

*Wakabaut Long Pawa**: The Bougainville
Community Government Act

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*Journey to power

Abstract

On June 15th 2019, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville will hold a non-binding referendum to help determine whether it gains independence from Papua New Guinea. This marks a significant step in the peace process after the decade long conflict. Women were a vital part of the fight for peace, however, outside of the three reserved seats for women, they have not achieved substantive political representation. The 2016 *Community Government Act*, with its progressive gender equality measures for local level government, holds great potential for women's leadership in the region.

This thesis asks what the effects have been of new equality measures in local governance structures on gendered social and political relations in Bougainville in the build-up to the 2019 referendum. It argues that women find themselves at the intersection of cultural conservatism, Christian worldviews and gender inequality in contemporary political processes. Working within a specific historical context, they must carefully negotiate these overlapping political practices in strategic ways if they want respect, recognition and political voice. Women use their cultural, religious and maternal identities in strategic ways to motivate them and justify their inclusion in decision making roles. At the same time, patriarchal attitudes, religious interpretations and women's traditional role as mothers have been used to justify their exclusion from the political sphere.

Through the theoretical frames of intersecting inequalities and inclusive citizenship two parallel journeys are considered. One is the struggle for women's representation and the other is paralleled at a regional level with Bougainville's own battle for self-determination and independence. Both struggles are connected and are framed as a journey or an ongoing moment of 'becoming'. One that continuously arrives, building upon what came before, but never quite being complete. It draws on Probyn's notion of longing to (be)long to explain the drive that propels both women and Bougainville in their connected but non-contiguous journeys towards belonging and acceptance.

For the incredible women of Bougainville.

Yumi ol pawa meri

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ABG – Autonomous Bougainville Government
- ARoB – Autonomous Region of Bougainville
- BCL – Bougainville Copper Limited
- BRA – Bougainville Revolutionary Army
- BRF – Bougainville Resistance Force
- BTG – Bougainville Transitional Government
- BWF – Bougainville Women’s Federation
- CG – Community Government
- CGA – Community Government Act
- CF – Consent Form
- CoE – Council of Elders
- LGC – Local Government Council
- LNWDA – Leitana Nehan Women’s Development Agency
- NRI – National Research Institute
- NSPG – North Solomons Provincial Government
- PIS – Participant Information Sheet
- PNG – Papua New Guinea
- PNGDF – Papua New Guinea Defence Force

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

On June 15th, 2019, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville will hold a referendum which may determine whether it gains independence from Papua New Guinea. This momentous event is set to take place 18 years after the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement, which brought a formal end to the ‘Bougainville Crisis’. This long and bloody civil war was fought between Papua New Guinea and Bougainville, as well as factions within Bougainville itself, between December 1988 and April 1998. Women played an important part in bringing peace to the region yet remain underrepresented in government. The Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) has three seats reserved for women, as an acknowledgement of the role they played in the peace process. Though this was seen as a stepping stone to more women entering government, currently only one woman Member of Parliament has ever been elected in an open constituency. In the three elections that have taken place for the ABG since 2005, women have not achieved substantive political participation, despite hopes that they would (Baker, 2015). Currently four out of a total of thirty-nine seats are held by women in the Autonomous Bougainville Government and none were elected in Papua New Guinea’s recent national elections. It is hoped that the *Community Government Act 2016*, with its gender equality measures (and the focus of this thesis), will have a positive impact on women’s representation in the region.

Most of Bougainville is traditionally matrilineal and women are customary owners of the land, however colonialism and other aspects of modernisation have had an impact (Hakena, 2000; Saovana-Spriggs, 2007) and the island remains largely “patriarchal in terms of distribution of power” (Regan, 2010, p.11). The introduction of Christianity to the island has affected gendered relations in complex ways. While it can be seen to reinforce traditional, colonial systems of men’s power it has also provided an important space for women’s fellowship, networking and leadership, particularly during the crisis (Havini & Sirivi, 2004; Saovana-Spriggs, 2007). Though the conflict has ended, women face some of the highest

domestic violence rates in the world (Fulu et al., 2013). This highlights how the designation of ‘post-conflict’ obscures the fact that many women in post-war societies continue to face daily violence and inequalities (Handrahan, 2004). Women’s role in the peace process is acknowledged in the Constitution, yet women entering formal politics are often constrained by various factors, such as access to resources, patriarchal attitudes around women’s role in society and the issue of *wantok* or clan-based voting. While there has been analysis investigating factors that contribute to low levels of women’s representation at the national level worldwide, this same attention has not been given to efforts at the local level. The research questions I outline below will turn the attention towards women leaders at the local government level and their gendered experience of leadership.

In the twenty years since formal cessation of hostilities the region’s leaders have been steadily dealing with the many and varied tragic consequences of the conflict as well as ensuring they are prepared for the referendum in 2019. As in all post-conflict states, there is an urgency to establish sound governance structures based on inclusive citizenship and, in particular, to promote gender equality. In the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ARoB) changes have already been made to the structure of local level government with the signing into law of the 2016 *Community Government Act*. This Act changed the Council of Elders to a Community Government and stipulated that each Ward must be represented by both a man and woman. In 2017, the first elections took place throughout rural Bougainville with five-year terms for all Ward Representatives. Each Ward Representative forms part of a larger Community Government, headed by a Chair and Deputy-Chair who must be of opposite genders. After the first Community Government elections, only two out of a total of forty-three Community Governments have a woman as Chair, implying that there are still barriers to women attaining top leadership positions and that men are still viewed as the natural leaders.

In this thesis I argue that women find themselves at the intersection of cultural conservatism, Christian worldviews and gender inequality in contemporary political processes.

Working within a specific historical context, they must carefully negotiate these overlapping political practices in strategic ways if they want respect, recognition and political voice. This struggle for women's representation is paralleled at a regional level with Bougainville's own battle for self-determination and independence. Both struggles are connected and are framed as a journey or, as I describe it, an ongoing moment of 'becoming'. A moment that continuously arrives, building upon what came before, but never quite being complete. The planned referendum in June 2019 provides a moment where Bougainville may be able to claim it has truly arrived. Yet, as Dowling and McKinnon (2014) attest, we "are always and everywhere engaged in becoming what we are, and exactly what that thing is can never quite be completely defined...identifications are always political – inscribed and imagined through relations of power and critical to diverse political transformations" (p.629).

1.1 Research questions and approach

The focus of this thesis is to examine the gendered impacts of the new *Community Government Act* in Bougainville on political participation and social transformation. My research will seek to answer the following overall question:

What have been the effects of new equality measures in local governance structures on gendered social and political relations in Bougainville in the build-up to the 2019 referendum?

I focus on Bougainville because both the post-conflict environment and the salience of the referendum are tied into the fabric of Bougainville society, and because I had the opportunity to work in Bougainville for 10 months in 2017.

I will examine the overall research question with reference to the following sub questions:

1. What political transformations have already occurred in local governance activities since the new *Community Government Act*?

2. What transformations have occurred in individual Ward Representatives and in the families of elected representatives?
3. What is the nature of the gendered political and social relationships between people in the Autonomous Bougainville Government, civil society organisations, Community Government and the community at large?
4. How are women negotiating the gendered political and social boundaries that mark their movement to higher levels of leadership?

Research on gender in the Pacific, particularly around issues of political representation, has tended to focus on women in national governments. What is missing from many of these arguments is analysis into governance at the local level. Literature tends to focus on the barriers to entry and ignore successful strategies and candidates (McCleod, 2015), particularly those at the local level. Liki (2010; 2013) highlights the importance of local level shifts in attitude towards women's participation in the public service, however "little systematic analytical work [is] being undertaken at the grassroots level and little is being done to foster community level leadership" (Haley & Zubrinich, 2015, p.1). This is echoed by Huffer (2006) who calls for "further research on...local government and traditional leadership including the roles of women" (p.47). Therefore, my research seeks to fill a gap in the literature around women in leadership positions at the local level and how gendered social and political relationships affect this. It is important to understand if experience in local level government or civil society organisations leads to greater representation at the national level and how structural changes at the local level may permeate out, affecting both the community and policies at the national level.

Theoretically, I will be drawing on the concepts of intersectionality, intersecting inequalities and inclusive citizenship to develop my analytical framework. This provides an opportunity to think more carefully about the connections between women's personal position and the context in which they are embedded. The concept of 'citizenship' raises debates around narratives of belonging, exclusion and of an individual's relationship to the state, but I am

interested in going deeper and exploring the allegiances and affiliations that women have, not just to the ‘state’ of Bougainville, but to their families, their communities and other forms of social organisations. Focusing on the relationships that have formed and informed these women will also allow for an exploration of the gendered power dynamics that exist within these relationships. As Rowe (2005) attests: “who we love, the community we live in, who we expend our emotional energies building ties with-these connections are all functions of power” (p.16).

In my research I explore how different aspects of these women’s lives diverge and intersect and how these intersections inform women in their representative role. Although the relevance and applicability of an intersectional framework in the Pacific has been usefully questioned (Griffen, 2006) I believe it can be fruitful to use this kind of approach in order to avoid assumptions that a woman’s gender will be the part of her identity that informs and influences her the most. As Corbett and Liki (2015) argue, we must move away from viewing women in politics as mere vessels for their gender toward an intersectional framework that allows other aspects of their identity to emerge. Many elements may influence women’s decision making beyond their gender, such as cultural traditions or community ties. Women draw on their faith in God, their solidarity with other women, the love they have for their community and their own inner strength to motivate them in their leadership.

1.1.1 The context of Bougainville

In this research I frame Bougainville not only as the context, but as a concept. The history of the region, its relationships with other nations, such as Papua New Guinea, Australia and the Solomon Islands, as well as its troubled relationship with its resources and the notion of a unified, Bougainville identity, have intersected and shaped the region. A term that is often invoked by people in Bougainville in relation to the referendum is *wakabaut*. Directly translating to walk, in this context it conjures up the sense of a journey or path to possible

independence¹. In my research I will consider two parallel journeys taking place. On the one hand, the journey and experience of the women as they inhabit their leadership roles and, on the other, the journey towards Bougainville's own form of potential 'empowerment' as it prepares for the (non-binding) independence referendum. I draw on Probyn's (1996) notion of longing to (be)long to describe the process of becoming for women's representation and for the region of Bougainville. Both have fought for the right to belong, to transition from the liminal state of gaining recognition to fully fledged representation or, in the case of Bougainville, independence. Neither have reached this state yet but their actions are partly driven by this longing to belong.

To track these connected but non-contiguous journeys I widen the notion of citizenship beyond its grounding in human bodies and consider a country's citizenship in the world and in relation to its neighbours. As Roseneil (2013) argues, the idea of citizenship is constantly evolving and she asks how "the interdependence and fundamental relationality of human existence [can] ever be recognised and supported when citizenship adheres to the individual?" (p.2). Bougainville is a region that is moving toward potential independence, indeed much of the political activity, development work and aid money on the island is to support the country in preparing for the referendum and the transitional period that follows.

Thinking about the wider notion of citizenship brings to the fore discourses of inclusion/exclusion, centre/periphery as well as the notion of recognition. Lister (2007) argues "identity and recognition figure prominently in the theory of cultural citizenship...reflecting the centrality of cultural identity to contemporary citizenship struggles" (p.51). Bougainville is a region which has struggled to forge its own political and cultural identity, impacted by forces of colonialism, resource extraction and internal conflict. The referendum marks a moment where Bougainville has the potential to be recognised as a nation state. Considering the space of Bougainville broadens the notion of citizenship beyond a singular body or body-politic in order

¹ I witnessed the use of this word frequently during my time in Bougainville. Politicians who gave speeches would talk of the "*Wakabaut long referendum*" (journey to the referendum) when giving speeches and it was used in everyday conversation by Bougainvilleans.

to understand how historical processes of inclusion and exclusion to rights and resources have shaped Bougainville and its people.

1.1.2 Quotas and women's representation

Over 100 countries now have some form of gender quota legislation and forty-nine countries have at least 30% female representation (Rosen, 2017). Though quotas are seen as a way to 'jump start' women's representation (Dahlerup, 2013), without the necessary oversight or electoral conditions they may be merely symbolic (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005). Policies that seek to redress imbalances in women's participation must also take into account gendered institutions and embedded structures of inequality, as "the impact of women's increased presence and change in public policy discourse may be limited given the intersecting forms of inequalities that mediate and reinforce the constraints on women's political agency" (Nazneen, 2018, p.8).

