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Experiences of Matrilineal Solomon Islands Women

Leaders in the Formal Sector

A thesis

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'My mother was my first country. The first place I ever lived'
- Nayyirah Waheed –

I dedicate this thesis to Rosemilly, Castro and Seinitago.

Abstract

This thesis explores Solomon Islands women leaders working in the formal sector of the Solomon Islands, and how they perceive their matrilineal cultural heritage has influenced their career progression. This study is motivated to give empirical substance to address issues of women's invisibility in the formal sector of the Solomon Islands.

Qualitative research methodologies, specifically, in-depth interview and narrative inquiry were utilised to capture the stories of 14 women, from their matrilineal upbringing, through to their respective careers in the formal sector. All the participants are employed in either the public sector or the Government sector and are based in the capital of Honiara, Solomon Islands.

Appropriately, critical feminist theory was employed to analyze and uncover elements of my data that best depicts the women's authentic experiences, challenges, and successes.

The key findings of this study found that the women do attribute certain ideals within their matrilineal upbringing to their career progression, but acknowledge that regardless of this, there are still barriers and challenges present within the formal sector that continues to impede the participation of women in the managerial roles of organisations.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Outline of the study

Numerous islands in the Solomon Islands are guided by the governance of a matrilineal society (Maetala, 2008; Pollard, 2000). Despite the pervasive presence of male dominance marginalising the voices of women throughout these societies (Maetala, 2008), women have assumed various roles within their matrilineal communities that have demonstrated strands of leadership, empowering matrilineal practices to remain. Overtime, there have been increases in women engaging in education and paid work. Although these strides in education and paid employment are positive steps for Solomon Islands women, women are still heavily underrepresented in managerial levels within the formal sector of the Solomon Islands. However, there is evidence of a positive number of women stamping their mark on leadership roles across the Government and public sector of the Solomon Islands. This study probes the private sphere of a matrilineal society and the public sphere of the formal sector, to understand how the experiences of being raised in a matrilineal society has influenced the career progression of matrilineal Solomon Islands women leaders in the formal sector. The main underlying question this study hopes to answer is:

Do you attribute certain aspects of your matrilineal upbringing to your career progression?

This introductory chapter highlights my reasons for undertaking this research, and a brief context of the Solomon Islands.

1.1 Why this research?

This research was influenced by my curiosities to answer some of the behaviours and traits I observed in my mother, aunties, cousin sisters and elderly women in my family and extended village. I saw in them leadership, respect, humility, and the ability to bring the family or the community together. This curiosity was the backbone to my study.

I was born in the Solomon Islands, but moved to New Zealand with my family. Along with hopes of adding substance to existing literature on Solomon Islands women, this research has been a journey to find my roots and reflect on how our indigenous ways of living can still be used in this present day to create a way of life that respects both our past and present.

1.2 The context of the study

Situated North-East of Australia, the Solomon Islands is a scattered archipelago that borderlines Papua New Guinea to the West, and Vanuatu on the East. The Solomon Islands are rich in diversity, with a population of 562, 231, encompassing a diverse range of ethnicities (Melanesian, Polynesian, Micronesian), languages and customs. There are nine provinces; of these, the following are matrilineal: Santa Isabel Province, Guadalcanal Province, Makira Province, and various islands in the Western Province. The capital Honiara is

situated on Guadalcanal Island, a melting pot where majority of business and economic infrastructure is located.

There are six chapters within this report. The introduction chapter introduced the outline to my study and reflected on why I became interested to pursue this research. Chapter two covers the literature review which examines literature on the constructs of a matrilineal society, and the many faces of the Solomon Islands woman. The third chapter outlines my research design, and the different methodologies employed to successfully carry out a field study. The fourth chapter covers my theoretical framework. The fifth chapter I present my findings and illuminate the different themes that emerged from my findings. The sixth chapter is a discussion of the findings in relation to the literature covered in chapter two. The last chapter I conclude my research, illustrate the limitations, and provide recommendations for future research in this field of study that can bring about change and further the participation of women in leadership positions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

A number of scholars recognise that matrilineal societies have existed for thousands of years (Lafitau, 1724; Ferguson, 1767; Schneider & Gough, 1961; Hogbin, 1964; Fenton & Moore, 1969; Kabutaulaka, 2000; Humphries & Thomas, 2011; Lyngdoh & Pati, 2013). These scholars recognise that matrilineal societies have distinctive characteristics and processes that encompass a unique social organisation. In this literature review, I examine literature on matrilineal societies and Solomon Islands women.

The first half covers key aspects of a matrilineal society. Beginning with early definitions of a matrilineal society, which leads to women's position in a matrilineal society, mother and child relationship, land ownership and inheritance and the status of men within a matrilineal society. The aim of exploring these key aspects is to see the progression of matrilineal societies across the world, and if, and how they have changed over time.

The second half covers literature on Solomon Islands women. I open with describing women engaged in subsistence work in the Solomon Islands. This is followed by a discussion on education and women in the Solomon Islands, women in work and finally, women in politics. Through this literature review I hope to identify a gap in research, which conveys the work of women from matrilineal societies holding leadership positions in the Solomon Islands. I anticipate that there is connecting evidence from the literature covering

matrilineal societies and these particular women, and I aim to explore whether the influences of matrilineal culture has shaped their career progression in organisations that tend to grasp westernised bureaucratic structures.

2.1 Barriers to women in the formal sector

Despite significant increases in women's participation in paid employment, women continue to face barriers across organisations (Halpern, 2005; Patton & Johns, 2012). The following section analyses well-known barriers in the literature, such as family responsibilities, and organisational structures in the work place that continue to impede the experiences of women in the formal sector. An underlying fact entwining the different barriers is the fact that organisations are still fundamentally dominated by men (O'neil, Hopkins & Bilimoria, 2008; Metz, 2011). Barriers to women in management exist globally, and are most prominent in the higher organisational level, where Berthoin & Izraeli (1993) highlight in an overview of women in management worldwide, stating: "probably the single most important hurdle for women in management in all industrialized countries is the persistent stereotype that associates management with being male" (p. 63).

2.1.2 Family responsibilities

For women, combining both work and family responsibilities continues to be a barrier impeding their participation in the formal sector (Fox & Lituchy, 2012; Gangl & Ziefle, 2009; Neck, 2015; Barsh and Yee, 2012; Granleese, 2004; Kark and Eagly, 2010). In a study nationally representing a group of highly qualified

women in the United States of America, Hewlett and Luce (2005) found that 44% of women drop out of mainstream careers for family time, compared to men at 12%. Social role theories influence the popular view attributing family responsibilities to women leaving their organisations (Metz, 2011). According to social role theory, women are largely responsible for caring for the family, while men assume the role of breadwinner (Metz, 2011; Eagly, 1987). To all appearances women's domestic responsibilities exceed men's (Bianchi et al, 2000; Milkie & Peltola, 1999, Bianchi, 2000). Shelton (1992) comments that women can be committed equally as mothers and workers, yet feel more strain compared to men, because of the tendency to sacrifice more and a higher responsibility to the home. Although mothers and fathers will tend to children, mothers still endure the most of childcare duties, while the involvement of the father is of a more enjoyable nature (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). These social roles create a pervasive idea that women face a double burden of both work and domestic duties that increases absenteeism (Bratberg et al., 2002). Absenteeism creates gender stereotypes attached to women in the workplace that affects their chance of employment in the hiring stages, or when selecting women for senior positions (Liu, 2013). Additionally, higher absenteeism among women is widely attributed to social expectations that women will be absent due to childcare (Patton & Johns, 2007; Addae, Johns & Boies, 2013). Realities such as these discourage women from re-entering the labour market. Comparing the family domain along-side the pressures of work life is incompatible for women and this incompatibility increases the lack of participation and absenteeism in one domain; the work domain (Greenhaus &

Beutell, 1985). Working women who have interrupted their careers are more likely to re-enter the labour market as part-time workers, and often accept job offers that do not measure up to their qualifications (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Although, organisations implement family-friendly policies enabling women to maintain continuous employment, evidence still suggests they have done little to improve the terms on which the average mother re-enters the formal sector (Waldfoegel, 1998; Arun, Arun & Borroah, 2004). Scholars accept that implications of family responsibilities on women may also be due to unsupportive cultures of organisations (Neck, 2015; Beck & Davis, 2005). The next sections examines these issues.

2.1.3 Organizational factors

Scholars have pinpointed several organisational-level factors that highlight social structures which subliminally reserves top management jobs for men (Liu, 2013; Trauth, Quesenberry, & Huang, 2009). Male dominance within an organisation influences the organisation's culture with embedded 'masculine value systems' (Trauth, Quesenberry, & Huang, 2009; Morgan, 1998). Morgan (1998) stated that masculine value systems pushes women out of organisations physically and psychologically, and as a result conflict between smaller female networks and the majority male component may. Male dominance within the workplace is also reinforced through the idea of the 'old boys club' within organisations (Liu, 2013; Mcdonald, 2011). The 'old boys club' is stereotypically attached too white men with status, whose membership to this certain group significantly increases a person's labour market opportunities

(Oakley, 2000; Simon & Warner, 1992; McDonald, 2011). Groups such as these give substance to the continual segregation of gender and race inequality theories within the workplace (McDonald, 2011). Generally, the literature also comments that human resource practices such as selection, performance appraisals, and training and development are also influenced by these groups, where evidence points to hiring individuals similar to themselves- traditionally referring back to the stereotypical traditional male leadership (Lui, 2013; Furst & Reeves, 2008). It is apparent throughout the literature that most of the common barriers women face in the formal sector are somehow interconnected. The barriers that I have discussed in this literature are well-known barriers common to western societies. This study hopes to discover two things with barriers in the formal sector: whether women in the formal sector of the Solomon Islands experience the same barriers, and to ascertain other unknown barriers related to the environment of the formal sector in the Solomon Islands.

2.2 Defining a matrilineal society

Scholars posit matrilineal societies as a form of social organisation where lineage is traced through the mother's line (Schneider & Gough; 1961; Holden, Sear & Mace, 2003; Andersen, Bulte, Gneezy & List, 2008; Thomas & Humphries, 2011). Holden et. al (2003) states "relatedness through females is regarded as more culturally significant than relatedness through males" (p. 100). This view is shared by Father Lafitau (1724), an important ethnographer who commented on early matrilineal societies. Indeed, research on matrilineal

societies has a long history, with Lafitau noting his views on Native American Iroquois women:

Nothing, however, is more real than this superiority of the women. It is of them that the Nation really consists; and it is through them that the nobility of the blood, the genealogical tree and the families are perpetuated. All real authority is vested in them. The land, the fields and their harvest all belongs to them. They are the souls of the Councils, the arbiters of peace and war. They have charge of the public treasury. To them are given the slaves. They arrange marriages. The children are their domain, and it is through their blood that the order of succession is transmitted. (Lafitau, 1724, pp. 66-67)

Cultural significance through leadership and ownership mentioned by Lafitau presented a utopia for women in matrilineal societies with regards to power. This power is further cemented in the literature by anthropologist, Lewis Morgan who proposed the earliest foundation of the home was founded in a matrilineal society. (1881; 1962; 1963; 1965). Morgan (1965) affirms Iroquois women were “the great power among the clans, as everywhere else” (p. 66). According to Schoolcraft (1860), power within the clans transferred to considerable political influence stating:

They are the only tribes in America, north and south, so far as we have any accounts, who gave to woman a conservative power in their political deliberations. Iroquois matrons had their representative in the public councils; and they exercised a negative, or what we call a veto power, in the important question of the declaration of war. They had the right also to interpose in bringing about a peace. (Schoolcraft, 1860, pp. 195-196)

Undoubtedly, first-hand accounts and descriptions presented by ethnologist, Father Lafitau and anthropologist, Lewis Morgan validate the crucial role women hold in the formation of a matrilineal society. Furthermore, these accounts illustrate how a social organisation such as a matrilineal society

endorses and embraces power held by women during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Overtime, the utopian power discussed earlier slowly diminishes and is challenged across several matrilineal societies. These reasons will be discussed further into this literature review.

2.2.1 Women's position in a matrilineal society

Several scholars have argued that most matrilineal societies are horticultural, communal societies (Schneider & Gough, 1961; Holden & Mace, 2003; Lancaster, 1976). This view is connected to the position of women in matrilineal societies. Supporters of matrilineality suggest this social organisation empowers women to understand and perform obligations to their families and communities (Lyngdoh & Pati, 2003; Thomas & Humphries, 2011; Thomas, 2013). These obligations place women from matrilineal societies in positions of power (Hirschmann & Vaughn, 1983). Hirschmann & Vaughn (1983) found that obligation to land offers women in Zomba, Malawi noticeably greater power. Individual women under the matrilineal inheritance system are able to maintain their land through successive marriages; offering them a higher security of tenure when compared to the men (Hirschmann & Vaughn, 1983). For this reason, communities uphold these women as leaders because they provide the means to every day subsistence and a stable livelihood for their children.

Lyngdoh & Pati (2003) asserts that "matrilineality recognizes and empowers women in positions of authority. It enlightens women to understand and enact obligations to their families and communities." (p. 49). Lyngdoh & Pati (2003)

go on to say that exercising this power and authority in the lowest level of the family home is “normal” within matrilineal societies (p. 49). Enacting such obligations is still exercising some form of power, although the setting of the home does not allow for the option for maximum change. Across current literature on matrilineal societies, there is a stark contrast to the power exerted by women noted by Father Lafitau noted in 1724. This decline in power has changed the position of women within matrilineal societies. However, the key aspects of matrilineal societies still remained, and this is further elaborated on throughout this literature review.

2.2.2 Relationship between mother and child

Several researchers have viewed the relationship of mother and child as the backbone of a matrilineal society (Biedelman, 1971; Holy, 1986; Peters, 2010; Schneider, 2012). Common blood ties the mother and child, and through this connection, the transmission of knowledge, wealth, and tradition takes place (Biedelman, 1971; Peters, 2010). Schneider (2012) observed the degree of this relationship on the matrilineal island of Pororan in Papua New Guinea. ‘Bihainim mama’ meaning, following one’s mother is key to continuing the expectations of Pororan society (Schneider, 2012). Schneider (2012) describes how the term ‘bihainim mama’ holds a key component of matrilineal kinship on the island of Pororan:

in the beginning the child goes around during the day and comes back to the mother every night, and once the girls grows older, she will always stay with her parents and serve them, whilst serving her husband and the wider community... You go with your mother, stay with your mother. Where mother goes you go, you must hear your

mother's talk, you must always follow your mother. (Schneider, 2012, pp. 57-58)

'Bihainim mama' speaks of the training of children in matrilineal societies, especially girls, to take over the mantle of womanhood; involving increased responsibilities for the family and the wider community. This mother-child bond extends to adulthood (Holy, 1986). Holy's (1986) book, based on matrilineal Zambia, Africa, uncovered the mother-child bond had an affect on residential arrangements in the child's later life. 72.7% of hut owners in the villages of Guta and Cifokoboyo lived in their mother's matrilocality, meaning, majority of husband's moved in with their wives in the vicinity of the wife's mother (Petersen, 1982; Holy, 1986). With their daughters living in the same vicinity as their parents, Holy (1986) identified that both villages of Guta and Cofokoboyo placed great emphasis on the mother-child bond. In doing so, the perpetuation of this strong bond will perpetuate matrilineality from one generation to another within these villages (Holy, 1986).

Prominent women's leader for gender and development in the Solomon Islands, Alice Pollard, stresses the importance of children. Though her research is not based specifically on matrilineal societies in the Solomon Islands, her findings support Holy (1986) and Schneider's (2012) ideas around the prominence of the child and mother figures. Pollard (2006) describes the birth of a girl child as a celebration of the community:

"She is my basket of wealth, she is my bundle of bamboo of water, she is my bundle of firewood, my hostess, the one who works hard and serves were often chanted by parents, uncles, aunties, grandparents and relatives. These chants clearly indicated the value and roles of

women and their position of leadership at birth and throughout the entire life span” (Pollard, 2006, p.101).

Interestingly, Pollard’s (2006) research comments on the leadership position of these girls at birth; a common key aspect of women in matrilineal societies mentioned earlier. Ties between a mother and child serves as a tool for the fostering of leadership within women in matrilineal societies, and more importantly, the continuation of a matrilineal society.

2.2.3 Land ownership and inheritance

Ideals around succession and inheritance link in with the relations of a mother to her children. Land ownership is key within matrilineal societies (Hogbin, 1964; Kabutaulaka, 2000; Pollard, 2000; Maetala, 2008; Peters, 2010). The term ‘succession’ refers to the transmission of rights in general, specifically, property inheritance in matrilineal societies (Radcliffe-Brown, 1934). Inheritance of land in the village of Zomba, Southern Malawi is passed down from mother to daughter, whilst their sons go to live with their wives once they are married (Peters, 2010). Daughters within Zomba are identified as younger females of the village where no specificity is made with whom they receive land and fields from, albeit, their mother, mother’s sister, grandmother or other matrilineal relatives (Peters, 2010). The lack of specificity reveals a flat structured leadership style, where women across Zomba have some form of authority when dealing with land and property (Peters, 2010). The degree of which land ownership rests within women varies between matrilineal societies. Peters (2010) reviews the matrilineal society of Zomba and states that:

One hundred and twenty years later, I was told the very same thing- that women are the 'builders of the village'. People in the Zomba Disicts, as throughout the Shire Highlands, follow matrilineal and matrilocal principles: that is, inheritance and succession run through the female line so that children are members of their mother's lineage, the heir to a male authority holder is his sister's son, and, on marriage, husbands move to their wives' village. (Peters, 2010, p. 182).

