure. For example, their rural livelihood, their close kinship ties and their sense of place, characteristics have been reasons for saying that Santa Isabellians are generally, very friendly, relaxed, peace loving, warm and caring. These also have contributed to "strong bonds within and between the villages" (O'Sullivan et al., 2011, p. 8) and which attributes to the nature of togetherness in communities and villages.

### **Land and resources**

In Santa Isabel society, customary tenure systems guide land and resource ownership and distribution. As such, land ownership and distribution is based on

matrilineal rights giving women primary rights and enabling them to express their views on how land and resources are used (Bogesi, 1948; Kinch, 2004; Naramana, 1987; Peterson, et al., 2012; White, 1991). However, membership in the matrilineal descent group allows other members to access land and resources as well.

In the same instance, it is customary that land succession rights occur through the descendent of the first-born female, who heads the tribe. Her descendent becomes responsible for the custodianship, distribution and management of the land. When the first-born female's time has come to renounce the head tribe responsibilities, she chooses her eldest daughter to take her place and a son to be the spokesperson for all land-related issues.

In this sense, land ownership is established through membership in matrilineal descent groups. The boundaries of land ownership are demarcated by plantings of certain kinds of trees, by natural phenomena and by markers of piled stones (*titili*). In any region (*nohi*), there would be numerous ancestral shrines (*padagi*) which are foci for regional ceremonial activity and symbolised genealogical connection with land (Bogesi, 1948; Naramana, 1987; White, 1978).

The tribal connections to land ownership may contribute to a large number (96%) of Santa Isabellians inclination to remain in their communities and villages (Solomon Islands Government, 2011). Thus shaping the society to be rural in nature as well as heavily depending on subsistence agriculture, marine resources (Kinch, 2004, p. 28) and on family and kinship networks for economic and social support. This also implies that Santa Isabel's land base continues to maintain some level of self-sufficiency in times of economic crisis. Moreover, the tribal connections to land also contributes to Santa Isabel people's construction of collective identity throughout history and which, has contributed to overcoming breaks and discontinuities in the construction of their present life meaning (White, 1991).

### **Leadership in Santa Isabel**

The fundamental social unit in Santa Isabel as stated earlier on in this chapter, comprises exogamous matrilineal tribes. Although, they do not exhibit marked forms of hierarchy in ranking, inherited titles or chiefly etiquette, these tribes are organised and subdivided into localised matrilineages, which formed the basic

social and political units of Santa Isabel society for centuries. A “chief” or “sifi” in pijin, which, once meant “a traditional leader knowledgeable in custom, history and local practices for resolving conflicts” (White, 2004, p. 4) provides leadership for the localised matrilineages. Thus, leadership within this context is vested in the knowledge and power of the people. However, in Santa Isabel, today, chiefs are not always associated with traditional leaders, it could also be used for men and women with educational qualifications and leadership experiences (Pollard, 2006).

In the 1890s, missionaries encouraged the emergence of “paramount chief” in Santa Isabel unifying the island’s clans in the wake of the steep population decline during the headhunting era. Chiefly leadership was strengthened in the 1920s, in an effort to ward off the growing influence of colonial administration on nearby islands (Fraenkel, 2004), but chiefs were not necessarily members of the descent groups holding title to the lands and commonly acted through customary right or political ability, as custodians of these lands (Bogesi, 1948).

Geoffrey White, a scholar who has written extensively on state, society and governance in the Solomon Islands, and in particular in Santa Isabel, writes that leadership in Santa Isabel is “a series of episodes that attempt to redefine or readjust relations between local polities [communities] and encapsulating systems of power” (White, 2007, p. 6). This statement relates to the ways leadership on the island has evolved around the events in the 1900s, such as, conversion to Christianity, resistance to colonial ruling, movement for political autonomy, the tumultuous events of World War II, major anti-colonial movement leading to independence in 1978 and the recent ethnic tension. These episodes, while they were interconnected political movements, were “moments Santa Isabel leaders played important roles in mediating new developments, often themselves embodying issues and problems of the day” (White, 2007, p. 6). These episodes led to the discussion, development and formation of the leadership framework known as the “tripod”.

### **Tripod political structure**

The functional contemporary local leadership called the “tripod” political structure was formed around the 1980s (White, 2007). This recently developed tripartite leadership, found only in Santa Isabel is a leadership innovation that attempts to bridge the relationship between the village chiefs, the church (Church of Melanesia)

and the state (Provincial Government). This was deemed necessary because both the chiefs and the church have a strong social influence in the communities (O'Sullivan et al., 2011; White, 2007) and this provided cohesion.

This political structure recognises the importance of chiefly leadership that comprises the family chiefs, village chiefs, district house of chiefs, and the Isabel Council of chiefs. It tries to extend leadership from the village level through to the provincial level and to give Santa Isabel traditional leadership a greater role and partnership with the provincial government and church leadership.

The “tripod” political structure acknowledges women to be chiefs at the village and house of chiefs’ levels, playing complementary roles to their male counterparts (Whittington et al., 2006). Such a role, as Whittington et al (2006) argue, merits further examination since it may well prove an entry point for enabling “women’s participation in formal decision-making” (p. 8).

### **Educational Position**

The Santa Isabel education system is administered under the Solomon Islands education system Education Act (Act, 1978). This act defines the roles and responsibilities of the Minister of Education, education authorities, school committees, school boards and school principals. It provides the legal basis, with much administration of the country’s education system being decentralised to the education boards of the nine provincial governments and the Honiara City Council (Malasa, 2007). This was necessary because of the geographic isolation and cultural diversity of the country, with additional issues relating to communication and transportation (Sikua, 2002). This decentralisation means the education authorities’ play a major role in the appointment and promotion of teachers, except for salary payments which are administered by the Teaching Service Office (Malasa, 2007).

The Santa Isabel Education Authority (SIEA) currently manages fifteen early childhood centres (ECC), thirty nine primary schools (PS), ten secondary schools (SS) and two technical and vocational centres (TVC). The Santa Isabel Education Authority together with the school committees, school boards and school principals manage these various education institutions.

In the early childhood education sector, the Santa Isabel Education Authority enrolled 1, 819 pupils in 2009 and employed 75 teachers. Teachers were mostly female (95%) and most of them took up leadership roles as supervisors and senior teachers.

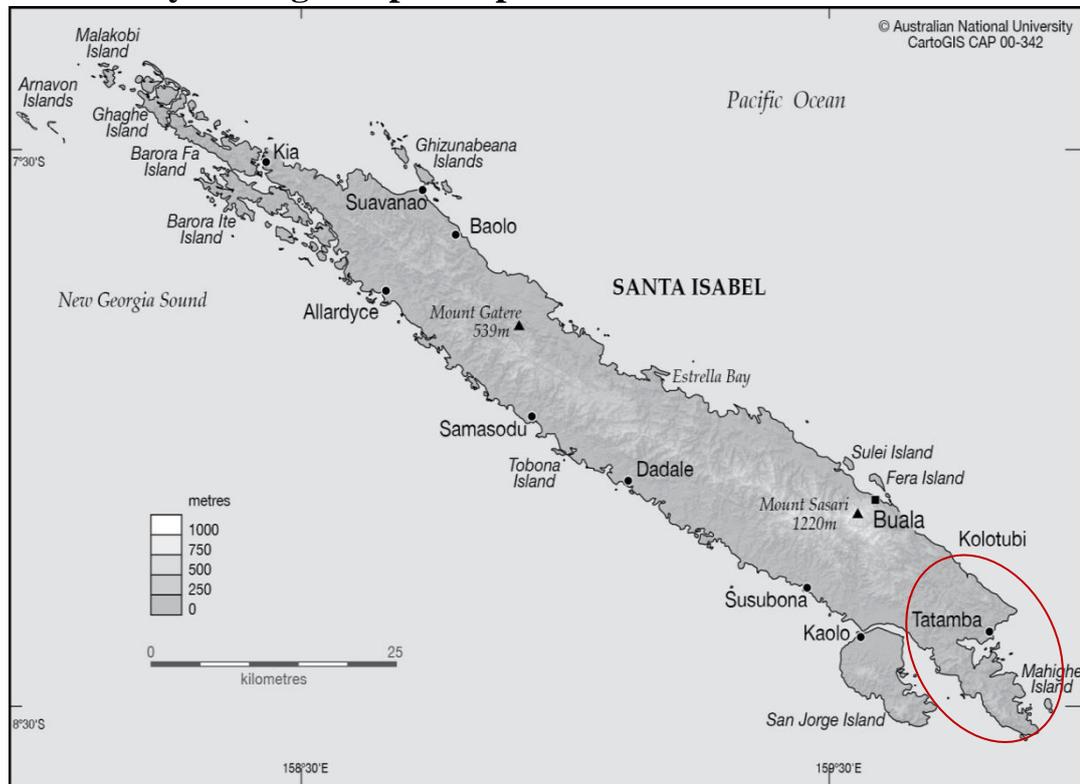
The primary schools enrolled 5,077 students with a teaching staff of 164 in 2009. Of this teaching staff 77 were females and 87 were males. There were only 6 females in head teacher positions, 1 in deputy teacher position and 3 in senior teaching positions.

The Santa Isabel Education Authority administers two types of secondary schools, community high schools and provincial secondary schools. The seven community high schools are extensions of existing primary schools and enrol students up to year nine, although three now enrol up to Year 12. These schools are mostly rural and community based (Malasa, 2007). The three provincial secondary schools enrol students from Year 7 to 12 with a majority of intake from Santa Isabel province, although one now enrolls up to Year 13. In 2009, these secondary schools enrolled a total of 1, 568 students and had a staff establishment of 141. Of this total staff, 109 were males and 32 were females. All secondary school principals and deputy principals were male and women only made up 12.6 percent of middle management leadership roles such as head of department (1 female), Year 12/13 tutor (2 Females), careers and guidance (1 female) and senior teacher (14 females) (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2009). In the vocational centres, there was an enrolment of 142 students and 10 teaching staff in 2009 but sex aggregation data were not available to determine the number of women who might take up leadership roles in these institutions (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2009).

The numerical representation of female teachers who took up leadership roles in these different levels of the education system shows that in Santa Isabel, women are still absent in educational leadership roles, especially in the secondary and primary levels. This is interesting as despite, these schools' operating within local matrilineal cultural settings, women were only seen in leadership roles within the early childhood centres. It would be important to understand women's perceptions

about why and how their leadership in the formal education system are as such, which might help me in understanding the context I am examining.

## Case Study Setting and participants



**Figure 2.2:** Map of Santa Isabel.

Map created by [anu.edu.au/maps](http://anu.edu.au/maps). Image used under Creative Common Licences. Source : <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/mapsonline/base-maps/santa-isabel-island>



As shown in Figure 2.2, this research is a case study of 10 women community leaders who hold leadership roles in one village (VWL), one secondary school (SSWL), one primary school (PSWL) and one early childhood centre (ECEWL) (5, 3, 1, and 1) in the south-eastern tip of Santa Isabel island known as the West Bugotu region (see Figure 2.2). The region is a typical Santa Isabel matrilineal society as mentioned earlier. A community in this sense includes the village, the schools, the church organisations (Mothers Union) and non-government and government departments. As Strachan (2005) states, “educational contexts are not just confined to the formal education sector: they exist in many contexts” (p. 48). Thus, although five women leaders who participated in the study practiced leadership in a village and five took leadership roles in different levels of the education system, all women leaders are a representation of women doing leadership in educational settings.

As shown in Figure 2.1, this study is situated in the Solomon Islands and involved one village community (VC), one early childhood education centre (ECC), one primary school (PS) and one provincial secondary school (PSS) located in the west Bugotu region on the island of Santa Isabel. Situating this study in this specific region can obtain in- depth insight and understanding of how the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture influences women's leadership beliefs and practices.

The village community is located on the west Bugotu region. This village community consists of a stretch of three villages and is home to about five hundred people of which five of the women participants in this study took up various leadership positions as president, vice president, as treasurer, as secretary and tribe spokesperson. The village community lies on the coastal edge and is protected by an expanse of mangrove trees that is home to a variety of sea creatures.

The early childhood centre selected for this study is one of the fifteen early childhood centres in Santa Isabel island. It is situated within the village community and enrolls up to ten to fifteen children from age three to five each year. Children in this early childhood centre transit into the village primary school to meet the primary school's yearly required enrolment quotas. One woman participant took up leadership role as a centre supervisor in this early childhood centre. The primary school is also situated within the village community and enrolls an average intake of twenty five to fifty children per year in years one to year six. It is one of the thirty nine primary schools on the island of Santa Isabel. Where one of the women participant in my study was the head teacher.

The secondary school selected is one of the ten secondary schools in Santa Isabel and situated near the village community. Three of the women participants were teaching and taking up leadership roles as heads of departments in this secondary school. This secondary school is the premier co-educational boarding school offering secondary education from years 7 to 13 in Santa Isabel province. It is called a premier educational institution because the best students from Santa Isabel primary schools and Community High Schools are awarded places to learn as well as being nurtured and developed at this school (Sir Dudley Tuti College, 2013). It is a school where 575 young people receive an educational experience delivered by 40 highly professional staff who create a caring, disciplined learning environment

that recognises the individual learning that nurtures self-awareness and personal growth that is based on strong Christian values (“Sir Dudley Tuti College,” 2013). The school’s academic reputation in Santa Isabel province and Solomon Islands is averagely good because the school emphasises learning and teaching that suits each child. The achievement experiences of students in this school have tended to be due to strong family and community engagement, which, is at the heart of the school’s support system. Through these supports, it is proposed students experience spiritual, social and cultural learnings during their secondary school academic journey (Sir Dudley Tuti College, 2013).

In summary, the village community, the early childhood centre, the primary school and the secondary school with the women leaders situate this study in Santa Isabel, in the Solomon Islands context.

## Chapter Three: Literature Review

In the previous two chapters, I raised the idea that certain cultural norms have been established in Santa Isabel society arising from historical, religious and social practices. This study aimed to *explore and examine the influences of the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture on women's leadership beliefs and practices*. It is therefore crucial to understand aspects of how women learn to be leaders and how they perceive, and practice leadership. These aspects are closely linked, influencing each other.

When investigating women's leadership literature, relevant scholarly publications are situated predominantly within women's leadership theories in developed countries. The focus of my research however is on understanding matrilineal leadership practices in a unique Santa Isabel island in the Solomon Islands. Hence, while I acknowledge the contribution that literature in developed countries has made to women and leadership, I am working in a completely different context. Therefore, for the purposes of this research, it is important to situate this literature review within the context of women's leadership inside the community of economically developing nations.

This chapter is organised into three main parts. The first explores literature pertaining to some popular women and educational leadership ideas in economically developed countries. It acknowledges and reviews the contribution and importance of literature relating to women's educational leadership practices. More precisely, social justice principles of leadership and the importance of relational leadership to women is addressed.

The second part of the review investigates women's educational leadership in economically developing countries. It addresses indigenous leadership, women in indigenous communities, women in Melanesian contexts, women and leadership in Santa Isabel and leadership in matrilineal societies.

The third and final part of this literature review theorises leadership theories that are relevant to the Santa Isabel context. In particular, it looks at leadership theories linked to spiritual leadership, relational leadership, servant leadership, village

leadership and big man leadership. This section also outlines the importance of relational leadership in the Santa Isabel context and concludes with a summary of the chapter.

The following part examines economically developed nations' concepts of women's leadership. In particular, it explores ideas of social justice principles of leadership and the importance of relational leadership and women.

## **Part 1: Women and Leadership**

Women and leadership discourses in developed countries, according to Shakeshaft (1999), emerged in the 1970s in the United States in response to the androcentric research dominating the field of educational leadership. Since then, there has been notable work in both developed and economically developing countries. However, it is interesting to note across this body of research, that perspectives about women's leadership are predominantly influenced by either Euro-centric patriarchal views or from women in developed countries. In these worldviews, leadership has been situated within leadership theories such as transformational leadership (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Burns, 1978), distributed leadership (Goldstein, 2003; Gronn, 2002; Spillane, 2006), ethical leadership (Burns, 1978; Langlois & Lapointe, 2014; Starratt, 2004) and relational leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Regan & Brooks, 1995; Rost, 1993; Uhl-Bein, 2006). For the purposes of this research, I am interested in ideas about women's leadership: in particular, in social justice principles of leadership and the importance of relational leadership.

### **Important ideas about women's leadership**

Ideas about women's leadership have shifted and are changing overtime, mainly to some extent due to "problematizing the concept of leadership itself, relative to dominant power and gender relations" (Blackmore, 2002, p. 55). This is particularly the case in research, writing and discussions that have theorised women's leadership through women's perspectives (Blackmore, 2002; Lyman, Strachan, & Lazaridou, 2012; Sinclair, 2013; Strachan, 1999). In this way, women's (researchers and participants') beliefs and experiences of leadership have continuously contributed to the kinds of debates that have addressed women's leadership practices. Still, there is enough evidence to suggest that women leaders have always worked with and against the culturally grounded practices of leadership evident in societies

worldwide (Blackmore, 2010; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011) that tend to either include or exclude them.

In her critique of women's representation in educational leadership, Blackmore (2013) calls for "refocusing the ... gaze away from numerical representation ... to the social relations of gender and power locally, nationally and internationally" (p. 139). She suggests that one way of doing this is to view leadership within a context (Blackmore, 2013). She states that in order for people to reform and rethink their leadership practices in more socially just ways it is necessary "to problematize the nature, purpose and capacities of educational systems and organizations" (Blackmore, 2013, p. 139). This idea is important to help me understand women's leadership perceptions that may guide the way women's leadership could be refocused in Santa Isabel, as well as in the Solomon Islands.

Carli and Eagly (2012), Ely and Rode (2010), Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) and Sinclair (2013) have written persuasively that women leaders who engage in research and work must first dismantle the emotional and physical barriers that exist for women seeking leadership roles. An example is the inherent claim alluded to by Growe and Montgomery (2000) about the influence of a society's culture on people's attitudes. They allege that these attitudes still continue to deny women's easy access to leadership roles (Growe & Montgomery, 2000) thus making women feel that they do not fit leadership norms, which I infer must be challenged. Shakeshaft (1993) concluded that the assumption that women are not in leadership because they do not want to be, is a myth, as studies about female aspiration levels do not support this. Similarly, Blackmore (1995) states that:

The lens of privilege ... requires women leadership to consider their position, to better understand how and why they came to be in that position and how they can use that position to challenge and transform exclusive images of leadership into more inclusive ones. (p. 35)

An action prevalent in women's leadership literature is women taking up leadership roles that enact principles of social justice.

### **Women and social justice leadership**

Social justice principles situated in educational leadership address ideas of leadership that focus on striving to make a difference in people's lives at both the

individual and institutional levels (Blackmore, 2013; Coleman, 2012; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Lyman et al., 2012; Sinclair, 2014; Strachan, 2002, 2009). Social justice leadership is often talked about in relation to feminist principles. Nevertheless, Lyman et al (2012) claim that not all women identify themselves as feminists. Thus, I acknowledge that while some women do not identify as feminist, their work is often about the experiences of women for women. For example, in some indigenous communities, where some indigenous scholars and activists have taken action “for gender equality are often seen as opposing traditional indigenous practices and forms of social organisation” (Huhndorf & Suzack, 2011, p. 2). As such, indigenous feminists are frequently accused of “eliciting ideas that may fracture communities and undermine more pressing struggles for indigenous autonomy” (Huhndorf & Suzack, 2011, p. 2).

As a Melanesian woman, I felt uncomfortable using the term feminist because of my context. That is, in my experiences as a woman leader in the Melanesian context, the word feminist raises misunderstandings that could further hinder social justice actions by women. Similar sentiments were expressed by few Melanesian women researchers. Akao (2008) from the Solomon Islands in her research on Solomon Islands women school principals experienced a similar discomfort. She comments, “I do not have the courage to identify as a feminist because I come from a society that snubs anyone who tries to go against the cultural norms” (p. 64). Kilavanwa (2004) from Papua New Guinea, claimed that women in Papua new Guinea while do not identify as feminists because of the “ridicule and repercussions that may arise from being labelled feminists’ this does not stop women from doing feminist work” (p. 95). More importantly, in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture the word feminism may not be appropriate, as women in this culture have strong traditions of worth.

Thus, I agree with the idea that whether women identify as feminists or not, is not the issue. Rather, it is how women leaders advocate to “make visible the factors that constrain women’s lives [that] deny them human rights” (Strachan, 2009, p. 107) that matters. Human rights according to Coleman (2012), are linked to social justice in the sense that the core concern is about “giving everyone equality no matter what their race, gender, or any other quality” (p. xv). Accordingly, social justice is becoming a “focus of scholars and practitioners” (Lyman et al., 2012, p. 3), and in particular, women leaders. For instance, the women leaders featured in Lyman et

al's (2012) book, *'Shaping social justice for leadership: Insights of women educators worldwide'* demonstrated their interest in social justice issues. They assert that social justice can relate to areas such as:

Class, race, ethnicity, inclusion of different abilities, sexual orientations, religion, language learners and other diversities that relate to marginalisation in schools and society through exclusionary processes or attitudes (p. 3).

This statement suggests that some women leaders work with diverse social justice issues in contexts different from where they practice leadership. In their review of literature on women educational leadership, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) claim that in most research, much of women's motivation to take up leadership roles in education are linked to their "strong desire to transform the learning conditions and opportunities for those who have been least well served by current educational policies and practices" (p. 11). In other words, women are more likely to identify careers in educational settings as socially just work and often talk about teaching as a profession where they can change children's lives. In essence, a lot of "[w]omen leaders often describe themselves as valuing the close relationship they form with administrators, teachers, parents, students and other community members" (Grogan, 2012, p. 13). Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) comment that:

Women, more often than men, talk about having entered teaching to change the lives of children, to make the world a fairer place, and to change the institutions so that all children have a chance. (p. 11)

This may mean that the increase of women in the teaching profession in some developed countries like Australia and New Zealand (Blackmore, 1996; Strachan, 2009) and in some economically developing country like the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea may relate to social justice concerns. Women's tendency to work with social justice principles could also relate to their relational approaches which are common in the way many women practice leadership. Besides, Fine (2009) states that women appear to use unique leadership approaches which are "nurturing, inclusive, and collaborative" [and which] encourages participation and creates democratic environments" (p. 183)

Women leaders also approach leadership in ethical ways (Hall, 2002; Strachan,

2002) and consequently have strived for their work “to achieve equity through personal, political, societal and institutional transformation” (Strachan, 2002, p. 117). It is not surprising then for women leaders who work with social justice principles to engage in what Strachan (2005) describes as:

Working for social justice and equity, empowering others, establishing a caring environment (the ethic of care), sharing power (giving away control and working alongside others), being outspoken and challenging injustices, promoting anti-violence and using consensual decision-making processes. (p. 49)

Social justice leadership therefore, can be viewed as leadership that is emancipatory (Grundy, 1993). Emancipatory leadership, according to Strachan (2005), “is a model of inclusivity and collaboration that marries critical reflection with action” (p. 49). Critical reflection with action, according to Brower (2011), may come about through the growth in awareness and the enabling of local people to take action on their own behalf. This means then that social justice leadership is action oriented (Lyman et al., 2012; Rapp, 2002; Strachan, 2002, 2004b, 2005). Importantly, it makes sense to say that women leaders working within this framework are more likely to identify unjust and unequal situations that are wrongly seen to be just and equal in society. This caused me to think that through critical reflections of supposedly just and equal situations, women leaders may begin to raise questions that could work towards changing unjust and unequal situations in their cultural contexts.

In a similar manner, in viewing leadership from a social justice perspective, Strachan (2005) argues that leadership is about helping those who are oppressed and marginalised to improve their lives. Interpreting Fraser’s (1997) term *recognition*, Blackmore (2013) explains that recognition is the politics of difference and the respect for difference. She argues that recognition when viewed “as the basis of socially just leadership is the politics of difference” (Blackmore, 2013, p. 148). Thus, maintaining the respect for difference is vital for a fair and just society (Weedon, 1999). The politics of difference, Blackmore (2013) contends, has circulated in leadership literature through demanding recognition of different ethnic or racial perspectives and religious and or cultural differences. Recognition of and respect for difference, according to Blackmore (2013) is likely to create people’s sense of belonging and collective wellbeing, which is also very critical to people’s

sense of social inclusion. This is important in helping me to understand how women leaders in my study view the value of their leadership experiences within the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture.

Social justice leadership can also be linked with ethical leadership. According to Larson and Murtadha (2002) “women leaders often enact an ethic of care rooted in concerns for relationships rather than roles” (p. 140) which I see belongs to social justice leadership. This is similar to Fine’s (2009) findings in her study on women’s construction of their leadership. She found that the women’s narratives illustrated an ethic of caring, through how they practice leadership. Hence, to think about women’s leadership in this manner may convincingly add to the argument that women leaders work within social justice principles of leadership. For example, some women leaders show social justice principles in their leadership roles through valuing close relationship with other stakeholders (Grogan, 2012). In this instance, I posit that women leaders demonstrate care by forming connections. Women leaders see these relationships as a way of strengthening their efforts in creating change in society (Grogan, 2012; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Sinclair, 2013).

In expressing the importance of administering community leadership, Starrat (1997) suggests that by combining ethics of care with justice, might provide a richer and more complete ethic of leadership. He explains that these ethics of care themes could come together to form “a rich human response” (p. 57). Similarly, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2001) perceive the ethics of care, ethics of critique and ethics of justice as complementary and valuable in developing a more humane informed practice within educational institutions. As such, an agenda for improved social justice and equity in the field of education would be one that challenges, resists, and also commits to empowering those they work with to establish a caring education community (Blackmore, 1996; Regan & Brooks, 1995). This attention is considered essential in educational leadership for social justice (Grundy, 1993) and is critical in understanding how women leaders in my study perceive and enact their leadership roles.

It is vitally important then that leaders work to rewrite and restore the experiences of women. This is supported by Larson and Murtadha (2002) who, in their reading of social justice research, found that there is a need to deconstruct existing logic as

well as showing and constructing alternative theories, images and processes of leadership for social justice. These alternative images could portray women leaders as enacting an ethic of care rooted in concerns for relationships rather than roles. This ethic of care, according to Noddings (1992, 1999), is fundamental in the reframing and reorganising of educational institutions away from hierarchical and role-based images of leadership. In addition, Beck and Foster (1999) argue that in order to change people's understanding of leadership so that it aligns more with social justice concerns, researchers might use moral and spiritual language words such as compassion, forgiveness, wisdom, humility and loyalty and images of home, church, and community.

The literature thus presents women and social justice leadership as relating to notions of inclusiveness, collaboration, empowerment, and ethical and relational approaches of leadership. So what is the theme relational leadership about? This is addressed next.

### **Importance of relational leadership and women**

Relational leadership while discussed in the 1990s (Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Regan & Brooks, 1995; Rost, 1993) really came in to the fore when Uhl-Bien (2006) saw this relational leadership approach as a process of social influence. Uhl-Bien (2006) argues that this approach moves beyond the manager- subordinate dyad or measures of relationship quality and addresses the question of “what are the relational dynamics by which leadership is developed throughout the workplace?” (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 672). She defines relational leadership as:

a social influence process through which emergent coordination (i.e., evolving social order) and change (e.g., new values, attitude, approaches, behaviours, and ideologies) are constructed and produced (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 655).

In other words, the social aspect is at the heart of relational leadership because changes are constructed and produced, and everybody participates in the process. This can occur inside and outside formal leadership (Yukl, 2002) and is not restricted to hierarchical positions or roles. Instead, it is occurring in relational dynamics throughout organisations and contexts (Uhl-Bien 2006).

Relational leadership consists two main perspectives: entity and relational (Uhl-

Bien, 2006). The entity perspective refers to “attributes of individuals as they engage in interpersonal relationships” (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 654), whereas the relational perspective refers to “a process of social construction through which certain understandings of leadership come about and are given privileged ontology” (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 654). Essentially, the meaning of relationships changes according to the perspective. Entity perspective focuses primarily on leadership in conditions of already being organised, while the relational perspective considers leadership as “a process organising” (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 664). In sum, in an entity perspective, the relationships are within perceptions, behaviours and cognition of the individual, whereas within relational perspectives leadership is viewed as a process by which social order is constructed and changed (Hosking, 1988). This may help me to understand women’s leadership perspectives within the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture.

The emphasis of leadership within the relational perspective view is then on “relating and relatedness” (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 665). This assumes that the meaning and reality of leadership is constructed through the processes and condition of being in relation to others and the larger social system (Brower, Schoorman, & Hoon Tan, 2000; Regan & Brooks, 1995; Uhl-Bien, 2006). In this sense, leadership can be considered as a process of organising knowledge (Dachler, 1992) and which Uhl-Bien (2006) asserts is a “socially constructed and socially distributed” (p. 655) phenomenon. Hosking (2000) adds that in relational leadership, the processes also construct peoples, communities and institutions’ multiple experiences. I am yet to find out if women’s experiences of leadership constructed by the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture

Furthermore, Kouzes and Posner (1995) and Rost (1993) see relational leadership as being based on relationships and being collaborative in nature. This is in line with the idea that relational leadership may also be perceived “as a concept that does not reside in an individual and can be shown by anyone, not just those who are labelled as leaders” (McNae, 2011, p. 23). This resonates with my idea of how women in the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture may perceive and understand their leadership practices in the communities which could help me to further understand if their leadership beliefs and practices are relational. Similarly, Hunt and Dodge (2000) state:

The relational focus [of leadership] is one that moves beyond unidirectional or even reciprocal leader/follower relationships to one that recognises leadership wherever it occurs; it is not restricted to a single or even a small set of formal or informal leaders; and, in its strongest form, functions as a dynamic system embedding leadership, environment, and organisational aspects. (p. 448)

This description illustrates that relationships, rather than authority, superiority, or dominance appear to be key in relational leadership. This shifts the view of leadership from requiring a formal position, to a more holistic leadership approach taking into account what Blackmore (1999) describes as the leadership context. I have been wondering if viewing relational leadership in this way will help me understand the context I am examining.

The literature suggests that context, therefore, becomes an essential aspect when investigating leadership. Klenke (2011) refers to context as “the environments, circumstances, and conditions within which leadership...are taking place” (p. 9). Similarly, Rousseau and Fried (2001) posit that context is a key factor in leadership and is critical in fully understanding leadership in practice, because context helps to connect “observations to a set of relevant facts, events or points of view that make possible research and theory that form part of a larger whole” (p. 1). Context is significant for a social analysis including leadership because a “context acts as a vehicle for positioning a phenomenon in order to make it meaningful” (Gronn, 2002, p. 486). This act of considering a phenomenon in relation to context in this case leadership means thinking about it in relation to prior knowledge from a “perspective or angle that affords that phenomenon its distinctiveness” (Gronn, 2002, p. 486). Rousseau and Fried (2001) also argue that with the emergence of world-wide communities of researchers, context has become more significant because context is highly important in any investigation of leadership (Wasserman & Anand, 2010). Relating leadership to context and coming to understand the leadership practices of women in Santa Isabel may help me understand the positioning of my research in such a setting.

Context can also be viewed as deeply ingrained attitudes and beliefs that create our worldview and shape our lives (Sharpnack, 2005). She argues that all individuals and all organisations have a prevailing context, whether recognised or not. However, most individuals do not purposely design their belief contexts: they inherit them

from their community or institutional cultures. In the same way, most communities and institutions deliberately design their culture (how we do things around here) and find that it evolves over time and is reinforced by rules, recognition, punishment, and rewards. Thus, the real source of people's actions includes what they know, how they perceive the world around them and what conclusions they draw as a result. Context could be viewed as the foundation of leadership because leadership has different meanings for different people and this is dependent on context (Harris, 2003). Hence, it is important to know if the ways my participants perceive and practice leadership are influenced by their contexts.

Osborn, Hunt and Jauch (2002) state, "Leadership is embedded in context. It is socially constructed in and from a context where patterns over time must be considered and where history matters" (p. 789). In order to set the frame for further comment and discussion, I draw from MacNeil's (2006) work, and make use of her definition, which articulates leadership as a relational process that combines "ability (knowledge, skills and talents) with voice, influence, and decision-making power) to positively influence and impact diverse individuals, organisations and communities" (p. 29). This definition was selected as the components resonate with key areas that relate to understanding my research topic, and it also aligns closely with my views of women's leadership in this context.

Relational leadership thus acknowledges the importance of relationships and context as part of leadership beliefs. It promotes the idea that leadership can be shown by anyone, not just people holding a formal position or role relating to leadership. This belief is critical in women's leadership, so it is significant to examine relational leadership in relation to women's leadership beliefs and practices. Given this premise, I want to examine how relational leadership situates women's leadership beliefs and practices. The following section provides a perspective on current beliefs, trends and issues pertaining to relational leadership and women.

### **Relational Leadership and Women**

Leadership literature is associated with many discourses that specifically relate to women. Relational leadership is one of these discourses and is critical to the ways in which women lead (Regan & Brooks, 1995). In a study of their own experiences

and the experiences of nine women administrators in Great Britain, Regan and Brooks (1995) found that their practice of leadership were “*relational* rather than controlling” (p. xi). Thus, they argue that relational leadership “also include[s] the informal roles through which a person exerts influence on events and people” (Regan & Brooks, 1995, p. 7). They claim that relational leadership comprises attributes such as “caring, [being visionary], collaboration, courage and intuition” (Regan & Brooks, 1995, p. xi) which are closely associated with maternal and female views of leadership.

Relational leadership, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) claim, is also a leadership approach that relates leadership to “being in relation with others in a horizontal rather than a hierarchical sense” (p. 6). Based on this understanding, women leaders most often use this approach to change organisational behaviour. Women leaders’ use of the relational approach was evident in Blackmore (1999), Brunner (2000) and Grogan’s (1996) respective studies. Their studies showed that these women leaders claim that they viewed power to be multidimensional and multidirectional, in the sense that women leaders “encourage empowerment of all organisational members through the development of communities based on collective values and action” (Fennel, 2002, p. 100). In other words, women leaders see power as something to be used with people rather than over people. As such, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) reiterate women leaders have a tendency to use this relational power. They say:

The power that women are likely to use for change is relational power, which promotes collective action and usually includes a variety of individuals throughout the [communities]. (p. 93)

Based on this assumption, it is likely that women leaders who use relational power in their leadership create change and understand that all relationships have a dimension of power. On the other hand, Fennel (2002) also states that women leaders “have often expressed discomfort with structuralism perspectives of power” (p. 100) because of very hierarchical power relations. Likewise Blackmore (1989) writes that women feel at odds with the “masculinity portrayal of power, leadership and organisational life which emphasises control, individualism and hierarchy” (p. 123). This does not mean that women lack power; rather, it denotes that women redefine power as power with and not power over (Shakeshaft, 1989). In addition, power

within relationships, according to Grogan (2000) and Brunner (2000), increases when it is shared, which is observed in women leaders' work. However, in relation to my research context, women's leadership extends beyond persons and institutions to include land and tribal matters, which become significant when addressing the power relations being introduced by hierarchical and male oriented patrilineal systems.

It is not surprising that Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) conclude that women as leaders use the relational leadership approach more because they believe in "accomplishing goals with and through others" (p. 6). Moreover, women perceive power to be linked with relationships and believe this approach to power could strengthen relationships (Brunner, 2000) and how they deal with change (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011), since women leaders are highly likely to base their leadership on building strong relationships. As a Melanesian woman, I agree with Regan and Brooks' (1995) contention that women more often show collaborative, courageous and visionary strategies in the way they lead. This is particularly important in my research in understanding women's leadership experiences within the Santa Isabel matrilineal context. Another aspect of relational leadership that interests me is Fine's (2007) claim that women leaders use more nurturing, inclusive and participatory approaches, which is another aspect of relational leadership that resonates with my experiences of leadership within the Melanesian context. This aspect may help my understanding in interrogating my participants' experiences of their matrilineal leadership cultural practices. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) emphasise these approaches as vital in women's leadership, because on many occasions they make decisions by listening from their heart which is also a key component of relational leadership.

Wood and Eagly's (2002) view that power divide is experienced even in simple socio-economic structures and non-patriarchal societies is an important consideration in understanding my participants. I am wondering how my participants' view of power relation that is said to be equally divided between men and women in their matrilineal culture setting (Kelep-Malpo, 2013) is understood.

This may help me to understand women's leadership experiences in both their community and formal leadership roles. Women leaders, however, are most often

likely to be participatory and relationship oriented in their approaches to leadership (Embry, Padgett, & Caldwell, 2008; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

In summary, a hallmark of women's leadership rests in a collective approach in which power is shared and decisions are made jointly. In this way, women leaders can create positive change through a participatory process where women work with, "rather than ruling over others" (Bassett, 2009, p. 10). Thus, when people refer to relational leadership, it could also hinge on the context where leadership is practiced. For each context exerts social, cultural, economic and political gender pressures on the community. Relational leadership is about purpose and processes, encompassing the key components of being inclusive, ethical, purposeful, empowering and contextual. However, these theories are based on economically developed nations. In economically developing countries in contrast and in particular in the context of Santa Isabel, these ideas could not, I predict, be applied in the same way. These ideas help frame my study as my findings may offer new contributions to this aspect of leadership.

## **Part 2: Women's leadership in economically developing countries**

Research has indicated that in economically developing countries, "the mainstream epistemology about women in educational leadership roles has been constructed, canonized and theorized from a white hegemonic female perspective" (Grimes, 2005, para. 1). This has resulted in an absence in the literature of women's experiences from economically developing countries. Banks (1995) identified the need for future research to have a broader scope and to reflect on the dynamics of race and gender within the changing nature of societies. More recently, Fitzgerald (2006) and Oplatka (2006) called for further research into the experiences of women of different race and ethnicities as well as women in developing countries.

Fitzgerald (2006) highlights research on the ethnicity of women. She calls for an "indigenous theory of educational leadership that places indigenous women at the centre of the narrative" (p. 14). This means that the knowledge production for and about educational leadership needs to be dismantled to provide a standpoint from which to theorise and research the realities of leadership through the experiences of women from a variety of ethnicities. This is also supported by Oplatka (2006) who

calls for “further examination of the career experiences, leadership orientations, and subjective voices” (p. 605) of women in educational leadership within economically developing countries.

The development of literature on women leaders within economically developing countries has been slowly growing, contributing to the knowledge base in educational leadership. This literature however, lacks context, specificity and relevance, because educational systems in these developing countries may not be similar to developed countries (Walker & Dimmock, 2002). There is also little research on women in economically developing countries and their leadership experiences (Oplatka, 2006), for Oplatka argues that we know very little about the lives and careers of women in educational leadership within them. Nevertheless, it is encouraging to learn that more studies are emerging. For example, in African countries, studies of women leaders in Tanzania (Bandiho, 2009), Uganda (Kagoda & Sperandio, 2009) and South Africa (Phendla, 2009) highlight common themes and challenges as well as many opportunities that lie ahead for women in educational leadership roles in these countries. The identified challenges suggest poor opportunities for advancement, navigating the politics within the educational systems, sexism and lack of support. On the other hand, these studies also showed the emotional depth attached to women leaders’ investment in increasing the opportunities for women in educational leadership in Africa.

In Pakistan, Shah’s (2010) study of women leaders in single sex colleges found that the Muslim tradition of sex-segregation, while it provide spaces for women to enter leadership in single-sex institutions, has to some extent contributed to the prevailing confinement of women to family and or private institutions. In Bangladesh, Sperandio’s (2011) research of rural village women who participated in short intensive courses, on-the-job training, shared learning and frequent in service and refresher training programmes based in their local community settings reveal that these new initiatives have helped women’s access to leadership roles. However, the nature of this training, she reports has caused women to adopt traditionally male roles of teacher and educational leadership with their commitment to serving the poor. This has resulted in “the wide acceptance and normalisation of non-traditional roles for women in conservative village culture” (Sperandio, 2011, p. 121). However, this

research has yet to show how these women undertake these roles and how their contexts influence their practices.

In New Mexico, Gonzalez and Ortiz's (2009) longitudinal study of three women leaders discovered that women leaders' successes in their leadership roles came from developing of strengths gained through unique contextual settings, in particular by their parents' and grandparents' influences through lived stories. In the West Indies, Houghton's (2009) study of women leaders and children portrayed through images, reveals women developing and building pathways into leadership from their unique cultural perspectives, which included women sharing their stories. These stories motivated change, foster empowerment and inspired women "to promote social justice and cultural change" (Adams-Taylor & Fahrenwald, 2009, p. 188). In particular, stories helped women to "discover, uncover and recover new images and meanings of their being within their professional and private lives" (Adams-Taylor & Fahrenwald, 2009, p. 188).

In an interesting revelation of women leaders in Gonzalez and Ortiz's (2009) and Houghton's (2009) studies, Adams-Taylor and Fahrenwald (2009) note that the women:

Did not have theoretical frameworks when they launched their careers, nor did they entertain strong feminist concepts. They just tried to handle matters in their own ways, with passion and strong belief in the value of their work. Their motivation and their energy are admirable.  
(p. 188)

These researchers illustrate various ways in which women's educational leadership could be viewed; however, the main argument remains with the women finding access to senior levels of educational institutions extremely challenging.