In the Pacific, a very limited number of states have introduced some form of gender equality measure, such as reserved seats or party list quotas (Pacific Women in Parliaments, 2018).² This makes the ABG, with its reserved seats for women and the equality measures in Community Government, somewhat special. The Pacific has received a lot of scholarly attention due, in part, to its low levels of women's representation. Factors that constrain women's entry into formal politics include masculine cultures that see politics as the domain of men only (Haley & Zubrinich, 2015; Huffer 2006), lack of access to campaign finances (Huffer, 2006; McCleod, 2015), inexperience and few programs designed to support women in the build-up to the election (Barbara & Haley, 2016) and the salience of *wantok* (clan based) voting that can see women reluctant to run against male relatives (Baker, 2015; McCleod, 2015). What is missing from many of these arguments is a focus on all levels of political representation. Further, even though

² The countries that have introduced special measures are Vanuatu with reserved seats for women in municipal councils; Samoa, with a minimum of 5 seats reserved for women in Parliament; a Constitutional stipulation requiring one in three candidates be a woman in Timor Leste and reserved spaces on party lists for the French territories.

there has been analysis into the factors that can improve a woman's chances of being elected to office, there is less that focuses on women's personal experiences once they have been elected and how they have been able to navigate their leadership role. This study focuses on the experiences of women elected to Community Government in post-conflict Bougainville in order to highlight the challenges and successes of adopting gender quotas at the local level in the build-up to a significant political event.

1.2 Chapter Overview

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter introduces the thesis topic and outlines the research questions, the context of the research and the theoretical framework adopted.

Chapter Two: Intersectionality and Intersecting Inequalities

This literature review chapter introduces the first of two theoretical frameworks used in this thesis. It starts with a discussion of intersectionality and its application as a research paradigm before looking at the concept of intersecting inequalities. It asks whether intersectionality fits within a Western Pacific context and concludes by exploring the different 'identities' that are salient in a Bougainville context.

Chapter Three: Inclusive Citizenship

Continuing the literature review, chapter three discusses the concept of citizenship with a focus on the theory of inclusive citizenship. It considers the way that citizenship is embodied and realised through actions in time and space. It looks at other forms of connection beyond citizenship through the concept of belonging.

Chapter Four: Bougainville

This chapter provides a brief overview of Bougainville's history with a focus on the women and the role they have played in the region's past, particularly during the conflict. It provides a history of local government in Bougainville before discussing the main features of the 2016 *Community Government Act*.

Chapter Five: Methodology

In this chapter I explain my choice of method and theoretical approach, including a brief discussion of the post-colonial feminist research framework and self-reflexive methodology. It outlines the method of participant selection, the interview process and data analysis. It ends with an outline of the ethical implications around conducting research in a different cultural context.

Chapter Six: Recognition, Autonomy and Claiming Space

In the first of two chapters discussing the results of my research, I examine the various elements of citizenship that were raised in the interviews, focusing in particular on recognition, self-determination and active citizenship. I end by looking at how the act of preparing for the referendum becomes an embodied performance of citizenship and nation building.

Chapter Seven: The Intersection of Gender, *Kastom* and Mobility

Chapter seven explores the ways that gender norms, particularly the maternal trope, cultural and Christian traditions and the isolated geographies of many communities in Bougainville intersect to shape the space and potential for women's leadership and mobility.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

The final chapter of this thesis reviews the research questions and their findings, discusses the limitations of the research process and what could have been done differently before offering some final reflections.

CHAPTER TWO: INTERSECTIONALITY AND INTERSECTING INEQUALITIES

This chapter introduces the first of two analytical frameworks that guide the research. It begins with a discussion of intersectionality, originally conceived in the United States of America (USA), and its theoretical and practical applications, as well as some of the critiques that have been levelled at it. Intersectionality has become a core part of many feminist development initiatives, often under the term of intersecting inequalities. The second part of this chapter will discuss ways to address multi-faceted inequality, drawing more explicitly on the concept of intersecting inequalities. It ends with looking at different identities within Papua New Guinean or Western Pacific cultures, where maternal, Christian and cultural identifications have greater relevance than the traditional intersectional framing of class and race.

2.1 Intersectionality

The theory of intersectionality is most often credited to Crenshaw (1991) who highlights the way women of colour are marginalised when “race, gender and class domination converge” (p.1246). She argues that race, gender and class intersect structurally, politically and through sexist and racist narrative representations. Drawing attention to intersecting oppressions reveals how politicised constructions of sexism and racism that view oppression as against white women and black men respectively, place women of colour at the margins of both their woman and black identities. Legal structures that deal with the issue of violence against women frame it as a crime done by black men against white women. Such a discourse erases women of colour who sit at the margins of this narrative.

As intersectionality has its roots in the USA, and was first developed by African-American women, its initial conceptualisation had a relatively concise focus on gender, race and class. This fundamentally highlights the racial and gendered intersections that impact women of colour, yet widened beyond an American context, its original focus on race is not always relevant. Puar (2013) offers another option for understanding gender inequality. She argues that the categories of race, class, gender and sexuality constructed by intersectionality’s original

rendering, are part of the modern colonial project that continues to privilege Western, and generally American, identities. She questions the sole use of the intersectional framework as a way to understand gender inequality and considers instead how it can co-exist with the concept of assemblage. She posits that “bodies are unstable assemblages that cannot be seamlessly disaggregated into identity formations” (p.379). Moving from an intersectional to an assemblage analysis also expands the concept of ‘bodies’ beyond the human and sees identities as performed, rather than defined by words alone. Such a shift takes our thinking about ‘bodies’ into other natural forms and beyond, such as nations, organisations and collectivities. This becomes helpful when we consider the Bougainville region as a ‘body’, rather than a concept, and identity an “encounter, an event...multi-causal, multi-directional, liminal” (Puar, 2013, p.383).³

It has been argued that as a frame of analysis, an intersectional approach fails to consider the role of space in gendered power formations (Youkhana, 2015) and does not address historical and trans-national dynamics of power (Patil, 2013). As gendered subjects, we are bound in spatial locations, and this becomes part of the terrain in which identities are formed. The material is not only the backdrop for power relations and identity, it actively shapes and constructs them (Hopkins, 2018; Rodó-de-Zárate & Baylina, 2018). This not only includes the physical, but the temporal and political space also. Mollett and Faria (2018) argue that intersectionality’s anti-positivism show how identities and formations of power are not fixed, nor is the relationship between them. They shift and reform, and are re-interpreted and reproduced depending on the time, space and subjectivities.

³ There are already discussions around recognising natural bodies as legal entities (Morris & Ruru, 2010). In fact, the New Zealand Parliament gave the Whanganui River the status of legal personhood in 2017, that recognised the “special relationship between the Whanganui River and Whanganui Iwi” (New Zealand Parliament, 28 March, 2017).

2.2 Intersecting inequalities

Intersectionality has moved beyond theory and methodology and in the context of ‘international development’ is often referred to as intersecting inequalities. Kabeer (2010) argues that “the persistence of intersecting inequalities undermines progress...and betrays the promise of social justice” (p.12). Women in particular, due to cultural norms and overrepresentation in the informal economy, as well as those carrying the burden of care, are often most affected by economic inequality (Kabeer, 2014; Kabeer, Milward & Sudarshan, 2013; Kabeer & Sweetman, 2015; Ukhova, 2015). States, organisations and programmes “which choose to intervene on the basis of one identity are problematic...this approach risks many interests and needs falling into the gaps, unaddressed” (Mangubhai & Capraro, 2015, p.274). Instead, addressing inequalities means understanding how gender, class, ethnicity, geographical location, and other markers of one’s subject position, intersect to marginalise certain people.

Much of the development literature that discusses intersecting inequalities focuses on the gendered impacts of climate change. Global warming has become a pressing issue worldwide and policies “that shape the local, national and international responses to climate change reflect the gendered power, privilege and preoccupations of mostly male policy-makers around the world” (Nagel, 2012, p.470). Despite being the most vulnerable to climate induced shocks, marginalised women and their communities are largely excluded from discussions that set the agenda for climate adaptation and mitigation. While the impacts of climate change are global, it is not uniformly experienced and therefore strategies that address it cannot treat people as a homogenous group. Communities in low lying areas and those lacking economic resources, agency or freedom of movement are far more vulnerable to extreme weather events. In flood affected areas of Bangladesh, women are at greater risk of drowning due to cultural expectations of modest dress and gendered responsibilities that confine women to the home (Nagel, 2012). Bringing an intersectional analysis to climate change, we see how gender intersects with class, caste, religion, disability, geographical location or education level to increase vulnerability. It is

vital that policy measures seeking to address the gender and climate change nexus must “focus on the structural mechanisms and barriers that produce unequal...relations” (Hackfort & Burchardt, 2018, p.181). This not only means an awareness of inequalities between men and women but also amongst women themselves.

While gender mainstreaming has become standard for many interventions, and promisingly so, the homogenous categorisation of women belies a multitude of experiences and diverse kinds of mobility. Mobility can mean physical movement between spaces and places or, social mobility, such as how easily one can transcend the inequalities that derive from their intersecting identities. Women living in rural areas must travel “long physical and social distances...to access health, education or political participation” (Unterhalter, 2009, p.16) compared to those in urban or peri-urban environments. Water is another important resource that can be difficult to access and water management is often seen as a women’s responsibility, associated as it is with domestic duties (Cole & Ferguson, 2015). Women living in rural and mountainous communities, such as are found in Bougainville, often travel long distances to collect water, in areas that are prone to landslides in the rainy season. Uneven distribution of state services means that the needs of citizens are not equally met, particularly for those living in rural areas. Yet even within urban environments, citizen rights are shaped by intersecting inequalities.

Due to the gendered division of labour, women in the urban informal economy often carry the additional burden of care and their rights are ignored, misunderstood or not formalised (Brouder & Sweetman, 2015). Legal recognition, access to state services and representation are citizenship rights and assumed to be equally bestowed. Yet intersecting inequalities “effectively bar access to decision-making for people from marginalised groups...[who] are often seen by public authorities as a problem to be dealt with, rather than citizens with entitlements who the state should be serving” (*ibid*, p.5). Women considered part of the urban poor can find themselves marginalised due to their gender, with its associated responsibilities, and from their

lack of formal economic security. Furthermore, they are unable to access representation in decision making bodies (Brouder & Sweetman, 2015; Chatterjee, 2015; Unterhalter, 2009).

When quotas do not account for the existence of intersecting inequalities they can end up disadvantaging particular members of the target group even more (Mangubhai & Capraro, 2015). In India, quotas have further marginalised Dalit women who sit at the intersection of both these identities. Dalit women “are told apply for the women’s quota when they try to access the scheduled caste quota, and they are directed towards the scheduled caste quota when they apply for the women’s quota. As a result, the majority of the beneficiaries of the reservation are Dalit men or dominant caste women” (Mangubhai & Capraro, 2015, p.265). Therefore, while quotas can be an effective way to reach marginalised groups, there must also be a consideration of the way intersecting inequalities can impact their success.

An intersectional analysis is especially relevant in multi-lingual Papua New Guinea (PNG) where normative constructions of identities have shifted with time and tensions arisen when gendered expectations intersect with tradition or *kastom* (Anderson, 2015; Horowitz, 2017). Arguments for maintaining cultural values that relegate women to a subordinate role in relation to men represent what Horowitz (2017) refers to as a retrogradation of women’s rights. She argues “gendered power relations are fractally reproduced through interpersonal, including intimate, relationships” (p.1422) and are often internalized and reproduced by the women themselves. Implying women are complicit in their own subordination must not place blame on women for perpetuating inequality. External factors, such as institutional structures, colonial histories, and spatial location must also be considered when determining the causes of multiple and overlapping inequalities.

2.3 Identity politics

When we consider intersectionality in the context of Bougainville, the primary focus on gender, race and class is not as relevant. However, there are other aspects of identity that

intersect to produce inequalities in Bougainville. The final part of this chapter will consider identities and relationships that hold more weight in a Western Pacific context.

2.3.1 *Wantok* and *ples*

One salient marker of identity is kinship or clan ties, what is known as *wantok* in PNG. Nanau (2011) explains that the term “*wantok* is a recent creation as it was formed with the development of the Melanesian pidgin during the 1800s. However, its moral structure and spirit are integral parts of Melanesian societies since time immemorial” (p.32). It operates at a wider level as a marker of identity, as well as in more reciprocal, close knit interactions at the community and family level (*ibid*) and has a strong connection to place. McGavin (2016) explores the concept of *peles/ples*, which encompasses physical, spiritual, racial, practical and cultural dimensions and is interconnected with identity. She argues that “identity in PNG is about your line of descent, but it is more about *peles* than it is about ‘race’” (p.63). Saovana-Spriggs, (2007) argues that Bougainvillean’s cultural, “spiritual and social identity” (p.204) is tied to the land and this is a fundamental reason for the development of Bougainvillean identity and self-determination over the years.