Peters (2010) clearly emphasises the principles of matrilineality within Zomba still largely influence the organisation of land inheritance and succession. Similarly, several islands across Melanesia; land ownership and succession is traced through the woman's line (Hogbin, 1964; Oliver, 1989; Pollard, 2000). However, over the years, anthropological and sociological literature have disclosed how modernity has undermined ideals around inheritance and succession within a matrilineal society. Loosely, modernity is referred to as the processes of demographic features and institutions of capitalism, such as market economies, nation states and cities and industrial production (Jackson, 2015). The processes mentioned by Jackson (2015) is viewed as a rupture for broadening gender equality implications and also applies to kinship within matrilineal societies (Appadurai, 1996). Jackson (2015) describes the decline of matrilineal norms in Zambia, due to the continued pressures of social change and capitalism on matrilineality. Fathers and sons claim a sense of injustice when investments by sons and fathers to enhance the land are not rewarded through property inheritance (Jackson, 2015). The growing conflict within matrilineal kins have resulted in father's investing in their sons through the writing of wills to ensure the transmission of property to their son's, rather than their sister's sons (Vubo, 2005). East New Britain, Papua New Guinea mirrors the rise of modernity in Zambia. Keir Martin (2004) tells of the 'growing tensions' between

matrilineal-land holding clan members and individuals who empathise with the increasing importance on the modern nuclear family and furthermore, the extension of capital through business ventures (p. 1). An individual in support of the latter conveyed his thoughts, stating:

This custom from the past is no good. Our ground is clan ground, but my ground is my ground automatically. I will never give it to the clan, no way. This kind of thinking is just for the old or the ancestors, now we've been to school we've got better ideas. If I develop this ground with my children. With my sweat. I'm just going to come and let the nephews kick them off?! No way. Not now!... You're making the man's family suffer... The father planted the cocoa. It's not the nephew's. It's not the clan's. (Martin, 2004, p. 4)

The strength with which these feelings were expressed in East New Britain reflect discussions within current literature surrounding matrilineal societies. Growing effects of modernity and the developing free market has clashed with land inheritance and succession processes within several matrilineal societies. Females spearhead decisions around land and succession (Hogbin, 1964; Oliver, 1989; Pollard, 2000), and as a result, a natural communal environment is nurtured, which clashes with current debates in the literature. Majority of present literature has shifted towards the effects of matrilineal ideals on the economy, additionally, implications of the position both men and their children hold within matrilineal societies (Vubo, 2005; Sear, 2008; Andersen, Bulte, Gneezy, List, 2008; Peters, 2010).

However advocates of a matrilineal society; Humphries & Thomas (2011) are adamant that matrilineality empowers women, and the transmission of this empowerment that is passed to their female children will help towards the notion of gender equality and women's participation in a modern day economy.

2.2.4 Status of men within a matrilineal society

The increase of capital within a matrilineal society corresponds with the increased status of men. Men play a vital role in a matrilineal society, especially in the economic area (Petersen, 1982, Lancaster, 1976). Early European trader, Cheyne (1971) recorded descriptions of the importance of men as agriculturalists on Ponape Island in the Federated States of Micronesia, he states:

All the outdoor labour is chiefly performed by the men, whose employment consists in building houses and canoes, planting yams, fishing and bringing home the produce of their plantations, also planting Kava and cooking. (p. 188)

The role of the agriculturalist man still remained on Ponape Island but intensified over the years (Petersen, 1982). Imported goods became favoured over local produce, whilst manufactured goods were largely paid for through the intensification of labour enacted by Ponapean men (Petersen, 1982). Craftwork such as weaving, fine tapa cloth, and ornaments created by women on Ponape Island was replaced by products from European, Japanese and American factories (Petersen, 1982). This affected the status of women; turning them into consumers due to their economic reliance on male-dominated agricultural activities, and the depletion of their craft (Petersen, 1982). Lancaster (1976) posits “most women in tribes practicing simple horticulture normally have not participated as fully as men in the sphere of the prestige or political economy” (Lancaster, 1976, p. 540). Greater engagement in economic activities by men in matrilineal societies may be a reason for increased

questions and animosity around female land ownership and inheritance; a key aspect in matrilineal societies. Lenski (1966) posits, "It has been observed that in societies not disturbed by capitalist social relations, goods and services tend to be distributed more or less equally and on the basis of need" (p. 46). Whereas, presently, the ideals of the communal need are replaced with capitalist principles such as rationality. Mtika and Doctor (2002) elaborates:

As capitalism enforces its ideals on society, social life becomes more rationalised; exchange behaviour is driven by selfish goals involving calculation of rewards/benefits and punishments/costs rather than collective preferences. (pp. 91-92)

Mtika & Doctor (2002) go on stating that capitalism encourages a different set of values in economic production which weakens matrilineity. One would assume this weakening of matrilineity refers to the increased involvement of men in the economic sector, and the weakening of the status of women in matrilineal societies. Either way, there is evidence that the status of men elevates with the increase of capitalism.

2.2.5 Ascribed traditional roles

Women across the Pacific combine the roles of housewife, mother, caregivers, and nurturers of children, family breadwinner and backbone of the kinship (Tongamo, 1988). The crucial women play in Melanesian society have been highlighted by certain writers (Pollard, 2000, 2003; Cox & Aitsi, 1988; Tuivaga; 1988). Ascribed traditional roles for women in Melanesia traditionally stress that women provide food for the family, raises pigs, keeps the home clean and can provide for social and ritual activities (Cox & Aitsi, 1988). Similar to

descriptions around women in matrilineal societies, Pollard (2003) comments on women in indigenous societies:

Indigenous societies acknowledge the contributions of women, and place women at the centre of the family, as they bind the present generation with the future, and link tribes with one another. (p.46).

From birth, until physically competent; girls are taught how to assist their mothers when working in the gardens or tending to activities at home (Pollard, 2000). These ideals re-affirm natural socialization where women and men learn to “practice a set of scripts and must remain within their feminine and masculine roles” (Kilavanwa, 2004, p. 10). Regardless of the low status women in Melanesia hold, they do not see their role as degrading and their status as inferior to men, rather, they see themselves as supportive figures for their husbands and men in general, and the success of their husbands reflect their own (Pollard, 2000). Nevertheless, it would be interesting to see if these views still reflect the current opinion of Solomon Islands women. Particularly, whether these notions have changed the perspectives of women who were raised in a traditional Melanesian setting, and have since moved to an urban setting exposed to Westernised influences and an increase in feminist dialogue.

2.3 Solomon Islands women

Offering a diverse image of the Solomon Islands woman is vital in this study, as there are many faces to the Solomon Islands woman. The following explores the different spheres the women in the Solomon Islands engage with on a daily basis. From their work in traditional subsistence living, to their work

in paid employment and the struggle for political recognition, the following is an insight into the varied lives these women lead.

2.3.1 Women in subsistence work

Unity between women in developing nations is the hope that organisation, education and resistance would in the long run provide many with a means of escaping from, or at the very least loosening the tight grip of poverty and subordination (Afshar, 1991). Although this unity is resilient in several societies, there is still a common argument in studies on gender relations that women in developing nations traditionally lack power to influence political and economic life (Wolfsberger, 2003). However, women in rural areas are testament to the latter, where their struggles are shielded by their resilience shown through domestic and subsistence economic progression. Through interviews, Pollard (2003) discovered that daily responsibilities of women in the Solomon Islands include managing themselves, their spouse, their children, their *wantoks*, their relatives and their households were upheld as signs posts of a competent woman (Pollard, 2003). A large portion of the female population in the Solomon Islands living in rural areas still engage in rural subsistence activities. Rural women engage in tasks such as gardening, fuel collection and handi-craft production, church services and community tasks such as fundraising (Pollard, 2003). The fisheries are an important sector in the life of rural women. The utilisation of marine life is essential to the flow of rural economics, and rural women are essential to this process. Rural women glean for shells, crustaceans, seaweed and engage in hand-line fishing, diving and mass-

harvesting techniques (Aswani & Weiant, 2004). However, similar to the Solomon Islands, the extent of work women do in Vanuatu is not acknowledged in their own Pacific Island societies (Molisa, 2002). In her study, Molisa (2002) found that the women make up the majority of the illiterate, landless, cash poor, overworked, underpaid and exploited who contribute the biggest amount of labour in the economy through unpaid work to sustain the family in every Vanuatu home. Governments, fishing industries and banks, just like the village community, especially men, rarely recognise the importance of their contributions (Aswani & Weiant, 2004). These contributions are seen as 'every-day' duties of the rural woman in the Solomon Islands. Wallace (2011) posits rural women face difficulties and challenges because of their surrounding setting. Many rural women often lack knowledge of their rights, there are fewer opportunities to participate in formal decision-making processes, and there is lack of support for those who do so (Wallace, 2011). Hence why, one must note that comparisons made between women from different societies should stray from imposing Western benchmarks on developing countries (Mohanty, 2003). Rural families are often large and women have to cater to their immediate family as well as elderly family members (CEDAW Solomon Islands Report, 2013). Faced with the realities of family and community life, women in rural areas are burdened by traditional female roles and the ever-present demands of the western economy.

2.3.2 Education in Solomon Islands

Education in the Solomon Islands resulted from concerns expressed by two major parties; early Christian missionaries and the Colonial Government (Pollard, 2000). Christian missionaries saw education as a tool to converting Solomon Islander's to Christianity, while, the Colonial Government wished to instill knowledge, skills and Western-derived attitudes deemed necessary to operate a successful modern cash-based economy (Pollard, 2000). Ideals from both parties did not complement the traditional system, where girls learned skills from their mothers (Pollard, 2000). In turn, girls were removed from the communal environment and taught foreign curriculum, which essentially excluded traditional knowledge (Pollard, 2000). Since post-colonial rule, the education system in the Solomon Islands still experiences setbacks. Despite planning and policies to increase the participation of education amongst Melanesian women, there is still an immense gap between the participation of men and women (Strachan, 2007). Among many reasons shared between academics, Strachan (2007) identifies a structural failure in the system where education in most Melanesian countries is not compulsory. This reason is exemplified in the Solomon Islands where UNICEF reported 41.5% secondary school participation for females, but only translates into 29.6% attendance for females (Unicef, 2012). The personal option of education from kindergarten level through to further education further widens the immense gap between male and female education. However, Pollard (2000) argues that this gap expands due to traditional beliefs. Pollard explains:

The unequal participation rate for men and women in education does not necessarily reflect government policy and/or any official bias towards educating males but is rather a result of the general acceptance of the traditional view that women's place is in the home. The nature of the problem is therefore such that it will take some time to be overcome so as to make way for a more equal participation of women in any aspect of the society. Change in people's attitudes, values and beliefs are required.

Education along with traditional culture has been entwined since its introduction into Melanesian countries through their respective colonisers and Christian missionaries. Interesting aspects to investigate are the attitudes of parents from matrilineal societies, and their viewpoints on girls attending school.

2.3.3 Solomon Islands women in paid employment

There has been little research conducted on Solomon Islands women in work. However, few published works in circulation disclose necessary information surrounding the state of these women. Asenati Liki's (2010) personal scholarly reflection provided insight into the pathways of women in the public service in the Solomon Islands. Liki (2010) attributes the increase of women employment in the public service to increases in women gaining tertiary qualifications and the shifting social attitude towards women leaders. She states:

There is little doubt of the support for women taking up senior positions in the public service. The fact that already there are women at this level as well as an impressive base at the mid-level provides evidence that long standing structural barriers in government can change. In addition, women in decision-making positions in the public service are clearly well-qualified for their respective fields. That their appointments were directed by the government through the Ministry of Public Service implied established connections within the service. Generally, the younger male public servants are more receptive to women's leadership than some of the older ones. (p. 15)

The latter of Liki's (2010) statement reveals how age gap brings differing perspectives, regarding women's leadership. Changing perspectives on Solomon Islands women in public service work is a testament to the work of avid campaigners. Liki (2010) and Sade (1992) draw attention to a misconception, that effort for the advancement of women in the Solomon Islands is a new concept. Both Liki (2010) and Sade (1992) affirm that 20-30 years ago, a handful of women in Government employment critiqued the lack of female participation in senior and managerial positions, attributing this condition to a lack of training and lack of opportunity for women. Critiquing the situation of Solomon Islands women 20-30 years ago formed a common understanding between these women that change was needed. Although change has been slow, the 2013 report for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) revealed that in 2007, women represented little more than 30% of the Public Service, of which 60% were junior positions (CEDAW, 2013). Furthermore, in the top three levels of Public Service, 6 women were employed in the highest, compared to 10 men (CEDAW, 2013). Different organisations and programmes implemented by the Government have contributed to increases in women employment in the Public Service. The Ministry of Public Service launched a "Leadership and Management Development Framework" in 2011, which highlighted the importance of providing leadership and management opportunities on the basis of equity in the public service (CEDAW, 2013). Policies such as these aim to assist the advancement of women through the rank of Public Service (CEDAW, 2013). Recently, no articles have been published, nor evidence, to indicate

whether policies and programmes such as these have produced the desired aims. However, one can only hope that with the changing attitudes, change is inevitable. Although the CEDAW report is valuable in summarising information and key statistics, the Solomon Islands Government have come under fire from Women and Youth groups, after refusing to approve a report outlining the struggle and suffering of Solomon Islands women over the previous ten years (Radio Australia, 2012). Above all else, a mutual belief amongst Solomon Islands women is that determination will help them push through barriers which currently hinder their chances of advancing in leadership roles and other aspects of the public sphere (Solomon Star, 2009). Presently, there is no literature, which primarily focusses on the work and experiences of women in the public service, specifically, women who are from islands that are culturally matrilineal.

2.3.4 Solomon Islands women in politics

In India, women are not active in the political sphere, where power and maximum change is held (Lyngdoh & Pati, 2003). This situation is comparable to the Solomon Islands. Women are underrepresented in all forms of public decision making in the Solomon Islands, especially in the political arena (Wallace, 2011). Douglas (2000) shed light on reasons why this is the case, stating:

Women are excluded by virtue of male prejudice; there is a lack of education amongst women in the Pacific, lack of women voting for women candidates in politics, and rural women following their husbands and cast similar votes or women do not vote at all.

Similar to the point discussed in the education section; lack of education has consequences for both rural and urban women. The 'big man' leadership system in Melanesia is another influential cause of women's lack of involvement in political leadership positions. Although complex, Whittington et al (2006) clearly explains big man' leadership stating it is "premised on the masculine roles of: the warrior, feast giver and priest which are associated with masculinity, strength, fame and supernatural power. A big man leader gains the title through demonstrated leadership skills, achievements, proven character and accumulation of wealth. The type of leadership is relational, reciprocal and dependent on their followers, over whom they have a great deal of influence" (p. 8). This particular system is an evident barrier that encourages men as leaders and relegates women to the domestic sphere, where they do not have the opportunity to exercise any form of masculinity which showcases leadership qualities (Whittington et al, 2006).

In the political arena, progress has been slow for Solomon Islands women. Honourable Hilda Kari was the first female to be elected into parliament in the 1980s where she held her seat until 1997 (Pacific Islands Women in Politics, 2014). Since then, only one female has re-entered national parliament; Honourable Vika Lusibaea who was elected in a by-election for her husband's seat in 2012 (Pacific Islands Women in Politics, 2014). Over the years, there has been a steady rise in women candidates participating in national elections. In 2006, there was a peak of 26 contending female candidates; an all-time high compared to the lone contender in the 1980 national election (CEDAW Solomon Islands Report, 2013). Although this increase has been steady over

the last 35 years, progress is unquestionably slow when compared to our Pacific neighbours; Australia and New Zealand. Reasons for this are similar to the slow advancement of women through the education system. Culturally, women are expected to be passive individuals when decision-making processes are in motion, hence why there is a lack of determination amongst rural women to be involved or concerned with politics (Ward, 1995). Structural barriers also hinder the advancement of women into the political arena. In the 2006 national election, female candidates were expected to pay \$2,000 Solomon dollars, and for provincial candidates, a payment of \$1,000 Solomon dollars was expected in order to participate (CEDAW Solomon Islands Report, 2013). Organisational structures enforcing these fees add to existing barriers, which affect the potential for women entering the contestation for election. Not all women are working and can afford these fees, and have to rely on their husbands or extended families to meet the economic costs of election. Historically, the church was a space for the gathering of women for empowerment, yet in recent years, traditional elders have expressed their disappointment in women vying for election (Pollard, 2003). Traditional elders emphasised leadership roles were only for men and at one point demanded the compensation of one pig for individuals wanting to vote for a female (Whittington et al, 2006). Church elders also influenced their communities by expressing their dislike of women candidates during public speeches to the congregations. Another barrier noticed by Pollard (2003) was the discrimination of the voting public to the situation of the intended women candidates. Women candidates who were widowed, divorced or separated

were seen as tarnished candidates who would be incompetent of the job since they were unable to handle their personal lives (Pollard, 2003). There has been little interest shown by the Government when trying to decipher the barriers of women trying to enter parliament. In 2008, the Solomon Islands government mandated the Constituency Boundaries Commission to review the number of members of parliament currently elected to parliament (Pacific Islands Women in Politics, 2014). This review guided the campaign for women's groups to introduce ideas around reserved seats for women. The proposal suggested electing a female member for each of the 10 provinces, including the capital, Honiara (Pacific Islands Women in Politics, 2014). Since this proposal has been put forward, the Government has ignored any proposed actions to implement this idea (Pacific Islands Women in Politics, 2014). Presently, there is still no legislative in the Constitution, or any act, which allows a minimum quota for women in parliament (Zetlin, 2014). Despite the support for more female involvement in parliament Liki (2000) discloses in her conclusion that focusing on the advancement of female candidates in parliament will result in the overlooking of women in the public service. Additionally, statistical information is not regularly collected; therefore estimation is heavily relied on when addressing information around women in the Solomon Islands, and the wider Melanesian region (Wallace, 2011).

2.4 Conclusion

In this literature review I have examined literature on matrilineal societies. I

began with looking at one of the earliest research conducted by Father Lafitau, where he noted that women in matrilineal societies embodied the Nation, I then ended the matrilineal society examination with the idea that literature on matrilineal societies began to stray from the power of the woman but towards the effects its principles had on economic and social outcomes. However, I hope, from the literature review; positive ideas surrounding leadership norms and rights of women within a matrilineal society gave evidence of empowerment towards leadership.

I have also examined literature on women in the Solomon Islands. This should provide an insight of past and current societal positions of both rural women and women in governance in the Solomon Islands. Through limited literature I have tried to illustrate the contrasting stories of women in the Solomon Islands to date, and the daily struggles both groups face when trying to enforce the little power they hold in a culturally man-lead society. In addition, I have discussed women's roles in education, their work in the rural areas, and most important to my research, the struggles of women in governance positions in the Solomon Islands. Research questions I intend on addressing in my proposal are what are the barriers which hinder the progression of women entering organisations? Do matrilineal aspects of Solomon Island societies give some form of intrinsic power that affects Solomon Islands women's career progression? Have traditional processes within a matrilineal society been cast aside to cater to Western/post-modern ideals?

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In this research I explore how Solomon Island women leaders working in the formal sector perceive that their matrilineal cultural heritage has influenced their career progression. In particular, I am interested in understanding how such women perceive they have challenged, influenced, resisted or upheld social norms that seemingly restrict Solomon Islands women from advancing to senior leadership positions. I draw on a critical feminist lens to understand the experiences of these women. In this chapter I focus on the qualitative method of narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry allows for the discovery of experiences, and gives voices to the minority through the form of storytelling, which suits the foundations of my research, where Solomon Islands women are seen but not heard (Clandinin, 2013; Akao; 2008). Secondly, I discuss the method of in-depth interview for the collection of data and its limitations. Employing narrative inquiry and in-depth interview under the umbrella of qualitative research will provide my study with descriptive and detailed accounts of each participant's experiences in the formal sector and their matrilineal upbringing. Thirdly, I discuss ethical considerations identified as being relevant to my study. I then outline specific themes I intend on asking in the interview process. Lastly, I convey the research processes carried out from the start of gathering data to analysing the data.