In most economically developing countries, women's progress into senior leadership positions has been slow and irregular (Oplatka, 2006; Strachan, 2009). Women are leaders, and, sometimes, women are among the most oppressed (Drake & Owen, 1998). This is unfortunate because as Drake and Owen (1998) identify, women in these countries are "cast as both bringers of change and guardians of the old cultures" (p. 1). It could be reasonable to say that in some of these countries, the education of women is considered important for bringing about advances which

will supposedly improve the economic health and livelihood in these countries. At the same time too, in these countries, it is through women that family values and traditions are transmitted and maintained.

Relatedly, in developing countries, the society's culture and traditions continue to affect women's leadership. Many effects tend to be negative and according to Cubillo and Brown (2003), can happen at the "macro - socio - political level, the meso organizational level and the micro level which concerns the individual herself" (p. 281). These tend to stem from the cultural, social and religious beliefs and values that define femininity in terms of marriage, housekeeping and child rearing. Thus, the cultural and social structure that separates the society into male and female arenas is also a major obstacle to women's access to leadership positions (Oplatka, 2006). Leadership positions, therefore, are perceived as belonging to male members of the society and women should refrain from attempting to attain this kind of position (Oplatka, 2006).

Strachan (2002), nevertheless, contends that in principle, most economically developing countries are committed to eliminating gender inequalities in education but in reality progress is rather slow. Some of the reasons outlined for this slow progress are a lack of financial and human resources, ad hoc planning and policy development, difficulties in data collection (Strachan, 2002) and lack of women role models in leadership positions in education, in politics and, to a lesser extent, in the community (Strachan, 2009, p. 103). Difficulties with the data collection is cited by many researchers as an issue when conducting research on women in developing countries (Aladejana & Aladejana, 2005; Pheko, 2008; Strachan, 2009).

This literature review acknowledges that women's leadership literature also extends to indigenous leadership approaches, the purpose being to explore work relating to women's leadership in indigenous communities, which is the focus of this study.

### **Indigenous leadership**

The literature on indigenous leadership illustrates that in indigenous communities, leadership has been "based on the character of the land and the needs of the people in their [place]" (Kenny, 2012, p. 1). The "place" in this case, means a person's "place of indigenous origin" (McGavin, 2016, p. 1) and comprise aspects of

“ancestry, belonging, community, descent, emotion, identity, and sentience, and unites the binary of culture and nature” (McGavin, 2016, p. 1).

Indigenous leadership therefore, believes in “listen[ing] and respond[ing] to the guidance of the processes expressed in [the] home place” (Kenny, 2012, p. 3). This perspective considers that the connection people have with the land gives people their sense of place, which brings coherence to their being (Kenny, 2012; Portman & Garrett, 2005). Thus, I concur with Kenny’s (1998) claim and argue that the sense of place is key in indigenous leadership. It raises the principle of engaging with the land in an intimate spiritual commitment in maintaining relationships with all living things. This principle of interconnectedness assumes the “relatedness of all things” (Kenny, 2012, p. 6) which is crucial in indigenous societies (Kenny, 2012). This principle is contained in indigenous religions and spiritual belief systems and is expressed in many indigenous prayers and ceremonies. Hence, it reminded indigenous people “of the significance of the principle of interconnectivity throughout their lifelong learning” (Kenny, 2012, p. 6) and more importantly in contemporary indigenous societies’ contexts. Indigenous leadership therefore, addresses concerns on how to maintain these relationships.

The concept of motherhood is an aspect of indigenous leadership that maintains these relationships (Chioma, 2011). In researching and writing from West Africa, she highlights and argues that it was evident in her study that motherhood did not “convey the notion of servant leadership but rather an elevated and symbolic form of service through protection and collaboration” (Chioma, 2011, p. 8) that sustains society in the highest possible order. Thus, she comments that women’s “definition of leadership always took the higher ground with a strong emphasis on moral integrity, altruism, mothering, caring, and sacrificing for the good of the society and for present and future generations” (Chioma, 2011, p. 11). Thus, AhNee-Benham (2003) claims that an indigenous perspective of leadership “advocates [for] building strong educational communities that are family-centred, preserves and revitalizes native languages and cultures, and strengthens self- identity and sovereignty” (p. 241). This resonates with my idea of linking leadership with land and motherhood in the Santa Isabel matrilineal context, where such an advocacy is likely to be core in women’s leadership beliefs and practices, especially if context is crucial as I suggest. This may also link to the notion of cultural reproduction of behaviours,

attitudes and practices suggested by Bourdieu (1996b). This means that Bourdieu's (1996b) idea of reproduction of cultural practices could be used as a methodological lens to analyse the relationships between my findings and the idea of cultural reproduction.

From an indigenous Indian Canadian perspective, Maracle (2013) writes that women's leadership for them means that leaders are not necessarily those who have taken on a title. She believes that leaders are those who seem to get things done. She argues that these leaders appeared to "have a healthy vision, possess knowledge, are passionately committed and have a personal leadership style that promotes action" (Maracle, 2013, p. 317). She claims that these are natural leaders who have worked to change communities. An important observation she made about this leadership approach was that these leaders were, in overwhelming numbers, women.

Indigenous leadership perspectives that are grounded in knowledge systems that value leadership as socially reproduced and leadership as a symbolic act of reproduction are critical in my research. This is because these perspectives could create opportunities to focus on women's beliefs and practices of leadership. In particular, through the continued existence of social groups such as the matrilineal culture which ties and shields land and kinship connections to women.

### **Symbolic reproduction**

Deal and Kennedy (1982) argue that symbolic leadership uses ceremonies, myths, rituals, sagas, anecdotes, and values in organisational leadership. I argue that Santa Isabel women leaders support and champion the kinds of rituals and practices that reinforce a matrilineal exercise of leadership and cultural power. This is symbolic reproduction in practice. Therefore, as symbolic leaders, these women, work with different groups of people within and across communities to both get things done, and to make the culture stronger, thus reproducing and reinforcing traditions (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). It is important to understand that symbolic reproduction can be positive in the sense that it endows rituals and traditions with mana and respect (Sergiovani, 1984). One example of such rituals is the burying of the placenta referred to in Chapter 2. It is an actual and symbolic act that acknowledges and reinforces women's place in the culture as custodians of land and descent. This resonates with Blackmore's (1995) views

[t]he lens of privilege ... requires women in leadership to consider their position, to better understand how and why they came to be in that position and how they can use that position to challenge and transform exclusive images of leadership into more inclusive ones (p. 35).

In summary, the core of indigenous leadership in Santa Isabel is relational and in some tribal societies leaders acted on behalf of others in the community. In Santa Isabel, the social cohesion practices are mostly exercised by women through the matrilineal traditions.

### **Women in indigenous communities**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (UNESCO, 2011) identifies indigenous people to be:

Non-dominant sectors of society [who] are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as a basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems. (p. 1)

This quote highlights strong connections to the relational and the influence of context. Bolton (1999) and Ruddle and Hickey (2008) claim that indigenous people's customs, traditional knowledge and practices have guided their everyday life for thousands of years. They operate in their traditional knowledge of planting, harvesting, hunting, fishing, gathering, caring, nurturing, doctoring, healing, conservation and preservation. Thus, indigenous people's immense wisdom of local species and consumption as food, medicines, fuel, and building materials are acknowledged (UNESCO, 2011). They hold extensive knowledge of their environments and how these ecosystems function, because they live so close to nature. Moreover, they use local techniques to manage their bio-diversity and complex ecosystems. It is how these indigenous people acquire and use the knowledge of their environments and their relationships with them that give them cultural identity. Together, these areas suggest the value of context as an important factor for leadership research.

Culture can be thought about in many different ways, such as "youth, aged, gay, lesbian, religious, rural, urban, prison, and poor, wealthy and differently abled" (McNae & Strachan, 2010, p. 43). Thus, culture includes peoples' specific ethnicity as well as the social practices that surround them. For the purpose of this thesis, I

concur with Thaman's (2003) definition, she writes that culture is "a shared way of living of a group of people, which includes their accumulated knowledge and understandings, skills and values, and which is perceived by them to be unique and meaningful"(p. 3). This is similar to Hooker's (2003) view, which describes culture as "the way that human beings learn to live with each other and their environment" (p. 5). Thus, people who belong to a specific group may reflect a "certain set of shared values and norms, which are expressed in the way that you behave" (Huijser, 2006, p. 5) and this is an expression of culture: the accretion over time of practices, behaviours and beliefs that Bourdieu described as habitus (Bourdieu, 2002). Related to this, Klenke (2004) contends that leadership most often "is shaped by culture" (p. 10). This can mean that the changing and evolving nature of culture over time may also change the arrangements of beliefs and practices about women's leadership.

In their review of research on the relationship between leadership and national societal culture, Den Hartog and Dickson (2012) note that certain leaders' traits and behaviours can be context specific and that others may be universal but differently enacted according to national culture and context. Furthermore, drawing on literature from cultural anthropology and cross-cultural psychology,

Den Hartog and Dickson (2012) found that "national culture equips individuals with common ways of perceiving and acting, which systemically affect what followers expect from leaders and how leaders enact their behaviours" (p. 17).

Thus, they argue that "we should not take for granted that leadership models and theories developed in one culture will apply similarly in another" (Den Hartog & Dickson, 2012, p. 17). For example, leadership theories developed in economically developed countries may not be applicable to developing countries and islands such as Santa Isabel. They also made a point that leadership scholars in economically developing countries need to recognise the new set of challenges,

"given that most of our literature is steeped in cultural assumptions from the so called economically developed countries of the world" (Den Hartog & Dickson, 2012, p. 18). This is important in my study in theorising leadership approaches that are relevant in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture.

A cultural understanding of leadership calls for "appreciating local shared meanings associated with the context of leadership relations and acts" (Alvesson,

2011, p. xv). He calls for leadership to be defined in terms of how it can influence “the construction of reality - the idea, beliefs and interpretations of what and how things can and should be done in light of what the world looks like” (Alvesson, 2011, p. xv). He believes that a “cultural view of leadership balances an academic a priori definition of leadership with openness to the meanings of people being studied” (Alvesson, 2011, p. xvi). Furthermore, he asserts that “leadership in most cases is better understood when it takes place within and as an outcome of the cultural context (Alvesson, 2011, p. xvi).

An emerging generation of indigenous women scholars and writers (see, for example, AhNee-Benham, 2003; Archuleta, 2006; Kelep-Malpo, 2013; Kenny, 2012; Pollard, 2006; and White, 2010) have now begun to analyse the unique political and social position of indigenous women. “Indigenous women’s circumstances vary enormously throughout colonising societies, where patriarchy dominates, and in indigenous communities with distinct histories and cultural traditions” (Huhndorf & Suzack, 2011, p. 2). However, Archuleta (2006) proposes women’s leadership in indigenous communities focuses on the next generation.

She writes:

Although not always recognised as political, indigenous [women’s leadership] rhetorical practices engage in a kind of political activism because they provide commentary in indigenous people’s resurgence and recovery and because they instil in the younger generation pride, activism, and the power to resist injustice. Rather than view indigenous women as victims, we should focus on their coming to voice and telling stories as a healing process. Rather than live in fear, indigenous women speak out to promote resurgence and recovery. (p. 108)

My quest to better understand leadership as a resurgence of instilling the younger generation with pride, activism and justice actions as seen in some of these indigenous contexts may lead me to accurately portray women’s leadership beliefs and practices in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture, which exists within a Melanesian context.

### **Women’s leadership in the Melanesian context**

In these Melanesian countries, there is minimal research on and about women’s experiences in educational leadership, contributing to the absence of their voices. Nevertheless, it is encouraging to see that this vital area has since been explored by

Kelep-Malop (2003) and Kilavanwa (2004) in PNG, Strachan (2004a), Strachan, Saunders, Jimmy and Lapi (2007), Thomas (2013) and Warsal (2009) in Vanuatu and Akao (2008), Elisha (2012) and Pollard (2006) in the Solomon Islands. The call made by Oplatka (2006) for the examination of women's educational leadership and career experiences within developing countries and Fitzgerald's (2006) appeal to research indigenous theory of educational leadership is timely. This is particularly important for women in the Pacific islands, especially women in Melanesian countries such as Solomon Islands (SI), Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Vanuatu. Nevertheless, more still needs to be researched in different Melanesian countries' contexts such as the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture in the Solomon Islands.

A range of literature over the recent decade has emerged on leadership in the Solomon Islands (Malasa, 2007; Sanga & Walker, 2005; Sisiolo, 2010) but attendance to women as leaders is marginal at best. For instance, in Sanga and Walker's (2005) work, they give a very detailed account of what leadership should be in both informal and formal contexts in the Solomon Islands. While they explain, give suggestions and made recommendations on how Solomon Islanders can practice leadership in their communities and institutions, the focus is entirely from a patrilineal perspective except for minimal mention of women's leadership, which is frequently, in the context of church or community group.

This has the danger of pigeon-holing women's leadership as referring only to informal social contexts. Similar observations were made of Malasa (2007) and Sisiolo's (2010) studies. While both studies were related to educational leadership, the participants interviewed were Solomon Islands' school principals only, and since most are male, there is a significant chance that leadership experiences were understood only from male perspectives.

Some exceptions are Pollard (2006), Akao (2008) and Elisha's (2012) studies, but these again focus on different situated contexts. While Pollard (2006), and Akao's (2008) research were informative and highlighted important issues inhibiting effective leadership and women's educational leadership participation, they did so in general ways from strong patriarchal perspectives. In essence, they assumed that the views shared were homogenous. Elisha's (2012) work highlighted aspects of

matrilineal leadership in women principals; however, these aspects were from teachers' perspectives. Thus, these studies did not address women's leadership from women leaders' understanding of their community context.

As stated earlier, there have been recent studies focusing solely on women in educational settings in Melanesian countries. However much more needs to be done. These studies allow us to see into the experiences of the women, experiences that are unique to women in Melanesia and especially the influences of the cultural context on women leaders in schools. For example, Kilavanwa's (2004) study highlighted that in a "big man" society such as PNG, men will not accept instructions from a woman because of the dominant role men play in domestic cultural practices at home. Similarly, Ni Vanuatu women spoke about male gate-keeping and how they had felt silenced (Strachan et al., 2007). In the same way, Solomon Islands women observed that the influences of the cultural patriarchal norms impacted on their leadership and how they felt discriminated against (Akao, 2008). Kilavanwa (2004) and Akao (2008) suggested that the reason Melanesian women are still struggling to address gender equity issues is the absence of women's experience and the silence of women's voice in "big man" leadership dominant societies. While these findings add to understanding women's leadership experiences, the contexts are relatively diverse; thus, the claims made about participants' leadership experiences may also considerably vary.

Women do hold some leadership positions in Melanesian countries, but they are usually located in their communities and their churches and often women do not perceive these as leadership roles or see themselves as leaders (Douglas, 2003; Scheyvens, 1995; Strachan & Saunders, 2007). Strachan (2009) states women in Melanesia face obstacles in accessing leadership not experienced to the same extent or in the same way by women in economically developed countries. This is true especially when looking at the different contexts that women are in and the cultures that are embedded in these societies. The influence of tradition and culture has always been given as an explanation as to why women are underrepresented in leadership positions. Strachan (2007) argued that in the Melanesian context, "culture significantly impacts on females' ability to participate in education and decision-making at all levels, including educational leadership" (p. 104). I am wondering, if this explanation goes for women in matrilineal cultures as well.

In most Melanesian cultural groups, leadership and power have tend to be “traditionally” a male domain because of the prevalence of “big man” and “chief” systems of leadership, which will be addressed in part 3. This is further legitimated and strengthened by both church and colonial hierarchical systems and is present in every aspect of society (Akao, 2008; Kilavanwa, 2004; Pollard, 2006; Strachan & Saunders, 2007; Thomas, 2013). In these societies, therefore, leadership is essentially male dominated and males tend to be gate-keepers to who has access to education and leadership positions (Strachan & Saunders, 2007). In this scenario, women are marginalized through being generally excluded from key aspects of the society such as higher education and formal leadership roles.

However, Scales and Teakeni (2006) contend that this situation is “not wholly supported by historical evidence” (p.78). For example, in the Solomon Islands, “Santa Isabel women are sometimes figured as chiefs” (Bogesi, 1948, p. 216) and in Western and Guadalcanal provinces clan leaders were sometimes women (Kari, 2004). Similar examples are found in PNG and Vanuatu which are also

Melanesian. In PNG, the Nagovisi women of South Bougainville “traditionally occupied and in many respects continue to occupy positions of high status and relative authority that give them a prominent place in society” (Nash, 1978, p. 119). In Vanuatu, Raga women in North Pentecost Island “were known to be chiefs of certain *garigari* (tribes)” (Naupo & Simo, 2008, p. 99). Thus, Scales and Teakeni (2006) questioned the prevailing assumptions about women and leadership in traditional society, arguing that in some “pre-colonial Melanesian societies, there was no categorical necessity for all leaders to be male” (p. 78). They further stated that the idea that only men can be leaders may well be a result of the Victorian gender concepts brought about with colonialism in the village headman system and the beliefs of missionaries (Scales & Teakeni, 2006).

Furthermore, in Melanesian societies today, women’s traditional roles and status are being questioned by women. This is important as an increasing number of women are now exposed to formal education, overseas travel, mass media, and other modern technologies (Pollard, 2000; Tongamoa, 1988; Tuivaga, 1988). Some women who are well educated are beginning to question the gender division of labour as “unfair, degrading and biased against women” (Tongamoa, 1988, p. 89).

This is in contrast to how Melanesians view this labour division as being complementary to the traditional system. Complementary or not, such labour division denies equal rights for women, thus continuously affirming their subordination to men (Tongamoa, 1988).

Interestingly, Pollard (2000) also commented that even though women's roles and status are undergoing rapid change, there is still reluctance among the women themselves to abandon tradition entirely. This view is similar to those expressed by Papua New Guinea (PNG) women leaders (Kilavanwa, 2004). In Kilavanwa's (2004) study, findings revealed that the ascribed roles of women are still very influential regarding women's position today in PNG, a place where all women, regardless of whether they are educated or not, "still have a link to the traditional social norms even though their work place, environment and organizations are based on western systems" (p. 91). The roles of women cannot be isolated without difficulty from family and community responsibilities, because the intricate social network is interwoven with all aspects and issues of communal life, as they are in Santa Isabel island in the Solomon Islands, another Melanesian country.

In Melanesia, girls and women struggle to access formal education. Their participation in formal education is highest at the primary level but at more advanced level, the numbers start to lessen. Generally, more males than females are represented at every formal educational level, because opportunities for formal education are largely taken by men. This is crucial as "[a]ccessing educational leadership begins with girls and women being able to access education" (Strachan, 2009, p. 103). Similarly, because formal education in Melanesia is not compulsory (Strachan, 2007), females' access to formal education is lower because of the privileging of males' formal education. Males are encouraged to pursue further education while girls are not seriously encouraged (Strachan, 2007; Tuivaga, 1988). Pollard (2000) however, notes that "the inequality of participation in higher education does not necessarily reflect official policy or bias in favour of males; rather it is the consequence of the people's traditional world view, which includes the notion that a woman's place is at home" (p. 6). As such, in Melanesian countries, despite policy reforms, planning and education restructuring, women are still disadvantaged and formal education is neither accessible nor equitable for women

and girls (Kilavanwa, 2004; Sikua, 2002; Strachan, 2009; Strachan & Saunders, 2007). Perhaps too, these deeply held cultural practices and beliefs indicate Bourdieu's habitus at work. This is addressed more fully in chapter 4.

To address this issue, Pollard (2000) suggests that basic changes in some of the fundamental attitudes, values and beliefs are required before reasonable gender equality can be realised. One such change may be in the perceptions that parents have about allowing girls to attend schools. In other words, parents as well as families need to be aware of the benefits of educating girls and women. Strachan (2007) also raises similar sentiments and writes:

While it is important to preserve those aspects of culture that help sustain and enrich people, it is also important to change those aspects that limit people's opportunities based on their gender. Both males and females need to be equally valued in all aspects of their lives, including education. (2007, p. 105) (p. 105)

Following this argument, Strachan (2009) states that the under-representation of women in educational leadership positions as well as in other formal sectors begins with gaining access to education. She argues that since girls' access to education is limited, this may create a flow-on effect that impedes the participation of women economically and in decision making at all levels in the society (Strachan, 2009) including educational leadership. According to

Kilavanwa (2004), in PNG, women's access to educational leadership is restricted by the "sites of gender inequality (male bias), division of labour, and the restricted access to education and resources" (p. 24). Perhaps, this is why, in Melanesia, most principals are male and very few are women (Strachan, 2009), as can be seen in Vanuatu where "gender plays a more significant role than ethnicity in the under representation of women in leadership as 98 percent of the population are indigenous Melanesian" (Strachan et al., 2007, p. 3). Therefore, the support of both men and the churches is critical and needs to be included in any strategy for change (Pollard, 2006). Churches are needed to be part of the strategy for change because they contribute to privileging men in leadership roles, as well as being a site of women's social and community leadership which could therefore be recognised more.

In her critique of Western views on women's roles in indigenous societies, Strathern (1984) offers two criticisms. She claims that in Papua New Guinea, "the domains

within which women possess power have not been adequately investigated” [and that] “women’s roles in decision making and politics have been underestimated” (Strathern, 1984, p. 13). She posits that both contentions lie on assumptions concerning women’s social behaviour. She went on to say that these assumptions are rooted in Western cultural formulation of relationships between nature and culture, which while, motivate the “search for new ways to describe women’s involvement in society” (Strathern, 1984, p. 13), also denigrate the domesticity of women’s roles in these societies. Again, perhaps these realities for women’s lives suggest the enactment of habitus and social reproduction.

For these reasons, it maybe timely to reconceptualise the way women’s educational leadership as well as other forms of women’s leadership in these countries are understood. In this process of reconceptualisation, Strachan (2009) raised an important point. She stated:

We [economically developed nations] must resist imposing western colonial practices and solutions. Those of us that are not “of” the culture must listen to how women in Melanesia might want that support to manifest. They know how best to work within their own cultural context. (p. 107)

Strachan recognises the tendency to view women’s leadership based on economically developed countries’ ideas. It is my intention, as part of the work of increasing participation of women in decision-making in educational leadership in the Solomon Islands, to engage in a process of remembering and exploring the traditional leadership roles of women in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture to contribute to how Melanesian women make sense of their own cultural contexts.

### **Women and leadership in Santa Isabel**

Women in Santa Isabel, although very little has been documented about them within the chiefs leadership structure (Scales & Teakeni, 2006), display empowering and influential leadership roles in both traditional and contemporary times (Pollard, 2006; Poyer, 1996; Scales & Teakeni, 2006; Whittington et al., 2006). These influences are “displayed through their community roles, word of mouth, and decision-making in their families and communities and sometimes at the national level” (Pollard, 2006, p. 18). For example, when Solomon Islands women were eligible to vote in 1967, Lily Poznanski, a woman from Santa Isabel, had already

been elected as the first female member in the National Parliament in 1965 (Pollard, 2006). At the provincial level, there are currently two women provincial members and at the community level women participate in decision making and are the motors, soul and life of the village (Marau, 2002; Tetehu, 2005; Whittington et al., 2006).

As a woman from Santa Isabel who had taken up leadership in a tertiary institution in the Solomon Islands, I concur with Marau (2002), Pollard (2006), Scales and Teakeni (2006), Tetehu (2005), Whittington (2006) claim that a number of women have reclaimed and shifted these leadership roles into more formal settings such as education, government, private establishments, churches and other contemporary instances. These assertions therefore, contribute to understanding the importance of the unrealised cultural potential for women in matrilineal cultures to take up leadership roles. After all, there may be no absolute barriers to women emerging as leaders in Santa Isabel and other matrilineal societies in the Solomon Islands, as anecdotal evidence shows that the majority of women who take up leadership roles both in communities and formal sectors in the Solomon Islands come from matrilineal cultures.

This is in contrast to the normal practices where men are usually seen as the women's spokespersons, the head of the households and dominating leadership positions in the communities, the church, the provincial government, and in regional and political leadership (Whittington et al. 2006). I contend that such observations "influenced people to associate traditional leadership with men [which] has threatened to undermine women's traditional high status in Santa Isabel" (Whittington et al., 2006, p. 71). This is important in helping me to understand women's views about their leadership within the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture which I am examining.

### **Matrilineal and leadership systems**

As described in Chapter 2, the Santa Isabel matrilineal cultural leadership system is grounded on land and kinship relationships. This positions motherhood as an important aspect of this view of leadership, and so matrilineal leadership is also referred to as a mother-based system of leadership in which:

The blood is the mingled blood of mothers and children: children grow out of the blood of their mothers, of their bodies and being. The shared bond of kinship comes through mothers. The maternal tie is based on the growing of children. (Rothman, 1994, p. 144)

This quote illustrates the essence of motherhood in the formation and establishment of the interconnectedness between land and people, which is a core value in matrilineal leadership, and partly explains the positioning of it as a mother-based system of leadership.

Hampton (1997) posits that in matrilineal societies, women are valued because they are the ones who produce children or who “reproduces the body of society; therefore, the childbirth experience and maternal connection is primary” (p. 84). Consequently, maternal ties are based on the growing and nurturing of children. It is a common understanding in matrilineal societies that “people are not men’s children coming through bodies of women, but children of women” (p. 141). The descent along the lines of women is characteristic of such matrilineal societies and, according to Rothman (1994):

It is a shared mother that makes for a shared lineage or family group. Men still rule in these groups, but they do not rule as fathers. They rule the women and children who are related to them through their mother’s line. Women in such a system are not a vulnerability, but a source of connection. (p. 141)

Similarly, in the context of New Zealand, Reedy (2003), in her deep understanding of the Māori world view, explains that a child belongs to mother earth (*Papatuanuku*) and so:

When a child is born the placenta, *whenua* is returned to the earth. The umbilical cord is put in a special place selected long before by the child’s ancestors, making that child irrevocably for that tribe. (2003, p. 57)

The above quote illustrates the cultural rituals of burying the placenta back in the ground as a symbol of linking genealogy through tribes claiming their children and children claiming their right to their place. Furthermore, through this cultural ritual, genealogical links are made and family relationships are strengthened (Reedy, 2003).

In Navajo (North American Indian nation), Santoro (2011) also describes the placenta/cord as a symbolic image of connectedness that goes far beyond the bond between the child and his /her physical image to the social bond at large. He explains that the burial of the cord links together nature, biology, family, and sociology. Furthermore, Schwarz (1997) referring to Navajo placenta and cord burial rituals stated that “the burial of the cord in the earth anchors the child to the belly button of the Mother Earth and establishes a lifelong connection between a person and a place, just as the cord anchors a child to its mother while in the womb and establishes a lifelong connection between mother and child” (p. 145)

In Africa, Chioma’s (2011) study of women in West Africa elicited a conceptual framework that includes the link between motherhood and leadership, where motherhood is perceived “as a general concept of creativity, caring, continuity, and peace” (Chioma, 2011, p. 21). She argues that motherhood:

Reflects the normative values and humanistic ideologies that embrace notions of preservation of past, present, and the future generations; prosperity and well-being of society as a whole and the promotion of equality, peace, and justice. It is also viewed as a metaphor for humanising the state. (pp. 21–22)

In a matrilineal culture, motherhood then is not only limited to reproductive and nurturing roles in households but a continuing legacy of women’s leadership. It also relates to the legacy of women in leadership positions which includes decision-making positions. Chioma (2011) states that, although the women leaders she studied practiced leadership “under a patriarchal ideology, they no doubt employed the preservative, cooperative, and non-destructive values of motherhood” (p. 25) through their matrilineal culture. This idea resonates with my experiences of motherhood in my Santa Isabel matrilineal context.

In Melanesian countries, matrilineal leadership is also viewed as an embodied practice. This means leadership is a practice of both the mind and the body (Sinclair, 2004, 2011). It is an “embodiment of a holistic experience that encompasses an individual person’s biological (somatic), intellectual, emotional, social, gendered, artistic and spiritual experience, within their cultural, historical and geographical location” (Barbour, 2011, p. 13). Embodiment thus, “recognizes the material conditions of race, gender, sexuality, ability, history and culture [which] indicates

a holistic experiencing individual” (Barbour, 2011, p. 88). Thus, women leaders in these societies unsurprisingly link leadership to their gender and sexual identity by bringing their sense of womanliness and sexuality into the way they lead (Sinclair, 2004) even if they do not articulate it in those terms. For in the reproduction of social practices, such linkages are likely to be strongly felt as these women identify as women first and leaders second. In other words, women leaders indicate “an integrity of values and practices, a sense of the whole person” (Sinclair, 2004, p. 16). I argue, therefore, my addition makes deeper sense of this and concur with Sinclair’s (2004) contention that leadership is an extension of the self. This is similar to Ropo and Parviainen’s (2001) claims that leadership practice originates and is formed by bodily experiences that are situated in social, cultural and historical, and deeply personal contexts. Women’s leadership in matrilineal societies, especially in Melanesian countries such as Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea could have elements of embodiment.

In Vanuatu, “matrilineal women hold a voice, space and have land and property rights in community affairs” (Thomas, 2013, p. xv). Thomas’ (2013) study found that in Vanuatu, “the solidarity economy which combines aspects of market access while still engaging in the traditional systems of social organisation, offers an alternative organisational and economic framework for developing and enhancing community well-being in both the rural and urban areas of Vanuatu” (p. ix). She goes on to comment that “matrilineal women are recognized and valued for their roles in creating patrimony and legacies and transmitting lineage, property and land inheritances to their children” (Thomas, 2013, p. xvi). This means that “matrilineal children belong to matrilineal mothers and their clans” (Thomas, 2013, p. xvi). In terms of property rights, matrilineages ensure that land and lineage inheritances are distributed equally to all children, regardless of gender. Matrilineal women, therefore, upon marriage, have the prerogative to bring their spouse into their communities to create future matrilineal generations. I argue and concur with Thomas’ (2013) view that the influence of competitive individualism that operates within a neo-liberal agenda that is infiltrating systems of leadership in Melanesian countries, risks weakening matrilineal authority and communal system of social security in these Melanesian countries. This influence is likely to reinforce male views of how society functions, and so better understanding matrilineal leadership is important in Melanesia.

In Papua New Guinea, in the Trobriand Islands matrilineal culture, femaleness is represented through objects and ceremonies of which women are the owners and from which the power of women is positioned (Weiner, 1976). For example, on evaluating femaleness in terms of its contribution to reproduction in this matrilineal society, Weiner (1976) found that it is not mere biology but a power structure in which Trobriand women operate. He states that:

The symbolic qualities of exchange objects mirror the preoccupation with the developmental cycle of life and death..... Each object symbolically represents some measure of regensis. (Weiner, 1976, p. 231)

This means that biological facts are represented as being put to cultural use. In other words, “the natural value of women is made culturally explicit in a variety of primary social and symbolic contexts” (Weiner, 1976, p. 17). In this way, women in this culture contribute to the social value of both men and women through human generation, which is a central concern of Trobriand culture. Thus, Weiner (1976) states that in Trobriand culture, reproduction is itself presented as a cultural achievement. Furthermore, this reproduction is not just of children, it is also social production, the upholding of certain social identities as Bourdieu (1977a) theorised. This explains then that, women have value because reproduction falls into a “cultural domain” (Weiner, 1976, p. 175). Thus Strathern (1984) concludes that in this context, this deliberate widening of the notion of reproduction is compelling. She writes:

Women contribute to the construction of matrilineal; they are charged with regenerating the *dala* “matrilineal kin group,” not only through childbirth but also through ceremonies and wealth exchange. Ties through women are the essence of group definition, and women have the task of ceremonially setting *dala* interests off from other categories of relationships. Women thus celebrate an abstract formulation of femaleness that is a vehicle through which specific social relationships are conceptualised. (Strathern, 1984, pp. 19-20)

In this society, men are in charge of basic food production. They convert labour into prestige, to the extent that certain food-stuffs, particularly yams, circulate as valuables. Women own wealth, and they are recipients of valuables. Since it is through women that major group-based ties are traced, transactions between the sexes are bound up with the relationship of individuals to “matrilineal kin groups,” with social continuity and long term identity. Transactions between men, by contrast,

bring renown in a personal, short-term sense. Men bring renown chiefly to themselves, whereas women act on behalf of men and women alike (Strathern, 1984). Perhaps this is a key feature that differentiates matrilineal leadership practices from patrilineal ones, while at the same time highlighting aspect of Bourdieu's social reproduction theory and the practice of habitus.

Similarly, in the Nagovisi community in southern Bougainville Island, Papua New Guinea, Nash's (1978) ethnography work found that Nagovisi is a matrilineal society in which principles of kinship, descent, and residence are linked to social relations and ideological valuations of work and gender in society. In this society, the domain of work is more than the material transformation of resources and of the social relations involved in economic transactions. Work is linked to notions of identity and personhood and to relations of differential control and privileges. For example, women and men play distinctive roles in sweet potato and/ or taro garden making. Men clear the bush and then the women do the planting, weeding and harvesting of crops. In addition, garden-related tasks are conceived of as both a husband's work and wife's work. There is a strong feeling that shared garden labour is almost as much a part of marriage as is shared sexuality. In the same vein, being a matrilineal society, most garden sites are located on tracks controlled by the women's matrilineages. Every adult woman has the inalienable right to use some of her descent group's land for food gardens and to transfer title to her daughters. Even in cases in which a woman has been expelled from her village or voluntarily leaves it, she still retains these land rights. Married men of a descent group could make subsistence gardens on land belonging to their own descent group, but only if the women of the descent group approved (Nash, 1978). The Nagovisi wife remains the garden authority as she has the major responsibility for running her garden. The husband is an important helper, but the wife manages the garden. It is not surprising to see in this society that men never have their own gardens and are fed from those of female relatives (Nash, 1984). Thus, Nash (1984) argues:

That "food production in Melanesia is the basis of all wealth and, in addition to its obvious life-sustaining nature, its connection to the family group, its political uses and its connection to conspicuous display and consumption at large political gatherings cannot be ignored" (p. 118).

I agree with Nash (1984) that food production in Melanesia is linked to women's power and is symbolic of social reproduction and the matrilineal politics of tribal land and lineage inheritance.

Nash (1984) also discusses women's status in relations to the concepts of power and autonomy in Nagovisi society. She claims that for this society, power is the ability to tell other people what to do and autonomy is the ability to do what one decides to do. She made a point that these propositions imply opposite conditions; that is, power suggests preventing others from doing as they please, while autonomy could be about responsibilities for decision-making and having agency and suggests that one does not have to do as other people say. Thus, while these explanations are applicable to understanding of gender roles, the kinds of power and autonomy available to a person is also related to the socio-political organisation of his or her society and to social context as well. In these societies, it may be inappropriate to compare men and women in terms of their status. Nash (1984) states:

If all we want to know is that women in some societies are not under the oppressive control of men, that they can own property and exercise their rights over it freely, and that they can enjoy their work, even when it is not an exciting career, I can do no more than offer the evidence of Nagovisi women, for whom, I believe, all of this is true. (p. 119)

Rimoldi (2011) made a similar claim and state that the "matrilineal structure of ... [Bougainville] society ... is [a] true source of women's power and authority (p. 180). Kelep-Malpo (2007), reporting on her study of male and female principles in Papua New Guinea public school system concluded that half of the female head teachers have been influenced by their matrilineal cultures to attain leadership roles. She states that the women "were being prepared for and influenced by their cultural beliefs and practices" (Kelep-Malpo, 2007, p. 12). In addition, she maintains that the women's matrilineal culture "nurtured them to be bold, outspoken, and to have experience in decision making" (Kelep-Malpo, 2007, p. 12).

Although matrilineal cultural practices have heavily influenced women's leadership beliefs and practices in these societies, the church has also played a significant role.

## **Church and women's leadership**

In the Solomon Islands, Scheyvens (2003), in a study of women in development says that while church women's groups play important social and spiritual roles in the lives of many indigenous women, these groups rarely attract the interest of development practitioners or theorists concerned with the empowerment of women. She argues that while welfare concerns remain central to the activities of many such groups, her study demonstrates that a welfare approach does not preclude women's groups from engaging in strategic activities for the empowerment of women. Some of these activities, she notes, include support for logging protests, workshops to affirm the importance of women's roles to develop their confidence, and opportunities for them to travel and expand their knowledge basis. Furthermore, the process of coming together to engage in welfare activities through prayer, which many women enjoy greatly, can provide opportunities for confidence-building, income generation, and networking.

In summary, the literature on ideas about women's leadership in both developed and economically developing countries, specifically Melanesian countries and in particular Solomon Islands and Santa Isabel, contextualise my research. The literature illustrates that women's educational leadership experiences have been mainly researched from within Eurocentric patriarchal societies' perspectives.

While for research knowledge on women's leadership in economically developing countries and Melanesia is emerging, the leadership experiences of women in Santa Isabel in the Solomon Islands are presently absent from this literature.. This is the gap I intend to contribute to.

Given the literature on indigenous perspectives of women's leadership, I theorised and construct a picture of how these perspectives might play out in how women leaders understand ideas around leadership and how these ideas are realised in the way they learn and do leadership, in particular with regard to the matrilineal leadership cultural beliefs and practices in the context of the Solomon Islands' societies.

### **Part 3: Theories Relevant to Santa Isabel Context**

#### **Spiritual leadership**

Research on women leaders, in particular, indigenous women, shows a strong theme of leadership grounded in spirituality (AhNee-Benham, 2003; Dantley, 2010; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Ngunjiri, 2010). Dantley (2010) argues that adding spirituality to values is paramount in leadership, for he relates leadership with critical spirituality, which he says is the aspect of character “through which we build connectivity and community with others” (Dantley, 2010, p. 214). He further writes that spirituality includes compassion, a sense of equity, understanding, and passion toward others and the life’s work to which one has been “called.” He claims that spirituality is the source of the transformative aspect of a leader’s work and appears to be common in the ways women lead.

In Africa, Ngunjiri (2010), in a study exploring women’s spiritual experiences of leadership in various communities (grassroots, national and Pan African and global organisations), found that spirituality “seemed to permeate everything [women] thought about, pursued, and talked about” (p. 183). Spirituality for these women was an unspoken understanding. It was the “foundation upon which they built a purpose for life, and a sense of direction as leaders” (Ngunjiri, 2010, p. 183). She claims that spirituality could be a source of the women’s leadership practice. This was illustrated in one of the participants’ (Thongori’s), comments, which stated “I remember praying to God many mornings that God gave me a purpose for life.... So I like to give encouragement or direction to people’s projects” (Ngunjiri, 2010, p. 183). For this participant, she found excitement in her leadership when she was guided by her God to step down from her corporate law job to advocate for women through the Federation of Women Lawyers (Ngunjiri, 2010).

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) state that for some women leaders, spirituality is a “source of personal strength as well as a way to understand connectedness to others and to the greater world” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 14). This means women leaders embrace their connectedness to others as a way to enable them to recognise “that [they] have a responsibility to respond to others and to use [their] gifts in the greater context of [their] interconnected life, rather than simply for

[their] own pleasure or advancement” (Bailey et al., 2008, p.22). In a similar manner, AhNee-Benham and Cooper (1998), reporting on narratives of their study on diverse women leaders, assert that women in their study derive power from their sense of connectedness by “webbing their schools with people, institutions, ideas and the larger environment” (p. 146). Further, Garrett and Garrett (2002) assert that spirituality has always been an important value incorporated in North and South American native people’s daily practices of leadership.

Spiritual leadership drawn from religious beliefs conjures different meanings for different women leaders. Sometimes, it is taken as a way for some women leaders “to understand the effects of spirituality in their lives as leaders” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 14). For many women leaders, spirituality is very similar to consciousness-raising (Ngunjiri, 2010) while “[f]or others, spirituality means a search for on-going peace and self-understanding” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 14). Spiritual leadership for women relates to a loving epistemology explained as “knowing other’s ‘worlds’ is part of knowing them and knowing them is part of loving them” (Laible, 2003, p.189). Simmons and Johnson (2008) posit that women leaders use “passionate language” in their leadership. They explain passion in language as everyday conversations that are “vocalised from a deep commitment to justice, and articulated with emotional imagery of tone, diction, and context that conveys one’s convictions for hope” (p. 239). Hence, Simmons and Johnson (2008) articulate that passionate language can serve as an,

anti-oppressive gesture that contests the cultural and political postures typically associated with white paternalistic norms. The difference in these [contexts] is in the way language is used to compel emotion for a cause (p. 239).

Thus, they found that the use of passionate language by women leaders gave hope of motivating “others to act in a manner that moves the organisation toward transformation” (Simmons & Johnson, 2008, p. 241).