2.3.2 The intersection of motherhood and Christianity

An important identification for Bougainvillean women is that of motherhood and the maternal (Hakena, 2000; Havini & Sirivi, 2004; Hermkens, 2011; Saovana-Spriggs, 2000; Tonissen, 2000). Women use their traditional authority over land based decisions and draw on their matrilineal identity to push for peace, women’s rights and inclusion in decision making bodies. George (2010) looks at the intersection between maternal imagery and feminism in the Pacific, including PNG and Bougainville, and describes the multi-faceted, non-essentialist way the maternal is used in women’s advocacy. Motherhood, or maternal qualities, are used as an entry point into politics and to counter the prevailing patriarchal political culture. Women highlight their fundamental role in society and the qualities that set them apart from men, as a tool to enhance political recognition and participation. Women also draw on maternal identities

in their work as peacebuilders and to fight against sexual and domestic violence (*ibid*). At the same time “intersecting sites of power within and beyond the family can coalesce and shape prevailing ideas about motherhood in ways which reinforce male privilege while subordinating women” (George, 2010, p.81). Global and local gendered narratives are powerful and work to construct and reify women as maternal peace builders, framing them as empowered, rather than as victims. Yet this obscures the physical and emotional abuse they suffered during the Bougainville conflict and the ongoing gender based violence that many women in Bougainville face (Eves, 2016).

Women also utilised church networks during the conflict to support each other and their communities (George, 2016; Havini & Sirivi, 2004)⁴. It is important to make a distinction between the terminologies that I use here. By church I refer to the wider institution of organised religion, whereas I use the term religion in a more personal sense to refer to one’s religious beliefs and faith in God. For many in the Pacific, religion is a very important part of life (Wood, 2016) both personally, but also as a valid space for women to develop leadership experience (Huffer, 2006; Korare, 2002; McCleod, 2015). Corbett (2013) explores how faith influences politicians - both men and women - in their political life with the boundaries between state, society and religion blurred. The ‘symbolic capital’ of church networks are utilised to gain recognition, offer a moral critique of political corruption, “enhance reputation” (*ibid*, p.289) and build a constituent base. Since the time of colonialism, the church, as a global institution, has provided health and education services on the island. Throughout the conflict it attempted to fill the gap left by the absent, post-colonial state and it remains a source of both practical and spiritual support (Saovana-Spriggs, 2007).

The role of church groups and women’s organising in Melanesia, as well as the complex and heterogenous ways women draw on both Christian and maternal values, has been examined

⁴ Catholicism and Methodism are the two main denominations in Bougainville, although there are a small number of Seven Day Adventists. During the conflict women from different denominations worked together to try and bring about peace (Saovana-Spriggs, 2007).

by a number of scholars (Dickson-Waiko, 2003; Douglas, 2003; Monson, 2013; Pains, 2003; Scheyvens, 2003). Douglas (2003) shows that women's church groups have multiple aims for furthering women in society, including more universal discourses of human rights and gender equality. These ideas are reshaped and re-interpreted according to the needs of women who "express modest, practical, but entirely modern wishlists" (p.7) that eschew binaries and respond to local demand. What is not discussed is whether women outside of the traditional heterosexual, married norm are welcomed into these spaces. From my own experience in Bougainville, young, unmarried mothers are generally supported but there was complete silence around queer identities. Therefore, while church women groups are an important space, they appear to leave unaddressed the additional and intersecting inequalities that those who identify as LGBTQI may experience.

In nearby Solomon Islands, Scheyvens (2003) shows how women's groups provide a space for women to come together, network, build confidence and learn new skills. While the spaces may be disregarded by secular-minded development professionals or feminist scholars, they can in fact provide some women with an alternative space for empowerment (Scheyvens, 2003). Church women's groups, particularly in rural areas, offer women an opportunity to leave their homes, take a break from their domestic duties and engage with other women. This has led Dickson-Waiko (2003) to describe church groups in PNG as "the missing rib - of an evolving indigenous feminism" (p.99). She argues that women in PNG have been constructed as gendered citizens - mothers, daughters and sisters - yet the church has provided both a vital spiritual avenue and a space of empowerment.

The church and the interpretation of religious beliefs, along with culture and traditional gendered roles, have often been constructed as sources of women's oppression. Yet women draw on aspects of their identity, such as their religion or their maternal role, in strategic ways to give voice to issues that they face (Monson, 2013; Pains, 2003). Far from being fixed, their identities are multiple and shifting, playing out in different ways, for different purposes across

time and space. In Bougainville, the maternal and faith come together in the figure of Sister Lorraine Garasu. One of the leading voices for peace during the conflict, she continues to be a powerful voice for women's rights on the island and is a symbolic mother figure for Bougainvilleans. Women, like Sister Lorraine, are able to actively engage with potentially oppressive tropes and use them to amplify issues that affect women. It is worth noting that it is the rights of women who identify within the traditional, heterosexual norm that are fought for by women like Sister Lorraine. The rights of LGBTQI women or men in the region continue to remain unaddressed.

2.4 Conclusion

Intersectional analysis shifts the focus away from fixed identities and onto the structural, cultural and discursive conditions that create multiple, overlapping inequalities. Acknowledging the complexity of these inequalities and their relationship to entrenched systems and processes of power is important and is best understood when coupled with an awareness of the local context. Men and women and their social identities are embedded in space and time. The specific spatial context can shape how inequalities are realised and therefore must be a part of any intersectional analysis. As concepts, both intersectionality and intersecting inequalities allow for the interrogation of the ways constructions of identity, structural and institutional processes of power, and specific spatial and historical contexts come together to perpetuate inequality between individuals and groups.

What is interesting to consider is how an intersectional analytical frame can be applied to a range of spaces, including local government and states. In the case of Bougainville, a number of different aspects of its 'identity' have converged, in ways that have impacted its people, its political present and its uncertain future. Bougainville's remote geographical location, its history of colonialism, its fractured relationship with the land and its resources, and its relationship on the periphery of the state of PNG all contributed to the civil war and continue to influence the social and political context. Bougainville's struggle for recognition can be

compared to the struggle of marginalised groups, like women, for inclusion within the political sphere and a call for a more inclusive form of citizenship. The next chapter will discuss the different debates around citizenship, who is included or excluded from these conceptions and the way in which inclusive citizenship seeks to deepen our understanding of the practice of citizens and citizenship.

CHAPTER THREE: INCLUSIVE CITIZENSHIP

In the previous chapter I showed how an intersectional analysis and an understanding of intersecting inequalities provide an insightful way to understand the gendered dynamics involved in developing policies, designing development programmes and introducing quotas. It highlighted the intersection of gender, race and class however, in this research, maternal identities, gendered cultural traditions and religious faith are more critical and thus the focus of analysis. The intersection of these identities inform women's experience in the post-conflict political environment of Bougainville. Understanding the context of Bougainville necessitates a consideration of citizenship because conflict often means a rupture to many of the services associated with the state, such as health and education. The transition to peace often brings a discourse of state driven good governance and can offer new possibilities for more inclusive forms of citizenship.

This chapter will begin with a brief overview of some alternative theories of citizenship. Far from being gender neutral, the universal citizen is framed as white and male (Turner, 2016). This leads to a discussion of feminist interpretations, which argue against gendered constructions of citizenship that often treat women, and other minorities, as second-class citizens. It will explore the concept of inclusive citizenship and the use of gender quotas in post-conflict settings. I end by arguing for the need to develop a more fluid, heterogenous and context specific kind of citizenship, especially in a post-conflict situation. This recognises that the transition to peace is a chance to re-imagine the relationship between state and citizen, creating possibilities for a more inclusive political and social environment. It involves looking beyond the relationships between states and citizens to relationships between citizens themselves (Kabeer, 2010) and the daily realities upon which they play out. It is then that we can begin to understand the way processes of inclusion and exclusion take place at all levels of society.

3.1 States of citizenship

Citizens, and the states within which they are bound, arise out of distinct historical and political contexts. In his excellent overview of citizenship theories, Stokke (2017) argues there are four different aspects of citizenship: legal, cultural, social and political. For Stokke the key dimensions of citizenship are “Membership, legal status, rights and participation” (p.193). Put another way, citizenship is about inclusion. Inclusion happens at many levels, encompassing cultural inclusion, juridical inclusion, social inclusion and political inclusion (Stokke & Erdal, 2017). Citizenship is not uni-dimensional, nor is it universally experienced or constructed. It is constantly reshaped, tested and contested by individuals and groups with heterogenous expectations and notions of citizenship. Though the state provides rights equally to all, citizens are stratified in their possibilities to access and fully realise these rights (Stokke, 2017). This reinforces the need for an intersectional approach to citizenship. The four dimensions of citizenship are “inextricably interwoven” (*ibid*, p.198) in a constantly shifting model of citizenship driven by conflict and struggle.

Citizenship can act as a link between an internal awareness of our rights as citizens and the institutions through which gender justice can be achieved (Kabeer, 2012). Institutions that govern our lives need to be judged from the point of view of those potentially most oppressed by them. If there is no space for renegotiation by marginal groups then institutions cannot be seen as just. Widening the scope of political participation and equality beyond government or local body institutions into spaces like the workplace and the classroom will lead to greater awareness of the diverse needs and ideas of different groups in society (Narayan, 1997; Sweetman, Rowlands & Abou-Habib, 2011). Prokhovnik (1998) argues that feminist claims for equality and inclusiveness cannot leave democratic institutions uncritically intact and just add women (or other marginal groups) to the mix. She calls for considering how different women experience their citizenship, although she herself writes from the perspective of a middle-class woman. Her assumption that women have a choice over whether to enter the workforce is

problematic. For some women, societal norms confine them to the home, while for others, entering the workforce is not in an active choice but one of economic necessity and survival.

Women's "admission to citizenship has largely been on male terms" (Hobson & Lister, 2002, p.27) and, furthering this claim, the admission of developing states into the 'modern' democratic world has largely been on Western terms. The West is taken as the normative yardstick of liberal democracy against which other states are measured through discourses of good governance, decentralisation and transparency. Yet, as Isin and Wood (1999) argue, "the fact that it [citizenship] eventually became universal should be interpreted not as 'natural' but rather as contingent and political" (p.5). In Pacific Island Countries discourses of 'good governance' and 'feminism' in the context of political representation are viewed by some as 'Western' impositions, where gender "from this perspective, becomes a negative term synonymous with other externally sponsored 'good governance' interventions that seek to promote a particular form of democratic representation that these women [MPs] see as antithetical to domestic political life" (Corbett & Liki, 2015, p.6). Making citizenship more inclusive should avoid reifying a singular, universal conception of what citizenship should look like. Instead, it should consider the space within which citizenship is realised and how diverse people may have different beliefs, ideas and demands due to historical, political, geographical and social processes and identities (Corbett & Liki, 2015; Cornwall, Robins & Von Lieres, 2011; Kabeer, 2005).

3.2 Inclusive citizenship

Inclusive citizenship approaches the debate from the point of view of the marginal or excluded and encompasses aspects of justice, recognition, self-determination and solidarity (Kabeer, 2005). Inclusive justice is built on the awareness that certain people require different treatment to ensure a fair outcome. Recognition requires people be seen not only as citizens, enshrined within the law or constitution, but also recognised and respected in the informal settings of daily life. Self-determination means that citizens are able to exert some agency over

their own life. This self-determination should permeate out from the nation state into different institutions, such as the home. Finally, solidarity comes through connections with others based on shared experience. These experiences are often ones of oppression and exclusion. But there are multiple, heterogenous and overlapping networks of solidarity that people may experience at the local level and beyond, transcending even the nation (*ibid*). Inclusive citizenship highlights that one's membership within a country may have less bearing and importance on one's life than other social ties and networks such as family, community and religion (McDougall, 2003). Yet this is a challenge when men and women have conflictual relationships with the state, such as in a post-conflict situation, and with each other, such as when levels of gender based violence are high.