Through narrative, I will listen and observe individuals whose stories are influenced and situated through specific relations, cultural texts and various social settings.

As the researcher I endeavour to listen to individual narratives given by each participant who draws on shared experiences through community narratives, hence why we are able to co-construct, reproduce or challenge existing community narratives.

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Research

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) offer a general definition of qualitative research as an activity that locates the observer in the world, with a view to interpreting particular phenomena. Capturing lived experiences of the social worlds and the meanings people give these experiences from their own perspectives is the ultimate goal of qualitative research (Corti & Thompson, 2006, p. 326). Qualitative researchers accept that there are multiple realities of viewing the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For this reason, qualitative research does not belong to one single discipline (Denzin et al, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). A multiple range of interpretive practices such as case studies, action research, ethnography and interview research are employed to interpret the different realities and meanings provided by participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Denzin et al, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Creswell, 2003; Mutch, 2005). Through these practices, researchers are

able to obtain an in-depth understanding of the context at hand (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Qualitative research encompasses a distinct explanatory nature; enabling the researcher to enlighten the life experiences of individuals and communities, particularly certain circumstances with deepened forms of exclusion (Squire et al, 2014). Gathering descriptive accounts of the unique lived experiences of participants enables qualitative research to understand a particular phenomenon (Mutch, 2005). Merriam (2014) describes humans (researchers) as instruments most suited to the task of discovering such phenomena due to the interviewing, observing and analysis activities central to qualitative research.

Qualitative research allows the researcher to examine people's words and actions, and so enables the researcher to represent the situation as experienced by the participants through their narratives (Burton, Brundrell & Jones, 2008; Squire et al, 2005; Maykut & Morehouse, 2001).

3.1.2 Situating self in the research

I was born in the Solomon Islands, but moved to New Zealand due to my parents gaining New Zealand Aid Scholarships to the University of Waikato. Since our move to New Zealand, my family have always kept close ties to the Solomon Islands and our extended family. My curiosity regarding the state of women leaders from matrilineal islands working in the formal sector of the

Solomon Islands, arose from observing the women in my family spearhead family, community, church and work life. I became curious and sought to discover how the commonality of matrilineality between these women may have influenced their character to be competent to lead these various domains they overlook day-to-day. Thus, I chose to focus on women leaders in the formal sector to answer my curiosities and to add to existing literature on Solomon Islands women engaged in the formal sector.

3.2 Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry, is a research methodology centred on the concept of telling a story through listening and understanding the meanings that are constructed, felt, and known by participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995; Caine, 2010; Trahar, 2013; Richardson, 1997). Indeed, Bruner, (1984) as cited in Lohr (2008) suggests that a “life lived, a life experienced, and a life told is through stories- memories, observations, anecdotes, performances, and reflections spoken or written” (p. 45). Narrative inquiry allows the experiences of the participants to be communicated through the familiar mode of storytelling, with the intention to amplify their experiences through their own perceptions and understanding. The following probes the advantages of narrative inquiry that aligns with the focus of this research.

One common link binding narrative inquiry is an interest in studying experience (Chase, 2005; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007), with the goal of shedding light on little-known phenomena through honoring the voice of participants (Trahar, 2013; Squire et al, 2014). To this end, Byrne-Armstrong

(2001) posits that the focus of narrative inquiry is to discover the many truths as experienced by participants rather than discovering a generalizable truth.

A characteristic identified by Trahar (2013) which I felt matched my research is the overtly political purpose of narrative inquiry, which challenges and disturbs established ways of thinking. In so doing, Hancock & Epston, (2013) argue that through story-telling, narrative inquiry encourages participants to recognise their experience, and as an outcome may empower them to stand together in relation to setbacks, rather than allowing setbacks to rule by dividing people. The women I plan to interview have all challenged leadership and employment norms in the Solomon Islands, where men are traditionally seen at the helm of public and private settings. I anticipate that listening to the narratives of women leader's in the Solomon Islands will reveal both similar and differing experiences amongst the women that can be used as instruments to further challenge traditional norms (Clandinin, 2007).

Caine (2014) states that culture is rooted in an individual's narrative. Understanding an individuals narrative involves telling a story about choice and action (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). Specificities such as choice and action draws you in and shows you new worlds, in turn uncovering one's culture (Squire et al, 2014). Hence why, narrative inquiry suits this research. Solomon Islands, similar to many other Pacific Island countries, is well-known for its oral histories and cultures. Creating and retelling stories is a common practice found throughout countless societies and cultures. This familiarity will help the

research process and should ease the conversational and exploratory nature central to building a narrative (Barton, 2004; Clandinin, 2007). Narrative is situated, which encourages the relational and cultural layers of each individual's narrative (Bamberg, 2006; Trahar, 2009; Clandinin, 2013). Listening to the narrative of an individual presents an opportunity to see certain aspects of one's socio-cultural life (Riessman, 1993). Even as participant's tell their stories of their career progression, if and how different aspects of matrilineality have played a role in their success, and employment experiences; how and why they say certain things is influenced by their social and cultural surroundings and histories (Riessman, 2008).

Since, narrative inquiry commits to seeing humans as relational human beings (Smith & Sparkes, 2009), there is more opportunity to explore relationships which influence the experiences of participants. The notion of narrative is universal to the human; making humans as well as being made by humans (Alleyne, 2015). Clandinin & Rosiek (2007) outline the relational and situated characteristics of narrative, stating:

narrative inquiry is not only an individuals' experience but also the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted. Narrative inquirers study the individual's experience in the world, an experience that is storied both in the living and telling that can be situated by listening, observing, living alongside another, and writing and interpreting text. (pp. 42-43)

Narrative inquiry is a process of situating the researcher within the research context. Researchers and participants co-create the narrative, and hence they

think together throughout the narrative inquiry process, and in the process discover the deeper historical, cognitive and ethical dimensions that come from people's lives (Barton, 2004; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Freire (1973) describes the process of participant and researcher working together, stating:

The thinking Subject cannot think alone. In the act of thinking about the object s/he cannot think without the co-participation of another Subject. There is no longer an "I think" but "we think". It is the "we think" that establishes the "I think" not the contrary. This co-participation of the Subjects in the act of thinking is communication. (p. 137)

Etherington (2006) states that the narrative inquiry process should be influenced by the researcher's values and beliefs in order for the research process and outcomes to be made transparent. The collaboration of my own beliefs along with the cooperation of participants will hopefully create a synergy of work that presents a narrative respectful of their experiences.

2.2.1 Limitation of narrative inquiry

While narrative inquiry is known as a fluid form of research (Schwab, 1962), there are also limitations. Narrative inquiries often remains in a state of uncertainty, whereby, the method raises more questions than answers (Eaves & Walton, 2013). The story telling nature of narrative inquiry offers detailed accounts of the experiences of participants, and illuminates particular phenomena, in this case, the experiences of Solomon Islands women from matrilineal islands who hold leadership roles in their organisations. However, these stories do not resolve the structural and cultural, every-day challenges these women continue to face in their organisations. These issues are rather,

brought to the forefront of public discussion through narrative inquiry, as opposed to solving the issues. Therefore, ongoing inquiry and research may be needed to answer new questions that have risen from the existing research (Eaves & Walton, 2013). In-depth interview is a viable tool to assist narrative inquiry in minimising these questions, by treating such questions as new insights sparking new dialogue within the literature, rather than a method that creates uncertainty.

3.3 Method

3.3.1 In-depth interview

Uncovering new and exciting insights, along with the how other people make their lives meaningful and worthwhile depends on the fascination and inquisitiveness of the in-depth interviewer (Schutz, 1967; Liamputong & Ezzy, 2005). In-depth interview fosters the narrative inquiry process because the focus is solely on the “other person’s own meaning and contexts” (Schutz, 1967, p. 113), or as Seidman (1991) describes ‘I interview because I am interested in other people’s stories’ (p.1). Using in-depth interviewing is favoured by Reinharz (1992) as it enables participants to express themselves freely without the researcher controlling the flow of discussion, whilst developing a sense of connectedness with people.

In-depth interview is considered a two-way process because of the interaction, reciprocity, and self-disclosure that occurs between the researcher and participants (Brooks and Hess-Biber, 2007; Vali (2010) however highlights the

importance of the researcher initiating these interactions. Reinharz (1992) stresses the importance of the introductory or icebreaker question in creating a sense of comfort and safety with participants and for establishing the flow of the conversation. Having a well-designed list or an inventory of important themes for discussion further helps the flow of conversation (Liamputong & Ezzy, 2005) and helps ensure that the relevant issues are discussed during the interview (McCraken, 1988).

In addition to defined themes, in-depth interviews promote story telling through posing open-ended questions. Open-ended questions creates synergy for both interviewer and interviewee and establish the topic or issue to be discussed, but they do not suggest how participants ought to respond (Liamputong & Ezzy, 2005). The lack of suggestion allows participants to answer freely. Importantly, while a thematic interview guide and a list of open-ended questions offer a starting point, “the phrasing of the questions and the order in which they are asked are altered to fit the individual [thus assuming that] meanings, understandings, and interpretations cannot be standardised” (Denzin, 1989p. 42). In addition, interviewers can seek clarification, follow topics that are raised by the interviewee, and encourage the participant to provide more information through the use of follow-up or probing questions (Liamputong & Ezzy, 2005; Taylor and Bogdan (1998).

3.3.2 Limitations of in-depth interview

Two limitations that hinder in-depth interviews are time constraints, and the lack of experience researchers such as myself may have (Kirsch, 1999; Bowling, 1997). Firstly, in-depth interviews can be time consuming and require further interviews and follow up meetings (Warsal, 2009). Interviews recorded on tape require transcribing. I assume the women participators I intend on interviewing will speak English and the nation-wide spoken language of Pidgin English; both spoken by myself. According to Bryman and Bell (2007), when interviewing non-speaking English speakers it is important to transcribe into the language used first, and then translate back to English. Depending on the data, I aim to transcribe the words of the participants in both English and Pidgin English, additionally, translate Pidgin English into English language for presentation purposes. I predict this process to be time consuming when considering the amount of woman participant's I plan to interview. Furthermore, scheduling meetings with intended women participants is time consuming. Conflicting schedules and the busy nature of their working lives may require follow up meetings to clarify or enrich data previously specified.

Secondly, Bowling (1997) points out that an in-depth interviewing methodology that attempts to be more conversational and engaging requires greater skill and experience. Some researchers have also suggested that for this to happen, interviewers should be of similar age, gender, race, class, sexual orientation to the people being interviewed (Tagg, 1985). In-depth interviewing is also difficult when dealing with the complexities of interpersonal interaction (Daly et.

al., 1997). Views expressed by Tagg (1985) and Bowling (1997) restrict young researchers like myself who are eager to explore why society is the way it is. Although I was not raised in the Solomon Islands, my mother and father have fostered the cultural practice of telling stories. Oral story telling is a commonality between the participants and I. This will help both parties connect, and assist my skills as a novice researcher to decrease suggestions specified by Bowling (1997) and Tagg (1985) in executing a successful interview. With opportunity comes experience; and with time, patience and cultural practices equipped in me through my parents and extended family, my research will be richer with the research method of in-depth interviewing.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Researchers must ensure that the research process upholds the integrity of both the researcher, and the participants. For this to happen, steps such as informed consent, social and cultural sensitivity and ensuring privacy through confidentiality and anonymity need to be taken to assure this process is thoroughly fulfilled.

3.4.1 Informed consent

One fundamental ethical principle is that of informed consent. This principle shapes the relationship of the researcher and the participant and serves as the base on which other ethical considerations can be considered (Cohen et. al., 2009). Both researcher and the researched must come to an agreement before

any collection of data progresses. Christians (2005) and Cohen et al (2000) state that this agreement must be based on full and open information.

For this research, gaining informed consent is a top priority, as these women will be disclosing information on personal and professional experiences. Additionally, giving them an option to opt out the research is key, because once participants sign off on the agreement, it shows they were not coerced into the agreement.

3.4.2 Social and cultural sensitivity

Concerns around social and cultural sensitivity are ethical considerations necessary to take into account with this research. Although all my participants are women from the Solomon Islands, they are all from different islands which have different norms and cultural boundaries. Social and cultural sensitivity in research is a strategy used to improve cross-cultural contact (Anderson et al, 2006; Greenholtz, 2006). Researchers learned that when individuals exhibit a sense of cultural sensitivity, they are aware of cultural similarities and differences, and learn to apply new cultural perspectives on their own lives (Kim et al, 2015). Therefore, in conducting this research, I am aware of these cultures, and am interested to discover how the participants view stereotypes (Kim et al, 2015) regarding the status of women within their cultural backgrounds, as it will impact the stories they give.

3.4.3 Ensuring privacy through confidentiality and anonymity

Privileges regarding privacy in qualitative research suggests that the participant concerned should decide what aspect of their personal information is to be communicated or withheld from others (Andersen & Arsenault, 1998). Anonymity and confidentiality are two ethical principles of research that aspire to protect the privacy rights of all participants (Vali, 2010). Kroocher & Keith-Spiegel (2008) describe confidentiality as a sense of safety which allows people to feel comfortable to share private feelings and thoughts. Confidentiality can be achieved through, deleting identifiers such as names, addresses other means of identifications from participants' data; gaining permission for ensuing use of data; and protecting the identity of the individual when quoting and reporting information (Akao, 2008; O'Leary, 2004; Cohen et al, 2000; Andersen & Arsenault, 2008). Anonymity works alongside confidentiality to ensure privacy is achieved. Anonymity involves the protection of the participant's identities, even from the researcher themselves (Allmark et al, 2009). Researchers decide in the beginning phases of the research process what information or who to anonymize (Vainio, 2013). Vainio (2013) follows on by stating participants should choose whether to be made anonymous or not. Anonymity and confidentiality may be difficult in a small area such as the capital of Honiara in the Solomon Islands. Women participants I plan on interviewing are part of a small group of women working in paid employment across the Solomon Islands. Communities are well knit and word of mouth may compromise processes that assist privacy in a research setting. Information

and personal experiences shared by these women may have an effect on their employment, so I will make an effort to protect the information they give.

3.5 Research Process

In this section I describe the research process including, the women, the interview, the people and the devices used to collect and analyse the data gathered.

3.5.1 The women of the study

This study involved fourteen women from three matrilineal provinces in the Solomon Islands. Two of the women, Georgina and Lavinia are from Guadalcanal Province. Edith, Nancy, and Sohi are from Santa Isabel Province. The remaining nine: Matalita, Margaret, Noelyn, Lucy, Gloria, Natasha, Serah and Stella are from the Western Province. All fourteen women are employed in a mixture of public, private and Government organisations in the capital of Solomon Islands, Honiara.

3.5.2 Access to institutions

To conduct any research in the Solomon Islands, permission must be obtained from the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Department (MEHRD). A month before travelling to the Solomon Islands for field work, a letter was sent to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Department (see Appendix 4). This letter was sent to inform them about my proposed research, and to gain permission to conduct research in

the Solomon Islands. Once I arrived in the Solomon Islands, my research permit was not yet granted, due to the Permanent secretary's involvement in the current political upheaval regarding the vote of no confidence against the current Prime Minister. A week later I was granted permission to conduct research in the Solomon Islands, and was required to pay a research fee of \$500 to the Solomon Islands Ministry of Finance and Treasury.

3.5.3 Selecting the participants

Generating a list of women holding leadership positions in the formal sector of the Solomon Islands was made easy through family connections who are employed in the sectors my research was interested in. Invitation letters were sent to these connections, who then forwarded these letters to potential participants (see Appendix 2 & 3). My research being exclusively focussed on matrilineal women reduced the list of women, who were sent an invitation letter, and a copy of the interview schedule (see Appendix 8).

Upon arrival in the country, I followed up these invitation letters with an e-mail and a phone call while waiting for permission from MEHRD to conduct research in the Solomon Islands. Several participants that were identified as potential participants in this research did not confirm their interest in the research. Due to the time straits, I needed to find replacements. This was achieved through the snowball sampling technique. Platzer & James (1997) praises snowballing for its ability to reach the parts other methods cannot reach, which is especially true when the research is largely based on exploration and analysis (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). This technique is effective, as, the first subject recommends

the research to the next subject and so on (Mutch, 2005). Replacements were found through this technique, and were then followed up through e-mail or phone conversation. Through these two modes of communication, I asked the participant whether they would like to meet prior to committing to an interview time, to answer any questions about the research or to get to know who I was as the researcher. Several women agreed to this prior meeting, which created a comfortable space before the actual interview.

3.5.4 Conducting the interview

When interviewing the women, I approached this situation as a young Solomon Island woman curious about my roots through their stories and experiences. This approach created an open space where the participants were able to relate to me and be fully expressive of their experiences. All the interviews were conducted where it was comfortable and accessible for the participants, in this case- their offices, their homes, a hotel bar and a coffee shop. On the participant's sheet, the interview was advertised to be one-hour long, however, I found majority of the interviews were close to one and a half hour to two hours long. All participants were told they were able to convey their stories and experiences in pijin (the lingua franca Solomon Islands) or English and were all tape recorded. Interview notes were also kept to note the facial expression of the participants, as they tape recorder is not able to catch such expressions.

3.5.5 Data transcription

All fourteen interviews were transcribed. The transcription process involved transcribing pijin interviews, and later translating pijin interviews into English transcription. Several interviews were mixed pijin and in English, and were transcribed twice. This process was lengthy, but needed to be done, to completely encapsulate the experiences of the participants. Once transcription was complete, both scripts were sent back to the participants to change, delete, clarify or validate their interview transcripts.

3.5.6 Data analysis

For this research, a thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Leininger (1985) describes this qualitative strategy as categorising themes by bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone. These themes are then formed together to form a comprehensive picture of their collective experience (Aronson, 1995). Thematic analysis is commonly used by qualitative researchers as it suits analysing and reporting on personal qualitative interview data (Mutch, 2005). For these reasons, this is the approach I have undertaken for this research.

3.6 The in-depth interview guide

Forming themes to assist the interview process stem from three main themes established in my literature review; barriers to female in paid employment, key aspects of matrilineal society and women in the Solomon Islands.

My research being about experiences of matrilineal women employed in leadership roles, I will derive core questions from these three main themes to uncover each participant's journey. Enquiries regarding employment barriers these women have faced, and/or continue to face in paid employment will create an opportunity to explore what helped these women overcome such hindrances. Questions such as "is the glass ceiling effect present in the Solomon Islands"? "Are most sectors of public and private life in the Solomon Islands male dominated"? "Do you think family responsibilities is the main reason for the lack of women in leadership roles across Solomon Islands organisations"? Questions such as these will be used to probe for answers around employment conditions and can extend into trying to find a connection between matrilineality and the realities of leadership and employment in the Solomon Islands for these women.