From another angle, AhNee-Benham (2003) writes that spiritual leadership for women leaders is “knowing others’ worlds ...[that] include the worlds of our ancestors ... [the] native spiritual wisdom, which is guided by the hearts of our grandmothers and grandfathers” (p. 231). Relatedly, Emmons (1999) describes spirituality as “a search for meaning, for unity, for connectedness, for transcendence

[and] for the highest of human potential” (p. 92). This relates to Maori perspectives of leadership around “the evolution of existence, beginning with a supreme god (Io) followed by the creation of the world, the creation of the gods, and then the creation of mankind” (Katene, 2010, p. 4). This means that power and authority originated from god and mankind was an agent of God (Katene, 2010).

I concur with Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) that many women leaders use spiritual leadership in their jobs, in particular when they relate their success in leadership roles to their spirituality. Furthermore, they acknowledge that women leaders see their spirituality in their ability “to push forward, often in conflictual and difficult situations ... [but which] gives them hope, increasing their resilience so that they can keep working for change” (p. 15). Dantley (2010) however, argues that spirituality related to religion “is often used to transmit codes of behaviour that work in collaboration with civil authorities to ‘domesticate’ a society’s citizenry” (p. 214). This made me realise that spiritual leadership, while it can be enabling for some women, could be inhibiting for others. This idea resonates with my study context and may help me to probe their understanding of these concerns further.

### **Relational leadership**

A relational leadership approach that could be relevant to the Santa Isabel context is likened to Eisler’s (2005) model of enlightened power. Based on studies of Nordic nations Eisler (2005) writes:

[H]ow a society structures the relations between women and men are of profound personal, social and economic significance. It is of key importance in how leadership and power are conceptualised and exercised. It is also an important factor in shifting the architecture of the workplace from top-down hierarchies of domination to what I call hierarchies of actualisation. (pp. 28–29)

Following this argument, hierarchies of actualisation refers to organisational structures that are partnership-oriented, “where the culture values and rewards relations that are based on mutual benefit, respect, caring, and accountability rather than relations in which there must be winners and losers” (Eisler, 2005, p. 29). This is consistent with Shakeshaft and Grogan’s (2011) observation that “women’s leadership often has been described as collaborative and creating a context that promotes shared-meaning-making within a community practice” (p. 41).

In fact, Eisler (2005) claims that the success of innovative economics in countries like Finland, Sweden and Norway was due to their “policies giving value and fiscal support to the stereotypically feminine work of caregiving” (p. 28). Examples of measures include such as universal health care, child-care allowances, elder care, and paid parental leave. These measures, she argues, have helped produce the higher quality human capital that transformed these countries into prosperous nations. This means that these countries have created cultural and structural changes that have enabled women to “occupy a far higher percentage of political leadership positions than anywhere else in the world [as women] make up 40 percent of legislators” (Eisler, 2005, p. 28). Such cultural and structural configurations characterise a model of leadership that appreciates the higher status of women. As Eisler (2005) elaborates, when the status of women rises, so too does the status traits and activities such as empathy, caring and nonviolent values, which could in turn make it more possible for men to embrace these values without feeling threatened.

In Melanesian countries, people believe in collectivism and their leadership experiences make relational connections to the family including those still alive and those who have died, God and the community (Sanga & Chu, 2009).

Women’s leadership in this context is “spoken of and enacted in relationship to others” (Strachan, Akao, Kilavanwa, & Warsal, 2010, p. 71). The family’s influence in developing relational values is central to the process of learning leadership in this context. For example, the values of “never give up” developed through powerful and repeated family homilies are carried into leadership actions

(Sanga & Chu, 2009). This resonates with Bourdieu’s (1996a) claim that the family is socially constructed. Strachan et al. (2010) argue that “remembering and taking these homilies into their leadership practice” (p. 71) caused women leaders in Melanesia to keep their families close. This also give them strength and comfort during difficult times throughout their leadership journeys.

Similarly, in a Melanesian context, the support of family allows for strong extended family networks (Kelep-Malpo, 2003; Pollard, 2006; Sanga & Chu, 2009; Thomas, 2013). This means that women can call on those networks to help care for children, giving them an opportunity to continue their careers and not having to take time out from their careers for child rearing. Nevertheless, Akao (2008) and Warsal (Warsal,

2009) argued that Melanesian women leaders still struggled to balance their professional and personal lives because of their huge domestic responsibilities. Kilavanwa (2004) also pointed out that “[b]eing educated and school leaders neither changes the roles of motherhood nor the obligations of wife” (p. 63) for Melanesian women. This is important in helping me to understand the impacts of the Santa Isabel mother-based matrilineal culture on women’s leadership. For women in Melanesia which, Solomon Islands and Santa Isabel is part of, the building and maintaining of good relationships is important to women’s leadership (Akao, 2008).

### **Servant leadership**

Servant leadership, drawn from Greenleaf’s (1977) conceptualisation is about leaders who are committed to the growth of people. A primary responsibility for such leaders is the “service to followers” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 20). The emphasis rests on the need to serve followers and devote oneself as a leader, to the ethical development of followers. Servant leadership could also be understood as leadership which, “believe that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers [and who are] deeply committed to the growth of each and every individual...to nurture the personal, professional and Spiritual growth of employees” (Spears, 2002, pp. 7–8)

Given that a key idea in servant leadership is a commitment to the growth of people (Greenleaf, 1977), I draw from Ngunjiri’s (2010) contention and argue that servant leadership for women leaders means to believe in “serving [that] ought to be natural, inherent in a genetic make-up... [where] women serve others, in their immediate family, their communities, and their nations” (Ngunjiri, 2010, p. 169). For example, women in African communities where Ngunjiri (2010) conducted her study talked about servant leadership as an ideal leadership that is service oriented and which they were quite comfortable to use. She described the women who use a servant leadership approach in her study as “critical servant leaders, indicating that they are able to lead and serve by breaking down barriers and critiquing existing social structures” (Ngunjiri, 2010, p. 171). However, she cautioned that the “connotations of beneath, subjugated, emancipated” (Ngunjiri, 2010, p. 170) that are associated with servant leadership need to be redefined. I am yet to find out if women leaders in my study view servant leadership as suggested by Ngunjiri (2010).

I also wondered whether a servant leadership approach is service constructed as a Christian duty in Melanesian countries as suggested by Kelep-Malpo (2007), Pollard (2006), Strachan, Akao, Kilavanwa and Warsal (2010) and in particular, in the case of Santa Isabel island where this research is located. The Servant leadership approach for Melanesian women leaders seemed to relate to strong Christian principles of respect, forgiveness and honesty (Strachan et al., 2010). This suggests that women leaders in Melanesia view a servant approach to leadership as having a relationship with God through prayer. Praying to God provided women leaders with comfort when they experienced hard times in their leadership roles. According to Strachan et al., (2010) “servant leadership for Melanesian women provided [them] with a way to lead that was congruent with their Christianity and their gendered roles” (p. 71). However, I agree with Strachan et al’s., (2010) argument that viewing servant leadership as service constructed as a Christian duty could be “problematic as it continues to position women as subordinate and does nothing to challenge the inequities in attitudes, systems and social structures” (p. 71)

A servant leadership approach for some countries, in particular, in indigenous African societies is viewed as “an elevated and symbolic form of service through protection and collaboration, and by sustaining society in the highest possible order” (Chioma, 2011, p. 8). Furthermore, she highlights and argues that it was evident in her study that motherhood did not convey the notion of servant leadership... [but was]...a definition of leadership [that] always took the higher ground” (Chioma, 2011, p. 11). Thus, servant leadership could be understood as an approach to leadership with a “strong emphasis on moral integrity, altruism, mothering, caring, and sacrificing for the good of the society and for present and future generations” (Chioma, 2011, p. 11). These ideas resonate with my experiences of the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership cultural habitus and may help me to unpack women leaders’ leadership beliefs and practices, and how they may be reproduced over time.

### **Village leadership**

Village leadership is likened to community leadership in that “village” can also be a community and vice versa. For the purpose of this research, therefore, both terms will be used when addressing aspects of women’s leadership. Firstly, a community is defined by Miller (2002) as “a group of people sharing a common bond or

tradition, who support and challenge each other to act powerfully both individually and collectively to affirm, empower and defend their values and self-interests” (p. 32). In these communities, Lambert (2002) states that leadership is “the enabling reciprocal processes among people...[that] manifest within relationships in a community, ... in spaces, [and] the fields among participants, rather than in a set of behaviours performed by an individual leader” (p. 42). As such, key leadership elements within the notion of community tend to be captured in developing supportive relationships, interaction between individuals, groups, and institutions, generating shared values, purposes and celebrations (Beck, 1999). The focus of leadership is on the combined effects of many sources of leadership, along with possible differences in the contributions made by these sources (administrators, teachers, students, parents, elders). The function of leadership is providing direction and exercising influence.

Within international and local communities, in particular grassroots organisations, churches, women’s groups, youth groups and civil society, Goethals, Sorenson and Burns (2004) suggested that a “bottom-up model” (p. 230) of leadership provides a framework that seemed to work successfully. A key idea guiding the success of this model is that it “clearly articulate[d] tasks, timetables, and expectations and then evaluates work, letting everyone participate” (Goethals et al., 2004, p. 230) The Country Women’s Association of Nigeria (COWAN) is an example of this leadership model, where communities have been “empowered by bottom-up planning” (Goethals et al., 2004, p. 230) to keep young people in the village. This example illustrates “leaders [can be] socially produced in context” (Goethals et al., 2004, p. 230) and that it is important in communities to have leaders who have been created through their interaction with their community environment. Again, these practices appear to echo Bourdieu’s (1977b) social reproduction. However, these notions of community leadership have been overlooked until recently (O’Brien & Shea, 2010).

Secondly, a village is a place where various social processes take place. It is an environment where learning can also take place effectively. In Santa Isabel in the Solomon Islands, it is a place where various kinds of learning are nurtured, and where people continue to learn throughout their lifetime, regardless of age and status (Rodie, 2011). Thus, the village leadership concept has been very much part

of the Santa Isabel matrilineal way of life for centuries where chiefs always welcome visitors to the village, and the chief, the head of family units, and members of this family unit have a sense of responsibility for family members' livelihood. My participants' village social structure is therefore, an important element that will help understand women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices through the habitus lens.

### **Big man leadership**

Big man leadership is premised on the masculine roles of the warrior, feast giver and priest, and are associated with masculinity, strength, fame and supernatural power (Pollard, 2006; Sanga & Walker, 2005). A big man leader gains the title through demonstrating leadership skills, achievements, proving character and accumulating wealth (Pollard, 2006; White, 1991). This type of leadership is relational, reciprocal and dependent on their followers, over whom they have a great deal of influence (Kelep-Malpo, 2003; Pollard, 2006; Sanga & Walker, 2005; White, 1991). A big man leader builds strong relationships and connections with other big man alliances or factions of tribes, a political act in which power and prestige are displayed. A big man leader displays great wealth through hosting grand feasts and distributes food and wealth to his followers. Hence, this type of leadership is not acquired by birth, but earned through hard work and demonstrated leadership skills. However, Pollard (2006) argues that the "functioning and the success of the "big man" leadership cannot be achieved in isolation but depends upon the relationship between...production and exchange of wealth as well as intensions of good will" (p. 18) from women through their roles in animal husbandry and food production.

In the Melanesian context, big man leadership relates to gender and power relationships. However, within this system, men and women are well positioned. For example in some societies in Melanesia, men are fearful of women's reproductive powers which they believe to be weakening and polluting (Douglas, 1993). We have a big man culture in the Solomon Islands: but I am not examining that context. I am examining a matrilineal culture where women's worth is vested in beliefs and practices related to the passing on of land ownership and descent through successive generations of women, therefore, women play an important role in linking children to their land and tribe and associated cultural practices. Women

in this culture have high status and considerable power to influence decision-making and action (Douglas, 1993). The big man leadership does not really apply. This is the new knowledge and the gap in the literature that I have realised. This leadership that I am interested in is of the matrilineal culture within my Santa Isabel context

In summary, therefore, I theorise that spiritual leadership, relational leadership, servant leadership, village leadership and big man leadership aspects of the literature will be important to the analysis of my findings.

### **Relational leadership in context**

In the Santa Isabel context, the relevance of relational leadership to women's leadership lies within leadership approaches that are grounded in spiritual, relational, servant and village aspects, which I have theorised are important in helping me to understand women leaders' perceptions of the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture. Even though this is what the literature shows, in the Santa Isabel context there might be other aspects that the literature does not attend to. These are the gaps that contributed to the development of my research in a manner that allowed me to become aware of unresolved issues based on my own observations and experiences within the leadership process.

### **Chapter Summary**

The review of the literature presented here has indicated that relational leadership is critical to the ways women lead. Women's leadership, therefore, is complex given the relationship between different concepts and understanding the connections that link leadership beliefs to practices in the way women lead.

The literature presented here also highlights the gaps in our knowledge of women's leadership in matrilineal cultures in Solomon Islands community contexts. The lack of research on women leaders' beliefs and practices in the Solomon Islands' community contexts highlights the need for further research. Hence, this study was designed to explore the influences of the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture on women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices in the Solomon Islands community context. It was guided by the overarching question:

What are the influences of the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture on women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices? Answers to this question may contribute to navigating changes in ways women may participate in leadership and decision making roles in the Solomon Islands by informing policy decisions that would bring about desirable outcomes.

The next chapter discusses the research methodology used in this study and the reasons for choosing this research methodology.

## Chapter Four: Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the underlying philosophy, methodology, and my positioning in the research. The chapter consists of three parts. The first part, explains ontological and epistemological stances that I hold, and how these stances led to locating my research ideals within an interpretive paradigm. The second part describes the suitability of a qualitative case study methodology in understanding Santa Isabel women's leadership beliefs and practices. It also illustrates my position as a researcher and identifies some potential issues confronted when undertaking my research. This part also explains my analytical lens, the notion of habitus, and the usefulness this theory has in exploring Santa Isabel women's leadership beliefs, experiences and practices. The third part justifies the selection of specific methods and their suitability for understanding women's leadership beliefs and practices. The chapter concludes with a summary.

### Overview of Theoretical Framework

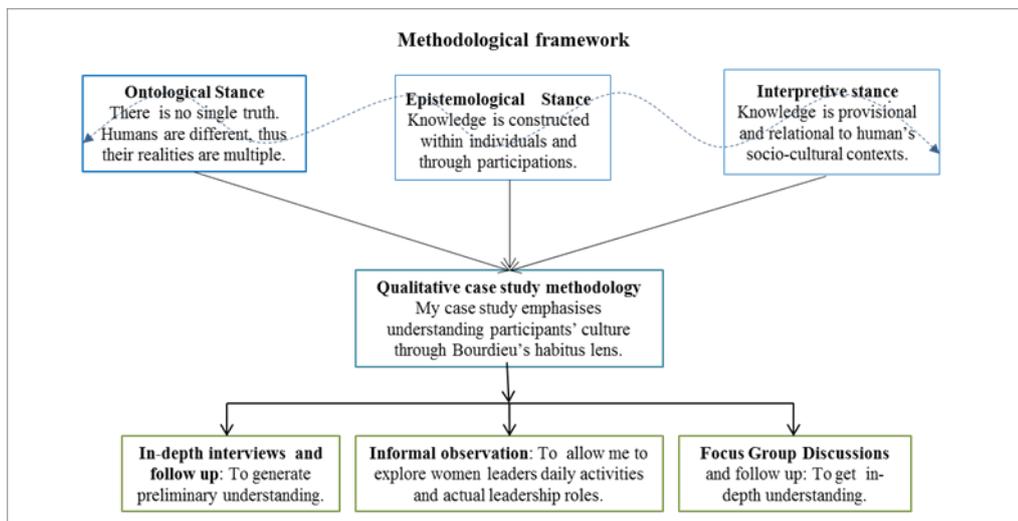
The research methodology provides clarity to the researcher's philosophical and theoretical perspectives about research design (Creswell, 2007). In my research, it involves outlining my ontological and epistemological perspectives, the theory of habitus, the paradigm in which this research is located and the methodology in order to understand Santa Isabel women's leadership beliefs and practices.

My research aimed to *explore and examine the influences of the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture on women's leadership beliefs and practices*. Through this overarching aim, I sought to understand the beliefs that women leaders held about the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture and explore factors that influenced these understandings. I also wanted to investigate how these leadership beliefs and practices evolved within this cultural setting. Furthermore, I wanted to see what matrilineal leadership looked like in practice. It was important, therefore, that the choice of methodology helped to support this research aim. In the next section, I provide detail of the theoretical framework of my research. I illustrate my philosophical and methodological worldviews in Figure 4.1 and explain these in the following sections which illustrate my research methodology overall.

Research methodology is understood to be the theoretical nature of the research and the underlying philosophical understanding which informs the research (Morrison, 2007). It includes the philosophical assumptions and the methods that guide data generation and data analysis of the research. As Anderson and Arsenault (1998) state:

How we see the world is largely a function of where you view it from, what you look at, what lens you use to help you see, what tools you use to clarify your image, what you reflect on and how you report your world to others. (p. 3)

Thus, in my understanding, a research methodology can also be “a research strategy that translates ontology and epistemology principles into guidelines that show how research is to be conducted” (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 30). It also influences how knowledge is perceived, generated and analysed within the research process (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). The guidelines of my research methodology, therefore, depend on my choice of ontological and epistemological stances outlined below in Figure 4.1, which I will now explain.



**Figure 4.1:** Methodological framework

### **Ontological stance**

As outlined in Figure 4.1, conducting research takes account of the researcher’s ontology. Ontology pays attention to the assumptions about the ways in which a researcher understands and views the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Ontology is a “belief system about the nature of social reality [and] how we can learn about this reality” (Leavy, 2014, p. 3). Ontology is concerned with the essence of establishing

a meaning about the kinds of things that exist and understanding what constitutes the world (Chilisa, 2012). It involves the study of reality and of being, which lead to understanding the nature of the phenomena in the case of this research the matrilineal leadership culture being investigated (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Thus, understanding a person's ontological perspective is crucial, as it raises "basic questions about the nature of reality and the nature of [people] in the world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 3).

In my research, I take a relational ontological stance. Chilisa (2012) describes relational ontology as "the nature of being and how worldviews on being are implicated in the social construction of realities" (p. 108). In my understanding, the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture expresses an ontology that deals with relationships among people, the living (plants) and the non-living (land), and the spiritual existence (ancestral spirits and God) that promotes love and harmony among people and communities. My position then is that how my research participants define their leadership beliefs and practices is associated with the kinds of relationships within their context.

This worldview recognises that the human nature has multiple realities, which are socially defined (Creswell, 2007) in relation to the context. For example, each woman in Santa Isabel makes sense of her own social, cultural and individual realities and these may differ from even those close to her. In this way, "truth" is partial and one's worldview, while influenced by social-cultural context it may be highly individual. This may mean that the meaning they make out of these experiences will also vary. Hence, there is no one single truth, as people are different and view things differently. For instance, two women leaders experiencing the same incident are likely to interpret it differently. This means that as a researcher it was important I was aware that their interpretations of their lived realities were likely to be understood differently even though they come from a similar cultural background as each other.

### **Epistemological stance**

The second philosophical stance involves my epistemology or how I decided to view knowledge in my research. My stance is guided by my ontology, as shown in Figure 4.1. Epistemology is the theory of knowing and creating knowledge about a

phenomenon (Matthews & Ross, 2010; Sprague, 2010). It relates to basic questions such as what is regarded as acceptable knowledge (Leavy, 2014), how knowledge is acquired, the nature of understanding, or how we know what we know (Chilisa, 2012). Epistemology also involves the interaction between the researcher and the researched in ways of enquiring into the nature of knowledge and justification and creating knowledge between them (Cohen et al., 2011). I believe there are multiple ways to see the world; hence, everyone understands it and their place in it differently. In my research, women leaders' interpretation of their beliefs and practices of leadership in the matrilineal leadership culture may also vary. These epistemological considerations in research shape methodologies and justify how the research questions are answered (Glesne, 2011).

My stance is that I (the researcher) and my research participants (women leaders) construct an understanding about the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture through interaction with the data they generated. As Wilson (2008) acknowledges, "systems of knowledge [are] built on relationships" (p. 74), and participants or communities can also be "knowers" (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, 3). With regard to a relational epistemology, knowledge is viewed as:

Something people develop as they have experiences with each other and the world around them. People improve on the ideas that have been developed and passed to them by others. They do so by further developing their own understandings and enlarging their perspectives. With enlarged perspectives, they create new meanings from their experiences. (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, p. 9)

This means that as a person continues to interact with people and the environment around them (within or outside of their own cultural contexts) they become aware of their own bias and prejudices. Thus, this may change their understanding of certain practices. For example, the perspectives of people from Santa Isabel, of the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture may shift and change, as they are exposed to other contexts such as formal education, religion, and other cultures.

As shown in Figure 4.1, both the epistemology and ontology that a researcher holds influence and guide the methodology chosen for conducting the research. The relationship between epistemology, ontology and methodology is complex. Kraus' (2005) representation, however, made the relationship simpler to understand. He states that "ontology involves philosophy of reality, epistemology addresses how

we come to know that reality while methodology identifies the particular practices used to attain knowledge of it” (pp. 758–759). These processes are interconnected with links between my view about the nature of knowledge, and my view of the reality my participants share about their leadership beliefs and practices (Jabareen, 2009). Combining these principles guided me towards a specific research situated within the interpretive paradigm.

The following section justifies this stance.

### **Interpretive paradigm**

The interpretive paradigm emphasises exploring individuals’ experiences in their social world. This includes understanding their perspectives, their interpretations, and meanings (Chilisa, 2012). Hence, it deals with values, ideals or beliefs that guide or provide a lens, for the way the world of reality may be viewed and interpreted (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Sparkes, 1992). It involves “an overarching perspective that guides the research process” (Leavy, 2014, p. 3) and which influences “what should be studied, how research should be done [as well as] how results should be interpreted” (Bryman, 2004, p. 4). It is “a particular world view where philosophy and methods intersect to determine what kinds of evidence one finds acceptable” (Patton, 2002, p. 571). In my research, understanding how the Santa Isabel cultural context shapes participants’ individual experiences and practices of leadership is important in the inquiry of knowledge.

Creswell and Clark (2011) state that interpretivists claim that reality is socially constructed. Creswell (2014) adds that interpretivists believe that understanding the individuals “world in which they live and work” (p. 8) helps construct the meaning of a situation. The key to this worldview is the attempt to understand the subjective world of the human experience, from the perspectives of those within a context. This means seeking to understand the person through interviews and observations about the culture or cultures where participants are situated. Hence, an individual’s experiences have to be understood in relation to the culture they live in and through the links that connect them within their social world.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) state that researchers who operate within the interpretive paradigm argue that theory is “emergent and must arise from particular situations” (p. 22). It starts with understanding individual experiences from what

the data yields (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Thus, in my research, I did not intend to understand the best practices for women's leadership or the common perceptions of women's leadership practices that have been identified by other researchers or theories. I sought to understand my participants' interpretations of their experiences. I do not attempt to judge the quality of women's leadership practices either. This qualitative interpretive paradigm provided me with an opportunity to make sense of the women leaders' beliefs that had influenced their existing practices. This way of understanding of women's leadership practices may help to support future leadership learning and development in the Solomon Islands but also illuminate the highly contextual nature of leadership. Guided by my ontological and epistemological perspectives and interpretive positions, the design and implementation of this research uses a qualitative case study approach, which is now discussed.

### **Qualitative Case Study Methodology**

As illustrated in Figure 4.1, a qualitative case study methodology was chosen for this study.

Qualitative research is the “study [of] things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). It is a research methodology that focus and attempts to “explore, describe, or explain social phenomena; unpack the meanings people ascribe to activities, situations, [and] events” (Leavy, 2014, p. 2). Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the researcher in specific socio-cultural contexts and “involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). A qualitative approach to research allows the researcher to study the selected issues in depth and detail (Patton, 1990). Central to a qualitative approach is understanding the situations in their uniqueness, and as part of specific contexts, with their own social interactions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The qualitative approach was suitable and appropriate to my research aim which was to explore and investigate women's leadership beliefs and practices in the Santa Isabel context. In order to understand how women leaders understood and came to develop their leadership beliefs and practices, it is important for me to carry out the investigation within the participants' natural settings. I was then able to conduct my research

without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis, and it also provided me with depth of, openness and detail with regard to the women's stories (Patton, 1990).

Hagan (2006) defines the case study methodological approach as an "in-depth, qualitative study of one or a few illustrative cases" (p. 240). I have chosen this approach for several reasons. Berg and Lune (2012) argue that a case study approach is commonly used in educational studies to understand unique phenomena, people, programmes, settings, groups and subjects. I see my research perspective as unique, because the focus is on women's leadership in the Santa Isabel matrilineal context. Although research in education and women's leadership has been carried out for decades across countries (Blackmore, 2009; Coleman, 2009; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Regan & Brooks, 1995; Strachan, 2009), this phenomenon has not been explored in the Santa Isabel context with this group of women leaders.

I required an approach that would enable me to understand the complex issues that the context of Santa Isabel may raise; For example,

- a) the leadership beliefs and purposes that underpin women's leadership practices,
- (a) how women's leadership practices have been influenced by their matrilineal cultural beliefs and religious principles,
- (b) how women perceive leadership learning and development.

The complexity of women's leadership practice is evident in the literature review (Chapter 3), and the case study approach is commonly employed in educational leadership research that aims to explore and understand various issues in this complex profession. Woodside (2010) argues that thick description alone is not enough for case study research. It should explore deep understanding about the phenomenon. He further states that a case study can contribute to knowledge about understandings and perspectives within a system that people live in. Understanding these perspectives include knowing about what people perceive, framing what they perceive, and interpreting what they perceive (Woodside, 2010). The case of seeking deep understanding about women's leadership perspectives is crucial to my research, because this is the first attempt to investigate this particular group of women in this unique small country context: Santa Isabel Island.

Furthermore, the case study approach is also useful for exploring women's leadership practices. Understanding women's leadership practices through an in-depth exploration of how leadership is enacted in specific contexts was crucial for my study. This was important, because this knowledge could contribute to the introducing of new and reformed policies highlighting areas of injustice. In my view, a case study research design will assist with developing an understanding of areas for future research. Toma (2006) argues that case studies are useful when a researcher is interested in contributing to policies, or improving decision-making about a specific phenomenon. Thus, a case study approach may contribute to understanding women's leadership in this cultural milieu and through further actions could ultimately contribute to enhancing women's leadership practice in education in the Solomon Islands.

Creswell (2013) argues that an important element in using a case study approach is the use of multiple methods such as interviews and observation for data generation. This allows a researcher to provide in-depth understanding about the cases (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2002) refers to an "intrinsic" case which contains unusual or meritorious features, and an "instrumental case which illuminates a particular issue. Case studies may also include multiple cases called "collective case study" (Stake 1995). Thus, to understand women's leadership beliefs and practices, I generated data in three phases. I visited the women twice and kept in contact with them during the period of my research. This was important because through just one visit I might not have been able to seek a thorough or deep understanding or construct sound knowledge about participants' practice within that context. I used multiple methods of data generation. For example, in the first phase I used interviews and informal observation, which were semi-structured and informal. In the second phase I used focus group discussions with informal observations and in the third phase I followed up individual interviews with selected participants after the two fieldworks visits. This was on the premise it would generate a wide range of information about my participants' understanding of their beliefs, experiences and practices of leadership. A researcher's position in the data generation process is also essential in the research process. In the next section I describe my insider/outsider positioning in this research.

## **Insider/outsider Researcher Position**

The insider/outsider researcher position is essentially someone in a situation like mine, where I am of and from the context I am studying. As Gair (2012) suggested, such a researcher is likely to have a “common lived experience or status as a member” (p. 137) of a particular group. In my case, I am from Santa Isabel and know the people and context intimately. I therefore identify myself as an insider/outsider researcher. According to De Cruz and Jones (2004) and Innes, (2009), most researchers to some extent can be both an insider and outsider. As a member of a Santa Isabel community who was raised in this region and a person who gained formal tertiary education overseas and worked in formal educational institutions in the Solomon Islands, I identify myself as both an insider and outsider researcher. I am an insider/outsider researcher because of my being of the culture and going back into the culture to conduct a research. I have left the community space and I am re-entering this space in a different role. Thus, the ways I negotiate the research relationships with the participants could be different now because of my outsider/insider researcher status.

This status therefore derived from having similar professional (teaching) and cultural milieu (Santa Isabel matrilineal culture) sameness and lived experiences as my research participants. I also taught in the same secondary school as a school teacher earlier in my career and lived in the village community. Together, these position me as an insider. It is becoming common for people to research their own backgrounds, for this shapes what they are interested in (Gunter, 2004) or for researchers to be part of the social group they intend to study (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Breen, 2007).

Furthermore, an insider/outsider researcher, has access to the research groups’ past and present through this shared background (Jenkins, 2000) and thus most likely shares experiences with the research participants, as I would do with my participants. This positioning, “provides a contextual understanding” (Innes, 2009, p. 440) and insight of the community. This was important in my study, as my status as both an insider/outsider allowed me the scope to talk about and look at a context that I knew well from different perspectives. This also provided me with insights into women leaders’ thoughts and experiences about their leadership that might otherwise have

not been possible. These insights, according to Innes (2009), can “allow [researchers] to develop better research questions that challenge preconceived notions of the group and expand scholarly understanding of the [participants’ perspectives.]” (p. 147).

My insider/outsider research status also meant I could interact naturally with my potential participants. This allowed for greater interaction between and among my research participants and me, especially when I informally observed some women leaders by “hanging out” with them. This hanging out approach which will be explained later in data generation methods was important because it was very much part of the way things are done in the Santa Isabel community. This allowed me to be with women who I knew already but also in a different way than I would do otherwise, because of my researcher status. This led to promoting the telling and the justification of ideas, (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002), and supported the generation of thick and deep data and bringing insider voices and experiences of the Santa Isabel women to the outside.

As an insider/outsider researcher, I am also advantageously positioned in my research because I have greater understanding of my participants’ culture. For example, my fluency in speaking the same languages as my participants allowed more straightforward communication in questioning and interviewing. I was also able to probe replies to obtain rich data (Coughlan, 2001). My strong understanding of the local values, knowledge and taboos and the formal and informal power structures (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002) and how the home community “really works” (Unluer, 2012) helped generate deep understanding of the participants’ contexts and their lived experiences. All these understandings and knowledge contributed to obtaining permission to conduct the research (Coughlan, 2003). In addition, being knowledgeable about all these allowed me to pose new questions and present new understandings about the kinship roles and responsibilities (Innes, 2009) of the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture.

However, there are also challenges associated with being an insider/outsider researcher. Such issues include a researcher’s prior knowledge (Brannick & Coughlan, 2007) and a researcher’s close ties with the participants, such as in my case. Firstly, my prior knowledge could be viewed as a disadvantage in the sense

that I faced unanticipated challenges when it came to separating my prior understanding about my participants and their cultural milieu. For instance, as an insider/outsider researcher, I had to be careful not to assume too much during interviewing and not probe enough because I was too close to the data (Coghlan, 2001). There were also instances where I encountered difficulties in generating data, as I hesitated to introduce matters that were personal in nature (Kanuha, 2000). Complications also arose in the interviewing process when my participants' assumed that I already knew what they know (Kanuha, 2000) and thus did not fully explain ideas without prompting.

Secondly, Innes (2009) explains that an insider researcher's close tie to the research participants has been frequently challenged on the grounds of bias. He argues about the dangers of over-rapport, which occurs when a researcher closely identifies with the research participants or groups' perspectives and fails to approach research situations in a critical manner. Accordingly, Aguilar (1981) states that:

The conduct of research from home often inhibits the perception of structures and patterns of social and cultural life.... [T]oo much is too familiar to be noticed or to arouse the curiosity essential to research".  
(p. 16)

In this case, I was conscious of ensuring a high level of reflexivity which will be discussed later in the section researching women.

## **Researching women**

Women's lived experiences of the matrilineal leadership culture contributed to understanding leadership beliefs and practices in the Santa Isabel context. Thus, in my research, the lived experiences of women leaders were essential in the construction of knowledge. I intended to engage with the women leaders' individual experiences of leadership to clarify their situation in their context. Individuals' live-world experiences are essential in understanding and interpreting my participants' world views in that "truth lies within the human experience and is, therefore, multiple and bound by time, space and context" (Chilisa, 2012, p. 32).

Of importance in my research are some commitments in researching women's experiences. First, McHugh (2014) argues that "creating a space to hear [women's] stories" (p. 153) is crucial. In my research, this meant that both I (the researcher) and

participants' (women leaders) sharing of stories, views and experiences with each other in the intended in-depth interviews could create that space. For women in Santa Isabel, this space was important as they could share their voices and stories in the conversations about leadership (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2008). As Maynard (1994) asserts, research on women seeks to challenge the absence of women's voices "by encouraging them to speak about their own condition and in so doing to confront the experts and dominant voices" (p. 23) which have their own limitations.

Second, Garko (1999) also claims that studying women's experiences view research as an interaction or dialogue between the researcher and the participant. Interactions in the focus group discussions are intended to generate data that could help to understand women's leadership experiences of the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture better. In addition, this worldview emphasises "connection among self, world, and others and allows the researcher to hear women's experiences as contextualised within the larger social order" (McHugh, 2014, p. 153). In my research, this is important for understanding the matrilineal leadership cultural practices in different times (past and present) and places (community and schools). This is consistent with my research intention in discovering the meanings of women's leadership experiences in context.

Third, women's research is committed to the "articulation of individual's experience as description" (McHugh, 2014, p. 153). This allows me to use individual participants' conversations to enable understanding their leadership beliefs and practices and for examining the ways in which gender, along with culture, plays a key role in shaping women's experiences (McHugh, 2014). For me, understanding the role gender and culture play in shaping women's matrilineal leadership beliefs and practices is crucial in answering my research questions. Lather (1988) asserts that researching women is to "put the social construction of gender at the centre of one's inquiry" (p. 181). In this case, women and their experiences of the matrilineal leadership culture are at the forefront of the inquiry to understand how matrilineal cultural practices inform women's leadership beliefs and practices. This will help me to analyse the socio-political context in which participants' experiences occur (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2008).

Fourth, Beckman (2014) calls for research that honour women's voices, in order to create opportunities for reciprocal learning. This is important in my research, as this study gave women in this unique Santa Isabel community the opportunity to contribute to women's leadership knowledge. For research to be part of a process whereby women's voices are present, Gorelick (1991) argues for research to not only describe but also challenge women's absence. This is appropriate for my intention to listen to women leaders' conversations to help me understand their experiences of leadership and also to identify challenges they may have faced in enacting their leadership roles. Women in Santa Isabel are not necessarily absent but when present, there was a challenge to their practice.

Fifth, Fonow and Cook (1991) suggest that reflexivity is central in researching women, because it allows a researcher to engage critically and reflect on his or her research processes throughout the research (Kirsch, 1999). Reflexivity therefore, is the process by which the researcher becomes conscious as an enquirer and a participant. It therefore enables a researcher to become reflexive with "the multiple identities that represent the fluid self in the research setting" (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 124). This was critical in my research in order to relate my own background knowledge and the knowledge that was created between me (the researcher) and my participants (the researched). This also allow researchers to adjust and refine their "research goals as they learn more about those they study" (Kirsch, 1999, p. 3). In my study, this was essential because I am from this culture and my being reflexive enabled me to define my relationship with my participants, which helped me to understand my thoughts from my participants' point of view. I needed to develop relationships with my participants by listening respectfully and being responsive to their concerns, making changes where and when appropriate throughout the research process. Hence, to conduct credible research, the researcher's role in generating knowledge through various data generation methods required trustworthiness at each phase of the research process. This was the worth of qualitative research that may arise due to the intimate relationship between the researcher and their data (Morse, 2015). In my research, these intimate relationships allowed for unstructured opportunities of obtaining data within verbal interactions.

In summary, social science approaches to researching women focus on commitments to create a space for women to share their stories and experiences and

in the case of this research, to navigate their leadership directions and improve their lives. Consequently, it is crucial that relationships between the researcher and the participants are treated with care and respect (Kirsch, 1999) to minimise inequalities that may arise during the research process. The qualitative case study approach provides a more easily adaptable principle of “establishing interactive, respectful, and collaborative relationships with participants” (Kirsch, 1999, p. 6). In my research, I would listen to, described and articulate my participants’ live-world experiences through our interaction during the data generation processes. These processes were essential in the construction of knowledge about the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture.

The interpretivist paradigm with the qualitative case study emphasised understanding my participants’ culture by relating their individual experiences to the culture they live in through the links that connect them within their social world. Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of habitus links these connections and aligned with my intent to explore my participants’ leadership beliefs and practices.

### **Bourdieu’s Habitus**

As illustrated in Figure 4.1, page 71, my case study approach emphasised understanding participants’ culture through Bourdieu’s habitus lens. This involved understanding the field, the logic of practice and the nature of capitals and considering how these generic elements might influence women’s leadership beliefs, practices and their habitual embodiment of leadership practices. Numerous researchers (Embry et al., 2008; Joas & Knöbl, 2011; Lardinois, 2002; Lingard & Christie, 2003; Moi, 1991; Schmidt, 1997) have adopted Bourdieu’s notion of habitus as an analytical lens. Because there is an existing history using Bourdieu’s habitus as an analytic lens, it is sensible to use it to help me explore ways the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture may have contributed to shaping women’s leadership beliefs and practices. In my study, this is about understanding how formal and informal pedagogic actions contribute to social reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) of matrilineal leadership practices.

By engaging with habitus as a lens I am able to create deep understandings of the social, cultural and professional worlds of the women leaders in my research. As Reay (2004) asserts, Bourdieu’s habitus concept enables a researcher to “uncover

the most deeply buried structures of the different social worlds that make up the social universe, as well as the ‘mechanisms’ that tend to ensure their reproduction or transformation” (Bourdieu, 1996b, p. 1). In terms of my research, such mechanisms might include the rituals that matrilineal leaders practice, whether in education or community. This lens also enabled me to understand the interconnectedness of concepts such as leadership and society’s cultural practices (Lingard & Christie, 2003). A great advantage in using the habitus lens as an analysis tool is that “it allows [researchers] to incorporate the most mundane details of everyday life in our analysis” (Moi, 1991, p. 1010). In the next section I outline Bourdieu’s concepts, of habitus, field and capital that I have drawn from to help me examine how these aspects may have contributed to shaping my participants’ leadership beliefs and practices, in particular, how habitus and cultural capital provides a way for understanding women’s leadership beliefs and practices.

Bourdieu (1977b) defines habitus as,

a system of durable transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices. (p. 72)

Habitus in my research is applied as a practice that belongs to individuals, groups or institutions that comprises dispositions, structures and generation. The matrilineal cultural habitus may play a vital role in imparting what was acceptable for both men and women in Santa Isabel. Thus habitus “makes coherence and necessity out of accident and contingency” (Bourdieu, 1977b, p. 87). This could mean that the Santa Isabel matrilineal cultural habitus “naturalises the attitudes and behaviours” (Richardson & Skott-Myhre, 2012, p. 11) of people who reside in these Santa Isabel communities. People’s attitudes in these communities therefore, were part of their being. For example, “[t]he experiences and attitudes one witnesses first-hand at home, [in communities] and in schools shape practices and beliefs and are likely to be repeated in the future” (Richardson & Skott-Myhre, 2012, p. 11). “What we can say about each of us human beings is that we establish patterns in our lives. We need them to get through each day. And if we break those patterns, there’s a particular reason” (Douglas & Olshaker, 1999, p. 393). In other words, habitus (that is these cultural /attitudinal practices - or in Bourdieu’s terms, ‘mechanisms’)

endure because they help us shape our world. In an island community, these rituals, practices and beliefs help us ‘get through each day’.

Similarly, Bourdieu (1984a) writes that “the ‘eye’ is a product of history reproduced by education” (p. 3). This means that, the way we see the world is learned and we learn to see by participating and interacting within our communities (dispositions). Richardson and Skott-Myher (2012) believe that the concept “allows us to recognise that these ‘essential’ practices are the result of experiences, mediations, representation, and dialogues that have taken shape within these spaces. It is a nature that must be constantly reiterated as natural” (p. 11). This helped me to understand the social reproduction of beliefs and practices, which supported the deep analysis of my generated data. Bourdieu’s notion of habitus provided the lens through which I made sense of the embedded nature of women’s leadership beliefs and practices.

However, habitus also raises concerns that it can “make certain practices seem inherent to the spaces in which they occur, as if these practices were only possible in these spaces and other possibilities for acting are out of question” (Richardson & Skott-Myhre, 2012, p. 11). This view was important in my study, as it helped me to understand my participants’ perspectives about the translation of the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership cultural practices into other contexts, such as in the area of formal education in the Solomon Islands.

The idea “that people within various communities tend to share values, practices and beliefs could mean that our experiences within a certain space are often similar enough to create a sort of group habitus” (Richardson & Skott-Myhre, 2012, p. 11), presupposes a “community of unconscious” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 80).

Thus, “each collective habitus is a product of events and circumstances that become naturalised and therefore unrecognised (i.e., unconscious) in the minds of community members” (Richardson & Skott-Myhre, 2012, p. 11). The habitus lens helped me to understand ways in which the women leaders’ may have shaped their specific practices in their context. This lens enabled me to examine the women’s social interaction within past and present lived experiences.