3.2.1 Marginality

To speak of inclusive conceptions of citizenship means turning our gaze away from the normative “liberal, white, bourgeois, heterosexual, man” (Turner, 2016, p.142) ideal of citizenship to those relegated to the margins. Much of the citizenship literature discusses who is excluded, and what traditional notions of citizenship have failed to recognise (Tambakaki, 2015; Turner, 2016; Williams, Vira & Chopra, 2011). Williams, et al. (2011) explore ideas of marginality, subaltern agency and power geometries. They argue that the margins are “dynamic sites” (p.16) populated by the subaltern who embody citizenship as both subjects of resistance and objects of state power. For Turner (2016), marginal subjects exist on the periphery. This creates the conditions and drive for contesting and refashioning citizenship. Politics is not merely about conferring and having access to rights, however, because “legal and formal democratic mechanisms...do not necessarily translate into social participation and political power of socially marginalised groups” (Hackfort & Burchardt, 2018, p.172). Intersecting identities can lead to an assemblage of marginality reinforced by societal norms. Tambakaki (2015) interrogates the category of non-citizen and argues that citizenship is constructed as an act of becoming. Therefore, the state of non-citizenship is liminal, a stopping point on the

journey to full citizenship. She calls for a deconstruction of the categories of citizen/non-citizen and instead a focus on acts of politicisation, such as protest, that make demands in the here and now. This draws attention to the particular experiences of exclusion and power dynamics enacted on marginal subjectivities.

3.2.2 State inclusion or ‘invited spaces’

Decentralisation to local governance can be a space for crafting citizenship, fostering leadership, and creating a more inclusive democracy. However, processes of implementation and structural and social factors determine how successful such efforts will be. The “sectoral institutions of health and watershed development, and...local government” (p.76) in India, are cited as examples of invited spaces (Mohanty, 2007). These are externally created spaces in which the state invites different groups to participate, yet have done little to amplify women’s voice, agency or empowerment. This is due to men determining which women will participate, women’s participation being narrowly confined to ‘beneficiaries and wage earners’ and the gendered perceptions of women’s role and ability in public spaces.

3.2.3 Embodied citizenship

Citizenship is not universally experienced but rather is shaped, for instance, by gender, by legal status, by class positioning, disability, sexuality, age and ethnicity. In this way we begin to see how citizenship is not fixed, but rather is *lived*, through our daily interactions and experiences (Lister, 2007) and shaped by our senses, our bodies and visceral narratives of belonging – all of which are gendered. The embodiment of citizenship plays out in ‘hegemonic relationships’ between neighbours, communities, the state, citizens and at an international level. Huq (2005) outlines the work of Naripokkho, a women’s non-government organisation (NGO) in Bangladesh, who argue that “much of the discrimination, ill treatment and violence women suffer is connected to the ways in which their bodies, their sexuality, their reproductive roles and their health is perceived, valued and constructed by their families, their colleagues and by society at large” (p.157). This ‘embodied citizenship’ seeks to enclose women’s bodies,

confining them to gendered roles, such as mothers, and gendered spaces, such as the home. For bodies that do not conform to the gender binary, bodily policing can take on a legal element, where diverse gender identities are not recognised and even punishable by the state.

Cornwall et al. (2011) suggest that rather than trying to define what citizenship is, it is important to consider how the inherently political performance of citizenship is enacted. Gendered citizenship debates are well placed to work beyond the binaries between civil society and the state, between collectives and individuals and understand that citizenship is practiced in everyday life, in multiple locations, in diverse ways and in different political, social and historical contexts. Gendered human relations are complex and we have attachments and feel beholden to more than nation states. In fact, for many, the nation remains abstract while the gendered relationships that we move through in our everyday lives hold much more weight.

3.3 Post-conflict possibilities for inclusive citizenship

Armed civil conflict is a time of disruption, violence and instability that adversely affects everyone in society. At the same time, the social upheaval that occurs during war also has transformative potential for gender relations in the transition to peace, with the possibility for creating inclusive, peaceful and democratic societies. (Anderlini, 2007; Hughes & Tripp, 2015; Muvingi, 2016; Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2004). The international discourse of good governance that exists in many of these states fits neatly with the spread of a neoliberal governmentality concerned with constructing the ‘right’ kind of peaceful and law-abiding citizens (Staeheli, 2017). What is absent from this discussion is a consideration of how gender also shapes power dynamics, particularly in post-conflict environments, where women can find themselves excluded from peace talks, as was the case in Bougainville (Hakena, 2000). Often the space that may have opened up to women in conflict is closed off in the transition to peace. Women “are all too often left out of post-conflict developmental plans and decisions by both international and national male leaders and told to return to their ‘normal’ activities, those of the private citizen largely concerned with domestic life” (Handrahan, 2004, p.441). Framing

peace as a return to a romanticised construction of the past “is another kind of (epistemic) violence” (Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2004, p.164) that can erase new and non-traditional spaces of women’s agency that arise during times of conflict.

3.3.1 Quotas in a post-conflict space

Quotas can be attempts to create a more inclusive political environment. Yet women who become a part of these institutions often face many barriers due to patriarchal norms and gendered expectations (Hossain, 2018; Kaini, 2010; Panday, 2008; Pant & Standing, 2011). In Nepal, the constitution requires that 33% of state bodies be women (Pant & Standing, 2011) through a system of reserved seats. Yet, since being introduced in 2006, the new legal provisions have done little to bring about real change to women’s lives due to a strong patriarchal culture, rigid religious beliefs, limited women’s agency and a lack of implementation (Kaini, 2010).

In Afghanistan, the ‘standard setting’ women’s rights framework, along with international NGO empowerment programming, displayed a shallow attempt at advancing women’s rights, ignoring the voices of local women activists (Kandiyoti, 2004). One way that women’s rights were advanced in both Afghanistan and Iraq (following the American invasion) was through the adoption of quotas (Ballington & Dahlerup, 2013; Krook, O’Brien & Swip, 2010). The adoption of such special measures comes from the “intersection between domestic women’s movements and the international community” (Ballington & Dahlerup, 2013, p.256). The use of the word intersection implies an equal balance or input from either side. Yet the top-down introduction of quotas can ignore specific social and political sensitivities and does not guarantee uniform or sustained changes to women’s political status (Krook et al., 2010).

One post-conflict state heralded as a successful example of promoting gender equality and women focused legislation is Rwanda, which has the highest level of female representation in the world (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018). Since 2003, Rwanda has used a system of quotas to ensure women’s participation in politics from the national down to the local level (Berry, 2015; Burnet, 2011; Uwineza & Pearson, 2009). Women in Rwanda are more respected,

have more independence and agency within the family, as well as better access to education (Burnet, 2011). However, progressive laws and legislation that have been introduced for women, such as the right to own property, access to contraception and protection against domestic violence have had a paradoxically negative effect on certain women's lives. Patriarchal beliefs in Rwanda construct women as 'adults' only once they are married and this has meant that unmarried women are often unable to take advantage of these policies, reinforcing women's dependence on men (Berry, 2015). If quotas are to amount to true substantive shifts in societal attitudes, the wider context in which they are enacted must be considered by "critically interrogating the underlying gendered structures that produce women's subordination (*ibid*, p.22).

3.3.2 Tradition and authority: Post-conflict local government reform

Most of the research that analyses the effect of gender quotas tends to focus on the national level. There is a dearth of analysis that focusses on women's participation at the local level in post-conflict states and measures that address this. Just like at the national level, women's leadership abilities are often constrained by both formal and informal institutions of authority (Beall, 2004; Hassim, 2014; Shah, Aziz & Ahmad, 2015). Beall (2004) argues that "local government is less productive for advancing women's rights than is often expected...because the informal institutions in which local governments are often embedded are hostile to women" (p.4). In contrast, Becker (2001) claims that the recognition of traditional authority by the state and the increase of women's leadership at the national level, has contributed to rural communities exhibiting greater gender equality in traditional leadership structures. What this shows is that the specific context in which gender equality legislation is introduced goes a long way to determining how successful or unsuccessful it may be.

Not only does context matter but the specific type of quota adopted can impact the effectiveness of women's participation. In Uganda, reserved seat quotas for women were tacked on to the existing structure of local government (Ahikire, 2003). Women elected to these seats

did not have their own constituency and the elections for them were held separately from the main local government elections. All this served to reinforce gendered stereotypes that view women as unqualified, representing only women's interests, and being subservient to men. Although the seats increased their political presence, women found they had to perform their gender, "demonstrating culturally appropriate forms of feminine behaviour" (*ibid*, p.224). Unlike men in local government, women's gender was brought to the fore, constructing women as the other and men as the natural example of leadership.

3.4 Belonging

Inclusion reframed can be described as belonging. Belonging is often utilised as a narrative, a story we tell ourselves about our identity (Yuval-Davis, 2006), or a performance for others with whom we wish to belong (Sturtevant, 2017). For Probyn (1996) 'belonging' is not fixed or static, rather, it is imbued with movement. Her focus is on those who exist outside a space of belonging, as "the outside...is a more adequate figure for thinking about social relations and the social than either an exterior/interior or center/marginal model" (p.11). Being on the outside has political potential and propels one forward toward belonging, whatever form this may take. Youkhana (2015) conceptualises belonging as 'rhizomatic', not only unfolding between people, but through interactions of people with objects, that exist in specific points in time and space. She argues that belonging incorporates the material in three ways "through corporeal and embodied experiences and internalized biographies; through tenure relations, allocations of resources, and the related enforcement strategies...; and through objects and artefacts that serve as bearers of agency and represent signification" (p.20).

Rowe (2005) explores the way belonging can become a tool of control that attempts to fashion us into 'hailable' subjects. She calls for a shift in thinking "from a notion of identity that begins with 'I'...to a sense of 'self' that is radically inclined toward others, toward the communities to which we belong, with whom we long to be, and to whom we feel accountable" (*ibid*, p.18). This notion of belonging sees it as constantly reconfigured as we move through life,

yet always rooted to place and to those around us. This brings to mind Bonnemaïson's (1987) metaphor of the tree and the canoe. He argues that Melanesian identity has deep roots in the earth, where "man [and woman] is a tree, but the local group is a canoe. Man's identity is given by his place, but his canoe draws him along roads...It thus possesses a mobile value, a 'wandering territory', which weaves links between implanted local groups" (Bonnemaïson & Crowe, 1994, p.21). Belonging has no centre or periphery but rather an infinite network that springs from the same source and is therefore connected.

3.5 Conclusion

Identity, inequality and the way these intersect to shape the lived experience lends itself to a discussion of recognition, both formal and informal, and the converse, invisibility, both internalised and structural. In the most traditional sense, the formal body responsible for 'recognising' people is the state. Citizens have the expectation that this recognition affords them legal, civil, political and social rights. The purpose of this chapter was to think more carefully about the processes by which particular people and debates are left out of the discourse of citizenship. This calls for a deepening and a widening of citizenship as a concept, an awareness that citizenship is contingent on context and that citizenship is not only a status bestowed upon bodies, but rather, is embodied, lived in everyday practices and relationships. For women, their gendered bodies intersect with social, political and legal structures that can determine mobility, dress, responsibilities, access to resources and bodily autonomy.

Inclusive citizenship should not be viewed as something that is top-down, only granted by states onto citizens. The state and other governing institutions can introduce laws and mechanisms that promote a more inclusive society, but citizenship itself takes place amongst diverse people, embodied through relationships and social interactions. Therefore, both people and the state have to be willing to ensure that society is inclusive for all. It is also important to look beyond the traditional dichotomy of state/citizen, to other forms of citizenship and belonging – to the church, to family and to the land itself.

CHAPTER FOUR: BOUGAINVILLE



Figure 1: Map of Bougainville (Source: Braithwaite, Charlesworth, Reddy & Dunn, 2010)

The region of Bougainville has a long history of settlement but, since the 1800s, resource extractive colonisation has resulted in loss of land, livelihoods and autonomy. During the colonial period, the governance of the region passed hands from Germany to Australia and then to the Port Moresby based government of Papua New Guinea (PNG). Amidst this transition was a continual denial by Australia and PNG of a desired Bougainvillean independence. A wish for greater autonomy had been voiced by Bougainville leaders and landowners who wished to regain control over valuable resources, such as the copper and gold deposits at Panguna (Oliver, 1973; Regan, 2010; Saovana-Spriggs, 2007). In this chapter I give a brief history of Bougainville

from the time of European contact up to the present day. I consider the way gendered relations have shifted throughout this time, particularly during the crisis and in the post-conflict social and political space. I divide Bougainville's history into pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict whilst acknowledging that such a simple classification does not adequately describe the complex and intertwined timeline of Bougainville's history.