A central theme in the interview is matrilineality. The premise of this research is to discover whether key aspects of matrilineality such as: relationship between mother and child, women's leadership in a matrilineal society, or land ownership and inheritance have played an intrinsic part in the successes of these women in paid employment. Asking questions around their childhood experiences, cultural practices that re-enforce core matrilineal ideals, and whether these ideals have had an impact in their journey towards their leadership roles is paramount to addressing my research questions. Probing the participants will aid the interview process. Rubin and Rubin (1995) gives an example of a probe, "Can you tell me a little more about that?" (p. 150).

Probes such as these will help women in my research to elaborate on the points they are trying to make, at the same time, the researcher is able to receive more clarification.

The current state of Solomon Islands women is an important theme to discuss with the participants. Certain women's roles in present society are changing due to economic needs, and the influence of westernised ideals on third world countries such as the Solomon Islands. Specifically, the role of education in their own personal experiences towards gaining employment, and promotion to higher levels of positions in their respective jobs will be examined through questions and probes. Discussing the role of unpaid work through subsistence living is a theme I would like to present to the participants. Theme of subsistence living will be familiar to the participants, as I predict they are the first generation after their mothers to work in the formal economy (since independence).

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explained the methodologies that are relevant to this study. I stress the importance of the qualitative approach because this method offered flexibility in obtaining the unique stories of the women through their eyes. Employing narrative inquiry under the big scope of qualitative research also urges the process of gathering data that is true and unique to the women in this study. The latter of this chapter covered the research process. These processes guided me as a young researcher to protect the women's stories

and identities. I also introduced the women in this study and outlined my journey to gathering data in Honiara, Solomon Islands. The next chapter will cover my theoretical framework that will be used to analyse and understand the women's experiences and stories.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.0 Introduction

Finding a lens for this research was a process in itself. I approached this process using a grounded method, where a lens was chosen after the collection and analysis of data. Key concepts of several lenses were studied and considered. Selecting the right lens was imperative, as the data gathered will be probed and analysed by this mode of inquiry to best illustrate the experiences of the women at the centre of this research. The following describes this selection process and delves into a deeper conversation regarding the chosen lens; critical feminist theory.

4.1 Choosing a theory

Commencing, postcolonial theory and postcolonial feminism were considered because of the patriarchal values still held within Solomon Island organisations after independence. However, this lens heavily relied on historical facts of the nation in question and explored the master to slave relationship. Lazarus (2004) describes colonialism as the modern portrayal of the master/slave interaction (p. 103). Scholars illustrate this interaction as a confrontation of two persons who struggle for domination, where the loser abandons the fight and accepts the sovereignty of the master whilst accepting the identity of a slave (Roth, 1988; Poster, 1975; Lazarus, 2004). I found this disconcerting as the women interviewed do not view themselves as slaves, nor do they voice claims of

violence often attached to the master/slave dialectic (Lazarus, 2004). Postcolonial theory lens was not ideal, as it strayed from the centrality of this research; the experiences of women leaders from matrilineal islands in the Solomon Islands.

Liberal feminism was then explored because of its core ideas around the equality of opportunity between the sexes, and the importance of education as a form of social reform and human fulfilment. In spite of this, the fundamental principle of individuality surrounding liberalism did not equate to the data collected. The lack of community and familial experiences within liberal feminism lead to the discovery and exploration of feminist communitarianism. Feminist communitarianism perspectives formed as a political critique of liberalism (Rousseau, 1995) where the formation of the individual is attributed to not only the self, but also: “the family, or community or nation or people which includes families, neighbourhoods, cities, guilds, professions, clans, tribes and nations” (Macintyre, 1981, p. 204-205). Although the familial and communal strands of feminist communitarianism offered contrasting views of liberalism which matched the matrilineal upbringing of the women I interviewed, the utopian-like lens had a propensity to overlook challenges faced by these women.

4.2 Critical Feminist Theory

For these reasons, critical feminist theory exceeded the former theories considered. As a whole, feminism encompasses a broad aim; to improve the lives of women by representing the experiences of all women as women see it

(MacKinnon, 1982; Weiner 1994; Dalton, 2001; Dominelli, 1995; Bloom, 1998). Different feminist approaches take on different paths to achieving this aim, but also frequently overlap and recombine to do the same (Dalton, 2001). Critical feminist theory is a tribute to this overlapping, where critical theory and feminist theory amalgamate (Dalton, 2001; Breitzkreuz, 2005; Lather, 1991; Lazar, 2007). In this research context, critical feminist theory is appropriate because this feminist inquiry critiques relations between gender identity, the family, notions around patriarchy and culture in relation to the wider social, economic and political context (Dalton, 2001; Assiter, 1996; Kauffman, 1989; Benhabib & Cornell, 1987).

Critical feminist theory works to uncover female experiences that are evidently invisible (Breitzkreuz, 2005; Blackmore, 1989; Maynard, 1994). Lather (1991) posits this work corrects, '[B]oth the invisibility and distortion of the female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal position' (p. 71). Through this process, a revaluation of the female experience will eventuate, where commonalities such as inequality can connect the diverse experiences of women (McCann & Kim, 2013). Bloom (1998) fears that if these 'complex and diverse realities of women's feelings and experiences' are not brought to the surface, women will never learn to see themselves outside of existing male ideologies and thus lose sight of our 'own complex and often baffling subjectivities' (p. 94). Employing critical feminist theory links to discovering the experiences of my participants in the formal sector, and their experience in the matrilineal setting that have influenced their roles in the formal sector.

A critical feminist approach offers an opportunity to examine the connection between structural oppression and the individual experiences of women (Bloom, 1998). Notions around gender is relevant in any and every social interaction (Lazar, 2005; Connell, 1987). Institutions are structured around gender, where inequality between the sexes is perpetuated through both men and women's habitual, but different participation in their institutions (Connell, 1987, 1995; Lazar, 2005; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992). Thus, Connell (1987, 2005) claims the organisation's structure, oppresses women, and reinforces the unspoken androcentric views often displayed by both men and women in the workplace (Lazar, 2005). Critical feminist theory provides researchers a framework to analyse workplace interaction and strives to bring to light the individuality of women's experiences, despite androcentric views that often determine female's experiences within the workplace (Lazar, 2005; McCann & Kim, 2013; Bloom, 1998). Critical feminist theory advantageously connects structural oppression to the individual experiences of women, hence, an analysis on barriers that impede women in the workplace can transpire.

The individual is important in every context (Bloom, 1995). Weedon (1987) elaborates on ideas around individuality, stating, "[H]umans have an 'essence at the heart of the individual which is unique, fixed and coherent and which makes her what she *is*". (Weedon, 1987, cited in Bloom, 1997, p. 3). Understanding who she *is* relies on understanding one's subjectivity (Bloom, 1997). Weedon (1987) defines subjectivity as:

[s]ubjectivity is used to refer to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world. (p. 32)

de Lauretis' (1987) definition expands on Weedon's (1987), recognising subjectivity as an "ongoing construction, not a fixed point" (p. 159), this indicates that the individual is continuously constructed through experiences. Walkerdine (1990) believes research should attentively focus on subjectivity, as such research can contribute to the transformation of women's lives. Understanding one's subjectivity will assist critical feminist theory to analyse the individual constructed experiences of the participants, in this case, matrilineal ideals or other factors that have shaped their stories and experiences.

Another key aspect of critical feminist theory is it aims to enhance a richer understanding of the complicated workings of power and ideology that endure hierarchically gendered social arrangements (Breitkreutz, 2005). Lazar (2005) confirms that critical analysis:

[p]rovides a framework to explore ways in which systematic power is constructed and reinforced in interaction, to identify how the dominant group determines meanings and, more specifically, to describe the processes by which the more powerful person in an interaction typically gets to define the purpose or significance of the interaction and influences the direction in which it develops. (p. 32)

This framework observes the "ways in which power and dominance are produced and reproduced in social practice through the discourse structures of everyday interactions" (Kress, 1990, pp. 84-85). Cited in Luke & Gore (2014), Carolyn Shrewsbury (1987) redefines power in feminist pedagogy, stating,

“[F]eminist pedagogy embodies a concept of power as energy, capacity, and potential rather than as domination... This conception of power recognises that people need power, both as a way to maintain a sense of self and as a way to accomplish ends” (Shrewsbury, 1987, p. 8). Critical feminist theory will help to analyse how power is embodied and enacted by the participants in both public and private spheres, despite widely documented patterns of one-sided power through male discourse (Holmes, 2005, p. 49).

A critical feminist lens explores how women resist oppression and negotiate their identities actively (Marshall, 2005, p. 5). Women encompass distinctive attributes which disseminates a distinctive form of understanding, thus a tendency to reason in a ‘different voice’ (Gilligan, 1982 cited in Barnett, 1996, p. 352). By connecting women’s experiences and their societal contexts, this voice can be heard (Breitkreutz, 2005). The strength of this framework is positioned in its demand that values traditionally associated with women be appreciated, to form cohesive initiatives that serve women’s distinctive needs (Barnett, 1996, p. 352). Barnett (1996) maintains that society needs an understanding that can resonate with women’s shared experience without losing touch with their diversity. Utilising this key aspect will assist this research in discussing the extent to which participants have applied matrilineal ideals to their participation in the formal sector, and how their voice is heard in oppressed-deemed environments.

Critical feminist theory is an emancipatory theory; in that it traditionally believes that the form of oppression that they focus on, in this case, gender inequality,

can be, and should be eliminated (Wright, 1993, p. 40). Researchers using this lens believe that enacting social theory contributes in some way to the realisation of this emancipation (Wright, 1993). Adding to emancipation is the role of agency within the critical feminist framework. Agency is defined by Emirbayer & Mische (1998) as:

[a] temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment). (p. 963)

Marxist determinism is rejected altogether by critical feminists in favour of the open interplay of agency, where social change has no particular tendency to move along a given course (Wright, 1993; Lazar, 2005). Employing this emancipation/agency approach enables one to analyse how, and if the engagement of participant's in the formal sector affects their role in their respective matrilineal societies, and matrilineality as a whole. Furthermore, a closer analysis on the effect different capitalist modes entering the Solomon Islands have perpetuated the oppression of women in this research can transpire. Also, comments on how these capitalist modes have emancipated women in gaining access to education and securing employment in the formal sector can be dissected. Discoveries on whether these capitalist modes challenge the position of these women can also be discussed.

4.3 Conclusion

Using a critical feminist lens is imperative for this research. This is because, all the participants are women. Although all these women are from the Solomon Islands, originally, all women are from different islands which have their own unique customs and cultures that have shaped their lives and experiences. Furthermore, there is a mixture of organisational employment within the group of women, ranging between public, private and Government institutions. Therefore, it was important to use a lens that places women at the centre of inquiry where their voices and stories could be expressed freely. Also, implementing a lens that analyses distinct contexts that construct the women's every-day experiences is paramount to understanding the connection between matrilineality and the formal sector.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter I present the findings from the 14 Solomon Island women. Relying on the principles of critical feminist theory and thematic analysis, I examine the contents of the data collated to answer my main research question:

Do you attribute matrilineal ideals to your career progression in the formal sector?

To answer this question, understanding the individual and their journey is important, as they are shaped by unique experiences such as their matrilineal upbringing, and the challenges and successes they have faced in the formal sector. Further understanding can be made by recognizing one's subjectivity. Subjectivity is not a fixed point, but a continual construction, where in this case; the women's experiences in the formal sector and their matrilineal upbringing can help grasp their sense of self in relation to the world (Weedon, 1987). In this research, construction of the individual and one's subjectivity can be seen through their matrilineal upbringing. This is identified through the data as: knowing your line and *kastom*, subsistence living and developing sharing and caring characteristic, matrilineal family ties: the relationship between grandmother, aunty, mother and daughter, the role of the church, and valuing education. Through these elements in a matrilineal society, a sense of self is constructed that helps the women pinpoint certain elements from their

upbringing that they have utilised in their work in the formal sector. Throughout the findings section I show how these women have done this.

This exploration of women in the formal sector does not suggest that their matrilineal upbringing conquers all the barriers these women disclose, rather, they identify and reflect on these barriers and determine how their upbringing has helped them work around such challenges. Barriers disclosed by the women are promotion, male dominance, organizational constraints, and attitudes of patrilineal men. These barriers show that in some instances the barriers are similar to women in the Western world, yet there are differences in how the women handle such barriers.

Lastly, a discussion into how the women view their standing in the formal sector has affected their role in the matrilineal setting proceeds.

5.1 Matrilineality as the foundation to leadership

Experiences of matrilineal women leaders in the formal sector in the Solomon Islands are invisible in current research literature. This section highlights elements from the women's matrilineal upbringing that have shaped the foundations of their leadership style. The 14 women highlighted in their interviews the following elements shaping these foundations: knowing your line and maintaining *kastom*, subsistence living- developing sharing and caring, matrilineal family ties- grandmother, aunty, daughter, mother relationships, and the valuing of education in the community. The women attribute and connect these matrilineal characteristics to their experiences in the formal sector which

not typically attached to why female leaders are successful in the formal sector of the Solomon Islands.

5.1.1 Knowing your line and maintaining *kastom*

All the women are from different islands, villages, tribes, and families, but uphold that maintaining *kastom* and cultural values is important. Knowing your line and maintaining *kastom* gives confidence in who you are, and is transferred to the formal sector by being firm in decision making situations.

Gloria outlined how maintaining *kastom* practices helped her understand who she is in her family, her place in her community, and in turn created a sense of self in her workplace. She shares:

In my family, the skill of weaving and the craft of weaving are very important because the weaving we do has its own patterns that show our stories...

Knowing where you come from is the most important thing, knowing your stories, knowing your line, that is important as it locates your position in that society, especially in front of the men and your people. If you know that, then people will look up to you.

When applying this to the workplace, Gloria stated, knowing where she comes from made her firm in her decisions in a male dominated environment:

[W]hen the men notice that you are firm in your leadership role they respect your decision.

Knowing your line is enforced through the practice of genealogy. Genealogy is widely practiced in Solomon Islands societies, and was mentioned by a few women. Matalita affirmed genealogy “*is something we do a lot.*” Through

genealogy, individuals know who they are connected too, who their families are, and keeps the family ties in tact between the generations.

The women generally pinpoint the maintaining of *kastom* practices and knowing your line through genealogy as an important foundation of a matrilineal society that helps conceive their sense of self in their family, communities, and in turn, their workplace.

5.1.2 Subsistence living and developing sharing and caring

Hirschmann & Vaughn (1983) stated that women tend to their land which increases their recognition as leaders in their communities. This is evident throughout matrilineal societies in the Solomon Islands, and is continuously demonstrated in the examples given by majority of the women. Subsistence living sustains the community and the people, and through this communal involvement, several women indicated this aspect in a matrilineal society influenced their work life.

Margaret reflected on her matrilineal upbringing, giving examples of her engagement in subsistence living:

My involvement in subsistence work was looking for shells to cook for community gatherings, or pulling dug-out canoes from the forest to the sea, or even cooking copra for school fees with the whole community.

When applying this to the workplace, Margaret and Lavinia both agreed these engagements made them more responsible in the workplace, Margaret stated:

Yes, it really helped me. Like, that knowledge and attitude, for sharing and caring, and looking after others, and being responsible for work that you are given to do... I got the influence from involvement in all that work.

Similarly, Lavinia expressed:

My grandmother... she always wanted me to accompany her to the garden, to go and fetch for water, so doing that equips me to be who I am now. I have to be responsible for my children, my husband, my family, and also in my work.

Additionally, this finding reveals engagements in subsistence living taught the women how to multi-task and to inherit a work ethic that is ascertained through practical teaching and close assessment by their closest connections; their mothers, aunties and grandmothers.

Sohi commented on her engagement through subsistence living and revealed that engagement in such activities developed sharing and caring qualities in her leadership style:

Sometimes we engage in our own family activities just food for the family and there are occasions where we have to gather food and work for the community. It is still happening in the community now that we have times that we go and help someone in the garden, or make a ho for them, weed for them, plant for them, cut firewood for them. Then, in feasts like weddings, land ceremonies, we help each other we go and harvest the crops and we help the whole community. So it is still, it is both.

Sohi then explained how these engagements in subsistence living influenced her leadership style:

That is where this community thing, and this sharing, caring comes from. Because in most leadership roles, I think so often, we do not look at the caring sort of, most leaders it's more for themselves.

They are more individualistic. Which is not our way of doing things. Ours is always sort of the community, doing things for everyone else.

It is always at the back of mind. Where I see, as a leader, I am not me, as a leader, I am for everyone else, for the future generation, for the nation, for the staff, you know? It's always for those many others.

The communal aspect of subsistence living in matrilineal communities fostered caring and sharing qualities, which have been utilized by the women and implemented in the workplace. Serah also adds that the ideal of subsistence living embraces communality which creates closeness within a matrilineal society, when transferring this closeness to the workplace, she states:

those virtues in a communal setting such as caring and sharing... I have a team that I look after, a team that I lead, so again, setting a good example comes in. So, I think it is all a part of being a leader. Not only setting a good example, but respect also... I would say the closeness within the matrilineal society, you sort of experience that in the community with the families, so when you come up to relate that to your career, I think that also comes in. So you know, dealing with people, it all comes into play.

When dealing with people in the work place you are constantly networking and building relationships, the communal setting enforced through subsistence living nurtures the skill to do so, and has positively affected these women in their work lives.

Communal living in matrilineal settings views the 'we' significantly important than the individual. Several women identified the 'we' factor is manifested in their leadership style. Stella says:

I think for me, being a leader is emphasizing the "we". I want them to understand and feel comfortable. A community needs to be balanced and the leader needs to drive that peacefully.

Subsistence living also brought to light how these women have been empowered from a young age in their communities. Georgina explained:

Girls in our community are fostered to have that sense of independence and responsibility. We gain these by following mum to the garden, to be able to cook a pot of potatoes, or bake in an oven stone like the motu (hangi). It is the mark of maturity in the adolescent stages. So I was made to realize that at a young age. If you are able to carry something on your head from the garden back to the house, you help your mum peel the potatoes, put it in the oven until it is cooked, that is a mark of achievement that will prepare you for life.

Georgina continued by confirming how this aspect in a matrilineal society helped her work in the formal sector:

I feel like it prepared me. I feel like I can adjust to any situation in Honiara. I am walking long distances, back home we walk, we walk to the garden, to the plantation, carry heavy bags, cook your dinner, feed your family. So to me, it just makes me a stronger woman... So, because of how I have come up through my community, there is no mistake, it has helped me.

This finding affirms that women in a matrilineal society are raised to encompass certain qualities that the community believe will help women in their lives. Achieving feats in the community as a mark of becoming a woman encourages and empowers girls at a young age that success comes with work. In addition, subsistence living allows girls and women to be seen outside of male ideologies, where their experiences can be connected, shared and celebrated.