Bourdieu (1977b) asserts that individuals' practice is influenced by their cultural practices. Habitus is an attempt to "describe and analyse the process of one's genesis," because he believes that an "individual is moulded by social structure" (Mahar, Harker & Wilkes, 1990, p. 33). The matrilineal leadership culture then is a socially constructed practice for successive generations in the unique island of Santa Isabel. Ideas about leadership are thus deeply ingrained. For example, the account of the reproduction of the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership beliefs and practices, mentioned in Chapter 2, illustrates how women are highly respected in their community contexts. Reed-Danahay (2004) argues that this is a result of socialisation. He states:

as a result of their socialisation, members of a social group come to acquire a set of dispositions which reflect the central structural elements ... of their society, and therefore behave in ways which necessarily reproduce those structural elements, although in a modified form. (p. 185)

Habitus directs people. In my research, the focus is on women leaders in community and educational contexts. Habitus helps unpick some of the conscious mechanisms of matrilineal leadership. This link to the wider mechanism of a social field. A social field (family, schools, and village community) can be seen as functioning as a "game" and which may have tensions and contradictions, because while the players may have experienced different habitus and are likely to have different interests, they still have to abide by the rules in order to contribute successfully to a shared goal. However, the habitus of individuals in a geographically social space may share some similarities with how games operate.

According to Tranter (2006), the embodiment of values happens from an early age, as people interact with their social field and within families (Allard, 2005). Mutch (2006) states that a family is an important social milieu; it is a micro level of the social field and is a place where values become internalised. Bourdieu (1996b) argues that "[t]he family plays a decisive role in the maintenance of the social order .... It is one of the key sites of the accumulation of capital in its different forms and its transmission between generations" (p. 23).

Hence, family as well as school experiences could be sources of values, which individuals internalise and which become their habitus. As Robbins (1991) argues,

the first socialisation usually occurs within one's family, and formal socialisation occurs later via the formal schooling process. Thus, if we believe in the family to be our first socialiser, Robbins (1991) observation that we receive our cultural identity from our family links to Bourdieu's (1996b) claim that "the family is ... socially constructed" (p. 21). This idea echoes Douglas and Olshaker's (1999) ideas about life patterns. While those authors were focused on matters of criminal motive, their idea is still applicable to the social patterns understood as habitus.

In my view, habitus has characteristics to structure or that can be structured and restructured. It is structured by one's past and present circumstances such as family upbringing and educational experiences. It is structuring in that one's habitus helps to shape one's present and future practices. It is a structure in that it is systematically ordered rather than random or unpatterned. It can be structured by patterned social forces and in turn structures the individuals within that social structure (Wacquant, 2006). Therefore, as *structured structures*, habitus is related to past history (Bourdieu, 2002). As a *structuring structure*, it organises practices and the perception of practices (Bourdieu, 2002), which means practices are always oriented towards practical functions and therefore reproducing itself as a pattern of order. This idea of structure thus links to dispositions alluded to earlier on, because Bourdieu (1977b) points out that dispositions are essential for bringing together the concepts, structure and tendencies. Lingard and Christie's (2003) argument, therefore, links to Robbins (1991) in that habitus can also be described "as the subjective incorporation or internalization of social structure,[and] has the effect of making the social world seem natural and its practices 'taken for granted'" (p. 320). The phrases *structured structures* and *structuring structures* are interrelated. When applied to family contexts, it can describe both as an objective social category (a structuring structure) and mental or subjective social category (a structured structure). Reed-Danahay (2004) explains it as

...reproduction of the social order, and produces a "near-perfect match" between the subjective and objective categories. [In Santa Isabel, the 'social agents' of my study were my participants- women leaders practicing matrilineal leadership through its rituals and ways of being] thereby experience the world, and the family, as "natural" and self-evident. (p. 114)

These women operate at both the practical and symbolic levels to reproduce those structures and mechanisms so that the matrilineal culture remains intact, but evolves as circumstances change. Jenkins' (1992) generation of practice which is reflected in matrilineal cultural mechanisms, can be understood as "repeated action of the elders, passed on to their younger people, so that practice, custom and belief are reinforced through generations" (Amalo 2014, p. 96). In matrilineal societies, the responsibilities that women as grandmothers, mothers have in continuing kinship ties that form the structure and organisation of society can be interpreted as intergenerational skills and values (Quéniart & Charpentier, 2013). Similarly, the common means of intergenerational transmission by socialisation are child-rearing or child-training by grandparents, parents and other educators or mentors (Schonpflug 2001). Habitus, therefore, influences the way people think and behave. These behaviours become practices which become habitus over time Together, these form both social practice and social belief. In the case of Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture, women practising such leadership have internalised such habitus from their elders' practices and exercise of customs and rituals. As such, there appears to be both symbolic and practical reproduction of matrilineal cultural ways of being. This helped me to understand my participants' perceptions about the genesis, foundation and opportunities of leadership within the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture.

Habitus could be generated unconsciously. Individuals' early experiences as leaders become enacted and embodied in daily activities in any occupation (school leaders, community leaders) because of socialisation practices - the kinds of patterns that shape how we live and which are necessary to a community functioning. Hence, the roles individuals execute, rules they pursue and models they follow can be shaped through their habitus. This may be the case for the Bugotu speaking people of Santa Isabel, where the values of honour and of loyalty to the family and kinship were inculcated as part of the habitus: in particular, the difference in socialisation for boys and girls (Bogesi, 1948; Maetala, 2008; Naramana, 1987).

Habitus is also talked about as being inscribed in people's bodies and displayed in how people perceive things as well in how they present things. As Harker (1984) explains, "habitus is the way a culture is embodied in the individual" (p. 118). Accordingly Jenkins (1992) asserts that:

the body is a mnemonic device upon and in which the very basics of culture, the practical taxonomies of the habitus, are imprinted and encoded in a socialising or learning process which commences during early childhood... [Thus] the habitus is inculcated as much, if not more, by experience as by explicit teaching (p. 76).

This idea resonates with my intention to understand how the embodiment of the matrilineal leadership culture is realised in my participants' leadership practices.

Bourdieu (2002) argues that habitus, as a concept, works well as a tool for social analysis if the researcher understands how to apply the concept with its properties: field and capital. In this sense, habitus, field and capital make up the practices people perform in their social world (Jenkins, 1992; Reay, 2004).

### **Field**

In my research Bourdieu's concept of field can be understood as a series of interconnections or networks. I have chosen to interpret this in three ways the micro field (familial and village habitus), the meso field (church and school habitus) and the Macro field (education in the Solomon Islands) in which participants experiences leadership. In this sense, "field" becomes a space made available to an individual where they act upon strategic possibilities. This, Bourdieu claims, opens up the room for the individual to potentially move from one "field" to another (Bourdieu, 1993). My desire to understand the "field" was key to understanding notions of habitus the women leaders carry in their practice.

### **Forms of capital**

Bourdieu (1984) notes that *habitus*, *capital*, and *field* work together in generating a practice among people. These concepts would assist me to understand how specific habitual practice is being shaped by the influences of cultural norms in Santa Isabel in the Solomon Islands. Roland (2002) explains that Bourdieu uses forms of capital to explain habitus and socialisation process. He explains capital as forces or resources that cause individuals to take different directions. Capital, Bourdieu (1986) argues,

takes time to accumulate ... to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, it contains a tendency to persist in its being, is a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible. (pp. 241–242)

In this sense, the accumulation of capital can be seen when people become enculturated into a specific milieu. Bourdieu (1986) identifies three types of capital: cultural capital, social capital and economic capital. In my study, two forms of capital that link to my use of habitus lens are; cultural and social capital.

Bourdieu (1986) classifies “cultural capital” as assuming three forms: embodied, objectified and institutionalised. An embodied cultural capital assumes the common understanding of cultural resources, which Bourdieu (1986) claims can be developed “quite unconsciously” (p. 245).

An institutionalised form of cultural capital refers to “academic qualification” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247). An example is the bachelors and certificate degrees the women leaders obtained from Universities and teachers’ colleges both abroad and in the Solomon Islands. This helped me to consider women leaders’ cultural background including some practices that they had been involved in that contributed to and informed these leadership practices.

Social capital is another form of cultural capital as Bourdieu (1986) argues, which is,

the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to ...membership in a group which provides each of its members with the backing of ... “a credential” which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the world” (p. 249).

Entwistle and Racamora’s (2006) argue that social capital suggests ideas of connection. Thus, social capital that each individual obtains is dependent on their involvement with social fields. In the case of this research, social networks (civic, friendship) may be used by women leaders as resources. From this point of view, an individual who has many connections such as friends or associates has more social capital than one with only a few friends or associates. Thus, Bourdieu (1984) states that “social capital [is] a capital of social connections, honourability, and respectability” (p. 122). Capital and habitus are meaningful when they are used in the context of a field. This helped me to explore women leaders’ social network relationships in terms of understanding how their social capital influenced their formed leadership beliefs and practices. This included others who the women leaders have been involved with in their early learning experiences and how these

related to their formed leadership practices in the school and community context. Bourdieu (1977b) asserts here that social life cannot be examined only from people's behaviour or interpreted only in relation to an individual's decisions (Jenkins, 1992). He believes that both are needed for analysing social life.

### **Autonomy of agents**

Views about habitus assert that practice is generated within the field where individuals live. Bourdieu (1990a) believes that individuals are actors in the field, hence the action of an individual cannot be understood in isolation from the "field" in which the action becomes meaningful (Joas & Knöbl, 2011). Edgerton and Roberts (2014) also state that "one's position in the social structure...shapes the parameters of people's sense of agency and possibility" (p. 195). This was useful in understanding women's perceptions of their leadership within their existing created social structures and their sense of agency within the Santa Isabel context.

### **Sense of the game**

Bourdieu (1990a) "sense of the game" is described as an important aspect of individuals shaping of specific practices. Bourdieu (1985) states:

The social world is, to a large extent, what the agent makes of it, at each moment; but they have no chance of un-making it except on the basis of realistic knowledge of what it is and what they can do with it from the positions they occupy within it. (p. 734)

In this view, Bourdieu argues that when individuals struggle with something or within a position, they are likely to adopt what works for them to make things easier. In this sense, "field" as described by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) is a game with "regularities that are not explicit or codified" (p. 98) and by Webb, Schirato and Danaher (2002) as structured contexts that shape and produce processes and practices, which included "a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations, appointments and titles" (p. 21). These terms suggest that "habitus is always constituted in moments of practice" (Webb et al., 2002, p. 38) that is, "how things happen in any given context" is a result of informal social practices that become rules over time. This framing of how people make sense of their leadership helped me to identify the women's reasons behind their

embodiment of specific leadership beliefs and how these beliefs were realised in their leadership practice.

### **Logic of practice**

Edgerton and Roberts (2014) state, that “field” is relational in nature and is characterised by its own particular regulative principles – the ‘rules of the game’ or ‘logic of practice’ - which are subject to power struggles among different interests seeking to control the capital (and ‘rules’) in the field” (p. 195). Thus, viewing that both habitus and field were relational structures provided the foundation to understanding women’s leadership practices in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture.

The notion of habitus functions in conjunction with capital and field as it “effectively accounts for the dispositions and competence that both generate and shape action” (Crossley, 2001, p. 86). He claims that field and capital are accounts of context in action. That is resources available to an actor within a context plays a role in the shaping the action (Crossley, 2001). This enhanced my understanding of the basis of the women’s leadership beliefs and the reasoning behind their formed leadership practices.

The key concepts of habitus are summarised with my research aims in table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1.** Contextualising Bourdieu’s concepts and the research aims

Concepts	Research Aims
Field	Investigating women leaders’ dispositions in their specific culture and context of practice. Examples: the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture; participants’ beliefs about specific leadership practices; their backgrounds, qualifications, and experiences of leadership
Cultural capital	Considering women leaders’ cultural background including some practices that they may have been involved in that contribute to their informed leadership practices.
Social capital	Exploring women leaders’ social network relationships in terms of understanding how their social capital influenced their formed leadership beliefs and practices. This included: people who the women leaders have been involved with in their early learning experiences and how these relate to their formed leadership practices in the school and community context
Autonomy of agents	Understanding women leaders’ actions and intentions in terms of their formed leadership beliefs or in performing their leadership roles, their sense about control, power, and decision-making ability
Sense of the game	Identifying women leaders’ reasons for their embodiment of specific leadership beliefs and how these beliefs are realised in their leadership practice.
Logic of practice	Understanding the rationale of their leadership thinking and logic behind their formed leadership practices

Table 4.1 summarises and illustrates the main concepts that were involved in my investigation of women leaders’ embodiment of the matrilineal leadership culture in their leadership practices.

The next section justifies my chosen data generation methods for understanding women leaders’ leadership beliefs and practices

## **Data Generation Methods**

When designing this research, I deliberately selected methods that aligned with my qualitative case study methodology summarised in the previous section of this chapter. The methods used to gather information during the research included: in-depth semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, informal observations and field notes. In the following sections, I illustrate why each particular method was considered suitable and justify their selection for this research.

### **In-depth Interviews**

In-depth semi-structured interviews are equated with qualitative interviewing (Warren, 2002) and have today become a key method as well as the most widespread method of data collection in social research (Brinkmann, 2014; Flick, 2014). The semi-structured interview has become a prominent method of data generation within social research frameworks (Bryman, 2001). In this research, individual interviews played a key role in the generation of data. Wilson and Goodall (1991) define interviews as “a communication process in which two or more people interact within a relational context by asking and answering questions designed to achieve a purpose” (p. 11). In addition, Kvale and Brinkmann (2008) highlight that the semi-structured format is “an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena” (p. 3). Furthermore, Anderson (1990) defines semi-structured interviewing as “a specialized form of communication between people for a specific purpose associated with some agreed subject matter” (Anderson, 1990, p. 190). These definitions illustrate that semi-structured interviews tend to be more informal conversations between individuals, where there is greater amount of flexibility (Brinkmann, 2014) compared to structured interviews. Bryman (2001) acknowledges the need for flexibility and states that a semi-structured interview is a “context in which the interviewer has a series of questions that are in the general form of an interview schedule but is able to vary the sequence” (p. 110) as well as the content of the questions.

In this research, the structure of the semi-structured interview was prepared in advance, as this acted as a guide for the interview (Bryman, 2001). The interview

guide according to Chilisa (2012), “ensures that the researcher collects similar types of data from the [participants]” (p. 205). Griffiee (2005) explains that, in a semi-structured interview, although the questions are pre-determined, the interviewer is free to ask for clarification. In this sense, the interviewer most often asks quite general questions and has the opportunity to ask further questions in response to certain information shared by the participants. Semi-structured interviews, therefore, use open ended questions to promote free interaction and opportunities for clarification and discussion between the researcher and the participants (Bishop & Glynn, 1999).

Patton (2014) encourages the use of an outline in semi-structured interviews, because while it provides the interview with a focus, it also allows for flexibility in the interview process. Merriam (1998) also believes flexibility to be a key feature and value of semi-structured interviews, as it allows the researcher to respond to any situations that may arise and to further question what has been offered as a contribution by the participant. Within this less formal interview situation, the interviewer is also able to freely modify the questions for example, the wording sequence to suit the situation and flow of discussion (Cohen et al., 2000; Merriam, 1998). For this research, semi-structured interviews provided the flexibility to clarify meaning and create further understanding of the context in which these women leaders exercise their leadership.

Working within the qualitative case study framework, the semi-structured interview is a common way of generating qualitative research data, because it is understood as talking and gaining information through conversations. Griffiee (2005) describes this more informal way as gaining information which can, as a result, allow for information to be shared. Due to the conversational and flexible nature of the interview schedule, the researcher is able to prompt discussion around a certain issue. This can encourage the participant to share their personal views and ideas about a topic in more detail. As a result, this creates the rich data that qualitative research strives for. The semi-structured interview allowed me to establish a high level of rapport (Denscombe, 1998) with the participants, which helped my information gathering. This is of significance in researching women where research needs to be open, collaborative and non-exploitative (McHugh, 2014).

### **Limitations of semi-structured interviews**

The semi-structured interview also has limitations. These limitations mainly relate to the actual processes and practicalities of conducting semi-structured interviews. Firstly, Patton (2014) states that a challenge of the semi-structured interview is maintaining focus on gathering useful, relevant and appropriate information as these require concentration and practice. He believes information can be missed out in the flow of the interview, resulting in important data being left out. I needed to be aware of the need to stay focused by following the interview schedule in order to gain confidence to move through the questions and develop the rich picture of data that the participants could offer.

Secondly, Opdenakker (2006) describes that the actual process of interviewing can be time consuming. He asserts that much of the participant's and the researcher's time is sometimes spent on the process of planning, delivering and recording of results. This concern, he claims can further be impacted by the ethical need to check the data responses by analysing the interview responses and by the time required for transcription. Thus, to use such a method when wishing to interview large numbers of participants in a short period of time is not feasible. A possible option, he suggests, is to restrict the interviews to a reasonable number.

Finally, in semi-structured interviews' there is a heavy reliance on the language that is used by both the researcher and the participant to elicit data. This can be limiting and Fontana and Frey (2000) argue that...[t]he spoken or written word has always a residue of ambiguity, no matter how carefully we word the questions or how carefully we report or code the answers" (p. 645). For example, the interpretation of different words and concepts may not be fully understood, or the participants may not have the language to fully describe their experiences and ideas. The use of the same terms may mean different things in different societies or the use of different terms in different societies may convey the same meaning. In the case of this research there are a number of different languages within the context and there was a lot of contextual meaning associated with different words.

### **Focus Groups**

Focus groups were selected as a method to generate data as it has the voices of the women leaders which are central to the research process. Rose (2001) states that

researchers are often drawn to focus groups as a research method because they believe that if “research is to be change-oriented it must not only offer critique aspects of society but also help women to collectively change their consciousness by fostering collective identities and solidarities” (p. 22). Reinharz (1992) argues, therefore, that focus groups have been seen as one way of raising consciousness within contexts and have been accepted as a research tool by many researchers seeking to create change.

Wilkinson (1998) also argues that the use of focus groups as a research method can meet the goals of examining women’s behaviour in naturalistic social contexts. This means to understand the importance of social context, it is believed that researchers should draw on the “very social process” (Graham, 1984, p. 113) that makes up people’s lives, using “real communication systems in natural settings” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 212), such as talk and conversation. This is supported by Fine and Gordon (1989), who state that “if you really want to know...watch me with women friends, my son, his father, my niece, or my mother and you will see what feels most authentic to me” (p. 159). Similarly, Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) believe that focus groups allow the researcher to gain information about a context that shapes and is shaped by people’s perceptions. They state that individuals “respond in their own words, using their own categorizations and their own perceived associations” (p. 13). McHugh (2014) also believes that “[f]ocus groups mimic the everyday experiences of talking with friends, family, and others in our social networks [and] ...may be seen as a social context and, at the same time, as a parallel to the social context in which people typically operate” (p. 152). This is relevant to my researching women, because the group of women in this research brought a richness of cultural context and personal beliefs in relation to both the school and village environment, a depth of exposure that I would not normally understand or have access to. This is one of the main reasons for choosing focus groups as part of the information generation processes of this research.

Focus groups can shift the power from the researcher to the participants (Wilkinson, 1998) during the data generation process, to some extent. This is in line with common ethical concerns about the distribution of power and the imposition of meaning (Cohen et al., 2011). The focus groups address this concern in that “...the numbers of research participants involved [in the focus groups], shift the balance of

power during data generation, such that research participants have more control over the interaction than does the researcher” (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 114). Chilisa (2012) reinforces this importance of balance of power and reiterates that in the focus group “[t]he researcher takes a less directive and dominant role ... [and] can use ... semi-structured questions ... [and] diagrams to stimulate a discussion” (p. 212).

The use of the focus groups as a method for generating data links to Kitzinger’s (1995) claims in that it is a process that “can help people to explore and clarify their views in ways that would be less easily accessible in a [one-on-one] interview” (p. 299). It is also an appropriate method to use when the researcher “wishes to encourage participants to explore the issues of importance to them, in their own vocabulary, generating their own questions and pursuing their own priorities” (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 299). Thus, focus groups are particularly useful for “exploring people’s knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way” (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 299). In addition, Chilisa (2012) claims that the group interaction in focus group interviews allows more realistic perceptions of the issue, because members within the group can challenge each other’s extreme views and thus, more realistic information is obtained on issues. Information is also checked for accuracy, as members’ question, complement, and corroborate what others say.

### **Limitations of focus groups**

Although focus groups are a valuable research tool that can offer both the researcher and the participant a number of benefits, it is also important to take into consideration their limitations. One of the limitations to focus group interviews is “that a few assertive individuals may dominate the discussion” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 213). This may cause the information generated to be more the views of only the more assertive and dominant group members and the more reserved group members may be hesitant to talk (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). According to Morgan (1997), this may amount to the tendency toward conformity. That means some participants may withhold information that they would normally share in private or polarise their views so they did not speak strongly about a topic being discussed.

Another limitation of the focus groups relates to the flexibility within the research process of conducting focus groups. While important, flexibility means the

researcher has less control of the data that is generated, when using focus groups compared with one-on-one interviewing (Morgan, 1997). This can come about mainly due to the lack of specific structure and the often open-ended nature of focus groups. According to Stewart and Shamdasani (1990), this flexibility may cause difficulty in summarising and interpreting of the data.

### **Informal observation using the hanging out approach**

Informal observation is a common method used for data generation in qualitative research, whereby the researcher, who is the research instrument, decides while observing what to attend to (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). In the case of my research, I intend to use informal observation through the hanging out approach (Bernard, 1994) as it may give me the opportunity to capture “live data” while women leaders practice their leadership roles in the contexts they work and live (schools, community) (Cohen et al., 2011). “Hanging out” is the process through which the researcher gains trust and establishes rapport with participants (Bernard, 1994). It refers to a researcher’s involvement “in a range of activities such as social events, leisure, activities or times when the researcher is simply ‘hanging out’ with members of the research group” (Bloor & Wood, 2006, p. 85). In the case of my research this method helped me to “look directly at what is taking place *in situ* rather than relying on second-hand accounts” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 456) and gave me the opportunity to be part of what was being observed, to help me understand women’s leadership practice in this context. This approach was a complementary method of data generation to support answering the research questions and differs from participant observation in that it is a culturally appropriate way for building trust between participants and the researcher. As Bernard (1994) argues, trust results in ordinary conversations and in ordinary behaviour when a researcher meets and converses with participants.

Hanging out is about recording activities related to participants’ involvement in scheduled activities in a research site (Auyero & de Lara, 2012). Thus, I kept field notes in the form of a diary to record the activities that I observed through the hanging out approach. For me, observing my participants in their leadership activities at their work place by hanging out with them was essential for understanding how cultural factors influence their shaping of leadership practices.

However, there are also limitations to using the hanging out approach. These included: the difficulty in the documentation of data and the time it takes to participate in the process. Firstly, data documenting and selecting what should be recorded during the process is crucial during hanging out activities. The researcher's ability to observe, document and interpret what has been observed accurately during these events are critical to minimising error and bias in the generated data (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). This is even more complicated when a researcher has to deal with the extent he or she participates in, in the lives of the participants and whether to intervene in a situation while hanging out with the participants (DeWalt & DeWalt, 1998).

Secondly, the "hanging out" method can be time-consuming for both the researcher and the participants (De Munck, 2009). This is because "[t]o obtain trust and sympathy of a community, so that community members will sympathise with your work, takes time and commitment and cannot be faked" (De Munck, 2009, p. 189). Thus, to acquire both cultural competency and mutual trust to enable the researcher to hang out with the participants in their settings takes time and skill.

### **Field notes in research journal**

Field notes are helpful ways for documenting and reflecting on the process of research (Richardson, 1994). In this research, a field journal was utilised to record research observations and personal notes (Flick, 2014) as well as reflections about incidents that arose throughout the research. Field notes provided a structured means of generating further source of data (Mulhall, 2003), "providing the primary means for deeper appreciation of how field researchers come to grasp and interpret actions and concerns of others" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 13). Berg and Lune (2012) and Patton (2014) state many options do exist for researchers who use the field notes approach. However, Mulhall (2003) believes that the many options depend on the value researchers may place on them. For some, field notes can be a primary source of information. For others, they may be a supporting or secondary role within the research process. Patton (2014) believes that writing field notes "consist[s] of descriptions of what is being experienced and observed, quotations from the [participants], the [researcher's] feelings and reactions...field generated

insights and interpretations ... [as these] are the fundamental data base for constructing case studies” (p. 389).

Field notes can be written both at the time of the event (in situ) and also outside of the context of the research (Cohen et al., 2000). Accordingly, Berg and Lune (2012) and Cohen et al. (2000) state that it is common practice to record field notes as close to the time of observation as possible, in order to capture accurate, rich details and information as details can otherwise be forgotten as time passes.

In my research, field notes may become useful secondary sources of data that were used to triangulate in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. These field notes supported data transcription and translation processes and at the same time allowed me (the researcher) to follow up on key emerging themes and gain clarity about certain aspects of the data generation process.

## **Chapter Summary**

In this methodology chapter, I have outlined my methodological framework explaining reasons and justifying beliefs relating to my philosophical and methodological stances. In Figure 4.1, I have illustrated those stances which are associated with my ontology, epistemology, paradigm, and methodology in the research process. My ontological view is that there are multiple truths in human lives and there is no one single truth. This view of human realities guides my view of creating knowledge. For me, knowledge can be created through interaction between me and my participants. Further, my ontological and epistemological views guide me towards the interpretive stance which seeks to understand the individual's experiences in real life settings (community and school settings). These philosophical stances required a research approach which allowed me to generate data through interactions with my participants. Hence, I decided on a case study methodology, which would suit my research aim of understanding cultural influences in my participants' practices of leadership in their context.

My case study methodology emphasised understanding participants' culture through Bourdieu's habitus lens. This lens involved understanding the field, the logic of practice and the capitals and how these generic elements influenced women's leadership beliefs practices and their habitual embodiment of leadership

practices. These enabled me to generate thick descriptions about each individual's multiple experiences and practices in the women's leadership context of Santa Isabel, in the Solomon Islands. The insider/outsider position plus the analytical lens will help support both my understanding and generation of data for answering my research questions, through interviews, observations and focus group approach.

## **Chapter Five: Undertaking the Research Process**

As outlined in the methodology chapter, my research explored and examined the influences of the matrilineal culture on women's leadership beliefs and practices. My future goal is to use what my thesis uncovers to develop ways of supporting women leaders in their accessing and enacting of leadership roles both in the community and leading in the formal education system. This chapter explains the process I took in generating data to support the research findings. This chapter is divided into four sections. First, it describes the case study phases of the research, how data were generated and how I managed issues that I confronted during the research process. Second, the chapter explains my approach to data analysis, highlighting how the key themes emerged, and how these themes assisted me to conceptualise women's leadership beliefs and practices in the Santa Isabel context. Third, I describe how I maintained ethical practices during both the data generation and the presentation of the findings. In the fourth section, I explain how I ensured trustworthiness throughout the research process and finally, I give a summary of the chapter.

### **Case Study Process**

As an interpretivist who holds a relational ontological and epistemological view (see Chapter 4, section 1), I have explored information that relates to participants' views and experiences of the matrilineal leadership cultural beliefs and practices. The following sections provide details about the research process as illustrated in Figure 5.1, including details about the selection of the case study site, the participants and the process of generating data to answer my questions.

### **Selection of Case Study Site and Participants**

As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 3) the notion of leadership focused on in this research are located in aspects of place and practice. In particular, the literature draws attention to relational leadership that is context based. In terms of my research context, this idea of leadership is given limited emphasis. Hence, women leaders' backgrounds and social and cultural norms are aspects that could have influenced their leadership perspectives. This led me to wonder how the Santa

Isabel matrilineal culture shapes women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices. Contemplating this, I selected the Bugotu region in the island of Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands to conduct my research for the following reasons.

The case study site and the participants were selected based on purposeful sampling. This method enables researchers to use their special knowledge or expertise about a group to select participants who represent the population (Berg, 2007). Purposeful sampling also ensures that the site and participants' sample represent certain necessary characteristics or criteria. Cohen et al. (2011) notes that purposeful sampling allows researchers to "hand-pick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought" (p. 156). This means that I needed to select a site and participants for my study that could advance my understandings of the research focus. Hence, I chose the Bugotu region on the island of Santa Isabel in the Solomon Islands as shown in Figure 2.2, as my case study site. This region comprises community contexts (villages and schools) suitable for investigating matrilineal leadership cultural influences on women's leadership beliefs and practices.

Furthermore, the proximity of the schools and villages to my village community, the availability of women leaders and the acceptance by the schools, the villages, and the women leaders contributed to my choice of this site. Equally important, in selecting this site for my case study research was the existence of the only schools in this region. I am further interested in conducting my case study in this region because I am fluent in the languages and familiar with the cultural ways of these communities.

The participants (ten women leaders) for my case study were selected firstly because my observations that due to their roles in the community, I believed that the women leaders have stories to tell about their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013) of the matrilineal leadership culture. Women leaders who were engaged in leadership at the time of my research were drawn from both the schools and village contexts. This is essential for my research because one characteristic of my sample of participants is having experiences of the matrilineal leadership culture. I believed that the participants selected for my study might know about the matrilineal

leadership culture phenomenon and could contribute to the development of leadership theories (Creswell, 2013).

I sought permission to investigate women's leadership beliefs and practices from community contexts in my local area. The Solomon Islands' Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) (Appendix B), granted me permission to conduct my research, and I then identified women leaders who I had observed participated in leadership activities in the schools and in the villages in this particular region of the Santa Isabel Island.

In order to gain the permission and consent of participants at the local level during my first visits to the villages and the schools (October to the end of November 2012), I approached the village chief and the school principal about my intentions. I first outlined my research project (Appendix K) to each of them. Both agreed to inform and invite a women who were engaged in various leadership positions (previous and current) in the schools and the villages to an information session. Two meetings took place (in a school and a village) with two groups of women to explain the project and their rights and what their participation would involve.

Of the 20 women who attended the introductory sessions, ten women leaders (five from the schools and five from the villages) voluntarily agreed to become my research participants. Drawn from the schools were: three women head of departments (Secondary School), one head teacher (Primary School) and one centre supervisor (Early Childhood Education), and from the villages were; a president, vice-president and secretary of the Anglican Church Mothers Union organisation; the treasurer of the Community Water and Sanitation Committee (SWSC) and a tribal leader.

Each participant had time to review the information I had provided in a folder they each received. This included the consent form which each of the participants signed and returned to be at the time of the interview and the interview guide. I also explained information sheet B (Appendix K), the consent form (Appendix I) and the interview guide (Appendix L). I explained my research roles, expectations, and limitations. I also informed the participants about their roles and their involvement in my research process. In addition, I informed them that the process might take up

some of their time and or add extra tasks to their family and community responsibilities. I then provided the opportunity for them to ask questions to get their understanding of their involvement in my research project.

Then we shared food before dispersing because this was a cultural protocol significant in creating relationships and rapport.

### **Getting Started with the Data Collection**

I gained permission from the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) and the Santa Isabel education authority ahead of my field work via formal letters of request (Appendix C). Nevertheless, permission to gain access to the research site (schools and the villages) was verbally conveyed during my first visit, although I had sent the information sheet B (Appendix K) and the letter seeking permission (Appendices F and G) earlier. The remoteness of the site made written communication difficult. I had relied on reliable persons to hand-deliver the information. Thus, I was not expecting a written response from the school principal or the village chief. I wanted to explain my research information face-to-face to seek their understanding before I received their permission to have access to both the site and participants. I believed talking with them was the most appropriate process in gaining their trust because this would be the first time for any research on women by a local woman in the region had ever been suggested.

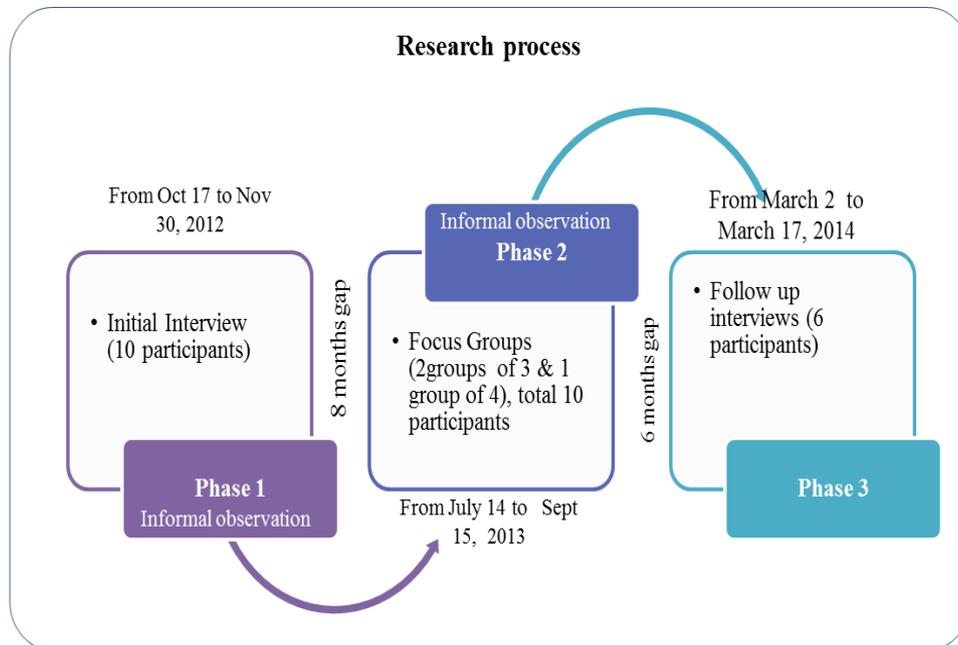
### **Data Generation Phases**

My case study research design followed three phases of data collection (Figure 5.1). In each phase, the data led to a growing understanding of women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices about the matrilineal leadership culture. A data collection time line is provided in (Appendix O) while the process for each phase is explained in the next sections.

#### **The First Phase: Initial Interview**

The first day of formal data collection as illustrated in Figure 5.1, began on October 17, 2012 and ended on November 30, 2012 for my 10 participants. The first tasks were centred on building rapport and generating initial understandings of women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices about the matrilineal leadership culture through conducting individual interviews with 10 participants; and observing six

participants informally in different leadership activities, field observations via “hanging out” The details of the interviewing process are provided in the following section and informal observation activities are discussed more fully later.



**Figure 5.1.** Case study research process

### **Interviewing process**

The first part of the process was negotiating a suitable location and time of the day (morning, evening, night) to conduct each of the interviews. Scheduling specific clock time was impractical in this context because using watches and other timepieces was not a common practice in Santa Isabel. Instead, timing of interviews was dependent on preceding events. For example, an interview might be scheduled for after the morning devotion. The one-on-one, face-to-face interviews took place over a period of three weeks in late October and mid-November as shown in the data collection timeline (see Appendix O) in various locations (three in a school staffroom, five in my home and two in participants’ homes). These initial interviews focused on generating data about women leaders’ self, and the wider community’s perceptions about women leaders. The participants talked broadly about their identity and background: their responsibilities in the village and schools, their experiences of doing leadership and their beliefs and practices about the matrilineal

leadership culture. The interviewing process took place relatively informally, and each interview lasted for approximately an hour.

At the start of every interview, I always acknowledged community protocols in inviting them through greetings, prayers, thanking them and acknowledging their place and presence in my research before I introduced my research topic. Next, I started my conversation with appropriate every day talk such as “I am so happy that you volunteered to participate in my research”, “I am so thankful that you have put aside your other commitments”. I also emphasised that the questions were open to any answers and that any answers will be welcomed. These introductory conversations encouraged both of us (the researcher and the participant) to feel comfortable to begin the interview. Though I used my prepared question guide, (Appendix L) the interviews process did not always follow this order because participants talked widely and often covered my areas of interest as they answered other questions.

However, in some cases when they said little about what they believed good matrilineal leadership looked like, felt like and sounded like, I probed their responses by using phrases such as: “Can you say more about that?” “What would be an example?” “Why might that be so?” and similar prompts when necessary. These prompts enabled my participants to continue to share their experiences of the matrilineal leadership culture and for me to have deeper understanding of their beliefs, experiences and practices.

Although prepared interview questions were developed in the English language, all interviews were conducted in a language of my participant’s choice; five in *Bugotu* and five in *Cheke Holo*. This was to ensure the ease and comfort of the participants’ during the interview process allowing participants to articulate their beliefs and experiences of leadership in the matrilineal culture in a relaxed and understanding manner. I digitally recorded the interviews as mp3 files and kept field notes.

I transcribed the interviews into *Bugotu* and *Cheke Holo*. These initial transcriptions helped me decide which areas I needed to explore more in depth or which questions needed modifying in follow up meetings. For example, some participants mentioned that women leaders in the community are highly respected.

Consequently, I wanted to explore the nature of this when I observed six participants engaging in community and school activities. Thus, the first interviewing phase provided me with specific ideas to pursue in the second phase of data generation.

During the interview process, I also realised some limitations in generating data through interviews. These were addressed in order to maintain ethical validity of my data. Firstly, since my participants' had chosen to be interviewed in their local languages (*Bugotu* and *Cheke Holo*), I had to translate the interview guide from English to these languages and translate what they said, into English to use in this thesis. However, I could not be certain that my translations were completely accurate. In this regard, my insider status was a benefit, for I could interpret the expressions and the meanings participants articulated because of our similar language, profession and cultural background. Cortazzi, Pilcher and Jin (2011) noted this, believing that if the interviewer is an insider the effect translation has on generated meanings is less because an insider researcher can effortlessly contextualise the meanings regardless of which language the participant chose to use. With the participants' experiences, beliefs and practices of the matrilineal leadership culture in mind, I am confident that I appropriately represented my participants' ideas.

Secondly, as an insider researcher I faced some challenges managing my interview in the early stages because of existing relationships with my participants. For example, at times participants spent more time talking about things that were beyond my research focus. DeLyser (2001) states that such an experience that insider researchers' encounter is a natural process in the interviewing process journey. For example, participants' over excitement in wanting to please me made it difficult to elicit the responses that I wanted to learn about. At other times, my participants' experiences appeared very similar to mine, which made it hard for me to separate my experiences from theirs in my analysis. This underscores the notion of reflexivity discovered in the following section. Nevertheless, as my research progressed, I learned to manage these tensions. I learned that more prompts and probing directed my participants' conversation towards my research focus.

For this first phase, in transcribing the interviews, I had to find solutions to some practical issues. There was no electricity in the local community. I had to travel and

I also had to make a few trips back and forth to the fieldwork location to word process the audio-recorded data and to print copies of the individual transcripts. Similarly, returning transcripts to each of the participants for corrections, clarity and confirmation was quite difficult. The simplest solution was to return the transcripts personally to each of the participants in person to review and confirm them. I therefore needed to wait while each person read the transcript to verify and confirm the accuracy of the transcript. Each participant read her transcript right away and very few sought to add further comments to the transcripts which I inserted using pen on the transcript as they told me what needed adding. At this stage, I felt that I had represented their views accurately in the transcripts because the ten participants commented that the transcripts faithfully represented the way they remembered the interview. These comments affirmed that I was properly honouring their responses. Giving the participants the opportunity to re-read the transcripts in their own languages helped reaffirm the reliability and validity of the interview data.

When I returned to New Zealand in January 2013, I translated the transcripts into English. It was at this stage that I thought about the NVivo-10 programme, which I will explain later. Translating transcripts oneself is supported by Twinn (1997) who examined the implications of translation between languages (Cantonese to both English and Chinese) in a nursing study. It found that the production of different translations conducted by two translators could negatively affect the reliability and validity of data analysis. She points out that the importance of using one translator is to maximise reliability and validity. She also mentioned the translation problems associated with certain terms that have no English equivalent. In my research, when this happened, I sought the advice of knowledgeable others about some of the terms used by the participants' in the interview languages before I translated them into English. At the same time, I translated the transcripts (Bugotu and Cheke Holo) into English by myself to minimise breaking confidentiality that I promised the participants in return for allowing me to use their stories.

### **The Second Phase: Focus Groups**

The second phase of the data generation lasted from mid-July to September 2013, eight months after the first phase. In this phase, I concentrated on discussing the

preliminary findings with participants in order to deepen my understanding of these women's leadership beliefs and practices about their matrilineal leadership culture. In this phase, my main tasks were conducting focus group interviews and informal observations of six participants. This phase concentrated on examining the emerging findings from previous phases of analysis.