I then discuss the relatively short history of local level government on the island, from the first Act passed by the Australian administration in 1949 that attempted to establish a more localized form of governance, to the present day, with the passing of the 2016 *Community Government Act*. Local government has evolved during this time, seeking to create a more hybrid form of government that incorporates and honours customary authority. It has become gradually more inclusive, evolving from a space dominated by men to the gender equality measures in the newest iteration of community governance. The chapter ends with an overview of the *Community Government Act* and its discourse of community driven participation and governance.

4.1 Pre-conflict

The Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ARoB) lies in the south west Pacific and is the northern most part of the North Solomons island chain. Although ethnically, culturally and linguistically distinct, Bougainville has fallen under PNG's administrative rule since the time of German colonialism, due to "accidents" of late-nineteenth-century colonial map makers" (Regan, 2010, p.8). The two main islands of Bougainville have been inhabited for at least 30,000 years, with a second wave of arrivals taking place around 3000 years ago (Oliver, 1973). Despite its small size, Bougainville, like neighboring PNG, displays incredible linguistic diversity with twenty-five different languages spoken in the region (Sagir, 2005). Griffin (1977) argues that the number of different language groups, coupled with "highly distinctive geographical and historical features" (p.30), had implications for governance and unity on the island. Prior to European contact, which began in the eighteenth Century (Oliver, 1973), there was no unified

Bougainville or Bougainvillean identity. Rather, small “clan-based holding groups, usually of just 50-200 people were the main social units” (Regan, 2010, p.8).

Bougainville is somewhat unique compared to other parts of PNG and the Western Pacific in that it follows a matrilineal system of land inheritance. With the exception of the district of Buin and Nissan Island, land in Bougainville is passed down through the mother’s line. Land holds great physical and spiritual significance as it is the resting place of the ancestors. Both a source of present and future wealth for the clan (Oliver, 1973), it encompasses “economics, politics, social relationships, spirituality, security and cultural identity” (Saovana-Spriggs, 2007, p.11). Kenneth (2005) argues that in her matrilineal home of Haku, in Northern Bougainville, though “men dominate socio-political life...[women’s] absence from public life [is] not the same as lacking power. The traditional position of women, although rarely exposed in public, included the power to exercise authority, especially in matters concerning the land and other inherited rights” (p.374). Women are able to exercise a degree of power through their position as “mothers of the land” (Havini & Sirivi, 2004). While this affords them respect and standing in society, it still views them through a gendered lens. Further, it is important not to conflate a matrilineal system of landownership with greater power and authority for women (Eves & Koredong, 2015).

4.1.1 Colonial and Christian contact

Bougainville, along with the rest of PNG, was taken under German control from 1884 and “by 1914 nearly 30,000 hectares of land...had been alienated by Europeans...land favourably situated for commercially feasible production” (Oliver, 1973, p.80). After World War I, Bougainville, as part of PNG, became an Australian administered territory. It remained under Australian authority until 1975. On May 1st of that year Bougainville made a bid to Australia for independence, sixteen days before PNG was declared an independent nation (Saovana-Spriggs, 2007). This bid was not granted but a desire for greater autonomy led Bougainville to be the “first district in Papua New Guinea to be granted provincial government

status. Its first election was held on 31 May, 1976” (*ibid*, p.88) with a total of twenty-two elected members, who were all men. Women’s involvement in government, both at the national and provincial level was very low; often there was just a single women’s representative, if any at all.

Marist missionaries were some of the first Europeans to make permanent settlements on Bougainville from 1901 (Regan, 2010). Marist missionary teachings, with their strong emphasis on the mother figure of Mary, merged well with the matrilineal Bougainville society and religion has developed into an important marker of identity for many Bougainvilleans (Hermkens, 2011). From the beginning, Marist missionaries “tried to integrate aspects of local customs into Catholicism and give them Christian meanings” (Sagir, 2005, p.361) as well as providing health and education (Momis, 2005) for the Bougainvillean population. While conversion meant a form of citizenship within a global community of Christianity (Douglas, 2000a), the Marists, and other denominations on the island, also fought for the rights and autonomy of local Bougainvillean communities against the state of PNG. In his overview of the Catholic Church’s role in Bougainville, Laracy (2005) highlights that “Marists were also prepared to stand up to the civilian authorities in support of indigenous interests on what appeared to them to be matters of morality and justice” (p.131). One such issue where they supported local landowners was around the unequal distribution of profits from the Panguna Mine.

4.1.2 The Panguna Mine

Small scale gold mining had been practiced in Panguna since the 1930s, but in 1961 a colonial geologist from Port Moresby confirmed that there was also a significant copper deposit (Davies, 2005). In 1964, Bougainville Copper Limited (BCL), a subsidiary of Conzinc Riotinto Australia, secured the rights to develop the mine (Braithwaite, Charlesworth, Reddy & Dunn, 2010). This was done without any consultation with local leaders or landowners. In fact, there was no formal ‘political body’ for Bougainvilleans until the early 1970s (Regan, 2010) who could represent local interests. Opposition to the mine existed from the outset, including by

women, but they found themselves sidelined by BCL officials, who did not recognise their customary authority over the land and instead negotiated largely with the men (Adamo, 2018). Notably the men from Bougainville did not correct this oversight of traditional authority.

Women did not just fade into the background however. Instead they put their bodies on the line in the fight against losing their land. In 1969, BCL was building a port at Rorovana and men and women from the area protested against it. Braithwaite et al. (2010) describe the event: “The footage was shocking: bare breasted women putting their bodies in the path of Australian bulldozers, resisting passively and being attacked by helmeted riot police with batons” (p.16). In 1974, in another act of bodily protest, women lay across the mine road in Panguna, only to be beaten by the police in retaliation (UNIFEM, 2007). This event was covered by Australian media and ultimately the “villagers won...thanks to Australian public opinion, the media and...fear of continued obstruction and loss of face” (Griffin & Togolo, 1997, p.362).

The opening of the mine brought modern development to the area, with BCL paying for all the necessary mining infrastructure such as “roads, electricity, water, telecommunications, ports, airstrip, housing” (Braithwaite et al., 2010, p.12). However, over time the mine development also had dire negative effects: it alienated people from their ancestral land; brought workers from elsewhere in PNG, as well as Australia; and caused environmental damage. Moreover, it contributed to the growing sense of a unified Bougainvillean identity separate from the rest of PNG (Adamo, 2018; Hermkens, 2011). The mine was extremely profitable, generating 1.7 billion Kina (approximately US\$2 billion) in revenue during its 17-year operation (Jubilee Australia, 2014). However, the profits were not distributed evenly, with 61.5% going to the PNG National Government, 4% to the North Solomons Provincial Government (NSPG) and just 1.4% to landowners⁵ (*ibid*). This undermined Bougainvillean autonomy over their land and resources. The desire for Bougainvillean independence, which had been expressed multiple

⁵ The remaining profits went to non-government shareholders.

times in the past, was in part fueled by a growing resentment towards the mine and the ‘outsiders’ it attracted, who did not have any spiritual connection to the land (Hermkens, 2007).

4.2 Conflict: The crisis on Bougainville

Various explanations and reasons have been put forth to explain why the Bougainville crisis developed. Regan (2010) claims the conflict arose as a result of three separate, yet interacting, grievances: 1. Disputes among land owners around rents and revenues 2. Limited opportunity and recognition of Bougainville BCL workers 3. Environmental concerns arising from the impact of the Panguna Mine on the surrounding area. Saovana-Spriggs (2007) gives an important counter argument to the causes of the war, drawing attention to the sense of ‘belonging’. She argues that there was “a failure to adequately address how the sense of being in a place, of cultural belonging and the desire for independence...has its roots in the deep past, and in precolonial connections to land” (p.75).

Mineral rights for PNG that had existed since the time of colonial rule, and continued into independence, “treated subsurface minerals as property of the state, a legal view very much at odds with Bougainville’s own about land” (Regan, 2010, p.14). This deep connection to the land is epitomised in a statement by Raphael Bele, treasurer of Napidakoe Navitu, an organisation formed in 1969 to represent local landowners:

To Bougainvilleans, land is like the skin on the back of your hand – you can neither buy it nor sell it. You inherit it, and it is your duty to pass it on to your children in as good a condition as, or better than, that in which you received it.

(Cited in Cooper, 1992, p.31)

The Mining Ordinance not only denied the customary authority of Bougainvillean landowners but also symbolically robbed them of the place where they belonged.

What started with small acts of sabotage against mine structures in 1988, eventually led to the formation of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), headed by former BCL

employee Francis Ona⁶, and the closure of the Panguna Copper Mine in 1989. The PNG government initially sent in forces to quell the rebellion but by early 1990 they withdrew all government troops and services. In May 1990, the BRA declared independence for Bougainville and so began the blockade. The blockade on the island meant that “Bougainville had no hospitals, no schools, no media, no mail services or telecommunications, no imports or exports, no banks or shops. Basically we were cut off from the rest of the world” (Havini & Sirivi, 2004, p.35). Despite being citizens of PNG, Bougainvilleans were unable access to some of the most basic necessities. Many went into hiding in the bush, growing food and providing their own support services, often through church groups (Douglas, 2000b). During this time people’s relationship to religion took on an even greater poignancy. People turned to faith during times of struggle and the church “filled a vacuum in civil government...altering people’s attitudes and expectations about the church government relationship” (*ibid*, p.2). For men and women on the island, membership within a church often provided more meaning and support than membership to a wider notion of Bougainvillean identity⁷.

4.2.1 Women during the crisis

Although the fighting during the crisis was mainly amongst the men, women suffered greatly. Many were raped and others killed, not only by the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) but also by men in the BRA. Stories of various women who endured the crisis, running from the army, coming under attack and even giving birth in the bush, has been poignantly captured by Havini and Sirivi (2004), who personally experienced the conflict. One such incident shows the brutality enacted against women’s bodies: “They killed them, mutilated them

⁶ Francis Ona, along with his female cousin Perpetua Serero, had broken off from the original Panguna landowner’s group to form the New Panguna Land Owner’s Association in 1987. They formed it together to honour the matrilineal tradition but Braithwaite et al. (2010) suggest this may have been a way for Ona to secure power for himself. Though she made demands for better housing conditions and greater compensation for landowners (Saovana-Spriggs, 2007) it was not clear from the literature if Serero, who died soon after the civil war broke out, supported the formation of the BRA and its subsequent actions.

⁷ In a further blurring of the state-church relationship, the Catholic Church in Bougainville recently announced its intention to provide monetary support for the referendum, as the National Government has failed to provide the necessary funding it owes (Radio New Zealand, February 2019).

and chopped off their breasts. The PNG soldiers placed dirt in their ‘private parts’ and dumped them at Arawa Hospital” (Havini & Sirivi, 2004, p.15). When PNG eventually returned to occupy parts of Bougainville, up to 60,000 people (Eves & Koredong, 2015) were put into care centres. People in the care centres were subject to “human rights abuses, intimidation, harassment, rape and killings....and where movement was strictly controlled, eventually by a pass system” (Saovana-Spriggs, 2000, p.27).

Women were not passive victims, however, and many played an active and vital role in the battle for peace. The crisis worsened as it progressed and escalated from a battle between the BRA and the PNGDF to one that involved many factions, including the Bougainville Resistance Force (BRF), who fought against the BRA.⁸ During this time “the women from the two sides were the ones who were crossing the divide between the BRA and Resistance living areas and forming joint agendas for peace that transcended the BRA-Resistance divide” (Braithwaite et al., 2010, p.48). Women fought hard for peace in an embodied way, as they “would insert themselves physically between warring groups, or wrap their arms around combatants in a bid to halt gunfights” (George, 2018, p.1344). At the same time, they also engaged in acts of violent resistance. The ‘Kangu Beach Massacre’ that took place in Buin troubles the stereotype of women as inherently peaceful. Women used their bodies as vehicles of resistance to entice the PNG soldiers into a game of volleyball, that resulted in members of the PNGDF being “mown down” (Braithwaite et al., 2010, p.41) by Resistance members defecting to the BRA.

By 1996 the situation in Bougainville had deteriorated to the point where much of the fighting was amongst Bougainvilleans rather than just against the PNGDF. Bougainville, once the most ‘developed’ province in PNG, had witnessed the “destruction of most public infrastructure and private sector productive assets, disruption of the capacity of the local state

⁸ It is not possible within this thesis to give a detailed account of the Bougainville Crisis. Regan (2010), Braithwaite et al. (2010) and Saovana-Spriggs (2007) all give excellent and detailed accounts of the history of the conflict.

to govern, and large-scale dislocation of people” (Eves & Koredong, 2015, p.12). This was a time of great upheaval, yet conflict is also a time where new forms of governance can emerge and people become active citizens in “the absence of state services (Sweetman et al., 2011, p.349). The women who went into the bush to talk to the soldiers, who grew food to feed their families and offered social services were performing a kind of active citizenship in the absence of the PNG state. Women were willing to take on new roles and it gave them an opportunity to exercise agency, much of which they had lost since the establishment of the Panguna Mine.