5.1.3 Matrilineal Family Ties: Grandmother, Aunty, Mother, Daughter relationships

The women in this study commented expansively on the relationship between grandmother, aunty, mother and daughter within a matrilineal society. Through these matrilineal family ties, the women articulated how certain aspects of each relationship shaped their working lives.

Several commented on how they have taken on their mother's characteristics to be effective leaders in their workplace. Edith says:

My mother was very charismatic, everyone loved her! She is that type of person where there are no inhibitions around her. I think my fearlessness comes from her and where I was brought up.

Lucy added:

My mum is a strong-charactered person. When she is firm in what she believes in, no one can shake her, she will stick to it. The positive strength that my mum has shown me, I feel I have taken on.

Similarly, Matalita reflects on her relationship with her mother, stating:

I see myself in my mother. I see myself as my mother. I talk when I need to talk. When she comes out to the family she is naturally an overseer, she can talk, she can do these things.

Alongside mother's characteristics are traditional customs that bind the bond of mother and child. Edith reflected on her experiences in her village on Santa Isabel Province:

The mother always "papam pikinini" when they are born. From birth, they are put on their mother's backs, anything the mother will "papa" you, all the time. You are always a link to your mother; you are

always within her care. So, when you grow up, you are more caring, more passive in a way too, because you have always been like that.

To these women, the role of the mother is important, as evident in Edith's comments, where the link to the mother inherently creates a caring nature from the start of a young girl's life.

The role of the grandmother and aunty played an equal share to their mother when raising girls. Peters (2010) emphasized this when pointing out there was no specificity with land and property inheritance, resulting in a flat structure, where the women in the community fostered the young girl. This equality amongst the women in the community nurtures the communal ideal; a fundamental principle in a matrilineal society, which was identified by several women in this study. Georgina was raised in the Guadalcanal plains by her single mother, aunts and her grandparents, she says:

They impacted me. They gave me the sense of love and security that no amount of male could have ever given me. My grandmother pulled me in close to her and sang songs, because she knew that I belonged to her and nobody else.

The role of mothers, aunts, and grandmothers was further emphasized by Margaret who stated:

My aunts and grandmothers, they all helped to encourage me and to help me get to where I am today. When you are in the communal village setting, there is never a time when you are one and alone with just your immediate family, you are with your extended family all the time. So yes definitely... my aunts and grandmothers were with me just as much as my mother.

This view illustrates that young girls in their matrilineal environment are raised to understand that they are surrounded by a support system not consisting solely of their mothers, but their aunties and grandmothers as well. The women were immersed in this setting, equipping these women with nurturing traits shown to them by their mothers, grandmothers and aunties. This is then transferred to the formal sector through support when the women began their own families whilst pursuing a career, Serah stated:

Because of my tribal connections with my matrilineal family, I was encouraged to get married early and have kids early, and have many kids... At one stage, my son was only six months and I had to travel to Fiji for work, so one of my sister in-laws and my mother had to come up to look after the kids, even going as far as breast-feeding my child. That shows that closeness within my family and extended family. So that is the support I was gaining and continue to get from my family.

The mother/aunty/grandmother to girl relationship described by most of the participants demonstrates the close knit bond of not just the nuclear family, but the role of the extended family. These relationships set a link between the generations to openly share, and support the women later in their lives when balancing life at work and life in the home. It also demonstrates how there is a reliance on the support system outside of the work environment, where Serah elaborates the help of her mother and sister-in-law to breast feed her baby while she is away working.

Noelyn identified leadership within the women in her family and applied this to her work life.

Having a voice and decision-making is good leadership. I saw that in my community. Women were always consulted in the decision-making process and through this they had a voice. In my matrilineal side, the women I have seen are the bosses. And also, what I see is that, the women leaders in our community always make a fair decision. They try not to be bias, they always try to give a fair decision, and they always try to do the right thing by pleasing everyone who will be affected by the decision... I feel as if I have tried to imitate those ideals.

The women in this study identify the gap between the public sphere and the private sphere, and their examples show how these gaps are bridged through close family ties through the women in the Solomon Islands.

5.2 Valuing our girls and boys through education

Education was emphasized by all the women as an important element in their experiences leading up to their formal sector employment and rise in leadership roles. The women spoke extensively of the work their matrilineal community and families accomplished through subsistence living which aided their journey to pursue an education. The close-knit bond family members hold with each other is also demonstrated in how the women refer to their families, for example, there is specificity when the women refer to a cousin, for example, cousin-sister or cousin-brother, as opposed to simply saying 'cousin'. This shows that, you are more than just a cousin, you are so close to me that you are unerringly my brother or sister.

The women spoke of their experiences from primary school through to tertiary education. Lucy illustrated how her community and family worked hard for her to gain an education, she explained:

Education is key... We were an average family that did not have a lot of money... I would say that the majority of parents in my village tried their very best to send their children to receive an education. Engaging in copra, cocoa, market, fishing and so on to send their children to school. I think that is one of the good things inside a matrilineal system where we come from in the Western Province. It is clear that, they put emphasis on girls to go to school, not just boys. When you compare patrilineal and matrilineal systems, you will see that is a big difference.

This comment shows the engagement on the family level, as well as the community level through subsistence living to ensure both boys and girls attend school. Interestingly, Lucy's comments raise a comparison between patrilineal and matrilineal systems present in Solomon Islands society. This research does not focus on the upbringing of girls from a patrilineal system. However, there are recognizable differences between both systems when comparing educational statistics released by the Ministry of Education Human Resources department, which found that there were more females enrolled in school from matrilineal provinces compared to females in patrilineal societies. Though there are various reasons why there is an imbalance between the two societies, one can assume that cultural differences between the two systems is a significant reason. Differences in how girls and women are treated in both societies are mentioned by the participants and exemplified in Lucy's comments.

Many of the women spoke of the positive perceptions their families and communities held towards education. Serah explains:

From where I come from, you would hardly see a girl or a boy who does not get sent to school. This shows that they take education very important, that is how they look at education. They would encourage us to go to school, and get a good job. They always

encourage us to do those things because they said that once those things are done money will just fall on your face. As I say, you hardly see anyone who does not attend school, everyone is encouraged from boys to girls. My family was very supportive.

Similarly, Georgina shared the same views, stating: “I can say that they believed in education, especially education for me, because they always provided for me, supported me, prepared me for school, feeding me the right food, whenever I brought homework home they let me sit by the fire or under the moon to do my homework. I could tell that they understood and that they saw the future in what I was doing”. However, Georgina went onto explain how her cousin-brother did not share this same view. Georgina explained:

From my cousin-brother’s point of view, I remember what he said, he said, “you good nomoa ya sister, but if you man nomoa ba hem good naya” (you are good sister, but if you were a man you would be better). He is always coming to see me this cousin of mine to seek advice or for help. When I think about what he said, I did not know what he meant then, but maybe it did not look appropriate in his eyes for a woman to excel. That is what he said. But I think right now, they understand what a female can do with education.

Georgina’s cousin-brother’s comments reveal that there are individuals in the family and community who hold existing male superiority ideologies within a matrilineal society, which tend to downplay the successes of women.

Although positive views have been shared amongst many of the participants’ regarding education; Gloria, Rendy and Natasha mentioned factors that obstruct education for girls in their respective villages. Gloria stated her parents pushed her five sisters and herself to pursue an education, despite of the mindset “for the girls to stay and boys to go to school”, that remained strong up until the 1990s in her village. Rendy specified her family, alike her village, do

not “value” education. Through her years of work and receiving an education; Rendy noticed her family have grown to see the importance of education. Natasha discussed the realities of village life, where large families are either financially incapable to send all their children to receive an education, or are only able too, to a certain stage of education, for example grade 6 Primary. These findings show that there are different perceptions across different matrilineal societies in the Solomon Islands regarding education. Furthermore, it reveals how outside factors such as financing an education can alter a girl’s opportunity to maximize her educational potential.

Education is a factor that has emancipated the women in this study. Of the 14 women, all but two finished secondary school, 12 gained tertiary qualification ranging from diploma to Masters level, while one has just submitted her doctoral thesis. As shown earlier, education was encouraged by all the women’s families and communities. Natasha spoke around the importance of education in her career, she states:

I believe in quality education and networking with those around you, inclusive of men and boys. That has made my way up to the high levels... That education part is very important as well. That gives you the know-how and the confidence, in terms of the way you present yourself, the way you make decisions in the workplace or elsewhere that often leads to recognition from others.

Margaret and Sohi disclosed that education and entering the formal sector was easily accessible for women in the late 1970s and 1980s. There were

scholarships available, and an increased need of female workers to boost the newly independent economy. Sohi states:

Because I finished High School in 1980 and I did my first diploma in 1981. So at the time, there were lots of scholarships, lots of opportunities. Maybe because some of the girls in the other islands were not encouraged maybe? But all of us who went, we all had a job, we had a choice whether to go to form 6, go direct into university, or to just go directly for jobs. Straight from form 5 or form 6. We were all encouraged to go, there were lots of girls from Isabel at that time, we all went through. They are all still working these days.

The older women in this study attest to expansive opportunities available to women during those years. The education system in the Solomon Islands is extremely strict, and holds values attached to Christianity. Lucy's educational journey is an example of how western systems that are bureaucratic in nature and intertwined with religion, can push individuals out. When asked if she did further studies after high school, Lucy says:

My history is I am a bright woman, but I was expelled from school. I was expelled when I was form two, I did not finish my school well, and I find that the education system here in the Solomon Islands is not conducive for young people. So, one of the barriers I have seen from my own experience is that the education sector did not help me, and to this day, it is not inclusive for young people. As we all know, when you are going through life as a teenager there are pressures, and the system we have does not cater for these issues... Young people face different types of experiences, and the formal education sector does not embrace or find other ways to pull these students back into the education system and help them move past these phases, because we should all understand that these things can be crossed to get to the other side of the bridge. Schools also have this bench mark for schools that run with religious missions. Religious beliefs drive these schools so they have an approach that is either black or white with no understanding whatsoever.

This finding illustrates how the system may be a reason to why there is an imbalance between male and female participation in the formal sector. If young

girls (and boys), do not have a fair chance at completing secondary school, there is a higher chance for female unemployment, or for these young girls to return to their villages.

5.3 Church institution- a site for leadership

Religion is widely practiced in the Solomon Islands. The church is an institution where the women saw their mothers and grandmothers organize, and lead communities, and eventually became a site where they were able to role-model their mother and grandmother's involvement in the church to their own leadership style and mannerisms in the formal sector. Also, a few women commented on how the church fostered matrilineal norms such as communal work, and subsistence living to fund education for children in their community, and to keep the community together in harmony with each other to look after their village.

Margaret commented on her church encouraging communal values through subsistence living, to aid the advancement of education for the children in their church communities, Margaret stated, "*our church had a very strong communal work, and the mission paid for all of us who went to secondary schools*". Church was seen as a foundation in Margaret's community that was "*very encouraging in terms of school and education, and also, they gave us an exposure to education*". Communal work was encouraged through the church. Edith recalled experiences in her village, she shares, "*[m]y village, it is very*

communal. If you go home, and they say, today we are cleaning the church. If you do not go to clean the church, you will pay a fine of \$5”.

Commenting on the communal nature of a matrilineal society, that is encouraged by the institution of the church, Noelyn discloses:

because of the community based ideals in a matrilineal society, it has helped me to be open and to be inclusive with people that I work with. For example, in our monthly meetings, when we are trying to draw up our reports, I always try to include everyone, and interact with each and every one of our staff so that I get everyone on the same page with our organizational activities and so on. Interaction is important and communication.

Church plays a role in regulating the continuity of matrilineal norms. In this case, communal work, and subsistence living, which most of the women identify as aspects of their upbringing that influenced their leadership experiences and how they carry themselves in the working environment.

Role modelling also occurred because the women saw women from their communities involved in church activities that encompassed some form of leadership role in the community.

Lucy saw women leading in her community through church and community activities. She explains:

There are women in the community who definitely stand out. How they lead the little groups, whether it be church, or smaller groups inside the community, they are very strong... They can lead; they can co-ordinate how women come together. My parents were members of the United Church, in there the UCWF (United Church Women's Fellowship Group) would organize women for every Thursday's there would be a meeting, and they would say, okay, we are required to contribute for church work... Okay, how will we raise money? Then they will go ahead and co-ordinate amongst themselves.

Lucy, states seeing such work by the women influenced her, she states:

I saw their ability to lead, to co-ordinate, and to bring everyone together to work for a common aim and achieve what they want to achieve. So yes I have seen that as an influence.

Georgina spoke of her community in the Guadalcanal Plains, where women's leadership in the church is respected by the men in her community, she states:

In church, the women show hospitality. That is where I see women coming up very strong. This is because they are attached to the land and attached to the food, so the males say, "ufala woman naya, mifala for toktok, but ufala na ba feelim heat blo fire" (It is the women, we just talk, but you will feel the heat of the fire). So I can tell that women leadership is very effective in Church organizing. In fact, they do more activities in the church than the males. Men just stand by and watch and wait for heavy things. Right now, women are actually planning and doing things. One example is the women's movement in Church, my background is Anglican, and we call the group for women the mother's union. So far, the mother's union have been organizing lots of meetings I am just very proud of them. That is the strength of them.

Similarly, to subsistence living, church is a site where women take control over the organizing of such work. Georgina's comments allude to this control and a prospective space for women to grasp a leadership position, where men respect this work and support the women to carry out such work.

Edith and Nancy spoke of the influences the church had on their mothers, which in turn, left an imprint on their lives. Edith and Nancy's mothers were involved in Church; "*she was President for Mother's Union for the Anglican Community in Isabel... she went to school at the girl's school, and they were brought up by the missionaries*".

Although Church was a substantial part of these women's lives, Edith was clear through her examples of her mother and grandmother that the Church did not cloud the matrilineal processes that were passed down from her through her mother.

Similarly, Nancy spoke of how church was an aspect of her mother's life that was greatly encouraged, she explains:

A big thing was to never miss church. I think that is the biggest lesson. Make sure in the weekends, do not miss church. So for me growing up is going to church, those values are important to me. Not just to please my mother but for myself as well.

Both women acknowledged the leadership work their mothers undertook whilst working for church organizations, and confirmed that they were role-models for them growing up. Edith described seeing this work, she says:

My mother's influence and what I saw growing up is in me. My mum never had anything for herself, everything was for the people.

This shows how the Church is a setting where women's leadership is nurtured, which is then role-modelled by the women in this study. Edith's comments also re-affirm the notion of caring and sharing ideals that are present in her mother's leadership style. Most of the women still engage in Church activities outside of the formal sector; showing their commitment to the things they attribute to their sense of self.

5.4 Experiencing the Formal Sector

Although the women were raised in a matrilineal society which nurtured their characteristics and moulded various aspects of their work role, barriers in the workplace were still present. The experiences varied between the women. Factors that created these variances are the types of organization, the age of the women, and the individual experiences of the women. The following explores barriers frequently discussed by the women in this study; lack of promotion, male dominance, and organizational constraints. Surprisingly, family responsibilities was not a factor that impeded their career progression.

5.4.1 Promotion

Prior research shows that women have difficulties in promotion which was connected to other barriers such as family responsibilities and stereotyping of women (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009). However, in this study, I found that although promotion was rare, family responsibilities did not bear heavily on promotion in Solomon Islands society when compared to prior research conducted in the Western context. Dilemmas surrounding promotion seemingly aligned more with structural promotion, where men or the organization itself hindered the advancement of the women's careers. Serah's comment conveyed the general consensus regarding promotion, *"When I started off the chances of being promoted is quite rare. It takes years before you get promoted"*. A few of the women believed they had to work twice as much than the men in their workplace. Gloria gave an example of how promotion in her workplace was biased:

one of the things I found was that I had to work twice as much when working with the male workers inside my office. I felt like I had to prove myself to my boss who was a male himself. I realized that I had to prove myself even more when one of the male colleagues who worked with me was promoted just after one or two years. We all worked, we all started at the same time, but he got promotion really fast. I got my promotion nearly 7 years later. The thing was, I know that I would have done a better job than him, but he got that promotion, and when he got that promotion really fast, without going through the normal channels that we usually go through, like the advertising, the interviews, he did not get that, he just got it like the HR going there and giving him a paper that says you know you're going to be promoted, your pay is going to go up by this much, and that pissed me off at that time, and I knew that if I wanted to get the recognition I have to work really hard and really hard just to get that recognition. So that is probably one of the things, the first things I noticed when I came in.

Serah and Noelyn revealed that lack of promotion within the workplace increased lack of motivation within the workplace. Noelyn revealed her male boss interrupted her promotion process when trying to gain further studies, she explains:

Before I became a director, it was definitely hard to get a promotion, especially when my boss at that time was hindering us to further our education to that bachelor's level. Maybe he wanted us to stay with our diplomas, so I think that is why two of my colleagues left. But for myself, I really loved the library, so I just remained there. Sometimes, I did feel like resigning when I was not getting the promotions or I was frustrated with something to do with my job, but then, when I went home and thought about it, I say, I think they need me and I should stay. I have been here for a long time, and I know what I am doing, and just wait for an opportunity to go for another training or so on.

Noelyn's explanation reveals strength and perseverance, to stay on in her organization despite her frustrations.

5.4.2 Male dominance

Organizations are still fundamentally dominated by men (O'neil, Hopkins, Bilimoria, 2008; Metz, 2011). This stance in prior research is clear in this study and was revealed by the women interviewed. Although the women in this study are leaders in their workplace, male dominance was identified repeatedly as a challenge in their respective roles. Male dominance by men from both patrilineal and matrilineal backgrounds appeared in the form of gender bias, and the lack of women in senior leadership roles across organizations. Natasha noticed gender bias relatively early in her career, she explains:

When first entering the formal work force, I would agree that there is evidence of gender bias, without people actually realizing or acknowledging what we refer to as gender bias. It is a kind of a foreign, new concept for Solomon Islanders. Due to the fact that tradition and culture dominates our livelihood. So, the fact that not that many women go to school or enter the workforce, does not really matter, as it is the boys who tend to leave the family for school or for work, which is much earlier than girls. I guess it is there, gender bias, there is evidence, but it not a matter that most people would think of seriously, until very recently when this concept became popular and more aware of too people here.

This finding alludes to traditional opinion in many Solomon Islands societies, where men belong in the workplace and women at home. Natasha describes this as a *“foreign new concept”*, where society have become institutionalized and accepting to this opinion. Serah and Rendy voiced the rarity of the term gender bias in the formal sector. Rendy said, *“we did not take much note of the gender issue, not until the late 1990s where we started to hear more about the gender issue”*. Similarly, Serah shared her experiences while working in her current organization:

[b]efore that they may have had gender issues, but during those times we never heard of gender bias or gender issues. We knew nothing about that... just no one talks about it. You know, during the interview when I was asked why do you want to join Customs? I said I wanted to be the first female to get into the job. But like I said, we knew nothing about it, and gender issues were never spoken about.