### **Focus group session process**

I generated a preliminary analysis of first phase data before this second visit to the case study site. Focus groups discussions were organised through the following processes. Once again, I sought support of both the village chief and, the school principal for the second visit to ensure continued access to the original 10 women participants. This led to me organising focus group interviews/conversations with the four village women leaders in a local woman's home on July 14, 2013. This was followed the next week by a focus group meeting with six women school leaders in a secondary school staff room on July 21, 2013. During these conversations, and over food (a common relationship-building custom I also undertook with the village chief and school principal), mentioned earlier. I briefly spoke about my intentions for this visit and outlined again key ethical concerns associated with confidentiality and anonymity. It was important to reiterate and clarify ethical concerns again so that participants understood the process of focus group interviews. At the end of the session, I verbally checked their willingness to participate. I intended giving them up to a week to decide. However, straight after these conversations, they talked among themselves and agreed on the size and composition of the groups for each of the focus group interviews, which they decided should occur on consecutive Sundays. These ideas aligned with the notion of best practice in the literature (Kitzinger, 1995). This meant that focus group interviews were organised as follows: (1) village, July 28, 2013; (2) secondary school, August 4, 2013; (3) primary and ECE, 11 August 2013 (see Appendix P) in three different homes. These focus groups consisted of two groups of three and one group of four participants. Conducting of focus group sessions in homes rather than elsewhere was important in this cultural context. This is because a home provided a relaxed environment that is marked as a space for family togetherness. In this case, I was aware of the overriding value of family togetherness, sharing, and doing things together as a way to make the participants comfortable. The strategy was a talking circle, where we

sat around a mat. Talking circles are Santa Isabel cultural practice and according to Chilisa (2012), "...based on the ideal of participants' respect for each other" (p. 213). The talking circle space symbolises and encourages sharing of ideas among group members, fostering respect for each other's ideas, togetherness, and a continuous and unending compassion for one another, which also symbolises equality of members in the circle.

The focus groups were guided by semi-structured questions (see Appendix N) which focused on the emerging themes from the first phase analysis of data from individual interviews. This was an opportunity to give and seek feedback to clarify, consolidate and generate understandings relating to matrilineal cultural influences that shaped these same women's leadership beliefs and practices.

These focus groups used the same local language as the individual interviews (Bugotu and Cheke Holo). Esposito (2001), states that conducting focus group discussions in the participants' first language yields rich data. Hence, as an insider researcher who speaks the same languages as my participants, I guided the discussions to yield that rich data.

I began the focus group sessions by sharing preliminary findings based on an analysis of existing data. Participants could then argue and justify, regarding specific concerns related to their matrilineal leadership cultural beliefs and practices and they acted as a member-check of the initial sets of analysed data. The audio-recorded focus group discussions lasted approximately one hour. I went through the same process of transcribing, clarifying and confirming the transcripts and translation as in the first phase.

Even though the, focus group discussion contributed greatly to my data, there were limitations to this method. The first was the culturally bound protocols in the way power was distributed within the groups. The younger members of the groups were hesitant to speak out about certain issues due to the respect they have for the older members. This contributed to their reticence and fear of stepping out of their cultural boundaries, which might have, they thought, caused disharmony within the group. At times this led to some of the older women dominating discussions while the younger women kept quiet and simply agreed.

Such occurrences were counteracted in the research process by subsequent one-on-one interviews a day after the focus groups discussions. Cultural protocols would not allow discussions about power distribution within groups to continue for fear of reprisal from the wider community. Thus, sometimes, encouraging a platform to hear everyone's voices and perspectives can be difficult to organise in focus groups. In the case of my research, it was difficult to organise two of the focus groups due to the women's different commitments. Negotiating time and location was difficult. McNae (2011), for example, comments on the importance of establishing expectations when she says that the "expectations of all people involved [in the focus groups]...need to be made clear and the processes transparent" (p. 121).

The second limitation relates to power relations between a researcher and participants in a focus group session. Morgan, Gibbs, Maxell and Britten (2002) suggest that power relation can be both a benefit and disadvantage to the data. For example, a researcher who directs too many questions may influence the eliciting of interactions between participants. However, when participants are given more flexibility this could influence the nature of the data generated. I experienced both situations during my focus group sessions. For example, participants raised issues that were beyond my research focus. Often, I had to steer them back to the discussion. This sometimes made it difficult to maintain the balance between where the participants wanted the discussion to go, and what I needed to learn about. In this situation, Gibbs (1997) states that researchers often need to keep the session focused and so must purposely guide the conversation back on track when needed.

### **Informal observation (hanging out) activities within the two phases of data generation**

The initial interview and focus group phases were carried out independently of each other due to the nature of data generating process and preliminary analysis involved. In that regard, these phases took place during two major visits in 2012 and 2013, as shown in Table 5.1. The informal observations (hanging out) with six participants involved twelve activities, two for each of the participants and were selected based on their scheduled activities at the time of my research.

**Table 5.1.** Informal observation within the two phases of data generation

<b>Field- visits Year</b>	<b>Data generation phase</b>	<b>Observation</b>
Visit 1 2012	1 <sup>st</sup> phase- Interviews: 17 Oct – 30 Nov	6 activities
Visit 2 2013	2 <sup>nd</sup> phase – Focus groups: 14 Jul – 15 Sept	6 activities

During these informal observations, I took notes about how each participant carried out her activities. In the first phase, I hung out with each participant while she carried out her role as a leader. The kind of activities I observed included: welcome ceremonies, a dance practice, a communal task support, a health campaign, a full community meeting and a visit to two elderly blind women. I hung out with the same five women again in the second phase of data generation while each of them participated further in activities such as a primary school fund raising, a tribal meeting, a Mothers Union conference preparation discussion, a secondary school department social and a clinic support outreach. These informal observations were important, as I sought to relate what they told me in the interviews to real life situations, which were scheduled activities for the each of participants and tended to last up to about one and half hours to half a day. The notes were digitally recorded onto a voice recorder or recorded in my research diary after each observation. Key aspects and themes, including quotes from participants were also later written into the diary.

My informal observations assisted my research process in various ways. Firstly, they enriched my data. For example, during these observations I overheard conversations or had conversations with the participants, which provided useful insights for learning about the many issues associated with their leadership beliefs and practices. In particular, participants talked about the issues they experienced in enacting their leadership beliefs in both the village or school activities, and this was useful to learn. These observation notes linked with my research diary, which recorded my notes on women practising leadership in these authentic occasions. The informal observations therefore, allowed me to be connected with my participants outside interviewing times and assisted in modifying my interview

questions, clarifying issues after the interviews and adding discussion points to future focus group sessions.

Secondly, informal observations combined with field notes recorded information related to my observations taken during the one-on-one interviews and focus group sessions. For example, I inserted notes on the verbal interactions between their observed practices and later related these to the common themes that emerged as data generation progressed. I also commented on key aspects of the focus group sessions as I observed my participants. Through these informal observations, I was able to connect the dynamics and subtleties of the groups and any emerging trends and or aspects thought to be relevant to the research questions and areas of focus.

In spite of the success of informal observation as a secondary data generation approach, I had a number of difficulties while conducting the hanging out. One difficulty was the limitation of the observations to two activities each for the six participants. Perhaps, I could have, gained more understanding and clarification of the data collected if I had observed more participants. Secondly, I only had time to observe the same five women leaders during the two phases of my fieldwork visit, due to the nature of the activities and their leadership roles. Although they wanted to please me they still exhibited the actual leadership practices that are associated with their habitual experiences. In spite of this limitation, data generated from other sources such as interviews and focus groups supported the findings emerging in the activities.

### **The Third Phase: Follow-up Interviews**

The third phase of data generation took place in two weeks during March 2014. After I had analysed the data from the previous two phases, I arrived at an understanding that women's leadership beliefs and practices were closely embodied with their matrilineal cultural context. I realised from this understanding that I needed some clarification on certain issues especially about their early experiences of leadership. Hence, I approached six out of the ten women leaders to clarify my curiosity because of access, time and their availability. When I explained to them what the follow-up interviews would involve they showed interested and were happy to participate.

### **Follow-up interviewing process**

From the preliminary findings, six women were approached for an interview that we could have via telephone as I had returned to New Zealand and was unable to interview the six women face to face. Firstly, I contacted one participant who acted as a contact person for the group. I had identified while on fieldwork to seek approval from the six women for the follow-up interviews. Following this contact, she was able to schedule dates and times on my behalf (see appendix O) for the interviews. I used an interview schedule (see appendix N) for these interviews so that I could elicit the information from each participant in one telephone conversation, which I digitally recorded in mp3. After each interview, I transcribed and analysed data before undertaking subsequent interviews. Data generated in this phase represented the missing pieces that I needed to understand how my participants' leadership beliefs and practices were shaped. It was also important in this phase to discuss my preliminary findings with the six participants in order to revise the data and validate my understanding.

Although a follow-up interview was important in my data generation process, one limitation to overcome was the poor reception and limited telephone connection. This is because I was calling from New Zealand where I undertook my doctorate and my participants are in rural communities in Santa Isabel Island, Solomon Islands. Finding the right time when the connection was faster and reception clearer required considerable effort and negotiation to resolve satisfactorily.

### **Managing Insider/outsider Issues**

Unluer (2012) and DeLyser (2001) claim that insider/outside researchers like me can face difficulties during the research process because of our over-familiarity with the research context and participants. DeLyser (2001) acknowledges a range of difficulties she experienced from both interpersonal obligations and personal engagements with her research participants. I encountered similar difficulties during my research process. This section describes the dilemmas I encountered throughout my data generation processes. As an insider/outside researcher, I experienced difficulties relating to my prior knowledge of the research context and the close ties I had with my participants. It was important to address and overcome these issues in order to ensure credible research.

Firstly, Brannick and Coghlan (2007) state that prior knowledge contributes to an insider's/outsider's over-familiarity about the local values, the cultural norms, rituals, rhythms, taboos, the formal and informal power structures of the research context. This existing understanding meant participants appeared to assume that I already knew about the situation they were describing. Hence they assumed that they didn't need to explain these things during my initial data generation phase of interviewing. For example, when I asked specific questions about their 'challenges in leadership', some participants responded saying: "You already know what they are", "You have seen them", "and you have experienced them yourself". In all these circumstances, I probed with more questions to elicit specific information about their experiences. I also paraphrased my participants' conversations to help me manage the interview process. Over-familiarity of the research context can also mean that as an insider, I am too close to the data. According to Coghlan (2001), this may influence an insider to assume that the participants will explain everything without much prompting. I experienced the opposite during my interview, and needed to probe for more information. My insider knowledge helped me in further eliciting the information required to answer my questions.

Secondly, my close ties with the participants (Innes, 2009) caused some dilemmas during the research process. As an insider/outsider, there were situations where I had difficulty in separating my views from my participants because too much is familiar. This added to instances during the research process in which I felt my knowing too much about my participants meant that I hesitated to introduce matters that were sensitive. For example, some participants when asked how the community viewed their leadership practice gave responses such as "I have already told you", "I don't know" and "what do you think". This made me uncomfortable about probing to elicit the kind of responses that I was hoping to get.

However, this was minimised by recognising the stronger relationship that already existed between my participants and me. This was done through being reflexive and critically examining assumptions and actions that were related to data collection and analysis (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). In this case I adapted the reflexive technique of writing a reflexive journal proposed by Schon's (1983). In this diary, I focused on the three types of reflection; *reflection-in-action* (writing a diary about my participants' interviews), *reflection-on-action* (I recorded the similarities and

differences between my own and my participants' experiences after the interview) and *reflection-through-action* (deliberate and intentional reflection). This was a kind of thinking that I engaged in to be aware of when I analysed and generated emergent findings from the data. I undertook this kind of reflection to reduce the effects of researcher bias in the process of generating the findings.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis (QDA) involves organising, accounting for and explaining the data to make sense of data in terms of the participants' "definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 537) in relation to the research context. This is important for "situating [people's] action, and grasping its wider social and historic import" (Dey, 2003, p. 33). These ideas were useful in my analysis as the aim of my research is to explore how women leaders' formed their leadership beliefs and practices in Santa Isabel. Hence, any possible explanations generated ought to be in relation to my participant women leaders' situated contexts. When analysing these data I was mindful of capturing meanings and experiences that participants shared with me.

To make sense of my data, I draw on Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory process in my analysis. This is a qualitative analysis that consists of features such as inductively generating ideas, coding (looking for key words from data), and constant comparison (cross-checking) (Strauss, 1987). Grbich (2013) argues that grounded theory in this way helps the researcher to capture an in-depth understanding of the data. For example, when I learnt about my participants' perceptions of leadership in the initial phase of data collection, I discussed this understanding in the later focus groups. This clarified many issues related to this trend.

Wasserman and Clair (2010) illustrate that grounded theory methods foster following up on what is happening, thus increase a researcher's flexibility during data gathering. Furthermore, Charmaz (2013) argues that grounded theory methods of analysis consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to add lesser known but useful contextual insights into an existing theory base, such as Bourdieu's notion of social reproduction in the case of my research. Grounded theory gave me the basis for making sense of what these

women told me because I had no idea what they were going to be, so I could not come with any preconceptions about my data, other than the lens related to reproducing ideas and cultural reproduction. It was open, and in order to make sense of things that kept popping up, I was able to identify them on the rawness of this data. I used the principles of grounded theory to percolate big ideas and they became the planks of my discussion. I begin with inductive data analysis and use comparative methods. These methods keep me (the researcher) interacting and involved with the data and emerging analysis. They also guided me as they gave me focus and flexibility because I could code and categorise data as I collected them. With grounded theory methods, I was able to shape and reshape data collected and therefore, refined data and increased knowledge about my phenomenon.

In order to embrace the grounded theory framework throughout my analysis process, I used NVivo-10 for managing and analysing data. I also found a range of useful tools that served different stages of my analysis. I used multiple strategies and tools to analyse the huge amount of generated data. The steps of analysis were not pre-planned, rather they emerged as I continued with the analysis. The tools were selected according to the purposes of understanding required to reach plausible answers in response to my research questions. In the next section, I outline the tools and related epistemology.

## **My data analysis processes**

### **Step 1: Transcription**

Transcribing is a crucial step to begin the analysis. Researchers transcribe interview data for the purpose of representing spoken data in a written form (Bloor & Wood, 2006). This technical process involves close observation of data, becoming familiar with the content, and repeatedly listening to participants' conversations, expressions, tones, and pauses in their conversations (Bailey, 2008). I transcribed and translated all interview in both our local languages, Bugotu and Cheke Holo and English. I was mindful of capturing meanings that my participants shared and took care with specific words when translating the Bugotu and Cheke Holo languages into English. The Bugotu and Cheke Holo data sources included interview, three focus group sessions and six follow-up interviews. Transcribing

took up a lot of time, although data generation took place in different phases. Furthermore, referred to data made up over 17 hours of recording (10 hours of interviews, 3 hours of focus group conversation and 4 hours of follow up interviews). I used indicators to make the transcriptions comprehensive (IN – initial interview, HOO - Hanging out observation, FG – focus groups, FUI – Follow up Interview).

## **Step 2: Open coding and pattern- seeking**

In this stage of data analysis, data was treated bit by bit and assigned categories (Dey, 2003). This initial coding process started through “examining each line of data and then defining actions or events within it” (Ikpeze, 2007, p. 258). It also means “categorising segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarises and accounts for each piece of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 43). Technology assisted analysis allows researchers to code data through reading line by line in a more systematic way than coding manually (Creswell, 2013). I applied this approach as I read and or re-read my transcriptions thoroughly to get the general picture of the information and reflected on them (Creswell, 2007). I then created nodes using QDA software NVivo-10. I used NVivo-10 programme because it offered convenience of storing sound and word files, analysing data and listening to the audio-record in the same software. I set up the project in NVivo-10 and created folders called ‘transcripts’ and ‘recordings’ which included two second-level folders: interview, and focus group. I then imported the generated data into their respective folders, using pseudonyms of participants for the third level folders. I then created a structured coding system with categories, subcategories and sub-subcategories to help organise files as nodes (data set) (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013) for each of the participants’ transcripts.

I started with interview transcripts, then moved on to focus groups and field notes. Through reading the transcripts line by line, I created free nodes (coding) on anything that I found interesting such as early experiences, perceived beliefs, challenges and ways of practicing leadership. In Figure 5.2, I illustrate these initial node folders and some created nodes. This process of reading through each piece of data and creating nodes helped me search for the commonalities among my participants. At this initial stage, I managed to create a considerable number of

nodes that helped me begin to make sense of women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices.

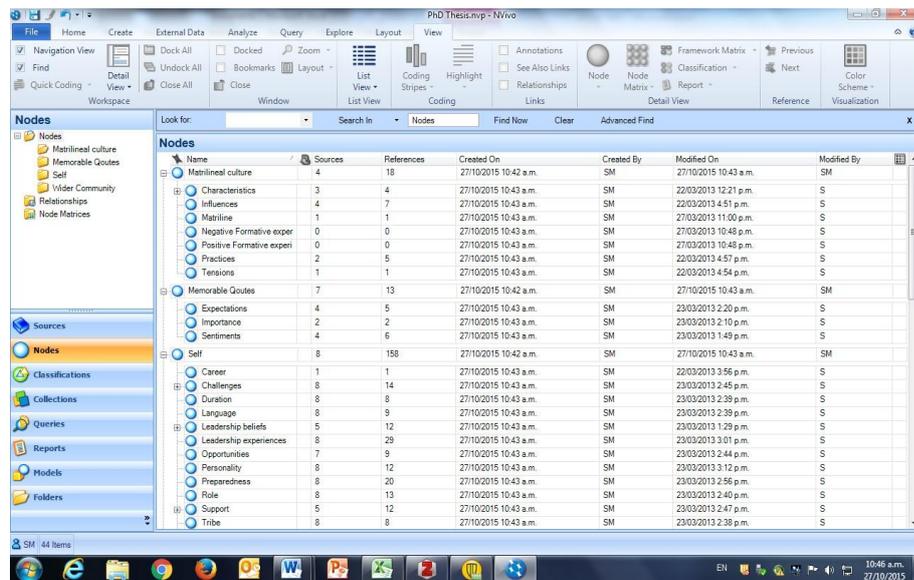


Figure 5.2. Node folder and nodes in NVivo-10

Charmaz (2006) asserts that coding generates the bones of the analysis that assembles them into a working skeleton. These initial codes helped me to deepen my understanding as I continued with other sources, looking for consistency of these codes across the data. Over time, the codes changed and new codes emerged as I continued with my analysis, particularly when summary reports (NVivo-node summary) were checked through.

### Step 3: Axial coding and checking through node summaries

Axial coding involves techniques for intense analysis of categories. This is selecting one category at a time in terms of the variable that the researcher seeks understanding of from the data (Strauss, 1987) and is unlikely to take place during early analysis. Axial coding is an important element of grounded theory analysis because in this process, researchers consistently examine each code and categorise them through comparison (Bloor & Wood, 2006). Axial coding in my analysis involved evaluating my categories, such as early learning and leadership experiences. I examined nodes created earlier, checked through node summaries to seek sub-themes in the research findings. Harding (2013) suggests that when researchers identify commonalities, patterns, and themes, it is necessary to use a constant comparison between different sources of data and across different participants. Reading through codes using the NVivo-10 node summary reports

(NVivo-10 option) and drafting some parts in word documents helped me notice more aspects that were congruent to answering my questions. Seidel (1998) argues that qualitative analysis is more than coding, sorting and shifting. He suggests that the themes, patterns, and categories can be checked, rechecked and redefined to generate a comprehensive understanding of data. Axial coding therefore, helped me to identify discrepancies, contradictory ideas, surprising features, and characteristics in my data. This process guided me towards my next step of analysis.

#### **Step 4: Seeking the big picture**

Though the previous steps enabled me to see the commonalities, I was not convinced of my preliminary findings because I could not outline women leaders' leadership journeys. In this process, I carried out two main activities with two different tools to capture a better understanding: creating a matrix and developing a visual overview.

I created a matrix of my participants using Microsoft Excel. This listed elements of their leadership beliefs and practices generated first through the NVivo-10 node summary reports as outlined in Figure 5.2. This matrix enabled me to see commonalities and discrepancies in terms of their leadership beliefs and practices. It also enabled me to identify structural and cultural barriers that influenced women leaders' shaping of leadership practices. This matrix helped me recognise that my participants' leadership practices were hardly ever complained about, suggesting something of their dispositions about these practices.

I developed a visual overview by using the information summarised in the matrix to see emerging themes that represented participants' shaping of leadership practice. I used Inspiration 8 IE, a mind-mapping tool to design individual participants' individual journeys. In this analysis step, manipulating two different tools, as illustrated in Figure 5.2, I had the building blocks of my findings as emerging themes for understanding women leaders' shaping of their leadership. In this process, I was seeking more than understanding their leadership journey. I sought to conceptualise how their specific leadership was shaped through their cultural context. This led me to the next step of my analysis.

**Table 5.2.** Emerging themes in Microsoft Excel.

Nodes	Emerging Themes			
	1	2	3	4
Good matrilineal leadership looks like	Women leaders are custodians to their lineage and land  Women leaders pass on knowledge, values, beliefs and practices that sustain society	Women leaders are custodians to their lineage and land  Women leaders pass on knowledge, values, beliefs and practices that sustain society	Contextual beliefs about leadership	Views about women leadership are context specific

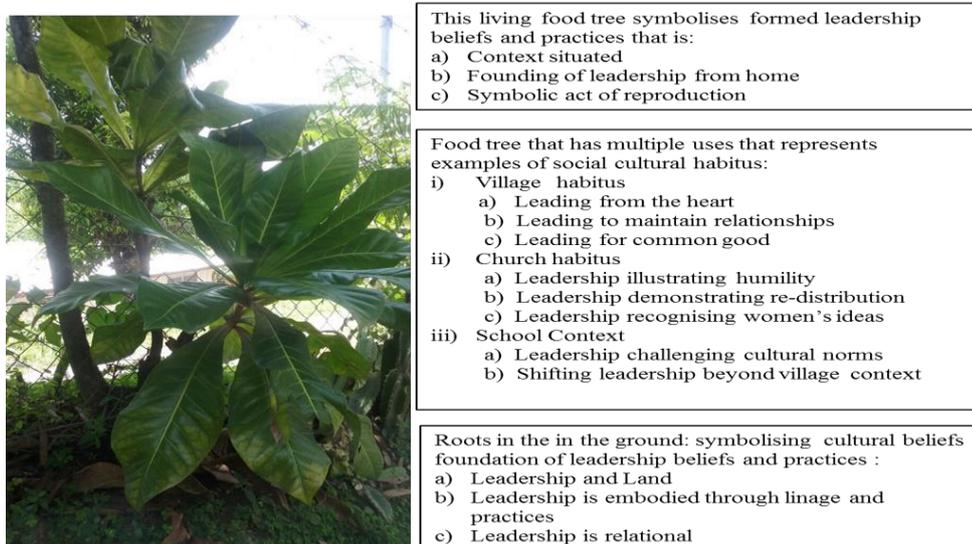
**Step 5: Illustrating to see connections between emerging themes**

Researchers continue to find suitable programs that support their analysis (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). In this step, I used PowerPoint for diagramming my thinking, visualising various concepts, such as the matrilineal cultural influence, early learning experiences or organisational factors. I found that these concepts themselves do not explain the journey of shaping leadership belief and practices, and need aligning together to generate an understanding of how women leaders’ leadership practice was shaped. The connection of meanings and concepts is inherently important in qualitative research because without them the big picture would not be fully understood.

These connections represented in a visual diagram capture concepts emerging from different analysis steps, particularly, those about the shaping of habitus as shown in Figure 5.3. I used the “*Mega*” in Bugotu language or cut nut in English and katnat in Solomon Islands pijin, metaphor to illustrate the matrilineal leadership as a symbolic act of reproduction. The cut nut tree is indigenous to the Solomon Islands with a life span of 80-90 years (Pauku, 2006). It is a widespread and common nut tree found mainly in villages and food gardens. It is a nut tree that has fruits all year around with a slender, sparsely branched, heavily flowered and fruited wooded structure. It has large, very glossy, wavy margin leaves and flowers that are calyx

closed in bud that ruptures into 2-4 lobes. The fruits' outer covering come in purple and green colours and are in a range of sizes but the fruit's flesh is always white. This nut tree also has other uses including: the bark and the very young leaves for medicine, mature leaves for wrapping food for roasting and baking and for storing vegetables and seeds, harvested nuts to sell for income, trees grown as windbreakers and dead wood for firewood. The description of this nut tree is useful to represent many of the women's understandings of their leadership experiences with regards to social reproduction of nurture and ethical care. In particular, women's leadership experiences that have been nurtured and tendered by the carefully prepared soil representing grandmothers, mothers and aunts teaching the young women the matrilineal leadership culture.

**The matrilineal leadership culture of Santa Isabel**



*Figure 5.3.* Illustration showing emerged themes.

**Step 6: Linking the habitus lens through the writing of findings**

The diagramming approach helped me to learn more about women leaders' journeys pertaining to the shaping of the leadership practice. In this phase, my writing became a form of analysis. As Richardson (2005) argues, writing enables researchers to construct knowledge about the researched area. At times, I wrote stories about specific participants, about how they became leaders, their early experiences, their education, their career and their leadership practices. Habitus, Bourdieu (1990a) is a very important concept in my study of the matrilineal leadership culture, because this cultural milieu constitutes a field, which many

women's perceptions and practices of leadership are founded upon and located. Thus, using habitus as a lens helps me understand the complexity of negotiating and translating women's leadership opportunities and status into organisational contexts, especially in the area of education. As Reay (2004) argues, habitus can be used to interrogate research data. In this research, I referred to the notion of habitus, field and practice when analysing the interview data in relation to social reproduction of leadership beliefs and practices.

That is, I am examining how habitus affected my participants' leadership beliefs and practices in their social field. Within this research, the participants' social field includes the micro field (familial environment), the meso field (schools) and the Macro field (wider Solomon Islands cultural practices). In this research, I am looking at how habitus influences the women's understanding of the role they prioritise in the micro field; and how habitus describes what they should do or should not do, which affects the way the women think and act in their meso field. This discussion of the micro, meso and macro social field is important because field involves the acceptance of the matrilineal leadership culture by the women, which on the other hand, is contradictory at the meso and macro fields. Of crucial to my discussion, is the interrelation between habitus, field and capital as discussed earlier on in Chapter 4 to explain the phenomena of my research findings.

I found the analysis meticulous yet time-consuming process. This meant that the categorisation of the final themes was arrived at after considerable layers of analysis. These layers of analysis unpicked the data through the habitus lens, which helped me understand the nature of women leadership opportunities in the both community and in educational contexts. The final themes in Figure 5.3 occurred as results of reshuffling the order so that I could more clearly represent the key layers of these themes. In turn, this helped me make sense of why women in matrilineal cultures although have access to leadership opportunities and are highly respected in their communities, so few were represented in leadership in educational roles in the Solomon Islands.

In the following section I describe ethical issues that I needed to think about in undertaking my research and how I address these in the research practice.

## **Ethical considerations for this Research**

In qualitative research, ethics is an integral part of the research process and needs to be observed throughout the research process (Creswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 2002). Hammerley and Traianou (2012), define ethics as “a set of principles that embody or exemplify what is good or right, or allow us to identify what is bad or wrong” (p. 16). This means ethical issues deals with deciding on what is considered right or wrong when conducting research with humans. Thus, all good research design includes considerations such as protecting the well-being and interests of the research participants (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012; Stringer, 2004), and in some cases, not to harm the researcher either (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). In small community contexts it is difficult to keep people anonymous thus, the nature of confidentiality and protecting women from any further harm is crucial. Tolich and Davidson (2011) suggest avoiding harm means protecting the participants from exclusion, vulnerability and disclosures. They call for researchers to “take the role of the other throughout the entire research process in order to protect the people in the study” (Tolich & Davidson, 1999, p. 79).

Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2001) and Traianou (2014) identify the principles of “... minimisation of harm, respecting autonomy and the protection of privacy” (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012b, p. 56). In other words, the focus of research ethics are “primarily on how researchers should treat the people whom they are studying or from whom they obtain data” (Traianou, 2014, p. 62).

In the case of this research, a full application for ethical consideration from the University of Waikato was sought and granted by the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee based on the University of Waikato, Human Research Ethics Regulation (University of Waikato, 2008) in 2012 (see Appendix A).

Since my qualitative case study was conducted in a community consisting of schools and a village, I focused on these principles when designing the research approach and planning the research process. This next section addresses the ethical considerations for this study which are grouped into the ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence and justice (Orb et al., 2001).

## **Autonomy**

In relation to research ethics, autonomy means respecting the rights of research participants (Orb et al., 2001). Thus, in carrying out research, Traianou (2014) states that “people’s autonomy should be respected; ... [and] their capacity and right to make decisions about their own lives should not be undermined” (p. 63).

In addition, Orb et al. (2001) argue that the;

respect for people is the recognition of participants’ rights, including the right to be informed about the study, the right to freely decide whether to participate in a study, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty (p. 95).

This means that the principle of autonomy in qualitative research is underpinned by informed consent. The term informed consent according to Flynn and Goldsmith (2013) “impl[y] that subjects know and understand the risks and benefits of participation in the research. They must also understand their participation is completely voluntary” (p. 10). In the case of my research, I adhered to the principles of informed consent by gaining consent from firstly the schools and community and secondly, the women who would be involved in the research.

To gain access to the women, I was required to gain permission from a number of institutions as outlined earlier in this chapter. First was gaining a permit from the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) (see Appendix C). A Government Ministry enacted to assess research applications and grant research permits for any research carried out in the Solomon Islands. This was granted in 2012 (see Appendix B). Secondly, on the receipt of the MEHRD permit, two sets of applications for permissions were needed. These were an application to the Santa Isabel Education Authority (SIEA) (see Appendix D) to gain access to the schools and an application to the village elder (see Appendix E) to gain access to the village. Permission from the SIEA was granted and received through email (see Appendix C) while permission to access the village was verbally granted by word of mouth by the elder. Following these, seeking the various schools’ leaders (principal of secondary school, headmaster of primary school and supervisor of early childhood centre) permission to access the schools was the next requirement, and outlined earlier in this chapter.

With consent from the schools and village I sought consent from the women. I presented prospective participants with detailed information organised in two separate one hour introduction conversations as indicated earlier. When inviting them to participate in the research, I adhered to the principles of informed consent strongly stated by Creswell (2012), which included;

- Participants had the right to participate voluntarily in the research and could withdraw from the research at any time.
- Participants were informed of the purpose, nature and the likely impact the research may have on them.
- Participants were informed of the procedures and what was expected of them and from researcher during the research process, one week before the research began.
- Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions freely, to receive a copy of their conversations and have their privacy respected.
- Participants were given a week to think about the research before they signed the informed consent form in agreeing to participate voluntarily before they participated in the research.
- Participants were informed that their actual names and their schools and community were not going to be used in the thesis write up and during informal conversations.
- Participants were informed to select a pseudonym that they preferred throughout the research process and the writing of the research.
- Participants were informed that the information collected would be securely kept in a locked cupboard in my office at the University of Waikato and were to be accessed only by my supervisors and myself.
- Participants were informed that their conversations were only going to be used for the purposes of the thesis and any future conference presentations and academic publications.

All the recruited participants were given an information sheet (see Appendix L) and two copies of each of informed consent (see Appendix J), (one for the participants' record and another for my record), explaining the research and their rights as participants. The participants were fully informed about the research through the information sheet and during the face-to-face sessions held before consenting to the

research. I also discussed and reiterated the purpose of the research highlighting the confidentiality and use of pseudonyms. I gave all the participants my contact details as well as those of my supervisors so that they could contact either of us if they have any queries about the research.

Ten women leaders provided informed consent to participate in the study by signing the informed consent form.

### **Beneficence**

Beneficence refers to the research ethical principle “doing good for others and preventing harm” (Orb et al., 2001, p. 95). This principle is based on protecting the rights and well-being of all participants involved in the research process. Tolich (2010) state that potential harm can be minimised when the researcher ensures that the research is theoretically valid and socially significant, and by exercising sensitivity and judgement. For this research to have any validity it was important that I undertook the research from the perspectives of the needs of the people involved and not from my own perspective as a researcher. As such, this research was firstly designed so that the first phase (individual face to face interviews) led to participants’ discussing the data analysis and their perceptions of what they perceive as support in developing their leadership beliefs and practices. This led to development of what the matrilineal leadership culture might look like, sound like and feel like during the second phase of data generation (one focus group discussion session for each of the three groups).

According to Hammersley and Traianou (2012b) harm may also include: “[d]amage to reputation, status, or to relations with others, for example through the disclosure of information that was previously unknown to some relevant audience” (p. 62). Point 13 (3), ‘Ethical Conduct of the University of Waikato’ stipulates that harm would include “pain, stress, emotional distress, fatigue, embarrassment, and exploitation” (The University of Waikato, 2005). In order to minimise harm, I took my commitment to confidentiality and cultural sensitivity seriously.

Confidentiality was one of the considerations of minimising harm. The school and the village are such close-knit communities that ensuring confidentiality can be challenging. I therefore, ensured that the confidentiality was kept by protecting the women by the deletion of identifiers such as their names, addresses, school and

community (Cohen et al., 2000). More importantly, I ensured that the identity of the individual was protected and was at the forefront when quoting and reporting information.

One main potential risk to the participants was their shyness and nervousness at sharing their ideas with me; however, it was my role to put them at their ease as I have knowledge of the Santa Isabel culture. For example, each of the participants were advised at the beginning of the interview sessions not answer any questions if they felt uncomfortable during the interview. They could withdraw any information immediately after the interview and when they receive their transcripts to check for accuracy during the first and second visits, and they had up to the first of December, 2013 to change, retract, or withdraw from the research. I was sensitive to the possibilities of any psychological or cultural harm throughout the research process.

### **Justice**

Justice refers to the ethical principle “equal share and fairness ... [to avoid] exploitation and abuse of participants” (Orb et al., 2001, p. 95). Issues of social and cultural sensitivity (University of Waikato Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities, 2008) were ethical considerations that I took into account in this research. This was because although all my participants were women from Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands, they are still individuals with different cultural norms. So in conducting this research, I was aware of their individuality, in particular how the participants viewed notions of privacy, identification and confidentiality from their cultural perspectives which may impact on the data that was generated. I was aware of the participants’ roles in society and that I might be taking up too much of their time, however, as I am an insider, I would be able to work with them around their rhythms, passions and routines and to be able to predict how to deal with them in the most appropriate cultural manner. The next section describes how I evaluated my research processes.

### **Evaluation of the Research**

A criticism that is often faced by qualitative researchers is their subjective approach to their research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Thus, it is essential to ensure the trustworthiness of the research process by explaining the underpinning

considerations that researchers are involved in during the research process. Maxwell (1996) confirms that the validity of qualitative research can be associated within three types: description (accurately recording data whether heard or seen); interpretation (capturing the meaning attached to words and actions); and theory (considering discrepant data and with alternative explanation). In order to promote my research validity, I used several strategies throughout my research process: transparency, reflexivity and triangulation.

### **Transparency**

Transparency in qualitative research means ensuring accountability by being transparent to oneself and others, including the participants and other research communities (Parker, 2005). Thus, adopting a transparent stance means acknowledging the limitations in terms of dilemmas, challenges, and uncertainties in the research process to the audiences (Duncan & Watson, 2010). To do this, firstly, after data generation, I carefully transcribed all the data myself in the local languages. I then visited the participants again and gave the transcriptions of the interviews for their member checking in order for the participants to check data accuracy and confirm what they shared (Cho & Trent, 2006). My participants could then suggest any changes to or clarifications of the transcripts. I also discussed various examples of notes written through my informal observations to show transparency and to clarify and confirm the data that I generated. These clarifications were significant in my research journey.

Secondly, during data generation, I was always mindful of certain considerations such as keeping records, taking notes and reflection throughout my research journey. These considerations were pertinent to my insider researcher status as well as the research process. I disclosed a number of dilemmas (see appendix Q) and several emerging issues related to insider-researcher status (refer to managing insider issues), which provides ample information about the degree of my transparency and the careful documentation of records in this research project. Inckle (2010) described her research journey and emerging dilemmas as a way to be transparent to the research audience. This also inspired me to aim for transparency for my audiences, my research participants, myself, and readers of my thesis.

## **Reflexivity**

Reflexivity as “a concept used in social sciences to explore and deal with the relationship between the researcher and the object of research” (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p. 60). This approach allows me to reflect on how my own positionality can complicate the process and direction of the study.

Self-reflexivity is crucial in ensuring credibility in qualitative research (Bott, 2010). O’Leary (2004) explains reflexivity as “the ability of the researcher to stand outside the research process and critically reflect on that process (p.11). It emphasises the significance of recognising the dynamics of the self and ‘others’ of fieldwork (Stoeltje et al., 1999). Reflexivity allows researchers to observe personal feelings and positionality and the analysis of this dynamic becomes an important source of data. It enables researchers to understand how their knowledge comes into existence (Hertz, 1977).

Ellingson (2009) notes and believes that describing the research journey’s challenges, complications and the issues that a researcher experiences during the research process is an integral part of explaining the degree of reflexivity in qualitative research. Richardson (1997) argues that being reflexive supports researchers to define their relationships with their participants which can help helped them to detach their thoughts from their participants’ thoughts. Brannick and Coghlan (2007) argue that “as researchers through the process of reflexive awareness, we are able to articulate tacit knowledge that has become deeply segmented because of socialization in an organisational system and reframe it as theoretical knowledge and that because we are close to something or know it well, that we can research it” (p. 60). They explain

## **Triangulation**

Cohen et al., (2011) define triangulation “as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour” (p. 195). They argue that ‘methodological triangulation’ is “one used most frequently and the one that possibly has the more to offer” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 197) in educational research. This is because this type of triangulation “uses different methods on the same object of study” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 196). Morse (2015) also states that triangulation

for establishing validity “usually refers to the use of two or more sets of data” (p. 1216). For my research, I used individual interviews, focus groups interviews, informal observation and follow-up interviews that gave me confidence in the data generated and thus my findings as these were also used to expand understanding (Morse, 2015). Triangulation technique is also suitable when “a researcher is engaged in a case study” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 197) that investigates a complex phenomenon.

Creswell (2013) notes that triangulation “involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (p. 251). He believes one example could be where member checking, “the researcher solicits participants’ views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). This approach “involves taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). In my research, I took back the transcripts as well as the preliminary analyses consisting of descriptions and themes because I was interested in their views of these written analyses as well as what were missing.

Creswell (2013) states that rich, thick description means that the researcher has provided “details when describing a case or when writing about a theme” (p. 252). This can allow readers to make decisions regarding transferability because the researcher describes in detail the participants or setting under study. With such detailed description, the researcher enables readers to transfer information to other settings and to determine whether the findings can be transferred because of shared characteristics. According to Stake (2010), “A description is rich if it provides abundant, interconnected details...” (p. 49). The trustworthiness of my research is the combination of Transparency, reflexivity, triangulation and transferability.

### **Chapter summary**

Within this research, data was primarily generated by interviewing which included; one-on-one semi structured interviews and focus groups. Secondary data was also sourced by keeping field notes and completing informal observations (Hanging Out) which were recorded in a reflective journal diary. Ethical considerations pertinent to the research process were also explored, with autonomy, beneficence and justice being discussed. Data was analysed using the thematic approach in which three

main themes relating to the matrilineal leadership culture emerged: Existing leadership beliefs, examples of socio cultural habitus and formed leadership beliefs and practices. Bourdieu's habitus and its related concepts of field, capital have been used as a lens to examine the findings of this research.

In the next chapter, I provide the research findings related to the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture as constructed by the women leaders and the researcher.

## Chapter Six: Research Findings

The purpose of my research has been to explore and examine the influences of the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture on women's leadership beliefs and practices. To achieve this aim, I needed to answer the overarching question:

How do women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices form in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture? And the sub questions arising from this were:

1. In what ways does the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture influence women leaders' beliefs and practices?
2. To what extent does the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture contribute to the formation of women leaders' cultural leadership beliefs and practices?
3. How do women leaders practice leadership in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture?

This chapter consist four parts and addresses each of these questions with supporting data. **Part One:** *Matrilineal leadership cultural beliefs and practices* present findings relating to the connectedness of leadership with land, elders, women and tribe. **Part Two:** *Women's understanding of leadership and the influences of social and cultural contexts* report findings on specific contexts that contributed to shaping women's leadership beliefs and practices. **Part Three:** *Formed leadership beliefs and practices* presents women leaders' shaped leadership beliefs and practices and their formed habitus. Finally, **Part Four:** *Chapter summary*, provides a concluding summary of the whole chapter.

This chapter provides a synthesis of the findings related to the matrilineal leadership beliefs and practices held by 10 women leaders. It also focuses on factors that contributed to women's understanding of and shaping of their leadership. It then describes how both the matrilineal leadership cultural beliefs and practices and the specific social and cultural contexts formed women's leadership beliefs and practices in the communities they live and work in such as the village and schools. The findings are based on recurring themes that emerged from individual interview data (IID) and focus group discussion (FGD) between September 2012 and September 2013. Secondary data generated through field notes (FN) and informal

observations (IO) of six participants will be referred to. Table 6.1 gives contextual information about who my participants were, in particular their cultural and educational background and their leadership roles.