4.3 Post-Conflict: Transition to peace and the 2019 referendum

During the ten-year civil war, it is estimated that up to 20,000 Bougainvilleans died. Some were killed by the fighting but many more died from the lack of health facilities once PNG withdrew all services in 1990 (Saovana-Spriggs, 2000). By 1997, after many earlier attempts had failed, the Burnham I and II and Lincoln peace talks were held in New Zealand. A number of key women leaders attended and, in fact, played an instrumental role in bridging the divide between the factions (Braithwaite et al., 2010). After almost a decade of fighting, the ceasefire was signed on the 30 April, 1998. Three years later, on the 30 August, 2001 the Bougainville Peace Agreement (BPA) was signed in Arawa and included the three pillars of autonomy, weapons disposal and a referendum to decide on Bougainville’s future political status (www.abg.gov.pg). Women are often credited with being a catalyst to peace in Bougainville but they had to fight hard to be included in the post-crisis negotiations (Hermkens, 2011; Saovana-Spriggs, 2000).

A UNIFEM report on the process of peace and reconciliation in Bougainville found that “women’s capacity for peace were recognised and utilised by international actors when convenient and discarded when women’s rights to participation was deemed secondary, or endangering progress on other important issues” (UNIFEM, 2007, p.2). In the post-conflict environment women can find themselves side-lined and excluded from “the ‘public’ arenas of

peacemaking” (Wood, Charlesworth & Chinkin, 2000, p.8). Jaintong (2001) describes the reaction of men to hearing women speaking publicly during the transition to peace:

Some of the men felt uneasy when the women began to speak out. They let the women speak, but some were clearly reluctant. Some, perhaps felt threatened-they did not want the women to take over the leadership roles, which belonged to the men...Some men would have preferred the women to move back to what is seen as their traditional role and remain in the background (p.104).

The crisis allowed women to move into more public roles, and the post-conflict space opened up new avenues for leadership. At the same time, women still had to struggle against the idea that once peace prevailed they should return to their more traditional position, exercising influence from the background. Rajasingham-Senanayaken (2004) argues that the reason why a return to peace can mean “a return to the gender status quo...[is] the lack of social recognition and a culturally appropriate idiom to articulate, legitimate and support women’s transformed roles and empowerment in the midst of conflict, trauma and social disruption” (p.162). After so much violence and uncertainty the post-conflict space can be a rush to return to normalcy – re-establish government and return people to their homes, however what can be lost in the drive for equilibrium is the new space for women’s agency.

4.3.1 The Autonomous Bougainville Government and women’s representation

The Bougainville Constitution (2004) was developed by a twenty-four member Bougainville Constitution Committee between 2002 and 2004 (Braithwaite, et al., 2010). The Committee included six women and considered input from women’s organisations who wanted the constitution to “formally recognise the matrilineal land tenure system, and to provide a legislative framework for it in the future” (Saovana-Spriggs, 2007, p.106). This seems a promising attempt at inclusion, though the women had to make many concessions, such as reducing the number of reserved seats for women from twelve down to just three. The opening pre-amble of the Bougainville Constitution (2004) has a strong influence of both custom and

Christianity, as well as a discourse of self-determination and anti-colonialism. While the emphasis of both Christian and customary values is similar to the PNG Constitution (1975) the narrative of struggle and autonomy shows how the ABG Constitution is a definitive declaration for Bougainvillean self-determination.

Much further into the Bougainville Constitution there is a clause that guarantees “fair representation of women on all constitutional and other bodies” (Bougainville Constitution, 2004, p.23). Though the Constitution guarantees representation, it does not qualify how this should be interpreted and it does not mention equality.⁹ Though women fought hard to have twelve reserved seats representing each of Bougainville’s districts (Braithwaite et al., 2010), the final Constitution only grants three. These reserved seats represent the North, Central and South, while the other Members of Parliament (MPs) represent one of the thirty-three constituencies. This means that the women MPs have a far larger area to represent than those elected to open seats. Further, the Constitution states that the women members will be “elected to represent the interests of the women of the Region” (Bougainville Constitution, 2004, p.37). This reinforces the idea that women are elected only to serve other women, which could discourage them from contesting the open seats. The 2015 election saw a record number of women contesting the open seats, with twelve candidates standing (Baker, 2015). Yet, only one woman, Josephine Getsi, was successful in winning her constituency.

The number of women contesting both the women’s and open seats has been increasing each election (Baker, 2015). However, gains in the political realm have not necessarily translated into the everyday lives of Bougainville women. As Eves (2016) suggests “violence has become normalized and...violent masculinities have become common” (p.1). Men and women still hold “rigid views on gender relations” (Jewkes, Fulu & Sikweyiya, 2013, p.14)

⁹ If we consider Papua New Guinea as a point of comparison, their Constitution (1975) also guarantees “equal participation by women citizens in all political, economic, social and religious activities” (p.2). However, with not a single woman Member of Parliament in the National PNG government, equal participation is far from being achieved.

where women are expected to be obedient to their husbands or fathers. The legacy of trauma and violence from the conflict broke apart families, eroded trust amongst communities and also impacted women's traditional matrilineal authority.

4.3.2 The referendum

Bougainville's troubled relationship to PNG continues to shape its autonomous present as it prepares for the independence referendum. It remains to be seen whether Bougainvilleans will unite and vote in favour of independence. The *wakabaut* to referendum will end on June 15, 2019 and much of the political rhetoric constructs the referendum as a destination, with independence the final outcome. The referendum is non-binding and must be ratified by the National Parliament of PNG (Bougainville Peace Agreement, 2001), yet PNG Prime Minister Peter O'Neill has stated that it would be hard to let go of Bougainville at a time when unity is needed (Tulo, 2018). In November, the question that will be put to Bougainvilleans in next year's referendum was finally confirmed. The question asks "Do you agree for Bougainville to have (i) Greater Autonomy or (ii) Independence?" (Kenneth, 2018). It is not clear what greater autonomy would mean and how would it differ from the arrangement that Bougainville currently has. With preparations for the referendum gaining momentum and urgency, the narrative of 'becoming' an independent Bougainville permeates the ABG's political discourse. During my time as a volunteer in Bougainville I heard many politicians claim that the 20,000 Bougainvillean lives lost during the conflict would be in vain if independence is not achieved.

4.4 History of local government in Bougainville

During its time as a German colony Bougainville was largely neglected by colonial administration and much of the responsibility for providing services fell to the various Christian missions on the island (Griffin & Togolo, 1997). After World War II the Australian administration established the Native Village Government Ordinance throughout PNG, including Bougainville. This set up councils that covered large areas, headed by an Australian Patrol Officer. Playing a subordinate role were the Local Government Councils (LGCs), who

were elected by men from that area (Saovana-Spriggs, 2007). “The system was commonly referred to as the *kiap* system... [and] was composed exclusively of men” (*ibid*, p.82). These government structures were not driven by local communities, instead they were imposed (under the veneer of asking) and therefore were seen as an extension of a paternalistic, colonial relationship that could undermine traditional authority (Griffin, 1977).

The first local government was established in Bougainville in 1958 (Griffin & Togolo, 1997) and by 1963 Bougainvilleans were represented by eight councils. By the early seventies, close to three quarters of Bougainvilleans “lived under these partly legitimized structures” (Griffin, 1977, p.55). Although the LGCs were intended to give more localised control over different social and economic issues, they were also seen as a vestige of colonialism. Moreover, many of the ward boundaries failed to account for historical divisions and interconnections between different villages (Paia, 1977). Therefore, by the time PNG had achieved independence and Bougainville’s first provincial government was established, there was a desire to do away with the old *kiap* system of governance (Griffin & Togolo, 1997).

With a growing wave of secessionist sentiment and following the failed bid for Bougainvillean independence in 1975, the North Solomons Provincial Government (NSPG) formed as a way of conceding more autonomy to the island. Bougainville was the first province in PNG to hold provincial government elections, however, by the end of 1980, elections had taken place in all nineteen provinces (Regan, 1997). In an attempt to re-establish more customary forms of leadership the NSPG passed the Community Government Act in 1978 (Regan, 2000). The former LGCs “were rejected as administrative instruments of colonialism...and not based on Melanesian concepts of leadership” (Griffin & Togolo, 1997, p.366). In contrast, constituents had the option of either electing their Community Government or having one made up of ‘traditional’ leaders (Regan, 2000). Many from the older generation felt that customary authority was being eroded and by “the late 1980s, traditionalists were putting on pressure to restore full chiefly power” (*ibid*, p.90). However, the Bougainville crisis

caused widespread disruption and traditional leadership was further destabilised during this time.

In 1996, the Bougainville Transitional Government (BTG) introduced a new system of local governance called the Council of Elders (CoEs). This “would ground the state in the legitimacy of customary authority and underwrite customary authority with the legitimacy of the state” (Braithwaite et al., 2010, p.39). It was hoped the CoEs would help restore order to the fractured society and foster “reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction at the local level” (Saovana-Spriggs, 2007, p.100). The wording of the Council of Elders (CoE) Act was important as it stressed elders over chiefs. This was intentional so that other leaders, such as women, youth or those from the church could also be a part of the Councils (Wallis, 2012). More women were included, though they were still a minority and by 2007 all of the CoEs had a least one women member (Braithwaite et al., 2010). Once the ARoB was established and the first elections held in 2005, the CoEs worked closely with the ABG on issues of local development, such as small-scale mining leases, planning and education (www.abg.gov.pg). The 2016 *Community Government Act* builds on the CoE Act but does not just *allow* for the inclusion of women leaders, it *ensures* it, through the fifty/fifty arrangement.

4.5 The Community Government Act

The *Community Government Act* (CGA) was passed by the ABG in 2016 and the elections for the rural community governments took place in early 2017¹⁰. Although Vanuatu and Kiribati have appointed women members on their local councils and the Provincial Assemblies in mainland PNG must elect one woman representative (Hassall, Kensen Takeke, Taoba & Tipu, 2019)¹¹ the ARoB is the only region in the Pacific Islands to have adopted full

¹⁰ The elections for the four urban Community Governments took place in July 2018, just before I conducted my primary research in Bougainville. At the time of travelling to Bougainville the urban Community Governments were still in the induction process, therefore, excluding one interview, they were not able to be analysed for this research.

¹¹ Although published in 2019, this chapter, which discusses local government in the Pacific, did not include any reference to the Bougainville *Community Government Act*.

equality in local level government. In the words of Jacob Tooke, Minister for Community Government: “The aim was to create a second level of government that was truly Bougainville and one that could help people plan, coordinate and carry out grassroots development activities and assist...government service delivery...and improve education, health and other service delivery (Department of Community Government, 2017). Implicit in the CGA is a discourse of grassroots participation and self-responsibility, which, though local in focus, reflects a global trend in decentralised governance (Duncan, 2004; Kerley, Liddle & Dunning, 2019).

4.5.1 The Community Government structure

Each Community Government (CG) is made up of between three to fifteen Wards. Each Ward is represented by both a man and a woman, therefore CGs can have between six to thirty members. Once formed, each CG must elect both a Chair and Deputy Chair where one must be a man and the other a woman. The CGA stipulates that if a man is elected Chair then when the consecutive Community Government is formed the Chair elect must be a woman (and vice versa). This is important as it means the equality measures extend beyond the Ward Representatives and ensure that women will have an opportunity to head the CG. As mentioned in the introduction, however, all but two of the CGs are headed by men. Yet the three Vice-Chairwomen I spoke to were positive about their Chairman and saw the relationship as respectful and collaborative.

4.5.2 Aims and functions of Community Government

The *Community Government Act* is framed as an act of service to the people of Bougainville. It seeks to “improve the lives of the people of its area and to improve the self-sufficiency and sustainability of its area” (Community Government Act, 2016, p.16). The Ward Representatives hold Ward Assemblies with their constituents in order to identify the needs of the area and plan accordingly. The CGs are expected to address issues around natural disasters, peace and security, health, education, mining ordinances, land and the environment as well as contribute to economic development in the area (Community Government Act, 2016). CGs have

the authority to impose a head tax on their constituents, as well as a business tax, as a means to generate income for their activities. The CGs are intended to be a link between the ABG and the local Bougainvillean population. This is important because geography, poor communication infrastructure and the tendency for most ABG members to live in Buka, means many people feel isolated and remote from the ABG and its members (Thomas, Levy, Vetunawa & Rawstorne, 2017).