Men generally hold higher positions in the workplace. A number of women believe the male dominated culture in traditional Solomon Islands society has translated into the workplace, where men hold higher positions. Lucy did not gain further academic studies past high school, and entered the workforce at a young age, working at a hotel in the private sector. She spoke of the connection between traditional Solomon Islands society and the workplace:

Personally, it is difficult as a woman, because in our society in Solomon Islands, women are mostly considered the homemakers, caregivers, child bearers, so that role is quite strong and it translates into your work life... our society in the Solomon Islands is very male dominated. Things like working at night for example, is usually work for men, women are not expected to go out at night, you know... A lot of the workers inside my workplace at that time were all male too. You will see when you go higher up in those senior positions, in my experience at that time, in the hotel, you will only see men as you go up, women none at all. But, when you look at the service sector, and I use service sector for those women I work with who clean the bedrooms, who do housekeeping and so on, there are no males at all at that level, just women. It comes back to this issue in our society where it is male dominated. The upper level positions belong to the men, while the work that involves domestic duties such as cleaning the house, doing the laundry and so on, belong to the females. So yes, that male domination I see as being linked to our society.

Lucy does not exclusively state whether this statement was referring to patrilineal men or matrilineal men. However, I found interesting that when the women were asked about patrilineal men, they were clear on their feelings and perceptions of them, yet when they spoke generally about men in the

workplace, they did not identify matrilineal men as holding the same views as patrilineal men.

Gloria is employed in the Government sector. Her experiences regarding male dominance correspond with Lucy's. She states:

Yes, in my sector, especially in my department is dominated by males. It took us nearly 8 years just to employ another female. During that time there were new employees, other interviews, they were all males. Just that, tells me that this is a male dominated work environment, and it is so hard just to get your idea cross.

Male domination appeared in the form of culture, but also by design, as expressed by Lucy, stating that during the recruitment process she identified that all the candidates were male. Sohi spoke of the impact male dominance has on women's roles in the workplace, she states:

Yes, I think an example of those challenges would be men not respecting what women say. Especially for example, they do not take instructions from women and as a leader that would be really a challenge for us. We want jobs to be done and if we want to move forward I think that is the most challenging, it is always males not respecting the decisions that come from women or instructions that come from women.

In stark contrast, Margaret stated she did not experience challenges when she entered the workforce. Margaret was among the first female graduates after independence in 1978, she states:

I felt like I did not face any, not that I noticed, or not that I felt and experienced it. All of us were treated equally by the bosses and also amongst ourselves. There were more males than females in the office, but I think we were the first few graduates, so there was more understanding between us all. The challenges I faced were challenges I had to deal with at work, work challenges that I could face and take on. When I came to work at the Ministry of Home Affairs, I was already up to the senior position, so I was taking

responsibility over others. So there was nothing, in terms of gender discrimination that I experienced. I guess that was the reason why I initially did not get involved in women's issues in relation to leadership, or striving for senior positions and promotions because I did not experience it.

This finding illustrates that time is a factor when discussing job opportunities, and the challenges that the women may have faced at the time. Interestingly, older women in this study stated that job opportunities were endless when they first entered the workplace. This was due to a smaller population, and increased opportunities after independence.

5.4.3 Organizational constraints

Several women discussed different constraints within their organizations that have hindered sections of their careers. Lavinia spoke of financial constraints that impeded her attendance to the opening of an eco-lodge she developed on the province of Santa Isabel, she states:

I approached my organization and encouraged them that we should be a part of these happenings, unfortunately there was no money available to send us and to travel to these places. These milestones need to be celebrated so that we can see that we are making changes. Those are the little gaps and barriers that I see. Make sure when you draw up a project proposal, make sure that the budget is up to the maintenance part so that we can live up to the full process of the labor and work that we put in... no sector is perfect, no NGO is perfect, even the government is not perfect. There are a lot of gaps in our society. It all comes down to resources and time.

In addition, Serah spoke of specific areas in her organization where gender governed rules influencing opportunities for women. She explains:

Having proper uniforms is a problem when I started off. Because it is a male dominated environment, we only wear skirt and shirt, no

trousers. Even if we go on board foreign vessels for clearance. We are not given the opportunity to perform some roles being a female officer for example, boarding of vessels.

This finding shows that although women are employed and qualified for a job, they are still undermined by male colleagues, or the organization itself, through the enforcement of rules and norms that hold them back from performing tasks equal to their male colleagues.

Recruitment processes were highly gendered. Serah and Noelyn commented on their organization's recruitment processes. Noelyn works for the library and she tries to discourage her organization's gendered requirements, but acknowledges that the stigma of a library institution being attached to female work is hard to counter, she said:

one of my staffs is a male, and he is the only male amongst all of us women, so I always encourage him to make him feel inclusive in our female dominated organization. Whenever we apply for vacant positions in the library, it is almost only females who apply.

Serah was one of the first females to be employed at customs. She discussed that the customs organization was a male dominated environment, that was normalized through the continual hiring of men. She explains:

the customs department was a male dominated organization. There were no female officers at all; well their use to be one a few years back then, but then there was none for a long time. I was one of the first four female recruits, so we sort of paved the way for other female officers. After we joined customs, whenever there is recruitment, there is always opportunity for females.

Serah conveyed she noticed this gender imbalance in her workplace and endeavored to create more opportunities for women entering this organization. Some of these women were trail blazers in their organization's and their efforts to make a difference for women coming through the formal sector is inspiring.

5.4.4 Working with patrilineal men

Power and dominance in the workplace shapes one's sense of self. This section examines power and dominance in the workplace as a barrier for the women in this study. The women reveal a significant finding in this research, where they candidly discuss workplace interaction with patrilineal men. Several women perceive this interaction as a challenge to the documented one-sided power men hold in the workplace. When queried if they have faced any challenges or barriers throughout their careers, Sohi, Lucy, Matalita, Nancy, and Edith specified one of their biggest challenges was working with patrilineal men. Sohi explained:

I think there were most men who did not recognize the position of women especially men who come from very patrilineal kind of setting, where I think there upbringing tells them that women are seen as below them. Yeah, I think that was the difference I saw. And especially in SICHE as well, like I worked very well with men who come from matrilineal societies, for example men from Isabel, men from Roviana (Western Province), men from Makira, yeah, Santa Ana. They, we work very well, I do not face a lot of challenges working with those men, because I think they understand the position of women in their societies and in their communities. But I really came across a lot of challenges working with men from very patrilineal settings, for example, Malaita. I think those were the very difficult challenging.

Matalita spoke of the same experiences, but her situation was different, as she perceived the respect she received from her boss was due to him originating from the Western Province, where several societies are exclusively matrilineal.

She states:

The challenge is that the men do not like women being above them. I find that with patrilineal men. I am lucky when I was working in Solomon Water, my boss, the General Manager, is from the Western Province; Donald Makini, so I had the support. I had the support that I needed to do the work, and I think I took it to the level where I could carry forth what they are doing... I had that support to run on my own, and do my own programs, and have my own vehicle, to the extent that they have to take the vehicle away from me too, because of you know, the patrilineal men are not happy about why I should be given that. Like, with my boss, Western men, no problems. I sort of just slip past with everything I want to do, and I got it. But, for the others, patrilineal ones, they find it hard for women to talk over them, or at they're same level. They seem to be threatened by it.

Interestingly, Matalita's experiences with patrilineal men reveal how she is undermined when using tools such as a vehicle. Furthermore, it showed that men in the workplace stick together, as the matrilineal men took the vehicle from Matalita to appease the complaints from patrilineal men. Experiences such as these not only impacts the individual, but also has an impact on carrying out tasks for the organization, that could in turn affect Matalita's position in the organization.

Lucy worked in a hotel after school, and spoke of the attitude of patrilineal men in her workplace, she stated:

We have some men in the workplace, and I will use my experiences at the hotel as an example. At the hotel we have security guards who work day and night. It became more obvious to me that the security guards at nighttime had different behaviors towards us during the night shift. They did not like us talking to the male guests at the hotel, and it goes back to how we view women in our society.

You should not do something “tambu”, you are restricted a lot of times. You are restricted to have freedom of expression, and I noticed that a lot while working in the hotel... The structure we worked in at the hotel was like this, we had a male hotel owner, and so at that level we have someone above you in terms of structure or reporting... the security guards at the hotel, they are mostly men from Malaita. Malaita has a patrilineal system. So how they treat us is in line with that system. With my current work in the Government, we have male supervisors who are from matrilineal islands. You will see that how they talk to us is different as well. They do not talk to us in strong manner... usually you can tell that those men who come from patrilineal islands have their own views, and they are quite strong in their views. Although they consult with you, it is just to hear you out, but not necessarily take into account your decision-making.

Lucy is undermined in her workplace by patrilineal men not listening to her ideas or decisions, which may be tied to their traditional views of where women are placed in society, or not placed; as holding a leadership role. Similar to Sohi, Lucy made a comparison between matrilineal male workers and patrilineal male workers. These women identified clear differences in characteristics between the two groups. Alike Lucy, Nancy faced stereotypical behaviors from male colleagues and identified how culture is intertwined with workplace interaction, she explains:

For me, I just have to tell it to them straight in the face, because I do not like it when some address myself in a manner that is unprofessional, you know like, “I know you are a smart single mother”, it is not really culturally sensitive. Again for me, this is men, coming from a patrilineal society, talking to a woman. So, not culturally sensitive, but for men, they need to be sensitized on how they should approach women leaders, it is a very common thing. But for me, I just take up the challenge and respond in a professional and positive manner. I am hoping that one day, sharing these stories and experiences with women leaders or emerging leaders we can come across that. I think, if you are not prepared to face males then you just have to consult other women.

Nancy's experience with patrilineal men undermining her reveals that the men in question locate motherhood, or in her case, single motherhood as her prominent role, rather than acknowledging and respecting her leadership role in her organization.

Responses to the treatment these women receive from patrilineal men captured my attention. Although these women were faced with such an obstacle in the workplace, these women saw themselves as capable, strong women who viewed this obstacle as a learning experience and thus found it enhanced their career as opposed to hindering it. Lucy said:

No. Maybe, I am too strong. I just have that attitude of not stopping. Nobody can stop me, like if this is what I want to do, this is right, and people are supporting you, especially superiors, then I am going for it, no matter what you say. But, I can come down to your level and I can explain, and I think I did that better with patrilineal men. It is just coming down to, not to go above them all the time, but coming down to them and explaining this is what we have agreed on and this is why, and going back to the books.

Sohi clarified:

I think it made me to be a stronger person. I think if I had faced only the challenges like the very patrilineal I would give up. But then, I also see that in the other cultures it's a challenge but in a positive way, that they were seeing that women should also be participating in the formal sector. And I saw that as a positive thing. And when I was facing all these challenges from the male in the patrilineal society, that's why I wanted to know more why, why are they entertaining these types of ways seeing women? Made me to really want to come out and find out more, and I think it made me to further my careers and contributes a lot to what I am doing now.

Lucy stated:

I know I am very strong, and I truly believe that when I believe in something, I stand by it. So I think these barriers I have faced have

empowered me and has made me a stronger person so that I can speak my mind, express myself well and to be confident in what I stand for.

This finding shows how traditional systems in the Solomon Islands are held on by individuals and can be brought into the workplace. Patrilineal and matrilineal values are intertwined in the organization and can shape workplace interaction.

5.4.5 Family responsibilities

One of the well-known barriers from the literature I found was how family responsibilities was a barrier for working women in the western world. My findings found that family was a positive tool to advancing their careers, as opposed to obstructing or slowing down their careers. Majority of the women had children before, and during their careers. Serah states:

I travel on a job related travel abroad, my mother will come up and look after the kids, I have my aunty who looks after the kids, and that shows their support. At once stage, my son was only six months and I had to travel to Fiji for work, so one of my in-laws and my mother had to comes up to look after the kids, even going as far as breast-feeding my child. That shows that closeness within my family and extended family. So that is the support I was gaining and continue to get from my family.

Majority of the women were not discouraged to having a family, and putting their career first, which is more common for women in western societies who are having babies later in their careers. Serah goes on to say:

Never. Actually, it was the other way around. Because of my tribal connections with my matrilineal family, I was encouraged to get married early and have kids early, and have many kids. I started work in 1981, and in 1982 I got married and I was having kids at the same time as I working. Even when I was not married I was encouraged to have kids, even though I was not married. That is

simply because of my matrilineal relationships with my tribe and that communal belief.

This finding goes against current literature where women see family responsibilities as a setback to their careers. The matrilineal ideal of community and family encourages the women to have their careers whilst having a family.

5.5 Emancipation and restraints in an emerging capitalist society

The women's upbringing in a matrilineal society is one attribute that has emancipated their experiences in a male-dominated society. This is seen through the freedom of gaining an education, entering the workforce, and advancing through their organizations into recognizable leadership roles. However, in doing so, the women have indirectly added to the detriment of a matrilineal society. This finding is based on the question:

Do you think your involvement in the formal sector disrupts your role in the matrilineal community setting?

5.5.1 Challenging matrilineal ideals

A major finding in this study was the women's realization that their participation in the formal sector challenged the core ideals of matrilineality; the community and subsistence living. Although they did not view their absence as dire, they state that they give back to the community through monetary means, as opposed to being their physically and engaging in subsistence living. Lucy

stated, because she holds a high position in her workplace, she does not make frequent visits back to the village, stating, "I do not have what I truly believe as frequent visits to engage in that setting. However, the place where I engage in a similar setting is with my extended family". Through the extended family, communal events such as "*marriages, deaths, where people come together and it is the communal type of setting where you can share*", Lucy identifies as her ties to her matrilineal roots.

Gloria spoke of the effects engagement in the formal sector has had on her role in the village. She explained:

Because I live and work in Honiara for so long, we sometimes lose touch with what is going on in the community. When we go back we have to re-establish ourselves in the routine of the village, for example, what to do. So yes, employment has affected my role in the village.

Gloria went onto explain that there is a bigger reliance on the formal economy, as opposed to subsistence living, which helped majority of the women in this study to attend school, she states:

Bigger reliance, and bigger help in terms of money and responsibilities. There is a definite role reversal, where now, we no longer rely so much on subsistence living to support our lifestyle here. I realize that my family back in the village support me in my work here because somehow I will help them on the side of money to help pay for school fees, or to build a house etc. Sometimes that responsibility is too big, because everyone asks for money. But I feel like families here in town help those back in the village, but I feel there is a disconnection because I am not there physically. They might know my name, oh yes Rachel has been helping us with school fees every year, but for the kids, they might not recognize me.

By giving back to her family and matrilineal community through monetary means, Gloria becomes an absent aunty to her extended family. Gloria felt that

this absence leads to her cousins covering for tasks she is not able to do in the village, resulting in “more recognition than us here in town. Whereas I am here, even though I give money, that may not hold as much prestige or recognition. So, negatively, they may look to them and not us when it comes to helping out and so on”. Similar to Gloria, Matalita believes she contributes in a different way to her matrilineal society, she states:

I contribute in a different way. Like, at home, they will call on us, okay, “you come and teach us these things, you come and do this with us”, or, “come and we pray for these people who are in need”. Church plays an active role as well. So it is not only culture. But, we are involved in weaving, and if there are new things coming out in weaving, we want to go and sit with them and find out what is new and what is going on. I think, people look up to you, but, you do not stay there and try to get people’s attention, I do not think I am like that. I like to come down to their level and see if I can add value to what they are doing.

Matalita is one of the few women who responded to this question by stating she does more than give back to the community through monetary terms. Through the institution of the church, she is able to share her talents of weaving or other knowledge through her work to the women in her community. Majority of the women shared that despite their roles in the formal sector, they endeavour to do their utmost best to never lose their connection with their matrilineal communities. Margaret stated:

Disruption in terms of not doing it every day, yes. But then again, it did not disrupt me in terms of contributing towards my community in the form of cash and so on. So I am still engaged, and I always advise my kids, you always stay connected to where you come from, or your base. The community is the base. So, I never disconnect from them, and I believe that has influenced my career.

Georgina and Sohi asserted that formal employment does not disrupt their matrilineal identities. Sohi explains:

I still practice my matrilineal values in my work place. For me, when I go back to the village it is just the same. I just take it up. For me, it is just natural that you go back to the village and you perform what you always do. Again, I think that is one of the challenges I think I find in women leaders, especially those who are employed. Like when they take up formal employment, and when they go home back to the village, they pull themselves outside of the community tasks, and the moment we do that, I think it is not healthy in the sense that we are not being true to ourselves.

Sohi continued to express how there is a connection between the village and the formal sector, she states:

when you go back and you do not engage as much with people in the community, then you are distancing yourself from them. The moment you do that, it makes people in the community to say, 'she is no longer us'. And it is going to be a challenge for most women if we continue to behave or to perform in that sense. Same for our men, they are also the same.

This further illustrated the importance of the community and the 'we' within the community. Sohi's comments highlight that if women are to ignore and remove their connection between their matrilineal communities and their work in the formal sector, there will be more challenges faced for that individual, as the 'we' and the community will identify you as an outsider.

Georgina bluntly believed that her role in the formal sector and her role in the matrilineal community is split '50/50'. She explains:

I look at myself as a traditional indigenous village girl, and also a modern educated person. So that when I go there to the village, I have to be there, I dress up like them, I eat like them, I clean my stone oven, I cut the grass. I tell stories, I communicate in my mother tongue. Life is complete. One thing is, living as a Solomon Islander

or as a white person in town, if you take that back to the village setting; there will be no harmony. I cannot continue to wear trousers, speak English to my children. I take my kids and engage in those communal ideals. It is a unique experience, I can converse with a nice white fellow here, and when I drive home I can switch any moment when I drive back to my village.

Georgina understands and accepts the two roles she has in society as both a working woman and a matrilineal woman from the Guadalcanal plains. She embraces multiple identities and roles within her life, and complies with unwritten set standards established by her matrilineal community, regarding the role of the woman within a matrilineal society.

I think that is the power of the matrilineal system, that mother and daughter relationship makes you down to Earth. You feel for them, how would they feel if you try act sophisticated and your poor mother is finding it hard to understand you, accept your fashion and so on. You would become a subject of ridicule. People in the village always comment, “no matter you go and tekem hao many degrees, ufala blo hea nomoa” (no matter where you go and how many degrees you chieve, you will always just be from here). That is what makes me special though, I can be them, but they can never be me, what makes me unique is that I have those both two sides of me. It is so satisfying to maintain both identities, and that is the impact of both systems. I have an equal balance. Also, acceptance for both systems.