## Participants Profile

**Table 6.1.** Profile of participants

Participant research name	Age	Village/ Tribe	Leadership role	Important focus on exercising Leadership	Background
Hanai	38	Bugotu/ Thokokama	- Mothers Union village president - Manages family trade store	- Advocates for happy, healthy family life	- Completed secondary education - 6 years teaching Sunday school - Married with 2 children - Second daughter - Grew up in the village
Daina	48	Maringe/ Vihuvunagi	- Organiser of the village water and sanitation committee - Mothers Union regional president	- Wants to contribute to the health and wellbeing of people in and around the village - Wants to promote happy, healthy families	- Completed secondary education - 5 years in formal employment - Eldest daughter - Grew up in the village
Elena	43	Bugotu/ Vihuvunagi	- Mothers union village secretary - Parents representative on village primary school board	- Wants to make community members aware of the importance of community living and education both formal and informal	- Completed secondary education up to year 9 - 5 years employed as shop assistant - Youngest daughter - Grew up in the village
Joska	25	Bugotu/ Vihuvunagi	- Senior ECE teacher - Liaise between children and parents - Village Sunday school teacher - President of youth group	- Wants to teach young children and the youth about the importance of their culture	- High school graduate - Partly trained ECE teacher - 5 years teaching - Married with one child - Eldest daughter - Grew up in the village
Me'a	26	Maringe/ Thokokama	- Head of Department - Treasurer of	- Enjoys working with young people and	- An university graduate -

			Department	wants to help young women in	First year teaching
			funds - Secretary of school beautification and health committees	Santa Isabel to realise their importance in society	-Eldest daughter - Grew up in the village
Iona	43	Hograno/ Thokokama	- ECE Centre supervisor - Mothers Union advisor - Advocator of children's rights and wellbeing	-Passionate about young children's welfare and education	- An university graduate - 10 years ECE teacher trainer - 7 years teaching - Married with one child -Eldest daughter Grew up in both the village and town
Guri	42	Bugotu/ Posamoggo	- Mothers Union village vice president	- A desire for people to live peacefully in communities	- Completed primary education - 3 years in casual formal employment -Second daughter - Grew up in the village
Anika	53	Bugotu/ Thokokama	- Manages village market premises - Manages own trade store - Tribal spokesperson	- Wants to make people aware of knowing where they fit in the community	- Completed primary education - 10 years in business - Married with one son -Second daughter Grew up in the village
Te'e	42	Bugotu/ Posamoggo	- Head teacher (primary school) - Organiser of water and sanitation school project	-Wishes to create safe environment for children in schools and the community - She is passionate about providing clean and safe water and proper sanitation	- College graduate - 20 years in teaching - Married with five children - Third daughter Grew up in the village

Haidu	37	Bogotu/ Thokokama	- Head of Department (secondary school) - Senior house mistress - Chairperson of school catering committee - Secretary of school disciplinary committee	- Passionate about helping young people to become good citizens	- College graduate - 7 years in teaching - Married with two children - Eldest daughter -Grew up in the village
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As illustrated in Table 6.1, the women leaders' age varied: the youngest are two women in their 20s and the oldest is in her 50s. Two women are in their 30s and five are in their 40s. In terms of the place they originally come from, seven are from the Bugotu region, two from Maringe and one from Hograno. Women from the Bugotu area make up the majority of participants (7), because the case study site is in the Bugotu region. Five participants belong to the Thokokama tribe, three participants trace their tribe to the Vihuvunagi and two to the Posamoggo tribe. Women from the Thokokama tribe made up half of the participants because this tribe holds primary ownership to land in this region. The birth position of the participants range from eldest (5), second (3), third (1) and youngest (1), which relates to eldest daughters recognition in inheriting land custodianship rights and responsibilities.

All ten participants have received primary, secondary and tertiary formal schooling. Two participants completed primary education. Four participants completed secondary education and four women have gained teaching qualifications, of which two were from overseas universities and two from a local college. The participants' work experiences varied from teaching in schools to church Sunday schools, working in private companies and managing privately owned small business projects.

The leadership roles participants engaged in varied from village community committees to a church organisation to school settings. Most of them held multiple leadership roles. The participants' reasons for taking up and participating actively in leadership roles also varied. One reason was having a passion for creating an environment conducive for young children to live and learn in, and helping young people to become good citizens. Another reason was experiencing the feeling of joy

when they can provide care for children, youth, the elderly and everyone in the community. Similarly, all participants spoke of how they hope to develop good attitudes and behaviours in young people so they could become knowledgeable about their place and culture, and who will understand the importance of upholding the peaceful way of living in Santa Isabel.

The following section reports findings on the influences of matrilineal culture on women's leadership beliefs and practices.

### **Part 1: Matrilineal Leadership Cultural Beliefs and Practices**

For the purpose of this research, matrilineal leadership cultural beliefs and practices are understood by the participants as patterns of thinking, doing, attitudes and behaviour that are considered normal, or typical within the Santa Isabel matrilineal society. For example, in the Santa Isabel matrilineal system as stated in chapter 2, three systems: decent, land and leadership play a key role in shaping cultural beliefs and practices. In Santa Isabel these systems' are interconnected through the mothers' relationships to decent (birth lineage) and the land. Consequently, women are central in the transmission/ maintenance and/ or adaptation of these cultural beliefs within society and the family structure. Women's leadership is likely to be at the core in this system and contributes to the village community co-existence that the three tribes *Posamoggo*, *Thonggokama* and *Vihuvunagi*, in the Santa Isabel matrilineal society, benefit from. Evidence of these three systems that recognise women's leadership beliefs and practices are present in the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture is illustrated in the findings.

#### **Cultural beliefs and practices**

In the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture people's responsibilities are linked to land inheritance rights and lineage. More specifically, land and lineage rights are passed on through successive generations of women. These understandings investing women with much power and authority have been done for centuries. Therefore, ways in which women of this cultural context view and practice leadership which has been learned through cultural practices will demonstrate the interconnectedness between women, land and lineage.

All participants talked broadly about how their leadership beliefs were shaped by growing up in this matrilineal culture. The Women's early learning experiences and the roles that they observed in their family and their specific context over time reproduced and generated a range of cultural practices. Cultural beliefs and practices therefore influenced individuals to do things in particular ways. The women in my research grew up in Santa Isabel, so their understanding of what leadership means was based on deep-rooted principles in their matrilineal culture. These beliefs and practices that influenced the shaping of the women's matrilineal leadership culture were consistently illustrated across different data sources. Three themes arise from these findings were that leadership was (a) linked to land, (b) embodied, and (c) relational.

#### **a) Leadership and land**

The powerful nature of matrilineal social and cultural practices was influential in positioning the women in positions of power with regard to their leadership. All participants shared perceptions that linked them to the land by birth, and to the land and the tribe through childbirth. The highly valued long-practiced ritual of burying the placenta and cord stump was culturally significant. Returning the afterbirth into the ground reinforced the relationship that women had with the land, along with their roles as mothers leading families and the tribes in the community.

All participants commented that the connection that mothers made with people and land played a significant part in forming the foundation for personal leadership. Iona commented:

In our culture in Santa Isabel, our women are foremost, very important, the reason being that the tribal land and lineage starts and ends with women as mothers. In our view as far as leadership is concerned, this is why women were and are able to hold positions of power and leadership in the community. (Iona, FGD, 2013)

The majority of the women perceived that being a mother who connected people to the land and the tribe made them feel valued in this society. This sense of value was evidenced in the way people responded to women as leaders in the community. Hanai expressed that the worth of women as mothers is manifested in the Santa Isabel culture through the respect people have for women, saying:

This cultural practice is still very strong in Santa Isabel. Thus, people in this society listen to women when they are told to do or not to do something. They still respect and honour women. (Hanai, IID, 2012)

However, although the women felt this significant responsibility in some cases, they also felt pressure to sustain this cultural practice by marrying and having children, specifically daughters. Me'a recalled that:

My mother told me when I was still in my early ages that if I was going to be the only girl child and do not get married and have daughters, land ownership rights and tribal links will end with me.  
(Me'a, FGD, 2013)

It was therefore not surprising that 8 of the 10 women suggested that motherhood was recognised as an important element of matrilineal leadership because it had in ensuring the continuity of the tribe and culture. For example, Daina commented:

In Santa Isabel culture too, mothers are not only those who bore children. Those of us who adopted children are also given similar mother status and can pass on land rights to our adopted children.  
(Diana, FGD, 2013)

Anika shared similar sentiments and reaffirmed the importance of women in the Santa Isabel society in tracing land and genealogy rights when she stated:

Our custom in Santa Isabel regarding land and genealogy is still traced through a woman's ancestress. This is still very strong and that it is the women's tribe that we decent from. (Anika, IID, 2012)

Leadership came with significant responsibilities. Women's roles therefore, include tending and preparing soil, grow, harvest and save seeds, store and produces food crops. The participants claimed that because of the connection mothers had with the land and tribe, many women were able to demonstrate leadership by holding responsibilities for caring for and nurturing others. This was expressed by Joska:

Because of these [beliefs], we [women as mothers] actually practice how to care for our relatives. For example, when people come to the home, it is us [women] who will give them water to drink, give them food to eat, these are what we have been continually shown... so when we grow up, we continue to practice these good ways of caring. (Joska, FGD, 2013)

Elena extended the notion of care and nurture within the home to include the significant responsibility women have in relation to the bush and the land, saying that:

We already have the knowledge and skills of how to care for our relatives. And when it comes to the bush and the land, we already have the knowledge in how to share with other relatives. (Elena FGD, 2013)

The connection between women's leadership and land, responsibility, provision, care and nurturing are demonstrated in the ways these women lead. These roles not only describe the reproduction of the formation of leadership beliefs and purposes that women have in connecting people with the land and the tribe, but also the embodied nature of land in this culture.

#### **b) Leadership is embodied through lineage and practices**

All women spoke about the land giving them a sense of physical and spiritual place, which brought coherence to their being. Nine of the 10 participants suggested that although the inheritance of land rights and passing on of genealogy were cultural practices that recognised the importance of women, their beliefs also shaped specific responsibilities that they attached with their leadership as mothers and as women.

Over half of the participants believed one of the most significant responsibilities was according to 6 of the 10 women is illustrated when mothers bequeathed to a child their rights to land (a physical space) and a tribe (clan line), and also bestowed spiritual and magical powers, enchantment and soul (inner self) at birth.

They highlighted that while the term *kutu* literally means, the "uterus" or "womb," it also means the "heart." This is what Hanai said:

In Santa Isabel our *kutu* does not only mean "belly" or "womb." It is also our "heart", which is our land, tribe, lineage or kinship group. That is why we bury the placenta and the cord stump in the ground. This marks our place, our existence from a female ancestress and where we will return to our ancestors. This is our genealogy and our inheritance of the land and resources. (Hanai, FGD, 2013)

What Hanai refers to is an indication of the deep relationship women form with land and genealogy through childbirth which connects them to their place, being and

responsibilities indicating women's leadership being embodied through lineage and land. Elena during the FGD observed that:

The eldest daughter in a successive generation of women will already be spoken to about who she is. For example, she will be told that she will be the one who will look after her tribal land and tribe... this...will be her responsibility as the first born granddaughter or daughter. (Elena, FGD, 2013)

Iona supported Elena's claims and added that these women gained respect in this society because of the values people place on their status as women as well as their knowledge and responsibilities which is again embodied in the way these women practice leadership. Iona notes that:

People will have respect for [a woman] as a person, her knowledge about her tribe and land, her knowledge and skills about the tribal rituals and ceremonies and the responsibilities she has taken up, which includes, caring for the people in terms of sharing the land and resources, resolving conflicts and teachings on communal living.... As such, the people will respect her and look up to her and will listen to her instructions and do what she plans. (Iona, FGD, 2013)

The respect shown to and for women, all participants claimed extended to how people perform activities around them. For example, in a focus group, one woman commented that:

Women leaders were really looked up to. They were really respected and activities were not carelessly done in front of them. For example, if they are around, people do not throw rubbish while they are watching. When they are sitting down, people do not walk in front of them (Daina, FGD, 2013)

Thus, most of these women (8/10) also claimed that women who take up leadership roles in this society were, and are, those who have knowledge of the land and culture, illustrating that these women embody these cultural knowledge, as Guri reveals:

Those who have the understanding of land and wisdom in the cultures and or customs of living in the village always become leaders. (Guri, IID, 2012)

Nevertheless, all women leaders claimed that the respect and self-worth that women in Santa Isabel receive is not the same for women in the other Islands in the Solomon Islands, saying:

In Santa Isabel we still respect and honour our women leaders. In the other islands, they do not really because it is the men who are strong. [Diana, II, 2012)

In addition, the entwining of women's bodies with land, according to 7 of the 10 participants, was also seen in the matrilineal cultural practices of planting food crops on the afterbirth and cord stump. All participants spoke about this practice as demonstrating the connection between women's leadership to feeding the body, their fertility and their notion of caring as Elena stated:

When I plant the *Mega* [cut nut] tree or the *dadale* (short coconut) palm tree on the afterbirth, it makes me feel whole that I can have children, that I have placed my children on a physical place and that they [children] will eat from the nut tree and the coconut palm tree. (Elena IID, 2012)

Elena's comment shows embodiment in a real sense. All women also identify this as an inextricable connection between the people and the land they live on. It centres people in terms of tribal land ownership. The women burying the placenta is also about staking the claim for continued matrilineality. For example, the participants claimed that land is also called "mother" because of the extent of engagement women have with the land, as Anika argued:

What we see in this is because we in Santa Isabel, women is the mother of the land, as such we know that it is the women who will care, care for everything, the children, the people or the community, or the school and so on are mostly by women. (Anika, FGD, 2013)

This comment segues to the relational aspect of my participants' perspectives on how their leadership in this culture operates.

### **c) Matrilineal leadership is relational**

Leadership was a task that involved the maintenance of relationships with land and people. The third theme in the data is that of the importance of relationships in Santa Isabel matrilineal culture. The women believed relationships were crucial and could not be separated from women's leadership because of the common understanding that people access land through their mothers and the relationships that exist with women. The accessing of land through mothers strengthens this relationship despite, land being commonly owned. Everyone who is of a tribe or married into a tribe can access land that belongs to the mother's tribe. This means there is a common

understanding of “*sakai mono*” or “*sikei gada*” in the Bugotu language, which means “living together and sharing”. By living this way, relationships become pivotal. Te’e’ said:

The teachings [were about sharing], [not] greed, fighting, quarrel and dispute with my tribal members about land. [These teachings]... [made me]...feel...important [about]...my responsibilities for my tribe and village. (Te’e, FGD, 2013)

Relational leadership was also about decision making. All participants believed that and the ways women lead consciously involved considerations of land, kinship and genealogy rituals. Te’e referred to land being revered in this culture, and the need for women leaders to have the ability to talk meaningfully about land and genealogy rituals. Decisions relating to land were made with careful considerations of kinship ties as Haidu revealed:

We are shown who and how we are related to people by our grandmothers. They continuously tell and show us the boundaries. Our tribe starts from this village and ends with that village and from this river to that hill and so on. (Haidu, FGD, 2013)

Similarly, the women leaders also indicated that the wellbeing of the growing population and extended family relations are also important considerations in land decisions. This is demonstrated in one of the early individual interviews with Elena, who states:

In the side of bush and things, when people who have married into the tribe come, we show them where to build their homes, where to make their gardens and so on. These were the kind of hospitality and caring that exist in our matrilineal co-existence. (Elena, II, 2012)

Maintaining peace and caring community is an aspect of the matrilineal relational leadership. All women believed that leadership cannot be separated from relationships, because relationships and relational are crucial in maintaining peace within communities as Haidu noted:

That is why we believe that leading is telling and showing people about good things for our children. If friends or relatives come take good care of them, do not use abusive language and talk to them harshly. (Haidu, FGD, 2013)

Iona argued that:

These are our expectations [caring for each other] but sometimes, there are some who do not fall in these expectations. However, there is always someone in the community who will show them what our mothers and grandmothers taught us. That is, the teaching of hospitality and caring is also the continuous practice of patience in leadership. We were taught not to get angry easily. (Iona, FGD, 2013)

In summary, the participants' leadership beliefs and purposes clearly illustrated that they were formed by the connection women as mothers have with land and tribe through their bodies during childbirth. It is unsurprisingly that these beliefs were formed and passed on for generations through the nurturing and mentoring practices of grandmothers and mothers, reproducing beliefs and customs. As noted in these comments that the majority (8/10) participants thought that their leadership beliefs and practices were influenced by the cultural practice of long practiced ritual, burying the placenta and cord stump, symbolising the interconnectedness between women, land and lineage through birth. I found strong links between this ritual and women's leadership when analysing women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices as reported in my further analysis. Significant cultural links between women leaders and their early experiences of the burying of the placenta and cord stump and the dominant ideals of the matrilineal leadership cultural practices in Santa Isabel are observed. These ideas, together, point to the placenta-burying ritual to matrilineal leadership as embodied cultural practice. This is explored in more detail in the discussion chapter. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that this may contribute to the later formation of their leadership beliefs and practices. Factors that contributed to women's understanding of leadership are outlined.

## **Part 2: Women's Understanding of Leadership and the Influences of Social and Cultural Contexts**

Exploring participants' early experiences of matrilineal cultural rituals helped me to understand the social and cultural influences related to their leadership beliefs and practices in the village, church and school contexts. Women talked generally about matrilineal leadership cultural beliefs and practices being reproduced in their leadership experiences in the village, church and educational contexts.

### **a) The Village Context**

The village context as described in Chapter 2, comprises close kin and extended family groups. In the village context, elders continue to teach the young the values

and traditions that are important to their co-existence in the community. Maternal great-grandmothers, grandmothers, mothers and maternal aunts as well as maternal grandfathers and uncles engage with the young to pass on tribal knowledge, skills and responsibilities. These elders are endowed with specific responsibilities to nurture and mentor the young in the ways of the culture as prescribed in their oral histories' lineage. Hence, they inculcate societal, customs, rituals, attitudes and behaviours that impact on women's leadership beliefs and practices in Santa Isabel.

Elders hold valuable sources of knowledge for their tribe. Many participants recalled stories and incidents which showed their leadership being developed and or constrained by elders' teachings and mentoring. The women's understandings and experiences of these teachings from the village could be categorised as: a) leading with humility, b) leading to maintain relationships and c) leading to getting things done.

**i) Leading with humility**

To lead with humility in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture, these women argued, meant to engage in tasks with one's whole being. It is the notion of responsibility that comes with people's co-existence with the land. In other words, it refers to behaviours and attitudes that relate to how they felt about people and situations within their community. To these women, elders are generally very welcoming, but it was their grandmothers and mothers who were perceived as the ones well-schooled and strong in protocol and accepted behaviours. They said that their grandmothers and mothers taught them to acquire such behaviours by asking them to get involved. This is illustrated by Anika's comment that:

Our grandmothers and mothers will always and continue to tell us to get involved in what they do and in the side of speaking yes, our mothers were/are very strong. (Anika, FGD, 2013)

Similarly, 7 of the 10 women leaders indicated that their grandmothers and mothers taught them to practice "humility" in their leadership. They suggested that practicing humility is "key to gaining respect" in society. For example, Elena in the FGD said:

In the past the respect given to our grandmothers and mothers was really strong. However, something that we saw then which we do not see now in our women was that they were really humble. They did not put

themselves in front of men and said that we are equal with you. (Elena, FGD, 2013)

Daina recalled the elders' teaching of humility which she believed impacted on her experiences of leadership today. She stated:

In the past, women honour themselves, but they did not show it. It was like they hid it to themselves. They did not show that they were women from which the tribe and land had passed on from or that they had inherited the tribal leadership rights. They just led and participated in village activities humbly. This is how we look at them. (Daina, FGD, 2013)

Furthermore, participants commented that women were not openly stating their status and or not speaking in public because of the high status women have in the society which also contributed to women's leadership experiences. Diana argued:

We think it was because of our custom too ... they [women] thinking highly of men as their speakers and protectors in the past. Because of these they honour their maternal uncles and elder brothers [and ask] them to become the community and tribal chiefs and not them {women}. (Daina, FGD, 2013)

Hanai in the same focus group, added:

The women then were very careful about talking over their maternal uncles and brothers. They used to call them "*khila grere*," meaning they were the shields to their foreheads when other people came to war with them. [This] means maternal uncles and brothers would be in the front line to protect women and children from harm. That was how these thoughts came about in the past, so it was like so secret or very serious for women to talk about how important they are openly. (Hanai, FGD, 2013)

These comments demonstrate that women's act of humility in knowing where, when and how to speak contribute to how they maintain their power and authority as leaders in their community. This links to the relational aspect of women's leadership.

## **ii) Leading to maintain relationships**

Maintaining relations is one of the practices these women believed was important which has contributed to their shaped leadership practices. This refers to doing things in a consensual manner, where decision-making happens with other people and was collaborative consensus. In reality, in some cases, it could mean talking until everyone in the group agrees on a decision. Such decision-making was often demonstrated during conflicts, in feast making and land allocation. For example,

the majority (8/10) of the participants claimed that grandmothers and mothers solved problems through the use of right and respectful words. This is illustrated in the following responses by Me'a and Iona respectively:

When we observed what they did (solving problem) in regard to how women lead... it [was] through talk or words such as “sons and daughters of ... let us stop this quarrel... come with me to the house and let us talk about it.” This shows how we should solve problems and is an example of a true leader where we should work together and lead each other. (Me'a, FGD, 2013)

So I must be careful in what and how I speak. In speaking, it is measuring what is appropriate for the people. Do not be really against them because if we do, they will not take in what you are saying seriously and as a result they will not respect your intentions. (Iona, II, 2012)

The selecting of appropriate and respectful words for the situation, according to most participants (9/10) calm people down more quickly, allowing those involved to respond to the issue of concern in a more consensual manner. However, there were also examples where feast making could enhance collaborative consensus making, as demonstrated in the focus group:

Our elders continue telling us that feast-making for our grandfathers and grandmothers and fathers and mothers before they pass away must be done. This kind of “*eivana*”- custom feast must be made so that we can live on the land after our grandparents and parents die. This feast-making allows us to live, work and do things together with other tribes in the village and in the Christian church. These are some of the leading that our elders showed us. (Daina, FGD, 2013)

What is referred to above indicate that ceremonies such as feast-making maintain and strengthen relationships and illustrates collaboration among generations of families and tribes. All participants understood the importance of custom feast in the way elders practice their leadership. Participants also observed that cooperation was a huge undertaking in how elders led, as shown below:

I observed that cooperation was so big in the way our elders do things. For example, my great grandmother was the eldest of five sisters. I remember my grandmother telling me that they have a small garden between them but they always do things together. They always do things as a group until they were quite old. (Haidu, FGD, 2013)

Haidu's statement reveals that leadership was realised in the way women organise their activities around practical tasks, manifested in the commitment shown by how

the women collaborated with and through their members to sustain the cohesiveness of the group. Guri's comment illustrates this:

When we look at our grandmothers' and mothers' leadership, they worked together so well. For example, when they say we are going to do this they do it together and complete the set task on schedule. (Guri, FGD, 2013)

Apart from this, the women suggested that collaborative consensus making was about reciprocity:

When we come to the village, we come under the village leader's ruling. We must respect the village chiefs so that they will see and respect us as well. If they ask us to do work or to help in certain things in the village, we have to do them so that we maintain the relationship with them. In return, they will never lose sight of us as their children, their relatives and or friends. This is one of the things that caused me to never forget my village. (Iona, II, 2012)

Leading to maintain relationships by doing things in a consensual manner meant that decisions were collaborative and reciprocal. This approach to leadership demonstrates that such teachings also impart values, beliefs and practices that are centred on the community's common good. These women therefore valued and nurtured the relationships in the wider family and village. This was about both protection and harmony and women were recognised as having these qualities as Iona in the early interviews argued:

Women live with a loving heart. They have a heart that is compassionate. They are also very sympathetic for people such that if something happens to someone, they will sympathise. (Iona, II, 2012)

Women who lead with a loving heart also believes in leadership to getting things done, which is described in turn.

### **iii) Leading to getting tasks done**

Leading to getting tasks done refers to leadership practices that intend to benefit all members of the tribe, community and or village. All participants believed that in their matrilineal leadership learning, verbally organised schedules were key to accomplishing tribal as well as other communal activities. Eight of the 10 women argued that unless schedules were communicated in good time, activities relating to peoples' communal welfare will never be done. This is what Elena said in one FGD:

When they [elders] have laid down these schedules, they [people] follow them [the schedules because]... people are able to do their gardening and attend to their own family things during certain months. In these ways they allow the people to participate in their own activities too, and not to be involved in communal community activities all the time. (Elena, FGD, 2013)

This comment suggests that communicating schedules via word of mouth on a timely basis was a leadership practice that allowed for both communal and family activities to be achieved as illustrated in the comment made by Joska below:

They [grandmother and mother] tell us things like: today we are going to do this activities, today is a day dedicated to do work for the government. ..., if you are instructed to participate in something, you must do it. When you hear the conch shell blowing, listen and do what has been announced. These were/are some of the teachings that we received that we know. (Joska, FGD, 2013)

However, 9 of the 10 participants also observed approaches which elders applied when difficulties and challenges arose. They stated that their success in their leadership roles are rooted in their elders teaching of consulting each other in times of difficulty, as this statement by Te'e demonstrates:

This is how we see how our elders and also women in the community value their leader roles. When we face difficulties, we consult each other.... We come together and share. Women in other communities are also the same. For example, although they face difficulties with transport, they will still attend the meetings, conferences and or gatherings. This shows that women are strong in their leadership. We think of and take on our responsibilities very seriously. We always think and feel that we have to succeed. (Te'e, FGD, 2013)

It is interesting to see how these women mimicked the way elders led in their understanding of leadership practices. For example, the participants often refer to how elders instructed and reminded them of how they should carry out their roles in the community. The importance of community in Santa Isabel context cannot be overemphasised. *Kutu*, the Santa Isabel world view that regards individual identity in terms of community identification, continues to be strong. This is social reproduction in action

Along with the influence of social and cultural practices in Santa Isabel, women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices were also shaped by their institutional contexts. All participants identified the Mothers Union organisation within the

Anglican Christian Church of Melanesia as an institution that had also contributed to shaping their specific leadership beliefs and practices.

### **b) The Church Context**

The church context teachings and practices refer to teachings and practices that have been introduced by missionaries and are located in the church. The Mother's Union is a church organisation that has greatly influenced women's leadership beliefs and practices in Santa Isabel. The participants' experiences of leadership are categorised as: a) prayer supported women's confidence to lead, b) redistribution of resources and c) recognition of women's ideas.

#### **i) Prayer supported women's confidence to lead**

All women indicated that the Mother's Union teachings of meditation and mindfulness helped them in their leadership roles and is about personal state of being and awareness. Participants spoke about mindfulness as involving their being and being aware of their context, understanding what is around them, living in the moment and not worrying about a lot of things. Meditation through prayer provided time for the women to pray and to ask for guidance, wisdom and understanding in their leadership roles. Interestingly, this action would appear contrary to the power that they hold as Hanai said:

When I do not pray, things will be difficult for me in my role or work.  
However, when I do pray my role or work will be easy. (Hanai, II, 2012)

Three of the 10 women leaders talked about their daily prayer meditations. They stated that even in today's world, "the sense of knowing what your skills are and a sense of gratitude brought about by praying could be a very healthy mental aspect to have" and that to think that way may make someone quite a strong person. As Iona said:

When I pray, I am not scared to approach men chiefs or people in the community. I feel important when I can build good relationships with all the people so that leadership can go both ways. I help them and they help me. (Iona, II, 2012)

Furthermore, to have this sense of mind refers to what women called *servicing people* and being seen as *sharing God's gift*. This means that that they hold a belief that their skills for patience and care to reach out to people who need support is given by God and is self-fulfilling. This is demonstrated in the following statement:

We view helping others not as servants but doing work that the Almighty God has given us to do. As such, we have to share with people the gift that the Almighty God had given to some people. The Almighty God has shared these gifts to people which include some of us. We have to use our gifts of care and patience to help other people. (Anika, II, 2012)

This Christian principle is cited by women because it is harmonious with their way of doing things, supporting their matrilineal habitus. For example, there is a ritual called “*sigo*” in Santa Isabel matrilineal culture, which means to visit or see new arrivals or those who are housebound. Women leaders stated that this is one of their main activities as Hanai said:

One of the major roles that Mothers Union leaders do is to facilitate “*sigo*” - visitations to new born babies, children and elderly in their homes and clinics to offer love gifts, celebrate new arrivals and offer support prayer for those who are in clinics. These are the activities that we do. (Hanai, II, 2012)

All participants commented that this ritual of living and sharing together is encouraged and given prominence in the mother’s union leadership, suggesting again the support for women’s matrilineal habitus. Women leaders noted this as the reproduction of culture in women’s experiences of leadership in the church.

## ii) **Redistribution of resources**

All participants claimed that the notion of helping distribution of resources was seen in their leadership practice. For example, a large contribution that Mothers Union members make during natural disasters is the collection of food, mats and, building materials to give to families in other islands in the Solomon Islands or in the Pacific who are affected by natural disasters like cyclones and floods, earthquakes and tsunamis. This was demonstrated in Diana’s response below:

Our roles reach those of other dioceses and worldwide too. Our collection, we take them to those who are poor, those who have nothing to eat and those who are affected by natural disasters. (Daina, II, 2012)

This quote illustrates how some women’s leadership experiences of the Mother’s Union milieu was a reproduction of the matrilineal leadership culture of caring and providing for others. For example, participants talked about the roles they played as Mother’s Union leaders in organising visits to give love gifts saying:

As part of our mother's union work, we organise visits to give gifts to the sick in the clinic to support them meet their needs for food and other things such as bath soap, drinks and money while they are in the clinic. We also pray with them and entertain them through action songs and dance. (Hanai, II, 2012)

All women understood this role as complementing their matrilineal leadership beliefs and practices and found them supporting their experiences of leadership within the church.

### **iii) Recognition of women's ideas**

Bringing women's ideas into discussions about community affairs was an important aspect of leadership within the Mother's Union organisation. Five of the 10 participants stated that their roles in the Mother's Union led them to speak up and out about issues affecting the community. Iona stated:

I have learnt through my years of leading in both the village, the church and the school that women need to participate more in discussions during village meetings. This is because, it is by sharing our ideas during these discussions that will make them [ideas] be known to others. (Iona, II, 2012)

Participating in discussions and meetings within the church contributed to the women's confidence to speak during larger gatherings in the village or to those in authority as Te'e commented:

I am no longer scared to speak in meetings because I understand that we need other people's ideas to make our ideas work (Te'e, FGD, 2013)

All participants believed that both the matrilineal leadership culture and Mothers Union practices of leadership created and supported a safe space for them to experience women's ways of leading. However, they also claimed that this was not easy for some women as Haidu recalled an incident she has as a child growing up saying:

Speaking in front of people is too scary for me because my mother used to punish me when I speak in front of people. So what has happened during my early years in my family would have continued if I had not been exposed to church activities. Now I feel that I can speak in meetings. (Joska, FGD, 2013)

Haidu's comment relates to the church being emancipatory in some elements. For example in helping her to speak during church and community meetings. All

participants also spoke about the church being restrictive in some cases. The women claimed that leadership approaches need to align with current changes and argued for women's leadership that could accommodate changes faced by people in Santa Isabel. This is an example of altering habitus through new influences, which links to how cultures and social practices evolve. Iona argued:

Leadership now is bound to change with time. So our leadership also changes to follow the kind of life that we come into. Our leadership now should reflect today's life because we are going to find it so difficult to lead if we only follow the past systems. We will never catch up with all the difficult things that are happening now. (Iona, FGD, 2013)

The majority of participants suggested that the church context contributed to shaping some of their values such as speaking in bigger village meetings and allowing them to lead in women's ways. The church context has also enabled some of them to further their education and took up teaching in both formal and informal situations. The education context shaped and advanced women's understanding of leadership in new ways which is now explored in turn.

### **c) Educational Context**

The educational milieu to some extent contribute to women's better understanding of their matrilineal leadership culture in terms of providing them new insights. All participants generally talked about leadership experiences that were related to: a) better understanding of women's leadership challenges and b) shifting the matrilineal leadership beyond the village context

#### **i) Better understanding of women's leadership challenges**

Formal education provided many of the women new insights into their cultural contexts. As such, they were able to view leadership in different ways. Seven of the 10 participants believed that through their secondary education in the Solomon Islands and tertiary education from abroad and in the Solomon Islands, they had a better understanding of the challenges that contextual beliefs and practices have on women's leadership, arguing that:

These days, when a leader makes mistakes, people argue back and say you are this and that, you are not doing it right, you should be doing it this way. It is not like in the past where decisions are not questioned. That is although, people see leaders not doing what they are supposed

to do, they still respect them, their ideas and their properties (Iona, FGD, 2013)

This quote shows that education which, has brought women and men out of their villages and exposed them to other ideas may contribute to changing people's beliefs of the matrilineal leadership culture. These have challenged women's matrilineal leadership beliefs and practices. All participants stated that:

Leaders are now experiencing difficulty in making some people to follow them which, results in tasks not attended timely. (Anika, FGD, 2013)

Four of the 10 participants commented that peoples' exposure to formal education may contribute to their changed attitudes towards women and leaders in general. For example, Joska commented that respect for tribal leaders is changing and stated:

These days, we see that the respect for tribal leadership is not as strong. We tend not to mind about how we speak to our leaders. In the past we never spoke to our leaders in an impolite manner, we never disobey our leaders or those who were there to show us what to do (Joska, FGD, 2013)

However all women claimed that the changes in people's attitudes in the way they respect women leaders in particular were caused by women's changed attitudes towards their matrilineal cultural behaviours. Elena in comparing her grandmother and mother's leadership to women's leadership now stated that:

Something that I saw [in my grandmother and mothers] attitudes in carrying out their leadership roles that I do not see now in our women is their behaviour. They did not put themselves in front of men and said that we are equal with you. It is now that we are open to a lot of things which we do not really understand that women are saying that they need to be equal with men.

This statement illustrates the point that leadership is context situated and while women may want to practice other forms of leadership within the matrilineal context, people may observe these are not norms cultural contexts in order to gain respect. However, 5 of the 10 participants stated that respect also comes with receiving an education and gaining a qualification as Me'a argued:

Through applying what I have learnt in my education...I gained respect from my students, teachers and people in the community. So [I find that] although I am young they respected me as a person which, also get them [students] to respect the leadership responsibilities as a Head of Department (Me'a, II 2012)

The majority (9/10) participants claimed that a challenge in their practice relates to some people not following them, as shown in Elena's and Hanai's comments respectively:

Some of the challenges that we experience are, sometimes...we see that people are tired and do not want to follow the leaders and the leaders too are having difficulty in making the people to follow them, which results in tasks not attended to. (Elena, FGD, 2013)

Te'e observed that sometimes they (teachers) felt their leadership is ignored intentionally, saying that:

There are too many things happening in the school community and sometimes students just ignore what they are supposed to do and just do what matters to them more. (Te'e, FGD, 2013).

Such experiences, 5 of the 10 women believed may lead to their feelings of failure as Haidu stated:

When students don't perform, we think that we are failing in how we should lead. For example, these days when the leaders tell people "these are the tasks we will do today or this week" people also have their important tasks to do like, preparing and selling their goods at the market. Their concerns in getting money becomes more important than doing what the leaders have said or what our grandmothers are telling us to do from our homes. (Me'a, FGD, 2013)

All the women leaders took their challenges as helping them to stay firm in their beliefs and purposes for leadership. This is demonstrated in Anika and Iona's statements below:

We must learn to be patient in what we do. This is one of the things we see in most women leaders, we never give up. (Anika, FGD, 2013)

We never give up... although people do not respond positively at times to our calls, we keep talking. When the time arises again, we will talk and so on and eventually people will respond and then we will feel that we have achieved something. This is something that we see in our women leaders now. (Iona, FGD, 2013)

Nevertheless, the women also claimed that Christianity and Western education teachings have contributed to men seeing themselves as the dominant leaders. Western leadership appears to equate with men's leadership and has led to friction in the way these practices are exercised as Elena in the FGD argued:

There are some very big changes that are happening now...men leaders are sometimes a bit careless... and do other unacceptable things such

as making individual decisions on land and tribal matters, which make most people in communities not wanting to follow them. (Elena, FGD, 2013)

This statement addresses the concern that women leaders raised about some men's attitudes towards leadership at the community level, even though the men are now no longer actively participating in community affairs. This is illustrated in Joska's comments in the FGD:

In the plans for the village, men are not really active, it's the women who will lead and give instructions on what to be done and who to do what in the family. It is the women who discuss and hold meetings to discuss plans and events in the family. (Joska, FGD, 2013)

In contrast, 2 of the 10 women indicated that the Western education that they had received contributed to their leadership confidence. Me'a, who had gained a Bachelor of Education degree in an overseas tertiary institution and heads a department in a secondary school, draws on this experience to speak and discuss issues in staff meetings confidently. She believes that:

As the only well-educated female in the village and now working as a secondary school teacher, I feel that more people respect me and I also feel that I have gained more confidence in myself. (Me'a, II, 2012)

Iona, who has gained a range of qualifications from certificates to degrees from both overseas and local institutions and has experiences working in both national and provincial government ministries is draws on these experiences and felt that:

People have trust in an educated person to do things well for them. They have great expectations that those of us who are educated will help them. They see that when they send someone to receive Western education, they expect him or her to come back to the community to help in development, give advice and take up leadership roles. (Iona, II, 2012)

These experiences suggest that participants saw Western education as a means to achieve better results that could contribute to enhancing their leadership knowledge and practices, which is what women's leadership in the matrilineal habitus aims to do. That is to practice leadership that serves the needs of people in their communities.

Through education, the participants recalled, they were encouraged to see beyond the village style of leadership.

**ii) Seeing beyond the village**

Nine of the 10 participants claimed that the education they had received have allowed them to think beyond their village setting and had given them the opportunity to extend their leadership to other contexts. Me'a in her comparison of people who might come to recognise her leadership stated that:

The number of people who will know us (Santa Isabel women) will be less because we will only be in the village. So if we gained respect through our [grandmothers and mothers] hard work or what we have showed as a leader might only be recognised in the village community or district which, might be narrow ...but now that we have gone out from our village and gained our papers [qualifications] there will be more people who will look to us. So we value ourselves more if we had attended schooling. (Me'a, FGD, 2013)

This quote demonstrates that the matrilineal leadership was contextual and often located in the village. Some participants (7/10) also noted that education contributed to furthering the space for Santa Isabel women to get involved in leadership roles as well as to talk about their leadership. Thus, education adds to these women's social capital and status as leaders which is also how education alters habitus, but in relation to social context which will be developed in the discussion Chapter and agreeing that:

Yes, this kind of leadership that we do in school now has gained us more respect from our surroundings and people compared to our grandmothers. Their leadership was gained through empirical knowledge and as such the number of people who respected them were less compared to mine after I gained my qualification and can read and write as well. So it is the qualification I gained that had made the difference. (Haidu, FGD, 2013)

Education therefore, validated women's leadership beyond the village. Five of the 10 participants recalled incidences which, showed that the gaining of respect through education qualifications benefitted them. Me'a in an earlier interview shared her experience saying:

I feel like [after gaining my qualification], I can carry out my leadership responsibility in this school, I have the respect from various groups like my students, the school staff and people in my village. (Me'a, II, 2012)

However, 4 of the women also argue that gaining a qualification alone does not guarantee full and genuine respect from those around them. Instead they believed that having a qualification and knowing their culture benefitted them more, which illustrates cultural and social capital at work. Iona had this to say:

The qualification I received plus my knowledge of my matrilineal culture equipped me to practice my matrilineal leadership in a way that they [students and people in the community] agree with. Thus, everyone respected me and honour my leadership making me feel fulfilled in my leadership role. (Te'e, FGD, 2013)

All participants felt that education should strengthen their matrilineal leadership beliefs and practices. This is evident when a few more women are taking up leadership roles in schools. Me'a believes that women can be leaders too and stated:

We women are leaders because of our matrilineal system. So in my view, at this time, not many women take up leadership roles in institutions, only two to three in each school or in other formal sectors. I believe that we women can come up, we are well educated and a lot of people's views are that we can be leaders too. (Me'a, II, 2012)

While Iona also argues that the matrilineal system means that women can have avenue for leadership and commented:

Our matrilineal system reveals to us that we have strength in leadership that we can show other women, If we can show this, then other women can do so too, This is because when others see us taking up leadership roles, they think and tell themselves, if that woman can take up a leadership role, I can too and they will do likewise. (Iona, II, 2102)

This is strongly supported by Te'e who feels that women in matrilineal system are already leaders.

In the matrilineal system, we women are already leaders in our own rights. It is our publicly demonstrating it in the schools that is not happening. (Te'e, II, 2012)

All women stated that in reality, they practise their leadership with challenges. However they stated that they were determined to keep practicing what they believe in. It could be sensible to say that the matrilineal cultural beliefs and practices and the range of contextual experiences that the women leaders have expressed indicate

their understanding of how both have helped shaped and formed their leadership beliefs and practices. Part three focuses on women's formed leadership beliefs and practices.