The Community Governments are elected bodies but the Act also emphasises the importance of working with and respecting traditional authority, such as the chiefs and the village courts. Each Ward has a Ward Steering Committee that is made up of the Ward Representatives, local stakeholders, village chiefs and other leaders, including those from within the church. The Act asserts that the relationship between the district staff and the CG and between the CG and Ward Steering Committees and local leaders is non-hierarchical (Department of Community Government, 2017). This kind of cooperation, if no conflict arises, could be seen as an example of what Kabeer (2010) terms horizontal citizenship that “that stresses the relationship between citizens” (p.57). Yet it is possible that this could lead to confusion or tension over issues affecting the community and who ultimately has the authority to make the final decision.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined some of the common arguments for the causes of the conflict. It seems clear that BCL, and the national laws that governed mining, lacked respect and understanding of the land’s deep significance to Bougainvilleans and to women as the rightful landowners. The “pollution and destruction...[the mine] had caused to their land...[and the] influx of foreigners, eroded their sovereignty” (Jubilee Australia, 2014, p.5) which, in turn, contributed to the armed resistance that followed. As in most post-conflict situations there is much to be considered in shaping new governance structures and practices, however this thesis

is focused on understanding the role that gender quotas can play in contributing to peace, inclusive political environments and women's representation.

This is important because while women have been heavily involved in peace building both during and after the conflict, they have struggled to gain substantial recognition and representation in the post-conflict ABG. The space for women to inhabit leadership positions has been limited, both historically, in the time before colonial contact, and within the local level administration introduced by Germany, Australia and later PNG. But the strong desire from women to be included within decision making bodies, strengthened by women's organising during the crisis (Saovana-Spriggs, 2007), led to the introduction of the *Community Government Act*. The CGA is an attempt at making local government more inclusive and recognising women's human rights to political representation.

Whether Bougainville gains full independence or remains in some form of autonomous arrangement with PNG, its journey towards 'belonging' will endure. As Dowling and McKinnon (2014) argue "identity becomes understood as a process...a never-ending process of becoming" (p.629). For many, Bougainville's journey will culminate in the 2019 referendum but this is just another step in the process towards belonging. The post-referendum period will be just as dynamic for Bougainville. Whether it transitions to independence or greater autonomy, its struggle for self-determination will propel it forward toward a yet uncertain future.

CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I explain my choice of methodology and the decision to adopt a post-colonial feminist framework, to ensure my research process remained self-reflexive and acknowledged the power dynamics of knowledge production. It discusses my own moment of becoming, moving from student to volunteer to researcher before outlining my method of participant recruitment and the interview process. It ends with a brief discussion of the ethical implications of the research.

5.1 Choice of method

In order to answer my research questions I primarily use qualitative research methods. Qualitative research provides the opportunity to go deeper and focus on individual experiences and narratives and to give primary attention to the ways in which meaning is constructed and interpreted. Though much of the Pacific development literature uses a gender framework (Corbett & Liki, 2015; Corbett & Spark, 2016; George, 2018; Hermkens, 2007) what is less common is an acknowledgement of the inherent power dynamics involved in the act of research. As a significant amount of research undertaken in the Pacific is done by outsider, ‘Western’ academics there must be a critical understanding of the ethical implications that can arise in cross-cultural research, particularly in a developing context (Scheyvens & Leslie, 2000). Therefore, I approached my research with a post-colonial, feminist frame, which I outline in more detail below.

5.2 Post-colonial feminist framework

Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) highlights the “complex ways the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices” (p.2). Colonial institutions, structures and relationships were built upon foundations of inequality, exploitation and destruction. The same argument can be made for the institutions of research and knowledge production which historically reify an individualised, empirical and scientific approach where knowledge is ‘discovered’ or uncovered. What the empirical approach ignores is the highly

subjective ways in which ideas and knowledge are produced and shaped by a researcher's position and background. It is with this awareness of inherent power structures and the ways in which so much of what is taken as 'truth' is merely a reconstruction influenced by one's assumptions, biases and positionality, that I approach my research.

Moving from a post-colonial feminist framework I take a methodological approach that acknowledges the relationship between researcher and researched, (with the problematic dynamic that this terminology constructs) and moves away from any assumption around an objective truth. It involves "listening to the community around us and giving them a chance to express their understanding of the world" (Huffer & Qalo, 2004, p.109). My research is less concerned with uncovering 'truth', but instead acknowledges the intricacies and complexities that emerge in subjective experience. Given that my research is focused on one district of the ARoB, the women I interviewed cannot be seen as representative of the whole of Bougainville. The ideas discussed offer a particular perspective into the ways in which people respond to and inhabit positions of leadership and is shaped by my own positionality. While it is impossible to remove myself completely from the research, I employed different strategies to give voice to the women in Bougainville. Of course, even the notion of giving voice is problematic as it assumes that voice must be given, rather than being something they already possess. As Varga-Dobai (2012) argues "to capture the essence, reality or true meaning of the Other through his/her words, stories and myths is in fact impossible" (p.3). Not only are stories constructed during the interview process but they are then re-interpreted in the analysis stage. However, the interviews were loosely structured and interviewees were able to be somewhat direct and shape the nature of the conversation rather than follow a rigid framework.

I worked closely with, Veronica, a local researcher to strengthen the research. She played an active role alongside me during the field research, helping to refine research questions, speaking with participants and translating from *tok ples* (the local dialect) when necessary. Working with a local Bougainvillean researcher helped with interviewing, deepened my

understandings of local communities and ensured my methods were culturally appropriate. She had the opportunity to discuss ideas and bring her own point of view to the research. The research process was an ongoing conversation rather than something set in stone. As Papoutsaki (2007) attests “there is a need to build on local knowledge and encourage young researchers to provide their insights on the role of research in their countries’ development” (p.9).

5.3 My own moment of becoming

In 2016, I left New Zealand and arrived in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. I was there as a volunteer for Volunteer Services Abroad and I knew little about the region or its history. For ten months I worked with the Bureau for Public Affairs, Media and Communication in a small office next to the airstrip in Buka. The Bureau had a website and Facebook page; produced a quarterly newspaper, *The Bougainville Bulletin*; had a mobile radio station, *Radio Ples Lain* that would travel to remote areas of the region to broadcast and spread referendum awareness; and produced referendum awareness materials. Working here, I saw first-hand how most Bougainvilleans were cut off from any form of media or government information and how hungry for this information they were. Our department would travel throughout the region to try and reach these remote communities and give feedback and information on the referendum and its preparations.

I accompanied the team on one such outing to a Peace and Reconciliation workshop in the district of Siwai. The three day workshop brought together recently elected Ward Representatives from the Southern districts of Siwai, Torokina, Buin and Bana to provide information around their responsibilities, as well as some gender awareness training. I was aware of the *Community Government Act* before attending this workshop but in speaking to the participants I began to see just how significant the Act was for women’s leadership at the local level. It was here that I started to formulate the topic for my thesis and made contact with many of the women who took part in my research.

In this thesis I talk about Bougainville and the women Ward Representatives going through a continuous process of becoming, culminating in two moments of arrival. During this time I have been going through my own process of becoming: from Honours student, to volunteer, to researcher. Over this period I moved from a theoretical awareness of development and the ways in which gender shapes the social landscape to a first-hand experience of living in a so-called developing (and post-conflict) state. On returning to Bougainville to conduct my primary research I struggled with my right as an outsider to gather knowledge from these women in order to further my own aims of writing a Masters thesis. However, because of the deep connections I formed during my time as a volunteer, I found myself a part (and apart) of Bougainville's journey. Becoming a researcher has brought me closer to Bougainville and its people, given me a deeper insight into its history, its complications and the hopes of Bougainvilleans for their yet unknowable future.

6.4 Choice of location



Figure 2: Buin district (Department of Lands, Physical Planning and Environment, ARoB)

Bougainville is divided into the three geographical regions of North, Central and South and then into a further twelve districts. There are currently 444 Wards in Bougainville, which make up the forty-four rural Community Governments and the urban Community Governments in Buka,

Kokopau, Arawa and Buin town. To ensure a rich analysis I chose to focus my research on the district of Buin, which is divided into eighty-one Wards that form eight Community Governments. Currently there are 162 Ward Representatives, half of which are women. My reason for choosing Buin is based on two principle factors. Firstly, Buin is the southern-most district of Bougainville and the most distant from the political ‘centre’ of Buka. Poor communication networks and infrastructure contribute to this distance, impacting the relationship of people in these communities to the rest of Bougainville and the ABG in Buka.

Secondly, unlike most of Bougainville, (with the exception of Nissan Island), Buin society has traditionally been structured along patrilineal, not matrilineal lines. Individuals did belong to matriclans, however, as Nash (1981) found “only ill-remembered remnants of matriclans existed, inheritance being patrilineal and class related” (p.110). This does not necessarily mean that women in Buin have less power than those in the rest of Bougainville but they cannot draw on a history of matrilineal authority to justify their political inclusion.

5.4 Primary data collection: Semi-structured interviews

5.4.1 Participant selection and recruitment

There were two different types of participants I sought for my research. For key informant interviews I looked for women who had a history of formal leadership or who held an important leadership position at the time the research took place. I allowed for a broad interpretation of leadership but all of the women I interviewed were well known figures in Bougainville society and had experience within women’s civil society organisations, church groups or as members of the ABG. The second group of participants were elected as a woman Ward Representative in 2017 within the district of Buin.

During the time I lived in the AROB in 2017, I made initial contacts with Community Government members from Buin who indicated their interest in taking part in the research. I also made contacts within the Department of Community Government, the Autonomous Bougainville Government and civil society organisations. I used these key informants to make

contact with potential participants. Participants who had already been interviewed and other members of the community assisted me in making contact with Ward Representatives from the area. The local researcher I worked with also helped me to make contact with communities.

The communication infrastructure and mobile network in Bougainville is unreliable and this can make communication from afar difficult. Before arriving in Bougainville I made contact with certain key informants and the Department of Community Government, however most participants were not able to receive a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) (a requirement of the University of Auckland Human Ethics Committee) ahead of time. I tried to ensure participants had enough time to read the PIS, consider their involvement and that they did not feel like they were under any obligation to take part. Many of the Ward Representatives live in areas where there is no network coverage. To further compound the situation, during the time I was in Buin the Digicel tower was damaged and there was often no mobile coverage at all. This meant that most interviews had to be organised through word of mouth and through visiting the market on market day looking for women who were Ward Representatives. The difficulty in contacting participants meant that some interviews that had been scheduled never took place.

5.4.2 Interview process

Interviews took place over thirty days. I conducted interviews in Buka, where the government is located and where most civil society organisations have an office, and in the southern-most district of Buin. I conducted eight key informant interviews with women representatives of the Autonomous Bougainville Government, civil society members, and women working within religious organisations. I interviewed nine Ward Representatives from the district of Buin. Eight were from rural Community Governments and one was from the urban Community Government. Elections for the urban Community Governments had only taken place in the weeks prior to my arrival whereas the rural Ward Representatives had held their position for a year. Both the key informant interviews and the interviews with Ward

Representatives were in-depth, semi-structured interviews and lasted between thirty to ninety minutes.

At the beginning of each interview, participants were reissued with the relevant PIS to read through once more and familiarise themselves with the topics at hand. All participants were given Consent Forms (CF) for their involvement in the study. Participants had the option of either signing the CF or recording their consent orally on the audio recorder. The interviews were recorded with a voice recorder, at the discretion of the interviewee. Participants were informed that they could instruct the researcher to turn off the voice recorder at any time or withdraw from the study at any moment during the interview. All participants consented to being recorded. Soft copies of the CFs, and interview transcripts were all stored on a password protected computer at the University of Auckland, and hard copies were stored in a locked filing cabinet in the secure office of the Principal Investigator. These will be stored for a period of six years before they are subsequently destroyed.

Interviews in English were transcribed by myself. Interviews that were conducted in Tok Pisin were translated and transcribed by myself with assistance from a third party translator. The translator signed a Confidentiality Agreement and deleted any copies of the recordings and transcription to ensure that confidentiality of information was preserved. Key informant interviewees received a transcript of their interview and had fourteen days in which to make any changes. Due to the lack of access to communication infrastructure and owing to the fact that interviews had to be translated by a third party, Ward Representatives who took part in the research did not have the option to receive a copy of their transcript. However, they had the choice of retaining a copy of their interview recording and the option to have their audio interview kept at the Autonomous Bougainville Government Archives in Buka.