Georgina complies with both identities because she has trained herself to do so through her upbringing; she understands that in taking on multiple identities within her life derives a sense of self and satisfaction, and in doing so, she does not offend her relatives and at the same time is not ridiculed by her community. It is important to note that in Georgina’s case, Honiara is a few kilometres away from her village, so her village is more accessible when compared to other women who are from the outer provinces who have to travel further.

5.6 Conclusion

In this section I have presented the findings of the 14 Solomon Islands women, who identify connections between their matrilineal experiences to their engagement in the formal sector. These experiences were revealed through the emphasis of significant themes that arose out of in-depth interviews; in particular: knowing your line and maintaining *kastom*, matrilineal family ties, and the institution of the church as a site of leadership. Through these themes, the women affirmed their leadership styles and characteristics within the workplace are mirrored on these elements in a matrilineal society. Grasping these elements, they are able to work around barriers that tend to impede the advancement of women into leadership positions. The next section will be the discussion of these findings in relation to existing literature in this area.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

6.0 Introduction

This study explored how women leaders in the formal sectors of the Solomon Islands perceive their matrilineal cultural heritage has influenced their career progression. While much research has been done on women in the Solomon Islands, there has been little literature that looks at the state of women in the formal sector of the Solomon Islands, moreover, developing countries, and the challenges these women have faced throughout their careers in the formal sector. This study aims to address this gap in the literature and connect the informal sector of a matrilineal society, to the formal sector of paid employment. This discussion chapter is split into four main parts and its subheadings: the influence of matriarchal systems on the women's work life, transition from the matrilineal setting to the formal sector, challenges in a male-dominated sector, and the challenges to a matrilineal society, in hopes to spark further research on a topic that developed countries are currently lacking in.

6.1 The influence of matriarchal systems on the women's work life

Familial ties are an important part of the matrilineal communal value system. Therefore, in this study most of the women referred to their mothers, aunties, grandmothers, and community as key influential figures who believed, supported, and paved a way for them to develop their leadership potential while growing up. Through these ties in a matrilineal society, knowing your line,

kastom and subsistence living were instilled on the women which further influenced their leadership experiences in the formal sector.

6.1.1 Influence of women in a matrilineal society

The findings relating to the relationship between mother and child in a matrilineal society agrees with the literature that this connection transmits knowledge, wealth and tradition (Bieldelman, 1971; Peters, 2010). Most studies around matrilineal societies in a Melanesian context have stressed this element, where *kastom* and kinship elements meet to foster the growth of the daughter (Schneider, 2012). In the findings of this study, Edith's reflection on her upbringing with her mother on Isabel Province paralleled Schneider's (2012) observations in Papua New Guinea, where mothers placed their daughters on their back from birth until they are young girls. This link between mother and child fosters a more caring and passive nature, which several of the women in this study mentioned as accompanying traits in their respective leadership styles. Davies & Fitchett's (2015) research into the transition of the mother-daughter relationship from a matrilineal society into a modern consumer culture discourse, alludes to the strength of this bond; where the rationale is, mothers transfer norms and values to their daughters who in turn inherit and internalise these norms (p. 729). The transferral of these norms and values are evident throughout this study, especially in the mother daughter relationship, where the women identify certain characteristics from their mothers where they feel they have taken on and has positively added to their leadership experiences in the formal sector. Personal characteristics such as being a good communicator,

providing for the children in the home, being fearless, and showing confidence with no inhibitions were several characteristics mentioned by the women in this study.

Another feature in this study was that aunts and grandmothers in a matrilineal society equally impacted the upbringing of the women in this study. Suppose a mother fails to conform to the norms of motherhood, the social organisation of a matrilineal society permits the responsibility of the children to be passed to her mother (children's grandmother), aunts, and sisters, rather than the father or his kin (Birdsall, 1987). Property inheritance in Southern Malawi, Zomba exemplified a flat structure between the grandmother, mother, and aunt to daughter relationship, where there was no specificity regarding who gives the daughter land (Peters, 2010). Birdsall (1987) discovered with the Nyungar people in Perth, Western Australia that kin tends to fall on the 'mothers side' (p. 131); where the extent of this closeness can be seen in how the children of female siblings regard their matri-cousins as siblings, and aunts in many occurrences are equated as a child's mother (p. 132). This study's findings are in line with previous literature, where there is no hierarchy within the women's matrilineal societies, and there is ample freedom between grandmothers, aunt, mother and daughter, to: impart *kastom* processes, how to organise the home, and skills that will enable not only their own, but their community's survival. In trying to find myself as a young leader, this particular aspect of a matrilineal society made me realise that these connections were missing from my upbringing, I found Gloria's comments regarding these relationships significant, she states:

They say that if the mother role is missing, you will see that child will just be floating; the child will not have land and will not have a place to stay. This is why the relationship of mother to child is important, or even grandmother and like I said before aunty as well.

These connections reinforced the identity of these women, and strengthened their place within the community. This in turn added a layer to the creation of the self, where the women felt confident with no reservations when entering the formal sector and when they were faced with challenges in their leadership roles.

The significance of these findings is that these relationships from their respective matrilineal societies supported the women in this study in their working lives; to maintain and grow as women leaders in the formal sector, while balancing a life at home. Present literature on women in Western society sees women choosing to pursue a professional career over raising families, (Gerson, 1986; Loy, 2009). In a study of women academics, statistics revealed that women are more likely to have fewer children, or remain childless and single over men (Caplan, 1993; Armenti, 2004). However in this study, all but one of the women had children before and during their careers. Thirteen of the women in this study attest this feat to the support of their cousin sisters, aunts, grandmothers, mother and spousal support. The general consensus was that these relatives fill in the gaps when the women are at work or are travelling because of work commitments. Support from their matrilineal family came in the form of caring for their children while they travelled for work or while they were at work, while they were receiving an education from high school through

to higher degrees in University, and maintaining the home while they were away from work.

6.1.2 Subsistence living

Majority of past and current literature on matrilineal societies describe this societal arrangement as communal, horticultural societies (Schneider & Gough, 1961; Holden & Mace, 2003; Lancaster, 1976). This study agrees with wide literature where scholars suggest this social organisation empowers women through subsistence living and domestic duties resulting in the understanding and performance of obligations to their families and communities (Lyngdoh & Pati, 2003; Thomas & Humphries, 2011; Thomas, 2013). In traditional times, women were seen as the backbone of how a traditional family should function (Elisha & Edwards, 2014). Within their matrilineal communities, the women revealed they worked in the garden to produce food for the family and community, observed their parents and community engage in copra to raise money for education, cleaned the village and church areas on certain days of the week, fetched firewood, and prepared meals for community ceremonies or just the family home. Majority of the women emphasised these activities within subsistence living which instilled in them a strong work ethic, and a caring nature, because these activities called them to serve not only their families and extended families, but their wider matrilineal communities as well. Furthermore, the engagement these women held within this capacity of their matrilineal society gave women in their societies some form of power and authority (Lyngdoh & Pati, 2003). Encompassing such power and authority gave a

sense of equality between the genders, which echoes literature on gender egalitarianism within matrilineal societies, where researchers describe matrilineal societies to be more gender egalitarian, because women are stronger in domestic spheres and contribute significantly to sustaining the subsistence nature of a matrilineal community (Harrell, 1997; Mattison, 2016).

6.2 Transition from matrilineal setting to the formal sector

This section of the discussion looks at the influence of the church, education as an emancipating tool, and the aspect of role modelling in a matrilineal society which helped transition the women in this study from their matrilineal setting into paid employment. All three subheadings are sites of empowerment that assisted the transition and growth of the women in this study.

6.2.1 Influence of the church

It is impossible to comment on women's leadership experiences without reflecting on the influence of the church in encouraging and empowering women in the Solomon Islands. Several of the women in this study commented their mothers, aunties, and grandmothers were heavily involved in the church, and to this day, the women have carried the torch in strengthening their faith and leadership involvement with church activities. Four of the women mentioned women's groups such as the United Church Women's Fellowship Group under the United Church, and the Mother's Union under the Church of Melanesia, as two women's groups that fostered the identity of women's leadership within church institutions in the Solomon Islands. These women's

groups encouraged women within the communities the women in this study were brought up in to: lead, co-ordinate and bring everyone together. Lucy stated in her interview that she saw women in her community engaging in economic fuelled church fundraisings for women and children activities. This is supported by Scheyvens' (2003) study which revealed that church women's groups give women an opportunity most others lack; 'a socially sanctioned release from their daily obligations' (p. 30). Pollard (2000) commented that without the involvement of women leading church groups, church related activities in the villages would die a natural death. The site of the church played a significant role in in equipping women with leadership abilities, and advocating these qualities within women to the wider community, which is seen throughout the findings of the study (Pollard, 2006).

6.2.2 Emancipation through education

Education is a significant tool in this study which assisted the transition from the informal setting of a matrilineal society, to the formal sector of paid employment. All but two of the women received formal tertiary education, with one reaching the doctoral level. Women's participation in education is slim when compared to men in the Solomon Islands (Unicef, 2012; Pollard, 2000). Pollard (2000) explained that the gap in participation between men and women in education may not be due to Government policies, but because of the traditional view of women in Solomon Islands society that women belong in the home. From the findings in this study, although the idea of domestic duties are attached to women, which is in line with previous literature, a significant finding

disproves this through the revelation that these women received immense support from their matrilineal communities to pursue an education, regardless of the time it would take them out of the community, and the cost of school fees. Matalita stated in her interview that all the girls in her village were encouraged to go to school, she went on to say:

Hunda village will be empty during the year, and end of year we will go and fill it up. No girl...I did not see any were left behind and not going to school, unless it was by choice.

When comparing with education amongst young girls from patrilineal islands in the Solomon Islands, Jane Waitara stated in an interview in Liki's (2010) personal scholarly reflection that in a patrilineal society on an island such as Malaita, the girl will more often be dropped and not receive an education, in favour of her brothers. However, Waitara's father was an example of an 'unusual' circumstance where he encouraged his daughters to receive education, equal to his sons; this is seen as a positive experience within Solomon Islands society that can be used as a precedence to counteract cultural stereotypes that obstruct the advancement of women into leadership positions (Liki, 2010, p. 12). Future studies may need to be conducted to discover the similarities and differences between young girls from patrilineal and matrilineal islands in the Solomon Islands. This is not to segregate women from each other, but to identify the positives from both environments. From this, an identification of changes that need to occur can ensue within each society to better equip young girls to strive for equal education, and leadership roles in the formal sector.

The women in this study value education, and uphold education as a foundation to their successes in the formal sector. An example of this is when Sohi stated in her interview that her leadership style encompasses the idea of the community, with a caring nature, and in doing so, strives for all her staff to have equal opportunity to education in order to nourish the performance of the organisation. Education paved the way for the women to be financially stable, and be in a position where they can give back to their families and communities through the cash economy.

Although education is an emancipating tool, this study found that during their careers, accessing further education became more difficult. This finding is in agreement with Maezama's (2015) article where she states, female participation in education in Melanesia is described at its highest during Primary education, and begins to lessen at more advanced levels. Strachan (2007) and Tuivaga (1998) stress that females access to education is lower because of the privileging of males' education, however, this notion may be reflective of a general population, and may not be true of this study which focusses on matrilineal women who seemingly speak of the equality of the sexes in their upbringing. However, this finding relates back to gender equality within different societies, where within a matrilineal society, the women are seen to have roles within the society that gives the equal footing with men.

6.2.3 Leadership through role-modelling

Role-modelling is a tool women use to acquire and develop leadership skills that can consequently lead to the movement of women into leadership

positions (Archard, 2012). The findings of this study are in line with the literature where the women role-modelled their leadership style on women and men in their communities and see this as a contributing factor to how they lead in their organisations. Cranston and Ehrich's (2007) study of prominent Australian leaders also found that several female participants mentioned their role models ranged from their mothers to work colleagues and that each played a significant role in shaping their leadership skills and abilities. The women's comments in this study reflect the 2007 study, regarding who they saw as role-models, which ranged from their mothers, aunties, male chiefs in their villages, cousins and sisters. Skills such as the ability to communicate to a big audience, multitasking, being confident, taking everyone's views into account when making decisions, working alongside the people rather than above them, were examples mentioned by the women in this study when role-modelling was referred to.

6.3 Challenges in a male-dominated formal sector

Although the women's upbringing empowered them intrinsically to know who they are, and created a work ethic that inspired their career progression, challenges and barriers are still present which impeded their journey in the formal sector. Promotion, family responsibilities, and working with patrilineal men are three main themes that surprised me allowed me to examine the literature against my findings.

6.3.1 Promotion

A survey of the literature confirms the existence of gender bias, ultimately leading to promotional opportunities favouring the male sex, over the female (Pirouznia & Sims, 2006; Uwizeyimana, Modiba, & Mathevula, 2014). The findings of this study agree with the literature. Gender bias is rooted within the workplace and the women spoke openly about their experiences with the lack of promotion to further their careers, or halted them in one position for a long period of time. This finding is in line with the 'dead man's shoes' expression, referring to a particular job or position that is held for life or at least retirement at the latest possible age by the people who hold it. Presently, this expression is used to describe a job that an individual has been waiting on for a long period of time, a good example of this could be the Queen of England. McCabe's (2002) study on how innovation and culture can advance managerial innovation commented on how the notion of the 'dead man's shoes' is a static like promotion that blocks the art of trying something new. One woman mentioned she was only promoted after her boss fled the country during the Ethnic tension in the Solomon Islands, which is an illustration of the dead man's shoe theory. Lack of promotion is also presented in the findings through the lack of training offered to the women by their employers. This comes back to propositions around gender equality and gaining equal access to education. If women are not offered this opportunity, it impedes their progress and participation (Strachan, 2007), which then leads to feelings of demotivation and frustration in the workplace, as mentioned by the women in this study. I suggest more female inclusive processes should be in place within the public sector, free of

bias, to empower more women to participate in formal training, and be visible enough to be hired into positions that can further their careers to nourish their organizations.

6.3.2 Family responsibilities

A recurring theme throughout the study is the presence of the family and community. The findings of this study indicated that family responsibilities was not seen as a challenge or a barrier to the women's career progression, but more as a positive instrument in advancing their careers. The culture of a matrilineal society where communality and family is crucial to the continuation of the tribe, is seemingly woven into the working lives of the women in this study. The findings in this study disagree with the literature where family responsibilities is seen as a barrier impeding their participation in the formal sector (Fox & Lituchi, 2012; Gangl & Ziefle, 2009; Neck, 2015; Barsh and Yee, 2012; Granleese, 2004; Kark and Eagly, 2010). Majority of the women had children before, and during their careers, and attributed their family and spousal support to their freedom to be able to pursue a career as opposed to obstructing or slowing down their careers. Nonetheless, the findings in this study did not oppose the supporting dimension of family responsibilities as a barrier, where women's domestic responsibilities exceed that of men's (Bianci et al, 2000; Milkie & Peltola, 1999, Bianchi, 2000). The women in this study believe this to be true, and take responsibility for the home, and push for a balanced life. The support of the female members of their family in taking care of the home and their children in their absence, sustains existing literature and reinforces the

social role theory where women are largely seen as being responsible for the home (Metz, 2011).

6.3.3 Working with patrilineal men

An unexpected finding in this research was the overt admission by several women of the challenges they faced working with patrilineal men. This question was posed to all the women, after the first few women I interviewed shared their negative experiences with patrilineal men in the workplace. I have searched widely to find evidence of this finding, however there was no such literature that supports or gives evidence to the negative influences of patrilineal men on women working in the formal sector of the Solomon Islands, or the workplace as a whole. One could argue that this finding can be drawn back to the cultural differences in a patrilineal society and a matrilineal society and their views on girls. In patrilineal societies of the Solomon Islands, for example the island of Malaita, the stereotypical situations where women are seen as homemakers is reinforced traditionally where the bride is exchanged for bride price (Hogbin, 1969; Ross, 1973). This payment of bride price made by the groom's family cements that the new bride will bear children to carry on the tribe's kin, prove her capacity to work hard, and is expected to be subordinate too, and obey her husband (Pollard, 2000). These traditions in a patrilineal society confines the constructs of a girl in this particular society, and creates an environment that concedes to these stereotypes, and reinforces this particular perception of women, which men from a patrilineal society then apply to the bounds of a workplace. Culturally, women within matrilineal societies of

the Solomon Islands are landowners, and are responsible for the passing down of the land, which means they are decision makers within their tribes (Maetala, 2008). Land is an asset to the leadership of women within matrilineal societies, and one would argue that this may be one contributing factor that fostered the acceptance of women as leaders within a matrilineal society, that can be later translated into the workplace. I argue that these two cultural differences within the two societies creates a tension that is duplicated into the workplace by both men from patrilineal societies, and women in matrilineal societies. From my findings, it appears that this tension created challenges for some women, but were challenges that could be, and were, overcome. As my study did not focus on patrilineal islands, and patrilineal societies, I am in no position to answer why this finding was mentioned as a barrier. One such area that can be investigated more to understand such a finding could be around the stories of women from patrilineal islands, and their journeys into the formal sector from their patrilineal upbringing up until now.

6.4 Challenges to a matrilineal society in an emerging capitalist society

A significant finding in this study is the effects of the growing engagement of women in the formal sector to a matrilineal society. Within Melanesian literature, Pollard (2000) and Maetala (2008) first highlighted this issue, where they found women's participation in the money earning formal sector contributed to women's decline in land affairs. Pollard (2000) used the example of a Guadalcanal woman who felt she was less able to fulfil her 'traditional roles'

in the garden, because of her engagement in work in the capital of Honiara (pp. 12-13). Rather than engaging in subsistence work, Pollard (2000) discovered that the cash economy increasingly became the new way of giving back to the community. The findings of this study agree with the literature. The women in this study stated that they do not return home to their matrilineal villages as much as they would like too because of work commitments. Giving back to the community is now through the cash economy, such as: paying for family member's school fees, contributing money for land ceremonies/marriages/deaths/church activities, sending money to help build houses and churches. This is a significant shift when compared to when the women in the study were younger, where they saw their communities band together and engage in subsistence living (selling copra) to fund their education. One of the women stated that her absence in the community led to her nephews and nieces not knowing who she is because she is never back in her village, although she is the one who pays for their school fees. If the women do not engage as much in their villages, the role-modelling cycle may also cease and the cycle of the continuation of women leadership may be in jeopardy.

This leads me to question the women's children and whether the ideals of a matrilineal setting are being instilled in them and practiced within Honiara. No research or evidence has been carried out to probe this question, but for future studies, it would be interesting to see a comparative study between the different ages and conclude how engagement in a capitalist setting such as Honiara leads to the erosion of a matrilineal society. However, the women in this study

do stress the fact that when they go back to their matrilineal villages, it is like nothing has changed, and they naturally ease back into the village of life. It is almost seen as a disgrace if you cannot perform the tasks of a woman in the village, hence why several of the women have applied their way of living to be compatible with a matrilineal setting. Some of the women have their own gardens in their homes where they tend to in the early mornings or evenings, just as they would in the village, while others strive to live a simple life by living in a home with no electricity. These examples attest to the notion that these women are strong in their identity and they do not want to lose touch with their cultural roots.