### **Part 3: Formed Leadership Beliefs and Practices**

This section presents women's understanding of their formed matrilineal leadership beliefs and practices. It is not surprising that the cultural beliefs and practices of leadership experienced in early years have continued to be reproduced in later years. All women believed that elements of their matrilineal leadership values and beliefs were reproduced and or supported in the range of contexts in which they practice their leadership.

Of prominence in the formation of the women's leadership beliefs and practices was the intimate connection between women's bodies, land and tribe. These matrilineal leadership values were present in women's leadership in the church as well as in education. Thus, it is evident that because of the intergenerational connections women have with land and the tribe, continuity does exist in the Santa Isabel islands. The Women's formed leadership beliefs and practices were evident in: a) strong foundation of leadership begins in the home and b) matrilineal leadership is a symbolic act of reproduction.

#### **a) Strong Founding of Leadership Begins in the Home**

The genesis of leadership for all participants begins at home. Granddaughters and daughters watched and listened as their grandmothers and mothers taught them. The women believed that the strong founding of their leadership beliefs and practices began in the home first, which relates to Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction. For example, Hanai argued saying:

Growing up in Santa Isabel and being raised in a matrilineal home, I can confidently say that this cultural upbringing greatly contributed to my views and ideals about leadership now. (Hanai, FGD, 2013)

This demonstrates that the women's childhood world which constituted their family and home influenced the formation of their leadership beliefs and practices. For example, women's views of matrilineal leadership were strongly linked to rituals of

land and lineage thus, bestowing them with privileges and responsibilities of leadership, as Elena stated:

Being women in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture, we are bestowed with privileges and responsibilities founded on leadership beliefs and practices that are centred on land and kinship. (Elena, IID, 2102)

This is evident in the ways women practice leadership in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture. One woman expressed how happy and comfortable she was to lead from within her village community. This is what Iona said:

Although women are quiet or silent, we have a place to speak. We are quiet and silent but we are the ones that do all the leading in our village and school. Our men only speak but it is us women who do most things. (Iona, FGD, 2013)

This reiterates the point that matrilineal leadership is context situated. The participants reported that they practiced leadership that was specific to their communities. They believed in themselves to do well for their families and communities and argued that:

As leaders we are always searching for ways to make things better for our people in the village. In our observation, women are also doing the same in their families and in their communities. We see that we women have feelings and we value ourselves in the sense that we do not take negative responses as obstacles to our leading but challenges that needed to be thought about to make things better...the care for people is in the forefront in how we women lead. (Elena, FGD, 2013)

Furthermore, women also perceived their strong foundation of leadership founded in the home first, helped them to acquire values of humility and to engage in practices that contribute to the greater good such as service and working across networks. According to 7 of the 10 women, these were significant aspects of their leadership beliefs and practices. They claimed that this is one of the fundamental features of their leadership. In an individual interview in 2012, Diana commented:

In my thinking, the way a person gets to be a leader .... is to help better the lives children and people's daily living. (Daina, IID, 2012)

Guri supporting Diana added:

These days' people as well as women leaders are getting better in understanding the role of women as in the community. (Guri, IID, 2012)

The women also believed that strength in their leadership was the networks that they had with other women on a regular basis to further the greater good of women in other regions. This was illustrated in the following statement:

We also work with other Mothers Union members in other regions in Solomon Islands such as Western, Central, Makira and Malaita Provinces and in the Pacific like Vanuatu, Fiji and Papua New Guinea and others in Australia New Zealand and England. (Daina, II, 2012)

Similarly, participants also suggested that a common practice in their leadership was providing for those who are less fortunate. Thus, sharing what you have with those who do not have and sharing what you have with your relatives and peers is the right thing to do, as Guri and Me'a during one focus group described below:

One thing that is different in our matrilineal culture is the way we care for others, such that when people come and ask for food or other things we just give them freely. (Guri, FGD, 2013)

My mother has done a garden with her family and my father and so when people come and ask for food, my mother gives them food freely (Me'a, FGD, 2013)

In the same way, women mentioned that their leadership practice was based on negotiating first before resorting to other ways in solving issues. This was because they believed in respecting and considering people's views. For example, women do not participate in war, but they negotiated with men involved in the warring factions. This is shown in Me'a's response:

We handle conflicts through talk. This shows how we should solve problems and is an example of showing respect for people so that we can understand each other [and] work together. (Me'a, FGD, 2013)

These participants' experiences highlighted that their understandings of their place, role and responsibilities in exercising their matrilineal leadership begun when they were young, as they learned about these things from their mothers and grandmothers. The mothers and grandmothers modelled the rituals and practices these young women were to embody and perform when they took on leadership roles. This developed their habitus and is an example of both social and cultural reproduction,

## **b) Symbolic Act of Reproduction**

All participants believed that their formed leadership beliefs and practices reflected the interconnectedness between women, land and lineage. Thus, they understood leadership as a lived experience that is alive and evolving. They talked about the notion of reproduction in terms of their leadership in nurturing relationships in order to maintain harmony and also the physical reproduction to maintain lineage, saying:

We are told never to disobey our elders and this has stayed on with us ever since. When I grew up I looked up to my elders and followed them in all the kinds of leading or work programmes in the village.  
(Diana, FGD, 2013)

Hanai reiterated the nurturing and maintaining of relationships when she said:

Our grandmothers and mothers were very welcoming in their care and in bringing us up. Therefore the welcoming of people is still very strong in the way we lead nowadays, especially with visitors and people in general. (Hanai, FGD, 2013)

In addition, all participants stated that maintaining connections and relationships were crucial in the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture. For example, the cultural expectation of feeding and caring for people is a deliberate nurturing relationship that is important in maintaining these relationships. Me'a recalled an incident with her mother and stated:

When I was still little, my mother told me to observe and to help her in taking care of visitors in our home. I admired my mother's knowledge and skills in the way she catered for and looked after so many people.  
(Me'a, FGD, 2013)

Similarly, all participants believed that their leadership was a highly deliberate relationship of maintaining village connectedness which was also an act of symbolic reproduction, stating that:

The teachings of being greedy, fighting and dispute with tribal members as well as within the community are strongly discouraged  
(Anika, FGD, 2013)

All women perceive the responsibilities linking leadership to maintaining the health and welfare of the community crucial. The majority of participants expressed these leadership as supporting people's health and welfare through food production. Hanai suggested that:

As a group, we support other families in terms of gardening, harvesting, feasting and celebrations (Hanai, II, 2012)

Women described their leadership in terms of the whole traditions, rituals, and customs that are associated with growing crops on top of the soil where the placenta and cord stump are buried. Elena recalled the burial of a placenta ritual and described that:

It was a ritual often carried out by aunts or grandmothers where they take the placenta straight after birth and bury it in a designated piece of land. After the cord stump dries and falls off, this is also buried near the placenta. When the soil is ready, a cut nut or a short coconut palm is planted on top. (Elena, FGD, 203)

This ritual, women claimed, links women to land, tribe and kinship, and supports the notion of the embodied nature of land and leadership. This is evident in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture as stated in the quote by Elena above. This also illustrates that mothers were honoured as key people who sustained society's culture and values. Iona expresses this as:

Motherhood in this culture is not always strictly defined by its biological role, but is understood as a position of leadership that women hold (Iona, FGD, 2013).

Hence, in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture, women hold responsibilities for caring for and nurturing others as well as for land holdings, and allocation of resources. They also control access to certain areas as well as the distribution of its resources.

Reflecting on all my participants' leadership experiences, their childhood world was constituted by their family. Being women in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture, they were bestowed with privileges and responsibilities founded on leadership beliefs and practices that centred on land and kinship. As such, they might have internalised relationship values founded on linking women's bodies to land and kinship. The participants may have embodied these values for a relatively long time, thus, contributing to their ways of thinking. It is evident in women's experience of their leadership that family values have strongly informed the women leaders' individual habitus in the contexts within which they have lived and worked. To this end, these values have greatly influenced the way they believe leadership should look like and feel like.

However, although it would appear that practices associated with matrilineal culture provided leadership opportunities for women, there were drawbacks and significant expectations linked to this which impacted upon women's choices and freedom within their communities. These aspects were linked to the women's learning experiences of leadership.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter outlined important findings related to women leaders formed leadership beliefs and practices in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture. The findings firstly indicated that the matrilineal leadership culture significantly influenced women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices. Secondly, the findings identified women's understanding of leadership and the influences of social and cultural contexts that shaped specific leadership practices among women leaders. Thirdly, women's understanding of how they formed their leadership beliefs and practices were presented. This showed that the genesis of leadership for all participants was at home and had evolved for generations. This is symbolic act of reproduction and is manifested in the way women understood their leadership beliefs and practices within the Santa Isabel context.

## Chapter Seven: Discussion of Findings

Chapter 6 reported research findings on how the participants' beliefs and practices were shaped and informed by the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture. These findings uncovered important aspects of the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership cultural beliefs and practices which influenced the women's specific leadership beliefs and practices. This discussion synthesises and theorises key findings in light of the literature and Bourdieu's (1977) habitus in order to answer my overarching research question:

How do women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices form in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture? And the following sub questions:

**Research question 1:** In what ways does the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture influence women leaders' beliefs and practices?

**Research question 2:** To what extent does the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture contribute to the formation of women leaders' cultural leadership beliefs and practices?

**Research question 3:** How do women leaders practice leadership in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture?

Each research question is answered in the following sections.

### **Research question 1**

*In what ways does the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture influence women leaders' beliefs and practices?*

This question involved three influences of the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture on women's leadership beliefs and practice: leadership and land, leadership is embodied through lineage and practices and leadership is relational.

### **Influences of the Santa Isabel Matrilineal Cultural beliefs and practices**

In relation to the findings, the women's understanding of the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture linked to land inheritance rights and lineage. In

Chapter 2, I have explained how for centuries the matrilineal cultural belief of passing land ownership and descent (birth lineage) through women is a powerful aspect of the matrilineal society in Santa Isabel. This cultural foundation was influential in positioning women with regard to having power and respect in their communities.

### **a) Leadership and Land**

All research participants-Hanai, Diana, Elena, Joska, Me'a, Iona, Guri, Anika, Te'e and Haidu indicated in their comments that their leadership is linked to land by birth by womanhood to the tribe and land through childbirth. The burying of the placenta and cord stump is culturally and spiritually significant in that the return of the afterbirth into the ground establishes a relationship between women as mothers, the land and the tribe. This is both symbolic and sacred. It is symbolic in that the placenta is buried in tribal land in which a person can trace his or her place and tribe to. It is sacred in that the ritual has deeper spiritual meanings that are known only to a few selected elders. Some research participants-Iona, Hanai, Me'a, Daina, Anika, Joska and Elena shared beliefs related to linking leadership to land that were similar.

According to Iona and Joska, this connection that mothers make with people and land played a significant part in forming the foundation for personal leadership. The cultural significance of women as mothers establishing connections to the land and tribe through birth and returning of the placenta to the ground is consistent with research in this area. For example, the Māori world view of a child belonging to mother earth (*Papatuanuku*) (Reedy, 2003), the Navajo (North American nation) perspective of symbolic linking of children to biology, family, and sociology (Santoro 2011) and the anchoring of the child to the belly button of the Mother Earth (Schwarz, 1997). This links to Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) argument that this ritual is part of the whole cultural ethos that suggest individual's habitus are influenced by their own cultural practices by the social reproduction processes.

In the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture, the linking of land to leadership can be understood as a cultural reproduction. Jenks (1993) argues that "cultural reproduction allows us to contemplate the necessity and complementary of continuity" (Jenks, 1993, p. 117). Furthermore, though people have the potential to

freely act upon their beliefs, they also tend to imitate experiences in a given culture (Richardson, 2001). This means for some of my participants who have studied and worked overseas or outside of Santa Isabel (Iona, Me'a, Daina, Te'e and Joska), their cultural givens were so strong, that they continued once they returned home to familiar beliefs, experiences and expectations. Cultural reproduction, therefore, sometimes continues with people even when later experiences change some of their beliefs or practices. The women themselves talked of the wisdom of elders imparting knowledge to daughters and granddaughters which were evidence of social reproduction.

The linking of land to leadership is consistent with Kenny's (2012) argument about indigenous women accepting the land as the first embodied concept of leadership. The literature highlights that this embodiment of belonging is a powerful connection people have in regards to people's sense of place (Kenny, 2012; Louv, 2012; Reedy, 2003). This principle of engaging with the land in an intimate spiritual commitment allows for the maintenance of relationships with all living things which is the interconnectedness that assumes the relatedness of all things crucial in indigenous societies like Santa Isabel in the Solomon Islands. It underpins some religious and spiritual belief systems expressed in many indigenous prayers and ceremonies. Hence, it continuously reminds indigenous people "of the significance of the principle of interconnectivity throughout their lifelong learning" (Kenny, 2012, p. 6) and more importantly in the context of women's leadership in Santa Isabel Island. This too echoes Bourdieu's social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1977a)

When Hanai comments that continuing the matriarchal practices of burying the placenta reaffirms women's connection to the land, it embodies what Bourdieu (1984) observed was the connection "between the two capacities which define the habitus, the capacity to produce classifiable practices and works, and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products" (p.170). This means that "habitus is a cyclical-but alterable—series of behaviours that determines how individuals see and act within their environments" (Richardson & Skott-Myhre, 2012, p. 11).

My research makes connections between the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture and the leadership beliefs held by women leaders. Women leaders' beliefs and practices

of leadership are inscriptions of both their habitus and bodies (Bourdieu, 1998). The women leaders' habitus is such that their leadership beliefs and practices are reproduced through the rituals and practices that have been sustained through the matrilineal leadership culture and through the kinds of values they articulated in the findings. This deeply embedded and embodied sense of leadership would, for these women and probably other women of Santa Isabel, affect how they would practice leading in a school. It is possible they would attempt to lead through acts of service and practices that connected to the land the school was on.

### **b) Leadership is embodied through lineage and practices**

The findings demonstrated that for these participants-Hanai, Elena, Iona, Daina, Me'a, Anika and Joska, the shaping of their leadership beliefs was deeply influenced by the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture. They see that leadership is a practice of both the mind and the body [embodiment] (Sinclair, 2004; 2011). Viewing leadership in this way is consistent with an indigenous view of how people's lineage situate them to their "place of indigenous origin" (McGavin, 2016, p. 1) which linked them to their community and brings them a sense of place and coherence to their being (Kenny, 2012; Portman & Garrett, 2005) (Kenny, 2012). Place in this case is symbolically representing cultural habitus which Bourdieu (2005) theorised as the social production and the upholding of certain social identities.

Iona and Daina believed that women's beliefs about leadership and the way they practice leadership in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture demonstrated the embodied nature of relationships that are based on women's bodies (their 'being'), which aligns with current relational leadership discourses such as leadership grounded in spirituality (AhNee-Benham, 2003; Dantley, 2010; Ngunjiri, 2010), relational to all living things (Kenny, 2012; Portman & Garrett, 2005) and contextual (Alvesson, 2011; Den Hartog & Dickson, 2012). All the women believed this gave them the space and right to think highly of themselves because it is through this historical ritual that they connected future generations to the land and the tribe.

In Melanesian countries, matrilineal leadership is also viewed as an embodied practice Kelep-Malpo (2003), Pollard (2006) and Thomas (2013). This holistic view of embodiment, Hanai, Diana, Joska, Elena, Anika, Iona and Me'a found

encompass their experiences of the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture. They pointed out that their personal, intellectual, emotional, social, gendered, artistic and spiritual experiences of leadership within their Santa Isabel “cultural, historical and geographical location” (Barbour, 2011, p. 13) makes them to be so.

Embodiment, in terms of the women’s experiences “recognises the material conditions of race, gender, sexuality, ability, history and culture [which] indicates a holistic experiencing individual” (Barbour, 2011, p. 88). My participants linked leadership to their gender and sexual identity by bringing their sense of womanliness and sexuality into the way they lead indicating “an integrity of values and practices, a sense of the whole person” (Sinclair, 2004, p. 16). For Hanai, Diana, Elena, Joska, Me’a, Iona and Anika their general comments very much suggest that their leadership is an extension of their self. This is supported in literature by Ropo and Parviainen’s (2001) claims that leadership practice originates and is formed by bodily experiences that are situated in social, cultural, historical and deeply personal contexts. Women’s leadership in Santa Isabel certainly expresses elements of embodied beliefs and practices of leadership.

In Santa Isabel, my participants’ embodied leadership not only deals with the inheritance of land rights and passing on of genealogy and cultural practices that recognise the importance of women, their beliefs form the responsibilities attached to women’s leadership in food production and peace keeping in particular. However, Iona’s comments that women leaders gained respect in this society because of the values people place on their status as well as their knowledge and responsibilities, has some wider truth for women in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture.

Nevertheless, this intimate connection to the land and the embodied notion of belonging might diminish and might actually disrupt or rupture matriarchal lineage or connections because while this is powerful, these women, do not make this present in their lives. The notion of peace-keeping might be significant for women leaders in the schools who embody Santa Isabel matrilineal practices because they have strong connection to the land and lineage

### **c) Leadership is relational**

The data investigated through interviews and the focus groups provided in-depth understanding of women leaders’ leadership beliefs and experiences of the Santa

Isabel matrilineal leadership culture. All the women commented and in particular, Te'e's, Haidu's and Iona's, demonstrated understanding that relational leadership is one of the influential factors that contributed to their leadership beliefs and practices. As previously stated in Chapter 2, relational leadership in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture relates to the "*sakai mono, sikei gada*" (living together, sharing) concept. This illustrates the women's rural livelihood, their close kinship ties and their sense of place. It also characterises Santa Isabellians as generally very friendly, relaxed, peace loving, warm and caring people who share "strong bonds within and between the villages" (O'Sullivan et al., 2011, p. 8). This contributes to their nature of togetherness in communities and villages. The rural livelihood relationships are crucial and cannot be separated from women's leadership. My understanding of embodied forms of culture is seen in the women leaders' culturally valued competencies: for example, their capacity to talk meaningfully about land and genealogy rituals. These women also indicated that the wellbeing of the growing population and extended family relations are also important considerations in land decisions, and exhibit another facet of their leadership behaviours.

Uhl-Bien (2006) for example, asserts that relational leadership is a "socially constructed and socially distributed" (p. 655) phenomenon. Hosking (2000) claims that the dynamics of influence within societies' processes can also construct peoples' communities and institutions' multiple experiences, thus also their leadership. Women in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture understand this intimate connection (Bogesi, 1948) because they have been socialised in this culture (see Table 6.1, participants' profile). Their beliefs about leadership have been shaped by the embodied nature of the relationships founded on women's bodies (their being), which aligns with current relational leadership attributes closely associated with maternal and female views of leadership such as "caring, [being visionary], collaboration, courage and intuition" (Regan & Brooks, 1995, p. x). Thus, these women's leadership cannot be separated from relationships or the relational, because one of the main objectives of leadership in a matrilineal culture is to support and maintain these relationships. In essence, they embody habitus in that they practice and nurture the values inculcated into generations of women leaders in Santa Isabel who deliberately maintain the matrilineal cultural practices. Bourdieu's (1977a) theory about social reproduction and habitus is played out in the Santa

Isabel matrilineal context through external forces. For example, patriarchal beliefs and practices of leadership continue to exclude the women leader' individual habitus and expect more pressure on these women's ways of doing, being and leading. This argument links to Bourdieu's (1990a) description of habitus as having "an infinite capacity for generating products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions, actions" (p. 55). This means that as we encounter new people, social groups, contexts and environments, we likewise internalise new values to help us negotiate our inclusion into these new situations and contexts. My participants discussed the impact of new ideas when all the women observed that peoples' change of attitudes towards the respect for leaders have greatly affected the way community activities are accomplished.

The women's experiences of leadership in schools and community require them to navigate through these social fields and adapt their individual habitus to fit in and to be accepted by these new environments. This continual adjustment is a feature of responses to context and is strongly supported in literature (Alvesson, 2011; Den Hartog & Dickson, 2012). Thus, habitus has the capacity for altering how we think, perceive, express and act within any new environment that we come in contact with. This is important in understanding women's leadership experiences in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture. Strategies, policies and leadership development can be delivered to extend these experiences outside of the community setting.

In summary, the core values of the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture that influences the formation of women's leadership beliefs and practices links and establishes the interconnectedness between land and people. Leadership is connected with land, it is embodied and it is also relational. These approaches to leadership helped to keep the society together which most often in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture is overwhelming the responsibility of women.

## **Research Question 2**

*To what extent does the matrilineal culture contribute to the formation of women leaders' cultural leadership beliefs and practices?*

This question involved understanding participants' social and cultural influences related to their leadership beliefs and practices in the village, church and educational

contexts. Aspects of women's leadership experiences in these contexts are discussed and theorised.

### **Influences of social and cultural contexts**

#### **a) The village context**

In relation to the findings, the women demonstrated that elders continue to teach the young the values and traditions that were important to community coexistence when they express ideas such as: leading with humility, leading to maintain relationships and leading to getting things done.

Leading with humility, the participants suggested refer to women's behaviours and attitudes towards people and situations within their communities. Anika, Diana, Elena and Hanai recalled how elders' teaching of humility impacted on their leadership experiences through their teaching of proper traditional ways of protocol. While these teachings contributed to how women gained their respect, power and authority, women's leadership was mostly present in communities.

In relation to the literature, the responsibility that women as mothers in matrilineal societies have in continuing kinship ties that form the structure and organisation contributes to the transmission of these social and cultural practices through different embodied intergenerational practical and theoretical knowledge (skills and values) (Quéniart & Charpentier, 2013). Joska, Me'a, Iona and Elena for example recalled that both their grandmothers and mothers taught them basic traditional cooking as they were growing up. In this sense, women's leadership is inculcated as part of their being. This shows that in the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture skills such as caring and nurturing responsibilities started during early years for these women and therefore have continued to shape their thinking and practices. This demonstrates that intergenerational transmission is strongly linked to the life trajectories and social environment of the "legislators" (Bourdieu, 1977b) who in Santa Isabel, are the grandmothers and mothers. These women transmit the material conditions of existence and attitudes, aptitudes and tastes that express this Santa Isabel culture. My participants also demonstrated their understanding of their matrilineal culture as well as showing the factors that have shaped their leadership conceptualisations.

Grandmothers also play an important role within the family, often acting as the “pole around which the family comes together” (Quéniart & Charpentier, 2013). Queniart and Charpentier (2013) found that “women are the perpetuator of family traditions” p. 59), contending that the act of transmission is a way to help children take their place within society. It involves practices that are “implicit, forming a back-drop to daily life” (Quéniart & Charpentier, 2013, p. 60). For example, teaching a grandchild to cook is a way of transmitting a part of themselves or who they are. The common means of intergenerational transmission by socialisation are concrete child-rearing or child-training by parents and other educators or mentors (Schonpflug 2001). This links to the notion of enculturation of beliefs and practices (Reed-Danahay, 2004) that consist of explicit, unintentional learning that aims to developing persons into competent members of a culture, which also includes identity, language, rituals, and values which were evident in the way women practice leadership. Again, the literature links this to women’s embodiment of leadership because they recalled how matrilineal leadership values become part of their leadership beliefs, particularly when they spoke of childbirth, child-rearing, and maintaining social relationships among kin.

All participants (10) also understood leadership as engaging in tasks with one’s whole being, an embodiment. They relate their experiences of leading with humility to the responsibility that comes with people’s co-existence with the land. The women commented that grandmothers were generally very particular about how behaviours and attitudes were carried out. Anika commented that her grandmother and mother always told her to get involved and Me’a commented that it was grandmothers and mothers who were well schooled and strong in protocol and accepted behaviours.

Linking to Bourdieu’s (1977a) notion of generation, elders were the sources of women’s leadership practice. Through their repeated actions elders (grandmothers and mothers) passed on to their young daughters the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership practices, customs and beliefs that are reinforced through generations and influencing women’s leadership habitus which is the way women think, behave and practice their leadership roles.

In relation to the findings, the women demonstrated that when they expressed ideas such as use of culturally respectful words, reciprocity and valuing and nurturing of relations, they refer to leading to maintain relationships. As revealed in the findings, the use of culturally respectful words was common in the way grandmothers and mothers solved problems. Me'a and Iona observed that the use of appropriate words was an example of women's leading to maintain relationships. Most participants also believed in the use of appropriate words calm people down more quickly, thus resolving concerns in a more consensual manner.

Reciprocity is one of the ways the women participants illustrated leadership in aiming to maintain relationships. Iona for example, participated in community affairs when she returned to the village during vacations and made a point of listening to elders. These women leaders also observed that "cooperation" was a deliberate method of leadership. Haidu's comments revealed that leadership was realised in the way women organised their activities around practical tasks, such as manifesting in the commitments to collaborating with and through their family, community and work members to sustain the cohesiveness of the group.

Valuing and nurturing of relationships in the wider family and village was also an aspect of women's leadership that showed maintaining of relationships in communities. Iona believed that women illustrated leadership qualities that brought about harmonious co-existence that protected families with care and support. Women were also observed to have teaching skills that imparted values, beliefs and practices that benefitted people living in communities in Santa Isabel.

As noted in the literature, maintaining relationships was a key factor in learning leadership within the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture (Naramana, 1987; O'Sullivan et al., 2011). Kenny (1998) points out the principle of engaging with the land is in an intimate spiritual commitment in maintaining relationships with all living things. People do exist in communities (Kenny, 2012, p. 6) and in order to maintain these relationships people need to understand the contexts they are in. For my participants, this relatedness of all things is reflected in the findings throughout almost everything they said, for it linked to land, family, community, tribe, childbirth and the exercise of leadership. This links to Bourdieu's (1977a) theory of

cultural and social reproduction where the structures reproduce themselves by producing agents endowed with habitus.

Leading to getting things done refers to leadership practices that intend to benefit all members of the tribe, community and/ or village. The women claimed that organised schedules, consultation and determination were observed by everyone to honour elders' leadership. For example Elena recalled her grandmother completing schedules according to her plans so she could help others.

Many of the women stated that there was always consultation between and among them. Te'e confirmed this and stated that when we face difficulties, we consult each other. We come together and share. Women in other communities are also the same". This again indicates the idea of relatedness and how it is fostered and reproduced in order to getting things done.

Participants also illustrated that women mimicked elders' way of leading. For example, the women often refer to how elders instructed and reminded them of how they should carry out their roles in the community. This is critical in the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership cultures' understanding of service. This resonates with Ngunjiri's (2010) notion of "rebuilding or strengthening communities that would also strengthen the nation as a whole" (p. 180). It is evident from the women's comments that leading to get things done is normalised in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture and cannot be overemphasised. *Kutu* (the womb) represents a Santa Isabel world view that regards individual identity in terms of strong community identification and connecting with the land and womanhood.

These findings are supported by indigenous women's leadership literature (AhNee-Benham, 2003; Archuleta, 2006; Maracle, 2013) Women leaders in indigenous communities while do not necessarily have to take on a title, are leaders who seem to get things done, "have a healthy vision, possess knowledge, are passionately committed and have a personal leadership style that promotes action" (Maracle, 2013, p. 317). These are natural leaders who have worked to change communities. They have advocated for building strong communities that are family oriented, that preserved and revitalised native languages and cultures and that strengthened people's self-identity and sovereignty (AhNee-Benham, 2003) In the case of my

participants, the ideas they articulated about this, support this contention, for Santa Isabel men led quite differently.

### **b) The Church Context**

The Mothers Union church organisation has greatly influenced women's leadership beliefs and practices in Santa Isabel. In relation to the findings, prayer supported women's confidence, redistribution of resources and leadership recognising women's ideas were significant findings.

The findings illustrated that women's confidence in leadership was supported by prayer. For example, Hanai, Iona and Anika observed that meditation through prayer provided time for women to pray and to ask for guidance and wisdom and understanding in their leadership roles. The literature suggests that indigenous women's leadership show strong leadership grounded in spirituality (AhNeeBenham, 2003; Dantley, 2010; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Ngunjiri, 2010). Hanai for example stated that when she does pray, things work out for her in her role as a leader. This is an aspect of spiritual leadership character that builds "connectivity and community with others". (Dantley, 2010, p. 214). Iona, Hanai and Anika also observed that even in today's world, the sense of knowing what your skills are and a sense of gratitude brought about by praying contributes to a very healthy mental aspect. This is supported in literature by Ngunjiri (2010) who states that spirituality is the "foundation upon which [women] built a purpose of life, and a sense of direction for leaders" (p. 183).

In addition, spirituality teaching caused women experience strength in carrying out leadership roles. For example Iona commented that when she prays, she is not scared to approach men chiefs or people in the community. This is consistent with literature that contends that spirituality for some women is a "source of personal strengthen as well as a way to understand connectedness to others in the greater world" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 14).

Furthermore, to have this sense of mind encourages what participants referred to as *servicing people* being seen as *sharing God's gift*, God-given skills for patience and care to reach out to people who need support. This is demonstrated in Anika's comment: "We view helping others not as servants but doing work that is selffulfilling". Ngunjiri (2010) explains this as women using "critical servant

leadership as a way to break down barriers and critiquing existing social structures” (2010, p. 171). However, this is contrary to the power that women hold in the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture. These examples demonstrate that some women existing leadership practices, to a certain degree, illustrate what Bourdieu (1977b) meant when he discussed the notion of habitus in people. In essence, they are dispositions of Christian teaching as they were taught.

However, my findings showed that Christian principles may be cited by women leaders to be more harmonious with their way of doing things: that is, it supports their matrilineal habitus. For example, in a ritual called “*sigo*,” (to visit or see) new arrivals or those who are housebound, women are very influential and are the initiators. Women leaders also confirmed that Christian and Western education teachings have contributed to men seeing themselves as the dominant leaders. This means equating men’s leadership with Western leadership. Nevertheless, participants believed that both their matrilineal leadership culture and Mothers Union practices of leadership created and supported a safe space for them to experience ways of leading. Haidu recalled an incident when the church context had allowed her to express her views which she was not allowed to as a child growing up in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture. This resonates with Bourdieu’s (1977b) argument on altering habitus through new influences that links to how culture and social practices evolve.

### **c) Educational Context**

Better understanding of women’s challenges and shifting matrilineal leadership beyond the village context were key findings associated with the influences of educational context on women’s leadership beliefs and practices.

Participants found that the formal education they had received provided them with new insights into their matrilineal context. For example Me’a and Iona indicated that the Western education that they had received contributed to their leadership confidence. Me’a, who had gained a Bachelor of Education degree in an overseas tertiary institution and heads a department in a secondary school, draws on this experience. She felt that more people respect her now, which has contributed to gaining confidence in herself. Iona shared similar insights. She said she also draws from her Western education experiences when describing her leadership confidence.

This is linked to Bourdieu's (1985) notion of habitus being generated through everyday activities and interactions in institutions (Emirbayer & Johnson 2008). Bourdieu (1985) further explains that individuals have a tendency to make sense of what to accept, what to leave, and what to choose in terms of their experiences and this is illustrated in the habits or practices of my participants.

Individuals' desires, interests, and motivation also play an important role when generating habitus (Lovell, 2000; Schmidt, 1997).

In addition, women's experiences of leadership illustrated that there is no clear demarcation between community and school leadership. They are one as part of the other. For example Haidu shared an incident when she felt she did not accomplish her task when she was operating in both the school and community context. The literature suggests that leadership contexts are deliberately designed by communities and institutions (Sharpnack, 2005) (how we do things around here). Thus, while context could be viewed as the foundation of leadership, leadership has different meanings for different people (Harris, 2003).

The literature canvassing leadership, culture and education in economically developing countries, in particular, Santa Isabel in the Solomon Islands illustrates that women's leadership is part of the whole cultural ethos of the place (Pollard, 2006). Bourdieu's (1977a) views on social reproduction are an important guide in understanding how this works as a habitus because women in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture know how things work which became a kind of unconscious way of doing and seeing things. This motivated my thesis because I wanted to understand how women in Santa Isabel undertook their leadership within this matrilineal cultural frame and how these matrilineal notions of leadership might be shifted into the education system. Thus, I focused a lot in this thesis on women in the community because they were referencing the community rather than the education contexts they were in. For example, all women spoke about their leadership beliefs and practices being founded on leadership knowledge and practices that were embodied and guided by their habitus. Their leadership beliefs and practices therefore were symbolically represented by connection with the land, elders and women. In this sense by creating this representation in an educational

context it means that leadership is relational – “enacted in relationships to others” (Strachan, Akao, Kilavanwa, & Warsal, 2010, p. 71).

All women talked about very similar things such as the impact of their grandmothers and their mothers and the overt education of young women about keeping the matrilineal ideals alive in relation to their leadership. I think these experiences are significant for women’s leadership in education as their habitus might direct how they operate in their school context as leaders. Thus, it is important to understand elements of women’s leadership in the matrilineal culture that would work in education. It is also important to consider which leadership beliefs and practices might need to be tempered by broader knowledge of how other things work and how they can use those or find other ways to shift matrilineal leadership into education. This kind of unilateral decision making may be much more accepted. In this case, there is a microcosm of a particular kind of leadership through the female line that is overridden by stronger patrilineal forces when the context is not Santa Isabel.

The strong cultural symbolic reproduction of thinking about matrilineal leadership that happens in Santa Isabel while it is special to this place does not have currency in education because there are not enough women who can go out into the world to create that space. However, it may be that these women can show that this kind of leadership in education and community within Santa Isabel does not translate to other schools in the other Islands in the Solomon Islands. This illustrates that the idea of social reproduction is also a highly contained idea and Santa Isabel as an Island is a representation of an Island matrilineal culture which highlights Bourdieu’s (1990) theory about social reproduction through education both formally and informally.

I now understand why my leadership at the School of Education was so fraught and difficult because my own world view did not translate into the bigger context such as the Solomon Islands education system. Given this knowledge about women’s leadership in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture, I will be better able to cope should I take on another leadership position educationally with those who have not known the same kind of expectations that I as a Santa Isabel women would expect my communities to know about. In particular, who I am and that I am entitled to lead.

Thus, when I came back to the original focus of my thesis which was to use ideas from the matrilineal leadership culture to enhance women's participation in educational leadership. I also thought about my own experiences of leadership in education and my bringing with me my own community knowledge and experiences of leadership. These women's experiences suggest that the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership does not flow out into the wider social context even within the Solomon Islands.

Relating the women's experiences to my own practice in the School of Education, I now understand how my leadership was fronted up against other kinds of tribal ways that were not matrilineal and which went against everything that I understood about how things were supposed to be. This means the kind of expectations I had about how people view me, the way it would happen in Santa Isabel did not operate in Honiara because Honiara is a kind of popularity of people from everywhere in the Solomon Islands as well as other overseas countries. When I have a lot of men who come from a view about who women are and also men who think they are supposed to rule, I came across difficulties because the way I exercise leadership was one that they did not recognise.

### **Research Question 3**

*How do women leaders practice leadership in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture?*

This question discusses and theorises women's understanding of their formed matrilineal leadership beliefs and practices. It involved the aspects: *strong foundation of leadership begins in the home* and *leadership is a symbolic act of reproduction*.

#### **a) Formed leadership Beliefs and Practices are context situated**

Locating leadership in the Santa Isabel matrilineal context affirms that leadership and context cannot be separated (Klenke, 2011; Rousseau & Fried, 2001) and reveals that these women created a worldview of leadership shaped from within their context. This is supported by literature that contends that contextual thinking is the basis for appropriate leadership beliefs and practices to emerge (Sharpnack, 2005). Supporting this contention, Fitzgerald (2003) adds that "position[ing]

indigenous ways of knowing and leading at the centre of practice and theory” (p. 20) may contribute to changing the absence of indigenous women in leadership literature and in particular women from the Bugotu speaking matrilineal culture.

### **b) Strong foundation of leadership begins in the home**

As noted in the findings, Daina, Hanai, Me’a, Anika, Elena and Iona spoke about the genesis of their leadership was at home. They talked about the foundation of their strong leadership beliefs and practices by watching, listening and practicing with their grandmothers and mothers.

These women therefore, recognised the critical importance of womanhood. This is evident through motherhood. Motherhood in matrilineal cultures begins and supports these relationships (Chioma, 2011). Women also maintained that motherhood did not “convey the notion of servant leadership but rather an elevated and symbolic form of service through protection and collaboration” (Chioma, 2011, p. 8) that sustains society in the highest possible order. Thus, she comments that women’s “definition of leadership places strong emphasis on moral integrity, altruism, mothering, caring, and sacrificing for the good of the society and for present and future generations” (Chioma, 2011, p. 11). AhNeeBenham (2003) states that leadership “advocates [for] building strong educational communities that are family-centred, preserves and revitalizes native languages and cultures, and strengthens self-identity and sovereignty” (p. 241). This resonates with the idea of linking leadership with land and motherhood in the Santa Isabel matrilineal context, where such advocacy is likely to be core in women’s leadership beliefs and practices.

As noted in the introduction, context and literature review chapters, these are part of the whole cultural ethos. This suggests Bourdieu’s (1977a) lens of social reproduction by grandmothers

### **c) Symbolic act of reproduction**

The findings indicated that Hanai, Diana, Elena, Joska, Me’a, Iona, Guri, Anika, Te’e and Haidu believed that the matrilineal leadership culture is alive and evolving. This belief locates leadership from and within a situated context, the *kutu* (womb or heart or land). In terms of Bourdieu’s notions of habitus and social reproduction, this living sense of matrilineal culture illustrates the deep embodiment of these

women's leadership practices. They affirm that leadership and this context of matrilineality are inextricably interwoven. These women live and breathe and nurture in others the same beliefs and practices they had been initiated into by other women. The particular kind of leadership these women practise is characterised and demonstrated by traits and practices (see Figure 7.1). Leadership is founded on cultural beliefs and practices that linked leadership to land and is symbolised by ceremonies and rituals such as placenta burial. Leadership is embodied through lineage and practice. It is also the exercise of leadership as relational because it fosters social cohesion. It is also demonstrated through social and cultural contexts such as the village, the church and education. Leadership is formed as situated, founded on strong principles from the home and represented by women as symbolic of their worth in linking people to their tribes and land.

However, while this notion of symbolic reproduction is steeped in tradition, various indigenous cultures suit their own contexts, which is why practices and meanings might either differ across cultures, or have similar meanings. All Santa Isabel women participants' experiences are immersed in tradition and knowledge. Both operate on the symbolic and lived levels and are expressed according to the contexts in which they lead.

## The matrilineal leadership culture of Santa Isabel



This living food tree symbolises formed leadership beliefs and practices that is:

- a) Context situated
- b) Founding of leadership from home
- c) Symbolic act of reproduction

Food tree that has multiple uses that represents examples of social cultural habitus:

- i) Village habitus
  - a) Leading from the heart
  - b) Leading to maintain relationships
  - c) Leading for common good
- ii) Church habitus
  - a) Leadership illustrating humility
  - b) Leadership demonstrating re-distribution
  - c) Leadership recognising women's ideas
- iii) School Context
  - a) Leadership challenging cultural norms
  - b) Shifting leadership beyond village context

Roots in the in the ground: symbolising cultural beliefs foundation of leadership beliefs and practices :

- a) Leadership and Land
- b) Leadership is embodied through lineage and practices
- c) Leadership is relational

Figure 7 1: Women's leadership is a symbolic act of reproduction

The Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture as an alive and evolving process is illustrated in Figure 7.1. In Bourdieu's (1977a) terms this is a symbolic act of reproduction. I used the cut nut tree as a metaphor to illustrate the embodied nature of matrilineal leadership beliefs and practices for the following reasons: Firstly, the cut nut structure. It is a living tree and this resonates with the idea of existence through the ages, being reproduced, and illustrates the social reproduction theory Bourdieu (1977a) explored. While it may evolve and its leaves, flowers, and fruits in different colour, shape and size live, it is still the same in its overall cut nut as a food source form. Secondly, the cut nut in *Bugotu* is called *mega* which literally means to stick something together to make a new whole object out from a source without undoing it. This illustrates leadership practices for these women as a symbolic act of reproduction. One of its major uses is the nut is food that is readily

available in and around villages and gardens all year around. As a symbolic act of reproduction Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1977a) women's expressed experiences of leadership in the matrilineal culture as illustrated by the cut nut tree metaphor shows the following characteristics:

- Like the roots of the cut nut tree that are placed into carefully tendered soil, the ground context symbolises the foundation of leadership beliefs and practices which are nurtured and prepared by reproduction and import from generations of women – grandmothers, mothers and aunts. This supports the notion that women leadership in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture is a symbolic act of reproduction.
- Similar to the cut nut tree being a food tree that has multiple uses, it represents matrilineal culture that believes in highly deliberate leadership practices of nurturing relationships in order to maintain harmony, village connectedness, health of community as a whole and the whole traditions, ritual and customs. This acknowledges matrilineal leadership culture as a symbolic act of reproduction.
- Akin to the cut nut tree being a food tree of the village that bears fruits all year around which are of different shapes, sizes and colours, these symbolise the diversity of leadership that women in the matrilineal culture experiences.
- Similar to the cut nut food tree's long life period, this represents women's leadership being responsible for matrilineality power that continues to exist in Santa Isabel island and demonstrates a strong link to the women using symbolic rituals and ceremonies in their practice of leadership to make their culture stronger (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Masiki, 2011).