6.5 Conclusion

The above discussion affirmed much of the current discourse around the theory and practice of matrilineality in the Solomon Islands. Specifically, the role of the women in a matrilineal society, and the role of horticulture make up of a matrilineal society which influences the every-day practices of individuals, families and communities that make up a village. The present findings are significant in that, these elements in a matrilineal society intrinsically created behaviours, and normative practices within the women that they were able to identify as influencing factors in progressing their careers. They reveal that the mother-daughter bond created a nurturing nature that they see in their leadership style, knowledge passed down from all the women in the community helped them understand who they were; giving them a sense of self and identity which is transferred into the workplace by being confident in their own skin, and

that through subsistence living, the women were able to build a strong ethic which helped in understanding that although they were to face any challenges, they could overcome them.

The study also highlighted the challenges these women face in their careers. Two of the findings in the challenges section surprised me, where family responsibilities disagreed with current literature, and working with patrilineal men was a new finding that can be further explored through further research. The presence of challenges and barriers within this study highlights that women are still highly marginalized in Solomon Islands society, regardless of which province or island you are originally from. The issues raised from this research are important issues that can be addressed. My concluding section will provide further suggestions and recommendations for future research and how we can address the invisibility of women in the formal sector.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

7.0 Introduction

This study has shown that the women attribute their matrilineal upbringing to their career progression. Certain elements within a matrilineal society guide this attribution. Elements such as the mother to daughter relationship, which fostered a caring-like nature, identified as a leadership trait employed by several of the women, the closeness of the family unit; entailing the relationships between all the females in the family, was seen as a support base to furthering their careers, the engagement in subsistence living instilled in the women a gallant work ethic that helped them to pinpoint challenges and barriers in the formal sector and tackle these head on without a second thought, and most importantly, the communal aspect of a matrilineal society maintained through the customs and teachings passed down from their grandmothers/mothers/aunties, encompasses and instils in the women the idea that although individuality is important, there is no individual without the concept of 'we' or 'us'. The women in this study give sound evidence as to how they have utilised these aspects from their matrilineal upbringing to positively impact their career progression and leadership styles within their workplace.

This study never sought to prove that matrilineal women leaders in the formal sector never faced challenges because of their matrilineal upbringing. Barriers and challenges in the formal sector are inevitable, regardless of whether you are a patrilineal woman or a matrilineal woman. One significant finding to

emerge from this study was that family responsibilities was not seen as a barrier for the women, despite the fact that current literature labels family responsibilities as one of the top barriers impeding the advancement of women into leadership positions. This finding is evidence of the communal traditions that are embedded in not only a matrilineal society, but in the Pacific region as a whole. Reflecting on this finding, it is evident that our people are still connected to our communal beliefs and traditions that give us our unique identity, in the midst of change from introduced capitalistic beliefs from the west. The current findings adds to literature on Solomon Islands women in the formal sector and to the body of knowledge around matrilineal societies, that has been described as an 'eroding' society. Specifically, highlighting the challenges women face in the formal sector will help to inspire future scholars to take a deeper look into the different process at play which seemingly stops the advancement of women into leadership roles. This study hopes to act as a foundation to further research that can help to uncover the invisibility of women in the formal sector of the Solomon Islands.

7.1 Limitations and further research

Reflecting on this research has given me time to identify the limitations of this study that may be referenced as starting points for future research around this topic. Firstly, the women leaders that were interviewed for this study were all based in the capital of Honiara. Women who are working in the formal sector but are based in the various provinces around the Solomon Islands were not interviewed. Future research into this group of women in the provinces may expose other barriers and challenges that are different from the women

residing in the capital. Secondly, I did not have the time or resources to tap into women leaders in the private sector of the Solomon Islands. Once again, these women will have differing experiences to the women in this study, as they may face a double burden where entrepreneurship and business are male dominated ideals in the formal sector. Lastly, this research was solely focussed on matrilineal women because of my own personal journey to find my roots, this study is not a statement to say that there are *only* matrilineal women are leaders in the formal sector. Future research that can do a comparison study of the different upbringings of working women in the Solomon Islands, both patrilineal and matrilineal will be an interesting study to read. Future research around women in the formal sector of the Solomon Islands is essential, as there is a growing number of females employed in the public and Government sector of the Solomon Islands. This growing number requires the bosses, the Government, managers, employers, employees to re-visit processes in their organisations that can help cater to the needs of the women they employ. If this can be done, there will be less demotivation amongst the staff, and a healthier organisational environment that tends to the needs of everyone, rather than a select few.

7.2 Recommendations

The following are three recommendations that can improve the public and private spheres discussed in this study.

7.2.1 Networking

A network which connects women in the formal sector can lead to more discussion and dialogue around the issues they face within the formal sector. If a database can be set up solely to cater to this network, the women will feel more in touch, and will not feel like the challenges that they face are theirs alone. In doing this, they can provide a safety network by giving sound advice future young female leaders who are qualified for leadership roles.

7.2.2 Equal training

It is also recommended that there be equal training opportunities across the board within public/Government sectors. This can be employed through the Government agreeing and passing a certain policy that stipulates this opportunity. Providing training solely for the advancement of women into leadership positions motivates women to improve themselves and adds to their knowledge and skills that can further better the organisation and its employers as time goes on.

7.2.3 Reviving traditions

It is recommended that Government owned organisations such as the museum or the Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau revive National trade shows that exposes the different customs, traditions and cultures of the Solomon Islands, especially in the capital of Honiara. If these events are encouraged, more kids who are raised in town will be able to learn more about certain aspects of traditional systems such as a matrilineal society, that cannot be replicated in

an environment such as Honiara, where not all extended families live in one same place, like you would normally find in a matrilineal society.

7.3 Conclusion

One can only hope that this research will be useful for current women leaders in the formal sector and to Solomon Islands women as a whole. This study was birthed from a personal curiosity and grew to be more than just a 'finding myself' research. This became a research with detailed substance that can improve the advancement of women leaders in the Solomon Islands, who aspire to bring about change to our country. Although there is still great work to be done before change is visible in the Solomon Islands, there are researchers, individual women, groups of women who are fighting for transparency and change for future generations to have equal opportunity into education and the formal sector. This study is an example of how the encouragement of the mother, the family, the community, a village can make a difference in boosting the lives of a child. Through the qualities passed on from our ancestors, we should continue to empower our daughters and young girls to engage, participate, embrace and appreciate every opportunity given to advance their individuality.

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Appendix One: Participant Information Sheet

Waikato Management School

Te Raupapa



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

RESEARCHER:

Dinna Teaheniu

Email: dkt8@students.waikato.ac.nz

Phone: +642040769324

SUPERVISOR:

Suzette Dyer

Email: SDYER@waikato.ac.nz

You are invited to take part in a research on the experiences of matrilineal Solomon Islands women leaders working in the formal sector. Whether or not you take part is your choice. This Participant Information Sheet will help you decide if you would like to take part or not. The following outlines the purpose of the research, what your participation would involve, what the benefits and risks of the study are, and the outcomes of your participation.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign the attached Consent Form. You will be given a copy of both the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form to keep.

WHO AM I?

I am a Solomon Island born, woman studying and living in New Zealand. My mother is from the Western Province, Kolombangara Island, and my father is from Rennell Island. Although I have lived in New Zealand for the majority of

my life, my parents have always instilled in me the essential ideas around kastom and communal ideals central to Solomon Islands society. I am thankful for my life in New Zealand and will never take for granted the knowledge passed on to me from my parents, grandparents and extended family. These notions drive my passion behind this research.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:

The purpose of this research is to explore Solomon Islands women working in the formal sector and how they perceive their matrilineal cultural heritage has influenced their career progression. In particular, I am interested in understanding how such women have challenged, influenced, resister or upheld social norms that seemingly restricts Solomon Islands women from advancing to senior leadership positions.

ASSOCIATIONS TO THE RESEARCH:

My supervisor, Suzette Dyer is associated to this research. My supervisor can be contacted through e-mail.

SDYER@waikato.ac.nz

I can be contacted through e-mail or phone.

E-mail: dkt8@students.waikato.ac.nz

Phone: 020 407 69324

PARTICIPANT'S INVOLVEMENT IN RESEARCH:

If participants give their consent to participate they will be asked to partake in either a one-hour in-depth interview, or a 2-hour focus group with 4-5 other participants, or both.

OUTCOME OF RESEARCH:

Material collected from the in-depth interviews and focus groups will be viewed by my supervisor and myself. This material will then be thematically analyzed

and used for my masters thesis, journal article and a possible presentation. Participants will not be identified or identifiable throughout the research process. Participants will be given pseudonyms to protect their identities and maintain confidentiality. Raw data will only be accessible by my supervisor and I. At the end of the interview and focus group process, each participant will be given a copy of their audible interview and individual transcript.

POTENTIAL RISKS FOR PARTICIPANTS:

Potential risks may arise if participants discuss their respective organizations when interviewed or engaging in discussion through a focus group. To handle the potential risk of workplace gossip or displeased employers; all participants will be given a pseudonym to preserve their anonymity.

HOW TO OPT OUT:

Participants will be advised that they have the option to opt out of the research. Participants can do so by direct e-mail or phone. The date to opt-out is set to October 30th, 2015. From the time of the in-depth interview or focus group up until this deadline, participants will review their answers and decide whether they want to opt out or give consent to remain in the research.

HOW TO GET MORE INFORMATION:

My contact details (both e-mail and phone number) appear at the top of the participant information sheet should the participant require more information about the research. All questions will be answered to the best of my ability.

Appendix Two: Email to Freda

Waikato Management School

Te Raupapa



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Email: freda.unusi@sivb.com.sb

Date: 17th September 2015

Dear ***Freda Unusi***,

Thank you for your time and help towards my research project. Attached is a copy of the participant information sheet. This sheet outlines the purpose of my research, and the tasks involved if the participants wish to partake in my research.

A specific criterion has been developed when selecting participants. For this research participants should be:

- 1) Female
- 2) From a matrilineal island in the Solomon Islands.
- 3) Employed in a leadership role in either public service, private organization or government sector.

Through word of mouth I have identified potential participants:

Sarah Nihopara

Sera Wickham

Milicent Barty

Timoly Sibisopere

Rachel Sibisopere

Rhyne Bennett

Dulcy Ilala

Patricia Rodie

Tanya Wickham

Freda Unusi

I ask that you forward this participant information sheet to these women; along with any other women you believe fits the criteria specified above. My contact details are on the participant information sheet for participants to contact me directly if they wish to accept my invitation to join this research.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Leana hola,

Dinna Teaheniu

Appendix Three: Email to Christina

Waikato Management School

Te Raupapa



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Email: CBakolo@mehrd.gov.sb

Date: 17th September 2015

Dear ***Christina Bakolo***,

Thank you for your time and help towards my research project. Attached is a copy of the participant information sheet. This sheet outlines the purpose of my research, and the tasks involved if the participants wish to partake in my research.

A specific criterion has been developed when selecting participants. For this research participants should be:

- 1) Female
- 2) From a matrilineal island in the Solomon Islands.
- 3) Employed in a leadership role in either public service, private organization or government sector.

Through word of mouth I have identified potential participants:

Sarah Nihopara

Sera Wickham

Millicent Barty

Timoly Sibisopere

Rachel Sibisopere

Rhyne Bennett

Dulcy Ilala

Patricia Rodie

Tanya Wickham

Freda Unusi

I ask that you forward this participant information sheet to these women; along with any other women you believe fits the criteria specified above. My contact details are on the participant information sheet for participants to contact me directly if they wish to accept my invitation to join this research.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Leana hola,

Dinna Teaheniu

Appendix Four: Letter to Permanent Secretary

Waikato Management School

Te Raupapa



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

7C2 Scotland Place,
Hillcrest, Hamilton 3216
New Zealand

September 10th 2015

Mr. James Bosamata
Deputy Secretary, MEHRD
P.O Box G28, Honiara
Solomon Islands

Attention: Mr. James Bosamata
Deputy Secretary
MEHRD

Dear Sir,

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

I write to seek your permission to conduct a research study on women leaders working in the formal sector. My research topic explores Solomon Islands women leaders working in the formal sector and how they perceive their matrilineal cultural heritage has influenced their career progression. In particular, I am interested in understanding how such women have challenged, influenced, resisted or upheld social norms that seemingly restrict Solomon Island women from advancing to senior leadership positions.

The outcome of this study will contribute invaluable information towards future efforts to improving the participation of women in the formal sector.

I will ensure that necessary ethical considerations are observed throughout the study as stipulated in the Solomon Islands Research Act (1984). 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 25th September, 2015, via e-mail, so that I could make necessary arrangements to begin my data generation as soon as possible. My e-mail address is: dkt8@students.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,

Dinna Teaheniu
(Masters Student)
University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

**Appendix Five: Letter to Participant (delivered to nominee by
Researcher)**

Waikato Management School

Te Raupapa



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

7C2 Scotland Place
Hillcrest, Hamilton 3216
New Zealand

Date:

Dear _____

Huai gaoi kia koe Ta'ahine/ Qu qinetuqetu pami gamu, 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 month and half. The study is on women leaders working in the formal sector. My research topics explores Solomon Islands women leaders working in the formal sector and how they perceive their matrilineal cultural heritage has influenced their career progression. In particular, I am interested in understanding how such women have challenged, influenced, resister or upheld social norms that seemingly restricts Solomon Islands women from advancing to senior leadership positions. I would like to invite you to participate in this research study.

Please indicate in the Consent Form (appendix six) provided whether you would like to be involved in the in-depth 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 said 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.

Dinna Teahenu
(Masters Student)
University of Waikato, Hamilton, NZ

Appendix Six: Consent Form

Waikato Management School

Te Raupapa



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Research: Experiences of matrilineal Solomon Islands women leaders in the formal sector.

Contact details of Researcher:

Researcher: Dinna Teaheniu +642040769324. Email: dkt8@students.waikato.ac.nz

Supervisor: Suzette Dyer. Email: SDYER@waikato.ac.nz

Participant Consent Form

I, _____ (print full name), agree to participate in the study, Experiences of matrilineal Solomon Islands women leaders in the formal sector. I understand that my participation in this study will require the following processes. I agree to these as stated:

One in-depth interview of 60 minutes duration or one focus group discussion of 1 to 2 hours duration with 4-5 other women participants. Field notes and digital tape recordings will be taken through 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 thesis and in any presentation or publication of this study.

The researcher, Dinna Teaheniu, 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 sessions and in-

depth interviews will be used for illustrative purposes only. Any quotations used in publication will not be able to be identified to me personally.

I have the opportunity to withdraw from this study any time up until 30th October 2015. If I have any queries or would like to be informed of the research findings I can contact Dinna Teahenu on +642040769324, or by e-mail, dkt8@students.waikato.ac.nz. If I have any concerns regarding my rights in this study, I may contact the supervisor of this study (contact details found at the top).

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 Seven: Information Sheet MEHRD

Waikato Management School

Te Raupapa



THE UNIVERSITY OF

WAIKATO

Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

(For the Permanent Secretary, MEHRD and relevant MEHRD Directors)

Researcher: Dinna Teaheniu (Masters Student)
University of Waikato, NZ, Hamilton

Introduction:

This research study is pursued as a requirement for my masters thesis. However, the data generated will also be used in articles and conference papers that will provide information about understanding women's experiences in the formal sector in relation to their matrilineal cultural heritage. Similarly, it will give empirical substance to address issues of women's invisibility in the formal sector.

The outcome of this study will benefit groups and individuals advocating for the advancement of women in the public, private and Government sectors in the Solomon Islands.

Data for the study will be obtained through individual in-depth interviews and 2-3 focus groups with 4-5 women participants.

Research Title:

Experiences of matrilineal Solomon Islands women leaders in the formal sector.

Research Focus /Objectives

The main focus of this study is to investigate women leaders working in the formal sector. My research topics explores Solomon Islands women leaders working in the formal sector and how they perceive their matrilineal cultural heritage has influenced their career progression. In particular, I am interested in understanding how such women have challenged, influenced, resister or upheld social norms that seemingly restricts Solomon Islands women from advancing to senior leadership positions.

Research Participants

Women leaders currently employed in the formal sector (public services, private organisations, or Government sector) who are from matrilineal islands in the Solomon Islands. This is because I would like to explore the influences of their matrilineal cultural heritage on their career progression.

Ethical Considerations:

Permission will be sought from all relevant authorities before this study can begin and proceed. The participants will engage 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 that 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 30th October, 2015.

Supervisors:

Suzette Dyer

Cultural advisor:

Susanne Maezama

Appendix 8: Interview Schedule

Welcome statement, Introduction to interview...

Self:

1. Where in the Solomon Islands do you come from?
2. Are you employed in the public service, in a private organisation or in the government sector?
3. How long have you worked in the formal sector?

Barriers:

4. Is there a gender bias when first entering the formal sector?
5. What type/s of organisational barrier/s have you faced throughout your career?
6. What are some challenges you have experienced in this leadership position?
7. Do you feel these barriers have slowed down your career progression?
8. Has family responsibilities affected your career progression?
9. Statistics have shown males outweigh females in the formal sector, do you attribute male dominance as a hinderance to your career progression?
10. Do you still continue to face these barriers?

Matrilineality:

11. Were you brought up in a matrilineal society?
12. How has your relationship with your mother influenced who you are today?
13. Do aunties and grandmothers play an equal share with your mother growing up?
14. What do you believe good leadership looks like in a matrilineal society?
15. Do you feel women in the matrilineal society you were brought up in held these ideals you described?
16. Do you feel you hold these ideals, and has helped you in your career progression and leadership role?
17. Is there any other matrilineal cultural ideal you feel has impacted your leadership role?
18. Do you feel this has helped you do an effective and fulfill a leadership role?

Women in the formal sector:

19. Were you educated outside of the Solomon Islands?
20. How is education perceived by your family and matrilineal village?
21. Did your family support you going to school and receiving an education away from your home island?
22. Was it difficult to receive an education? (i.e. scholarship or money to fund an education outside of the village)
23. Do you attribute your engagement in subsistence work (gathering food for your family and wider community, working in the food plantations, engaging in cultural traditional custom gatherings) in your matrilineal village as a factor for your successes in the formal sector as a leader?
24. How has employment affected your abilities to engage in traditional matrilineal roles?
25. Does paid employment disrupt matrilineal practices?
26. Does your wider family support your role in formal employment?
27. Does your mother, aunties, cousin sister's, nieces cover for the tasks you are not able to do because of formal employment?

Probes:

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...