This living food tree therefore, symbolises leadership that is contextually situated in cultural beliefs and practices that connects leadership with land, elders and women. Within this cultural context, women may experience opportunities to practice leadership and are highly respected. However, their access to leadership in the field of education is restricted because men are still seen as more important in

the wider social political context in the Solomon Islands (Akao, 2008; Pollard, 2006; Sisiolo, 2010).

In my understanding, this taken-for-granted practice means that how women leaders in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture see the world is based on what the family believes is important. For example, the women are like a fish in water (comfortable) in the home and community environment. They are happy to lead in their communities because they have authority, power and respect. However, they are like fish out of water when they transfer the matrilineal leadership culture in formal systems for example into the school system.

This is supported by literature. MacNeil (2006) articulates leadership as a relational process that combines “ability (knowledge, skills and talents) with voice, (influence, and decision-making power) to positively influence and impact diverse individuals, organisations and communities” (p. 29). Sinclair (2004) added that “finding a space for leading, given the concerns and constraints is no easy task” (2 (p. 9). Five of the women leaders: Me’a, Iona, Haidu, Te’e and Joska’s to matrilineal leadership values in the formal school systems. Hence, women leaders’ leadership that recognises and usefully engages with the structural constraints of societies and organisations and still to find ways of empowering oneself and others. Nevertheless, there are people, and particularly women working at these frontiers of innovative leadership practices.

Thus, indigenous leadership perspectives that could perhaps create opportunities to make a real case through the matrilineal culture might focus on women’s beliefs of leadership that are grounded in knowledge systems that value leadership as; alive and evolving, a continued existence of social groups and tied and shielded by women through land and kinship connections. This resonates with Blackmore’s (1995b) views, when she states that “[t]he lens of privilege ... requires women in leadership to consider their position, to better understand how and why they came to be in that position and how they can use that position to challenge and transform exclusive images of leadership into more inclusive ones” (p. 35). Similarly, Sinclair (2004) argues that “the practice of leadership is to critique and subvert imposed and received notions of leadership” (p. 17).

The understanding of women's perceptions of the matrilineal leadership culture thus is a connection with the land, connection with the elders and connection with women. This is a clear illustration of leadership as a symbolic act of reproduction purported by Deal and Kennedy (1982). These comes with responsibilities these women have of making sure that the matrilineality way of exercising power (Chioma, 2011; Kelep-Malpo, 2003; Nash, 1984; Weiner, 1976) because this is a big responsibility for women to carry.

From women's expressed experiences the matrilineal leadership culture as illustrated in Figure 7.1 places responsibilities that nurture relationship with others which are all symbolised by the burying of the placenta and then growing food crops on it which demonstrates a symbolic act of reproduction.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed major findings of the research. The discussion was divided into three sections, with each specific research question answered through generated themes. The first section examined leadership and land, leadership is embodied through lineage and practices, and leadership is relational as key influences of the Santa Isabel matrilineal cultural beliefs and practices on women's leadership. The second section discussed the village, church and educational contexts as factors that contributed to the shaping of women's leadership beliefs and practices. The third section discussed matrilineal cultural formed leadership beliefs and practices. These involved strong foundation of leadership begins in the home and leadership that is a symbolic act of reproduction.

The chapter also theorised that the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture is context contained and specific to Santa Isabel island. The chapter concluded by explaining how the matrilineal leadership culture is a symbolic act of reproduction that begins in the home and continues to exist through grandmothers and mothers teachings which is hugely a nurturing responsibility that sought to maintain a harmonious co-existence in communities through knowing the cultural ethos and understanding of the connections between women, descent, land and leadership.

## **Chapter Eight: Conclusion**

My thesis has been about ten women in Santa Isabel Island in the Solomon Islands. These women are matrilineal leaders. The findings were extracted through individual interviews, focus group discussions and observations of women going about their ordinary practices.

The participants answered my overarching question and my three questions in this way.

### **Overarching Question**

How do women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices form in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture?

Women's leadership beliefs and practices were formed by socialisation within the Santa Isabel matrilineal cultural beliefs and practices, the village, church and educational contexts. These social and cultural influences informed women's leadership beliefs and practices and formed a strong founding of leadership that begins in the home and leadership that is a symbolic act of reproduction of the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture.

### **Sub Question 1**

**In what ways does the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture influence women leaders' beliefs and practices?**

My study indicates that women leaders' leadership beliefs are influenced by their matrilineal culture, such as leadership and land, leadership is embodied through lineage and practices and matrilineal leadership is relational. This cultural belief has also unconsciously influenced and impacted on women's leadership practices that are formed later. This cultural practice was reinforced by their own learning experiences of accepting knowledge from experts (grandmothers, mothers) through living and practicing them. This sequentially has continued to influence their conceptualisation of leadership and their later practice. In other words, women leaders' cultural beliefs of linking leadership to land were later reflected in leadership practices. This finding highlights what women leaders' need to

understand regarding their leadership practices in relation to better addressing women's leadership positioning in the Solomon Islands.

### **Sub Question 2**

**To what extent does the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture contribute to the formation of women leaders' cultural leadership beliefs and practices?**

The findings demonstrate that women's leadership beliefs and practices were influenced by social and cultural contexts: the village, the church and educational contexts. In the village context participants' understanding and experiences of leadership were influenced by elders teaching of: leading with humility, leading to maintain relationships and leading to getting tasks done. In the church context, women's leadership experiences were shaped by prayer supported women's leadership, leadership involves redistribution of resources and leadership is recognising women's ideas. In the education context: better understanding of women's leadership challenges and shifting leadership beyond the village.

### **Sub Question 3**

**How do women leaders practice leadership in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture?**

This study indicates that women's leadership practices in the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture were founded on strong leadership beliefs and practices that begins at home and their leadership is a symbolic act of reproduction. The highly lived experiences and the crossover from the community sense of these women's leadership into the formal education system is a very important consideration.

### **Major Finding**

A major finding from these women about the importance of this matrilineal leadership to Santa Isabel is what women said to me in relation to ideas of leadership to Bourdieu's (1977a) notion of social reproduction and symbolic act of reproduction to my own practices. This suggests that my leadership journey had enabled me to see what I did not see before through the courage of my participants who shared what they knew as part of that social reproduction process, articulating their own habitus and how this has come to be the whole symbolic act of

reproduction. The logic of practice that has been established in Santa Isabel Island is one based on having strong women because they are the cohesive device across the community that keeps it peaceful, making sure people are well looked after, that there are enough crops, things are functioning as they should and knowing what is going on which illustrates a symbolic act of reproduction as shown in Figure 7.1.

However, this social reproduction and embodiment of leadership is contained in the Santa Isabel Island and does not transfer to the education system because there are not enough women who have grown up in this particular kind of frame of matrilineal leadership to go out into the world and exercise it and have it understood by people who are not understanding the how and what they are seeing.

### **The limitations of this study**

The limitations of this study are:

My research was carried out in a region in the island of Santa Isabel, in the Solomon Islands. Data were generated from ten women leaders, five from a village community and five from schools and may not be generalised to all Santa Isabel village communities and schools or to other village communities and schools in other contexts.

I collected data from women leaders, but my research did not focus on understanding women leaders' educational leadership knowledge, rather their understanding of a specific culture. It was limited to how the matrilineal culture influences their leadership beliefs and practices.

My research focused on understanding the influences of the matrilineal culture on women's leadership beliefs and how these may shape their practices. It concentrated on linking leadership to cultural beliefs. Therefore, the effects of other aspects such as education, churches and the schools may not necessarily be understood within my research findings. Therefore:

- Since I worked as an insider/outsider researcher, my research process may have involved my personal bias resulting from my prior knowledge and familiarity with the research site and participants. This means that the generated data may have been influenced by the familiarity between us. I

have acknowledged this position in order to make the research process clearer, and disclosed any issues which may come up. I was mindful of validating my data generated more than three times.

- As my case study was limited to a certain period of time with the women leaders, the generated data does not represent the entire process of their leadership habitus.
- Since the research site is quite rural and remote, I travelled to and fro many times to begin processing the transcripts and may not have captured some of the leadership activities.
- Since the data generation involved interviewing and focus group sessions with all the participants using the local language, researcher bias might have come into effect while translating the data into English. I was careful to discuss with my participants and with other research colleagues in order to lessen such bias.
- The participants were selected purely based on specific criteria and voluntary participation. Thus, data elicited may be restricted to respective participants' experiences rather than applicable to other women leaders in other regions and to men.
- I did not interview any men, as I am not interested in what men bring to that understanding and how they believe women's leadership should be practiced and if it has any limitations.

The research focused on what the women were saying about the community because that was what they were saying and so, the focus on school leadership is much lighter than I had anticipated.

However, without having carried this out, these findings will still be invisible to me as a Santa Isabel woman leader and to these women and to the ability of other people to understand the way that social reproduction has been a very valuable and very positive thing when in Bourdieu's terms it is often social reproduction for the maintenance of privilege and elitism.

## **Contributions of this Thesis**

This study fills a gap in the research into the leadership experiences of women in the Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture. It also creates new findings that strong founding of leadership begins in the home and a new frame of looking at women's leadership in developing countries that may never have been considered before. My research is unique in the way that I am showing the embodied nature of leadership. How leadership is embodied in the women themselves and are connected to the land that they walk upon. The notion of belonging and the ethic of care contribution mean something to others.

### **Theoretical contribution**

My research contributes one concept within theoretical knowledge. My research has proposed an emerging understanding of matrilineal leadership as a symbolic act of reproduction that contributes to an understanding of the connections between women, descent, land and leadership that had previously been overlooked in women's leadership research as illustrated in Figure 7.1.

I have found ideas of leadership through this study. Methodologically, there were other issues that I need to think about that lie with my analysis. The habitus lens while provide me with enough of a way of looking at the data to make sense of it, it was a difficult concept to deal with because I found the extended notion of habitus unfamiliar. I could have used socio-cultural theorising as a lens to understand women's embodiment of leadership.

### **Contribution to Santa Isabel and the Solomon Islands**

My research has identified how deep-rooted cultural beliefs and practices of matrilineal leadership influence the way specific women understand their leadership practices in Santa Isabel in the Solomon Islands. Thus, my research may make a significant contribution to the Santa Isabel and the Solomon Islands by:

- Identifying characteristic of matrilineal leadership
- Identifying external forces which may undermine the community cohesion matrilineal leadership brings
- Identify ways in which social reproduction and habitus operate in the Solomon Islands

- Showing the importance of women enduring social practices that benefit communities.
- Understanding of cultural habitus to the ideas of leadership by women
- General understanding of leadership in the Solomon Islands, in particular, Santa Isabel.
- Adding to international literature on developing countries experiences of leadership, particularly by women.
- Adding to what has already been known, especially the literature on school leadership
- Adding to understanding of how women's leadership has been theorised and understood from a Santa Isabel matrilineal leadership culture.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The findings of my study have highlighted some important areas for future research.

These areas are briefly outlined as:

- The matrilineal leadership culture provides an alternative way for shifting women's leadership into formal sectors: schools, higher education, government ministries and churches.
- My matrilineal leadership culture framework (Figure 7.1) has contributed to understanding women's leadership in new ways.
- Other researchers may find my detailed outline of my case study process (Figure 5.1) useful for their own research. Trying out the approaches outlined provides an opportunity for a researcher to test these in their own research to add to qualitative research methods.
- Some opportunities for future research would be talking to women principals in the Solomon Islands and finding out their habitus and their sense of where their leadership comes from to be able to compare it with Santa Isabel.
- Conduct similar study on a different island as a closed case study to find if there are similarities and differences.

- Carry out a study on the extent this idea of social reproduction which is very strong in a tribal culture affects schooling.
- Carry out a study on how leadership is symbolised within a school. What things characterise it? Can it be characterised as a Western tradition? A religious tradition? A female tradition?

## **Final Reflection**

Through investigating women leaders' leadership beliefs and practices, the findings have contributed to my personal knowledge in a number of ways:

- I have come to understand connections between my own habits of learning and my present leadership practices. This understanding will help me to navigate my leadership practices to create effective change and support to those I work and live with.
- I discovered that the matrilineal leadership culture has provided me with knowledge and experiences that I need to reflect on to make my leadership tasks less challenging.
- I learned the benefits of adopting various data generation methods and lenses in research. This understanding will help me in my future research career.

My research made me realise how much I still need to discover about my own area of study. In future, I hope to find out more by examining the influence of culture in various contexts (males, youth, teachers, schools, churches, villages).

By investigating this area, I realised how much the learning about leadership needs to change in the Solomon Islands to bring about the kinds of much needed changes that allow women to fully participate equally in leadership roles.

Finally, I had another rethink about my experiences and in the light of what these women told me about their experiences and how the men operate counter to that not pulling together to make sure that community decision-making has to be an unselfish one for the greater good of the group and not for the individual. There were too many agendas at the School of Education that were about individuals and not the common good. That now I understand that my world view having being

based on itself on matrilineal cultural ethos and Bourdieu's habitus was strongly reproduced by my own informal and formal education at the hands of my grandmother, my mother and my aunt just as these women talked about their own experiences. Now I better understand this way of operating did not equip me to be a leader in this cut-throat individualistic frame that may be as a result of the influences of colonial powers and different ways of looking at the world. Now, I better understand why my leadership in that school of education was so fraught with difficulties because I understand now how my own world view did not translate into the bigger context. This new knowledge has affected how I see the world of leadership, the world of women's leadership and the world of women's leadership within the Solomon Islands and how I think that might affect how I could lead, should I lead in the education sector again.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Waikato University Ethics Approval

Dean's Office  
Faculty of Education  
Te Kura Toi Tangata  
The University of Waikato  
Private Bag 3105  
Hamilton, New Zealand

Phone +64 7 838 4500  
[www.waikato.ac.nz](http://www.waikato.ac.nz)



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

### MEMORANDUM

**To:** Susanne Maezama  
**cc:** Associate Professor Beverley Bell  
Carl Mika

**From:** Associate Professor Linda Mitchell  
Chairperson, Research Ethics Committee

**Date:** 20 April 2012

**Subject:** Supervised Postgraduate Research – Application for Ethical Approval (EDU034/12)

---

Thank you for submitting the amendments to your application for ethical approval for the research project:

**Women's leadership in Santa Isobel, Solomon Islands secondary schools: A case study**

I am pleased to advise that your application has received ethical approval.

Please note that researchers are asked to consult with the Faculty's Research Ethics Committee in the first instance if any changes to the approved research design are proposed.

The Committee wishes you all the best with your research.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Mitchell".

Associate Professor Linda Mitchell  
Chairperson  
Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee

# Appendix B: Solomon Islands Research Permit

FORM - R.B

## THE RESEARCH ACT 1982 (No. 9 of 1982)

### RESEARCH PERMIT

Permission is hereby given to:

1. Name: Susanne Maezama
2. Country: Solomon Islands
3. To undertake research in (subject(s)): Women's leadership in Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands secondary schools: A case study
4. Ward(s): Bugotu region
5. Province(s): Santa Isabel
6. Conditions:
  - a. To undertake research only in the subject areas specified in 3 above.
  - b. To undertake research only in the ward(s) and Province(s) specified in 4 and 5 above.
  - c. To observe with respect at all times local customs and the way of life of people in the area in which the research work is carried out.
  - d. You must not, at any time, take part in any political or missionary activities or local disputes.
  - e. You must leave 4 copies of your final research report in English with the Solomon Islands Government Ministry responsible for research at your own expense.
  - f. A research fee of *SBD300.00* and deposit sum of *SBD200.00* must be paid in full or the Research Permit will be cancelled. (See sec. 3 Subject. 7 of the Research Act).
  - g. This permit is valid until 30 / 7 / 2013 provided all conditions are adhered to.
  - h. No live species of plants and animals may be taken out of the country without approval from relevant authorities.
  - i. A failure to observe the above conditions will result in automatic cancellation of this permit and the forfeit of your deposit.

Signed: .....

  
Minister for Education and Human Resources Development



Date: 8/6/12

## **Appendix C: Letter Seeking Permission - Permanent Secretary MEHRD**

4/ D O'Donoghue Street  
Hillcrest, Hamilton 3216  
New Zealand

----- Date

Mr. Charles Viva  
Permanent Secretary, MEHRD  
P.O Box G28, Honiara  
Solomon Islands

**Attention:** Mr. Timothy Ngele  
Undersecretary (Administration)  
MEHRD

Dear Sir,

### **RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY**

I write to seek your permission to use a selected secondary school located in Santa Isabel, to conduct a research study, on women's educational leadership, as a requirement towards my doctoral thesis. Please find attached a completed Solomon Islands Research Application Form including relevant attachments.

My research topic is on the matrilineal culture's influence on women's beliefs about educational leadership in the Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands context. The focus of my study is planned within the parameters of the expected outcomes, in relation to quality, that is highlighted in the SIESF (2007-2015) document, in an effort to contribute towards the improvement of teacher quality in the Solomon Islands education system. The outcome of this study will contribute invaluable information towards future efforts to improve leadership and women's participation in decision making in Solomon Islands secondary schools.

I will ensure that necessary ethical considerations are observed throughout the study as stipulated in the Solomon Islands Research Act (1984). Please refer to the research description (Appendix J) provided for more details about my proposed research.

I would appreciate if your office could favourably consider my request and grant me permission to pursue the above mentioned research study.

Please respond to my request by 1 May, 2012, via e-mail, so that I could make necessary arrangements to begin my data generation as soon as possible. My e-mail address is: sm25@waikato.ac.nz. I will follow-up on this request via telephone, after the above date, should I fail to receive a response from your office.

Thank you.  
Yours faithfully,

**Susanne Maezama**  
(Doctoral Student) University of Waikato, Hamilton, NZ

## **Appendix D: Letter Seeking Permission- Education Authority**

4 /D O'Donoghue Street  
Hillcrest  
Hamilton 3216  
New Zealand

----- Date:

Mr. Thomas Ena  
Chief Education Officer  
Santa Isabel Education Authority  
Buala  
Solomon Islands

Dear Sir,

### **RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY**

I would like to seek your permission to involve a secondary school that is operating under your education authority (EA), in a research study I will be conducting as a requirement towards my doctoral thesis as of 1<sup>st</sup>. July 2012.

My research topic is on women's educational leadership. The objective of my study is to investigate how the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture influences women's beliefs about educational leadership.

I will ensure that necessary ethical considerations will be observed throughout the study. Necessary measures will be taken to ensure that all participants' identities will be concealed in the reporting of data, although maintaining anonymity in our tight-knit communities can be a challenge.

To ensure confidentiality, participants in the research will be assured that any data they provide will be kept confidential for an indefinite period of time. Please refer to the research information sheet (Appendix K) attached for more details about the research itself.

I would appreciate it if your office could give me permission to involve the selected secondary school under your EA in this study. Please respond to my request by the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2012, via e-mail, so that I could make necessary arrangements to begin my data generation as soon as possible. My e-mail address is: sm25@waikato.ac.nz. I will follow-up on this request via telephone, after the above date, should I fail to receive a response from your office.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

**Susanne Maezama**  
(Doctoral Student)  
University of Waikato

# Appendix E: Santa Isabel Education Authority Approval Letter

9/14/2015

The University of Waikato Mail - Permission to conduct research study



Susanne Maezama <sm25@students.waikato.ac.nz>

## Permission to conduct research study

2 messages

Ellison Mane <isaeducation@solomon.com.sb>  
To: sm25@waikato.ac.nz

Thu, Sep 13, 2012 at 6:48 AM

Dear Madam,

My sincere apologies for the belated reply to your request.

Isabel Education authority has approved your request to undertake studies in its schools as requested.

To assist you with your studies I am giving names of teachers including teachers in the primary and ECE schools who are currently given responsibility posts in our schools as listed hereunder as per your approved research permit:

N0	Names	Schools	Responsibility Posts
1	Agnes Vihi Rumo	Sir Dudley Tuti College	HOD- Social study
2	Cynthia Rubaha		Senior Secondary Teacher- H.Economic
	Qwenderlyn Vicks	Kalenga CHS	Senior Secondary Teacher- Business Study
3	Helen Stine	Nagolau Primary School	Senior Teacher
4	Ruth Kariuvi	Rasa Primary School	Head Teacher
5	Linesu Hiro	Lilura Kindergarten	ECE Supervisor
6	Diana Vote	Lelegia Kindergarten	ECE Supervisor
7	Nancy Kikolo	Tataba Kindergarten	ECE Supervisor
8	Everlyn Tafe	Kamaosi Kindergarten	ECE Supervisor
9	Rachel Gathonoda	Kalenga Kindergarten	ECE Supervisor

Should the focus of your studies be with secondary schools only I am also giving names of those with responsibility posts in our other secondary schools as per table below:

N0	Names	Schools	Responsibility Posts
----	-------	---------	----------------------

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/?ui=2&ik=bac99d6542&view=pt&q=isaeducation%40solomon.com.sb&qs=true&search=query&th=139b7f2f1fe658fb&siml...> 1/2

1	Gladys Huba	Visena CHS	SST- Agriculture
2	Mellisah Devi		Senior Secondary Teacher- H.Economic
3	Ruita Bugoro	Guguha CHS	Careers mistress
4	Christa Meleha		SST – English
5	Julia Hara Boklo		SST- Home Economic
6	Vivian T. Dotho		SST- Agriculture
7	Everlyn Maomamo	Muana CHS	SST- Home Economic

I hope the above would be of some help in your preparation to your research.

Thank you

Ellison Mane  
Chief Education Officer  
Isabel Province

## **Appendix F: Letter Seeking Permission - School Principal**

4 D O'Donoghue Street  
Hillcrest  
Hamilton 3216,  
New Zealand

---

Date: 9/6/2012

Mr. Robert Manekaea  
Sir Duddley Tuti College  
Kamaosi  
Santa Isabel Province

Dear Sir,

### **RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY AT YOUR SCHOOL**

I would like to seek your permission to involve your school, more specifically women teachers who hold positions of responsibilities as deputy principals, heads of departments, administrators and or extra-curricular activities in a research study I will be conducting as a requirement towards my doctoral thesis, in July 2012 and March 2013.

The MEHRD and your EA have granted me permission to conduct this research in your secondary school. Please find attached a copy of a letter from the MEHRD secondary division supporting my research.

My research topic is on women's leadership in Santa Isabel, Secondary schools, Solomon Islands. The objective of my study is to investigate how the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture influences women's beliefs about educational leadership.

I will ensure that necessary ethical considerations are observed throughout the study. To ensure confidentiality, participants in the research will be assured that any data they provide will be kept confidential for an indefinite period of time. Please refer to the research information sheet attached for more details about the research itself.

I would appreciate your support in giving me permission to conduct this research study with the women teachers at your school. You may respond to my request by the 30 June 2012, in person or via telephone, as I need to make necessary arrangements to begin my data generation as soon as possible. My contact details in Honiara are as follows: **Postal Address:** C/o Selu Maezama, National Training Unit, MEHRD. P.O Box G28 Honiara, Solomon Islands.

**E-mail address:** sm25@waikato.ac.nz.

**Mobile Phone:** 7511981

I will follow-up on this request via telephone or by visiting your school, after the above date, should I fail to receive a response from you.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Susanne Maezama

Doctoral Student

University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

## Appendix G: Letter seeking Permission – Village Chief

[To be delivered by a person nominated by the researcher] 4/D

O'Donoghue Street  
Hillcrest  
Hamilton 3216,  
New Zealand

---

Date: 9/6/2012

Chief Dikahehe  
Tataba Village  
Santa Isabel Province

Dear Chief Dikahehe,

### RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY AT YOUR VILLAGE

I would like to seek your permission to involve your community, more specifically women who hold positions of responsibility as village committee president, chair, secretary or treasurer in a research study I will be conducting as a requirement towards my doctoral thesis, in July 2012 and March 2013.

The MEHRD has granted me permission to conduct this research in a selected secondary school in Santa Isabel. Please find attached a copy of a letter from the MEHRD secondary division supporting my research.

My research topic is on Women's leadership in Santa Isabel, secondary schools, Solomon Islands. The objective of my study is to investigate how the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture influence women's beliefs about educational leadership.

I will ensure that necessary ethical considerations are observed throughout the study. The confidentiality of participants in the research will be assured in that any data they provide will be kept confidential for an indefinite period of time. Please refer to the research information sheet (Appendix K) attached for more details about the research itself.

I would appreciate your support in giving me permission to conduct this research study with the women at your village. You may respond to my request by the 30th June 2012, in person or via telephone, as I need to make necessary arrangements to begin my data generation as soon as possible. My contact details in Honiara are as follows:

**Postal Address:** C/o Selu Maezama, National Training Unit, MEHRD. P.O Box G28 Honiara, Solomon Islands.

**E-mail address:** sm25@waikato.ac.nz.

**Mobile Phone:** 7511981

I will follow-up on this request via telephone or by visiting your village, after the above date, should I fail to receive a response from you.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Susanne Maezama  
Doctoral Student  
University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

## **Appendix H: Letter to Participants**

[To be delivered by the a person nominated by the researcher]

4/D O'Donoghue Street  
Hillcrest, Hamilton 3216  
New Zealand

-----  
Date: 10/6/2012

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Vuvugei toke. Greetings from the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.

I am seeking your cooperation to help me in a research study I am undertaking over the next 2 years. The study is on the influence of Santa Isabel matrilineal culture on women's beliefs about educational leadership. I would like to invite you to participate in this research study.

At the beginning of the research (July, 2012), I will visit your school/village to talk with you about the research. I will then conduct one face-to-face interview in July 2012 to find out how the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture influences your beliefs about educational leadership, including your practising of leadership in the school/community contexts. In March, 2013, I will visit your school/village to conduct focus group meetings to share with you the data generated from the interviews to identify what you think as important in developing your leadership practice.

Please indicate on the Consent Form (Appendix I) provided whether you would like to be involved in the interviews and focus group discussions or not.

I can assure you that the information you provide through the interview and the focus group will be kept confidential, and that I will not reveal your identity at any time. What you say in your responses may be quoted in my report, but your name will not be revealed.

Thank you so much for your time. Your cooperation is very much appreciated.

Susanne Maezama  
(Doctoral Student)  
University of Waikato, Hamilton, NZ

## Appendix I: Participants' Consent Form

Women's leadership in Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands secondary school: A case study.

Contact numbers of Investigators:

Researcher: Susanne Maezama 0221099657

Dissertation Chief Supervisor: Associate Professor Beverley Bell (07) 8384466  
Ext 4101

### Participant Consent Form

I \_\_\_\_\_ (print full name), agree to participate in the study, *Women's leadership in Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands secondary school: A case study*. I understand that my participation in this study will require the following processes. I agree to these as stated:

One face-to-face semi-structured interview conversation of 45 to 60 minutes duration and one focus group discussion of 1 to 2 hours duration. Field notes and digital tape recordings will be taken throughout these interviews and meetings and any worksheets or group notes which are completed will be collected by the researcher.

My confidentiality will be maintained in this study by the following procedures: I will be identified by a pseudonym in all field notes and in the dissertation and in any presentation or publication of this study.

The researcher, Susanne Maezama, is the only person who will know both my identity and my pseudonym

Field notes will also be available to the supervisors/examiners; however, they will not be aware of my identity. All information gained from the focus group session process will be used for illustrative purposes only. Any quotations used in publication will not be able to identify me personally.

I have the opportunity to withdraw from this study any time up until 1<sup>st</sup> December 2013.

If I have any queries or would like to be informed of the research findings I can contact Susanne Maezama on 0221099657. If I have any concerns regarding my rights in this study, I may contact the chief supervisor of this study:

Associate Professor Beverley Bell

University of Waikato

School of Education

PO Box 3105

Hamilton

Phone: 07 838 4466 Ext 4010

My signature below indicates that I have agreed to participate in this study, that I have received a copy of this consent form and an information letter about the study.

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix J: Research Information Sheet A**

[Written in Solomon Islands discursive style]

*(For the Permanent Secretary, MEHRD and relevant MEHRD Directors)*

**Researcher:** Susanne Maezama (Doctoral Student)  
University of Waikato, NZ, Hamilton

### **Introduction:**

This research study is pursued as a requirement for my doctoral thesis. However, the data generated will also be used in articles and conference papers that will provide information about understanding women's views of educational leadership in the matrilineal context. Similarly, it will give empirical substance to address issues of women's invisibility in educational leadership. The outcome of this study will have significant implications for teacher education, teacher inservice education, teacher induction and teacher professional development in Solomon Islands, as the data generated can be used to inform policy decisions relating to gender policies in the above areas. Such policies should help drive the design and implementation of teacher induction, professional development and in-service education and leadership programmes in the future. The establishment of such programmes is critical in addressing the quality issues in teaching and learning that are highlighted in the Solomon Islands education working documents, the SIESF (2007-2015) and the SINEAP (2009-2011). The focus of this study is planned within the parameters of the expected outcomes, in relation to quality that is highlighted in the SIESF (2007/2015) document, in an effort to contribute towards the improvement of teacher quality and women participation in decision making in the Solomon Islands education system. Data for the study will be obtained through individual face-to-face interviews and focus group meetings.

### **Research Title:**

Women's leadership in Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands secondary schools: A Case study.

### **Research Focus /Objectives**

The main focus of this study is to investigate how the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture influences women's beliefs about educational leadership. The study will also examine how these beliefs influence women's decisions to take up and practise leadership and to identify what women perceive as important in developing their leadership practices.

### **Research Participants**

Participants will be women teachers from Santa Isabel, who are currently employed in the school and hold positions such as former/current principal, deputy principal, head of department or administration staff. This is because I would like to explore the influences of the matrilineal culture on women's beliefs about educational leadership in order to establish an in-depth understanding of their leadership practices and needs.

### **Ethical Considerations:**

Permission will be sought from all relevant authorities before this study can begin and proceed. The participants will be involved in the study on a voluntary basis, after they have signed a Consent Form. Data generated through this research will be kept confidential for an indefinite period of time and any personal information obtained from the participants will be securely stored for the duration of the research project. Participants may withdraw from the study up to 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2013.

### **Supervisors:**

Associate Professor Beverley Bell,  
Dr, Noeline Wright,  
Dr. Rachel McNae

### **Cultural advisor:**

Dr. Patricia Rodie

## **Appendix K: Research Information Sheet B**

[Written in Solomon Islands discursive style]  
(All participants, Education Authority, School Principal and community elder)

**Researcher:** Susanne Maezama (Doctoral Student)  
University of Waikato, NZ, Hamilton

### **Introduction:**

This research study is pursued as a requirement for my doctoral thesis. However, the data generated will also be used in articles and conference papers that will provide information about understanding women's views of educational leadership in the matrilineal context. Similarly, it will give empirical substance to address issues of women's invisibility in educational leadership. The outcome of this study will have significant implications for teacher education, teacher inservice education, teacher induction and teacher professional development in Solomon Islands, as the data generated can be used to inform policy decisions relating to gender policies in the above areas. Such policies should help drive the design and implementation of teacher induction, professional development and inservice education programmes in the future. The establishment of such programmes is critical in addressing the quality issues in teaching and learning that are highlighted in the Solomon Islands education working documents, the SIESF (2007-2015) and the SINEAP (2009-2011). The focus of this study is planned within the parameters of the expected outcomes, in relation to quality that is highlighted in the SIESF (2007-2015) document, in an effort to contribute towards the improvement of teacher quality and women's participation in decision making in the Solomon Islands education system. Data for the study will be obtained through individual face-to-face interviews and focus group meetings.

### **Research Title:**

Women's leadership in Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands secondary schools: A Case study.

### **Research Focus /Objectives**

The main focus of this study is to investigate how the Santa Isabel matrilineal culture influences women's beliefs about educational leadership. The study will also examine how these beliefs influence women's decisions to take up and practise leadership and to identify what women feel as important in developing their leadership practices.

### **Research Participants**

The participants are women teachers from Santa Isabel and who are currently employed in the school and hold positions such as former/current principal, deputy principal, and heads of department or administration staff. This is because I would like to explore the influences of the matrilineal culture on women's beliefs about educational leadership in order to establish an indepth understanding of their leadership practices and needs.

### **Ethical Considerations:**

Permission will be sought from all relevant authorities before this study can begin and proceed. The participants will be involved in the study on a voluntary basis, after they have signed a Consent Form. Data generated through this research will be kept confidential for an indefinite period of time and any personal information obtained from the participants will be securely stored for the duration of the research project. Participants may withdraw from the study up to 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2013.

### **Supervisors:**

Associate Professor Beverley Bell,  
Dr, Noeline Wright,  
Dr. Rachel McNae

### **Cultural advisor:**

Dr. Patricia Rodie

## **Appendix L: Interview Schedule 1 – Individual Interviews**

Welcome statement, Introduction to interview...

### **Self**

1. Where in Santa Isabel do you come from? Tribe? Languages?
2. How long have you been teaching in secondary school/ leading in your community?
3. What is your role in the school/Community?
4. What do you believe good leadership looks like, feels like, and sounds like in our matrilineal culture?
5. What opportunities do you get to show leadership in your school/community?
6. What were some of the challenges you experienced being in this leadership position? E.g. Views of others, decision-making processes... How do you view your own leadership?
7. Did you feel prepared to take on these roles?
8. Do you feel that this helped you do an effective job and fill this role?
9. Who has supported you in your leadership role? E.g. Family, colleagues. Is there anything else that you see as supporting you in your leadership role? To be a leader?

### **Wider Community**

10. Do you believe that anyone has the opportunity to be leaders in your school/community?
11. How do you perceive women leaders are viewed in your school/ community?

### **Prompts:**

1. What do you mean by that?
2. Can you clarify that for me?
3. What would be an example of...?
4. Tell me more about.....?
5. Why would that be so....?
6. How do you know.....?

## **Appendix M: Interview Schedule 2- Focus Groups**

The conversation we had in October to November, 2012 suggested that the matrilineal culture may have influenced your leadership beliefs and practices in a lot of ways.

**Can you recall what happened during your:**

- (a) Early childhood?
- (b) Primary school?
- (c) Secondary school?
- (d) After Secondary school?
- (e) College and/ or university years?
- (f) After your college and/or university years?

**Let us talk about how our grandmothers and mothers lead.**

- (a) What do you observe? Let us recall?
- (b) Incidents you remember
- (c) Things they were involved in
- (d) How they were respected by their surroundings
- (e) (e) How do you think they valued themselves?

**Let us talk about the things we did/do with our grandmothers and mothers that showed leadership.**

- (a) What do we notice? Let us recall examples
- (b) Incidents we remember
- (c) Things we were involved in
- (d) How we were respected by our surrounding
- (e) (e) How do you think we valued ourselves?

**When looking back at how our grandmothers and mothers lead, do you see anything that is different from how we lead now?**

- (a) What do you observe? Let us give examples
- (b) Incidents you remember
- (c) Things you involved in
- (d) How were/are we respected by our surrounding?
- (e) How do you think we valued ourselves?

## **Appendix N: Interview Schedule 3 – Follow Up**

In the conversations we had during the individual interviews in 2012 and focus group discussions in 2013, I found that you are very knowledgeable about your role as leaders in the community. Please can you say more about the areas I am going talk to you about?

- Describe your learning with your grandmothers and mothers and how they relate to your own leadership both in the school and the community
- What do you do mostly when you lead in the school or community? Can you give some examples?
- What do you think about your leadership in terms of the huge responsibilities that your matrilineal culture place on you?
- Let's talk more about how you think you can use the matrilineal leadership ideals you have in other places such as church and schools.

## Appendix O: Data Collection Time Line

Method	Participants	Date	Time
Interviews	Hanai	27 October, 2012	Morning (10:00 -11:00)
	Guri	27 October, 2012	Night (7:00 - 8:00 pm)
	Diana	28 October, 2012	Morning (9:00 -10:00 am)
	Elena	28 October, 2012	Afternoon (1:00 - 2:00 pm)
	Joska	30 October, 2012	Morning (10:00 - 11:00 am)
	Me'a	31 October, 2012	Afternoon (1:00 – 2:00 pm)
	Iona	3 November, 2012	Afternoon (2:00 – 3:00 pm)
	Te'e	5 November, 2012	Morning (9:00 – 10:00 am)
	Haidu	8 November, 2102	Afternoon (1:00 - 2:00 pm)
	Anika	11 November, 2102	Morning (10:00 – 11:00am)
Observations	Hanai	18 November, 2012	Morning (8:00 -10:00am)
	Iona	21 November, 2012	Morning (10:00 -12:00)
	Me'a	23 November, 2012	Afternoon (2:00 - 4:00 pm)
	Diana	25 November, 2102	Morning (10:00 - 12:00)
	Anika	30 November, 2012	Morning (10:00 -12:00)
	Te'e	30 November, 2012	Night (7:00 -10:00 pm)
Focus groups & observations	Hanai, Guri, Anika & Elena	14 July, 2013	Afternoon (1:00 – 2:00 pm) &
	Me'a, Te'e & Haidu	8 Sept, 2013	Afternoon (1: 00 – 2:00 pm)
	Iona, Joska & Daina	15 Sept, 2013	Afternoon (1:00- 2:00 pm)
Observations	Hanai	20 July, 2013	Evening (3:00- 6:00pm)
	Anika	28 July, 2013	Morning (10:00- 1:00pm)
	Me'a	10 Sept, 2013	Night (7:00-10:00 pm)
	Te'e	14 Sept, 2013	Night (7:00-10:00 pm)
	Iona	18 Sept, 2013	Morning (9:00-1200 pm)
	Diana	22 Sept, 2103	Night (7:00- 11:00pm)
Follow – up Interviews	Hanai	2 March, 2014	7:00 pm – 8:00 pm
	Iona	7 March, 2014	written responses
	Me'a	14 March, 2014	written responses
	Diana	16 March, 2014	7:00pm- 8:00 pm
	Anika	17 March 2014	7:00 pm – 8:00 pm

**Appendix P: Field Diary and Observation Examples**

<b>Snapshots</b>	<b>Occasions</b>	<b>Excerpts from reflective diary</b>
Field Activities	Informal meeting 1	<p><b>18 October 2012</b>– Around 6:30 pm my younger sister and sister-in law arrive at my home with cooked food. As we sat talking about what they have cooked 10 women leaders in the village all came in as a group also with a plate of cooked food each and fruits and vegetables. This illustrates the ritual of gift giving and entering someone’s house never empty handed.</p>

	<p>Welcome visit (<i>Sigo</i>)</p>	<p><b>28 October 2012</b> – Around 9:30 am the Village Mothers Union president (one of my participants) came to my house and told me that there will be a welcome visit for my Son’s wife and their 2 year old son who accompanied me to the village for the first time during my field work. Around 10:30 am, we witnessed one of these cultural ceremonies. The whole village (men, women, youth, children) came as a group, assembled under a shady tree near our house and sang a song (<i>kiloa, kiri kiloa, roгна fifilo sua</i>) meaning this bird by the name of kiloa wants to come and see your child and danced and clapped as they approached.</p>
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<p>Different Types of reflections</p>	<p>Reflection action(reflecting to Interviews)</p>	<p>in <b>27 October 2012</b> – When I had my second interview. I felt awkward when she only gave one word responses to my questions even when I probed and rephrased the questions. I thought about this...I assumed, maybe she did not feel comfortable to share with me. I thought about this later and I understood that this participant was not sharing openly with me because of our close relationship. We are first cousins and I am older than her. We talked freely with each other though, when she came and visited me when I arrived, or was it because I was older than her or was I asking questions that she did not understand.</p>
	<p>Reflection on action completing an event, interview or observation</p>	<p><b>31 October, 2012</b> – When listening after to Me’a during our interview, I felt she should give more examples on good matrilineal leadership practices from her experiences. She talked about good leadership as working collaboratively with others, and gave an example of her grandmother practicing it with her sisters in garden making, but did not say much or give examples to her current practice. I gathered from this interview that I will have to probe more on this question in my upcoming interviews.</p>

	Reflection through Action (memos Written when transcribing)	<b>5 November, 2012-</b> When I was transcribing the interview I had on 3/11/2012, I realised that it would be important to ask questions about different cultural rituals that women
		are involved in the next interviews, seek their views about how this rituals link to women's leadership practices, more practical examples. Though, I probed about specific practical leadership practices that may be illustrated through a cultural ritual, such as giving love gifts, she gave responses that were very general. It was good that I had planned for the observations so that I can make the links to understand this approaches of leadership
Notes on participants informal observation	Informal observation on my participants	<b>20 July 2013</b> – Today, I am with Claudia. She is leading the women in distributing bed nets to every household in the village. There are 10 youths (boys and girls) and 10 adults (males and females). They all sit around Claudia as they begin with prayers and then listened attentively to the instructions given. The 20 people involved were given a household each to go visit. All households received the number of bed nets which were calculated on the number of people in a particular household. Claudia received support and was respected and everyone was happy to receive their bed nets.