5.4.3 Participants

Of the seventeen participants I interviewed, two are in the current ABG, two are former members of the ABG, four are prominent leaders from women's organisations, eight are Ward

Representatives of rural Community Governments and one is a Ward Representative for the Buin urban Community Government. Of the nine Ward Representatives, three were Vice-Chair of their respective Community Governments. Twelve of the participants were married, four were widows and one was unmarried. All but one participant had children, though she had fostered children from within her family. Just over half the participants were in their late fifties and early sixties and the rest were in their late thirties to forties. Their education level ranged from grade six to one participant with a Masters degree in Education. This difference in education could be attributed to the fact that the younger participants were still in school when the crisis started, likely making it difficult to continue their education.

5.5 Secondary data collection: Literature Review

Before conducting the interviews I undertook a review of the literature to place Bougainville in the wider context of other post-conflict countries that have utilised some special measure to increase women's political representation. I reviewed the literature around inclusive citizenship, intersectionality and intersecting inequalities to deepen my understanding of my theoretical approach. I also read newspaper articles and different legal documents, such as the Bougainville Peace Agreement, the Bougainville Constitution and the *Community Government Act* to gain greater insight into the frameworks informing the complex environment of post-conflict Bougainville.

5.6 Data analysis

5.6.1 A note on translation

In Buin district the most common language spoken is not Tok Pisin or English but the local dialect or *tok ples*. All the key informant interviews were in English as the women were confident communicating in English and were used to interacting with visitors not fluent in their language. However, most of the Ward Representatives felt more comfortable speaking Tok Pisin during the interview. Although I possess a good understanding of Tok Pisin and can easily hold a conversation I did not always fully understand what was being said. I had a local researcher

on hand to help but perhaps due to power dynamics, or, an overestimation of my abilities, she did not always translate into English. I transcribed the interviews verbatim first in Tok Pisin before translating them to English. I enlisted the help of a translator to help me with the sections I was unable to translate myself. Therefore, it is likely my translations are missing the nuance or depth of what was being said. Although Tok Pisin may seem like a relatively simple pidgin to those who learn it as outsiders, certainly it is used creative and complex ways by native speakers.

Translation is not only another form of construction within the data analysis process it is also a clear example of the power imbalance inherent in the researcher/researched relationship highlighted by Tuhiwai-Smith (2012). Even through the simple process of translation I placed my own interpretation upon what the women were saying. As Jolly (2003) warns: “Given the different terrains of translation, we need to work sensitively through vernaculars and local lingua franca and appreciate how far women feel empowered to or compelled to speak. *Ol grassroots mama...* rarely aspire to nor readily have the resources to talk or write back in scholarly conferences or academic journals” (p.143). It is important to recognise that my position as a white researcher in Bougainville can be exploitative towards participants and that is why I endeavoured to include local researchers and translators throughout the process.

5.6.2 Method of data analysis

When I first approached the task of analysing my interview transcripts I found it a profoundly uncomfortable experience. What I contended with the most was whether I had the right to even be using the knowledge that was so graciously given to me and how to honour the women who gave their time to me, given that so much of academic knowledge fails to respect indigenous epistemologies and peoples (Papoutsaki, 2007). Even the writing process is highly constructed, channelled through and re-interpreted by one person and coloured by their own beliefs and assumptions. Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) argues, and I agree: “If we write without thinking critically about our writing it can be dangerous...we reinforce a style of discourse

which is never innocent” (p.37). Therefore I approached the analysis with a continual awareness of my position throughout the process, rather than its acknowledgement being a token, one off event (Brown & Strega, 2015).

I used a somewhat modified version of Braun and Clark’s (2006) method of thematic analysis. I ‘coded’ each interview with different themes and as recurrent themes started to emerge I grouped them under larger theme groups. I then went over the interviews again and counted to see which themes were raised the most. I used these theme groups in discussion with my wider theoretical frameworks of inclusive citizenship and intersecting inequalities to begin to form a wider picture of what the interviews revealed.

5.7 Ethical considerations

I gained ethics approval by the University of Auckland to conduct research in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. I was granted a research visa for Papua New Guinea through the National Research Institute (NRI). Both applications required me to consider the potential ethical implications and what measures I would take to ensure these were mitigated. I will briefly discuss some of these issues and what steps were taken to address them.

As I interviewed some of the women members of the ABG, of which there are only four, it was not possible to conceal the identity of these women. To mitigate the chance that the views or ideas expressed would be harmful to them as a result of the research, I thoroughly briefed them on the confidentiality issues in the PIS and I returned my transcribed notes to them for final approval. For the other research participants, real names have only been used with permission, otherwise a fake name or pseudonym has been assigned to ensure confidentiality. All the participants agreed that their real names could be used in the final version of the thesis. In fact they wanted their words to be attributed to them. In this thesis, when referring to participants, I use their full name when introducing them for the first time and then subsequently I use their first

name only¹². No other identifiable information has been disclosed, such as workplace or position, unless permission was given for these to be published.

Participants were given information about the project through a Participant Information Sheet. They had the opportunity to ask questions about the research and stop the interview at any point in time. Permission was obtained through the signing of a Consent Form. Participants were able to withdraw their data within 30 days of the interview taking place, without giving any explanation. Reciprocity is an important aspect of Bougainvillean culture (Nanau, 2011) so participants were offered a *koha* of basic foodstuffs such as cooking oil, flour, sugar, tinned fish or rice.

¹² Due to the bonds I formed with my participants, using their last name felt too impersonal. However, in using their first names, I do not wish to create a distinction between the scholars I cited and the women I interviewed, as the knowledge my participants shared is invaluable to this research.

CHAPTER SIX: RECOGNITION, AUTONOMY AND CLAIMING SPACE

Well...for now men are allowing us on reserved seats. That's the *best* they are doing (laughs). I want to see a man one day come to me and say "Rose, I wanted to run on this seat but I want to give you this opportunity. You run on this seat and I'll support you." I want men to come to the stage where they can think that way.

(Participant interview, 2018)

A key facet of inclusive citizenship is recognition and an awareness that inclusive justice can mean special measures for certain groups in society (Kabeer, 2005). The *Community Government Act* in Bougainville is a special measure that provides an opportunity for women to gain greater recognition and self-determination. This recognition comes from members of the community they represent, as well as men in leadership, who are witnessing exactly what women in these positions can achieve. Further, it has enhanced women's self-recognition, building the confidence of those elected as Ward Representatives. The CGA sees Community Government members as directly involved in the project of nation building and contributing to Bougainville's recognition as a referendum ready state. The participants viewed women as an integral part of Bougainville's history; as pioneers paving the way for future women leaders and for peace. In this chapter I argue that, viewed through the frame of inclusive citizenship, the CGA is a chance for women to gain recognition and self-determination, which is mirrored in Bougainville's own struggle for independence and recognition as a nation state. I see this as a continuous act of becoming for both women and the ARoB, culminating, for many, in two related moments of 'arrival'. For the ARoB this arrival is the referendum and for women there is much hope that the 2020 election will usher in even more women representatives. However, as discussed earlier, the concept of belonging and becoming allows for an open-endedness due to intersecting identities and the ever shifting terrains of power that makes one end point impossible.

6.1 The use of special measures

The Autonomous Region of Bougainville exists in a continuous state of transition: from peace to conflict, from conflict to post-conflict, from post-conflict towards peace and independence. The post-conflict environment has potential for fostering women's leadership, yet, despite the major role women played in the peace negotiations, even risking their lives during the conflict, they found that their post-conflict space was in fact reduced. Helen Hakena, the co-founder of the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency (LNWDA), spoke of the way men were quick to push women to the side once the hostilities had formally ended:

And when we came through the conflict and when the government set up its structure, this is when we found that women's leadership role were undermined again by men. Because there was peace you know in most areas of Bougainville so men again were taking up leadership role during that period...And during that period when there was peace in some areas of Bougainville men came out to the forefront and forgot the women. But then the women we were not silent. We wanted space. We wanted to be given space and we started to negotiate with those in government for women's inclusion.

Helen uses the discourse of inclusion, as well as the metaphor of space, to show how the fight for recognition and representation in post-conflict Bougainville has persisted. She refers to the first post-conflict consultations for the Constitution that included women, but not in any meaningful way:

The men were in great numbers you know. Whereas the women, those three women were just like flowerpots. Like they were not consulted about anything to do with women.

Helen, witnessed and personally experienced the gendered trauma of the conflict and used this to fight for women's rights. Therefore, her despair and frustration at women continuing to be overlooked is palpable.

Rose Pihei, a former women's representative for South Bougainville saw the *Community Government Act* as a source of pride for the ABG and offered another view:

Creating reserved seats for women at the Community Government level...I was amazed. And I feel proud of the Minsters. And not just the Ministers during my time but how men think. Men think highly of women in Bougainville. It's just their ego that we have combat. (Laughs). Secretly they admire the work that women do. Secretly. But we have to combat their ego.

Rose believes the CGA is in part an outcome of women's efforts at gender sensitising and gender awareness trainings that persuaded the ABG to directly support women and women's representation. Although proud of the (mainly men) government ministers for passing the CGA, Rose recognises that men can be a barrier to increasing women's leadership.

Both men and women vote, so there are clearly many women who support men candidates but, as the interviews revealed, there is another interpretation to consider – that is many voters saw the women's reserved seats as the only space in which women could run for government, with open seats being the domain of men (Baker, 2015). Agnes Titus, also a co-founder of LNWDA and a key women's leader from before the crisis and still today, put it rather bluntly:

Like I said...*men's* interpretation of politics is that everything is them, them, them. That the political representation is by men only. So, it's taken us all these good many years from before the conflict until now we are still advocating that, "No, political decision-making is for both men and women.

Both Rose and Agnes highlight a reality that, in the beginning stages of post-conflict governance at least, men are often the gatekeepers to women having more power.

6.1.1 Invited vs taken space

In her discussion of women's representation in India, Mohanty (2007) introduces the idea of invited space and finds that the women given the opportunity to take part in government were largely place holders, unable to exercise much agency. The CGA can be framed as an example of this kind of invited space. The women I interviewed were overwhelmingly positive about the CGA but understood that it would not be possible without the support of men. Laura

Ampa was the women's representative for South in the first ABG and now runs a safe house for women. She explains:

Yes. And men you know started to recognise the women. What we do. So, now we are happy. In every decision making we must be there. They invited us.

Here we see the discourse of recognition with men placed in the active role, inviting women into their space. As Antonsich (2010) argues "Every politics of belonging involves two opposite sides: the side that claims belonging and the side that has the power of 'granting' belonging. This means, that a process of negotiation...is always in place, either at the individual or at the collective scale or both" (p.650). Women, even before the crisis, called for greater representation but ultimately it has been those who have had the power to create legislation that will allow this. Government, at both the national and provincial level, has historically been dominated by men and even today the majority of the ABG and most of the departmental secretaries are men. What this means is that it is men who are conferring 'belonging' on the women as a group. In doing so they can overlook the actual contribution particular women make in decision-making and formal governance. As I will discuss further in the following chapter, the intersection of a patriarchal culture with women's gender can limit the space for women's participation in politics.

Mohanty (2007) believes that more often than not invited spaces become "*empty spaces*... [that] do not translate into meaningful political participation" (p.81). However, in Bougainville I did not find this to be the case. Women are active participants, well aware of the gendered boundaries they must contend with. Women are not waiting to be invited into these spaces, they are demanding they be included. This is summed up by Helen:

But as for me I do not accept what is given to me by men...Yes, they have given us these spaces. We do not just go into those spaces to sit there. To fill those spaces. To keep them hot. We should use those spaces to create change.

Quotas are an entry point but it is what women do once they inhabit these spaces that will make the difference. As I will discuss later in this chapter, women have taken the invitation that was both fought for and offered and have proven to be proactive and hard-working leaders.

6.2 Recognition

The CGA was described in the interviews as an avenue for women to gain recognition and a sign of gratitude for their work during the Bougainville crisis. Rose describes how this process of recognition has been ongoing:

So, when we look back at...what women did...the first government they had to recognise the women's work that was done through the peace negotiations. Cease fire period. Conflict period. Negotiation period.

While Rose frames the CGA as part of a continual push for recognition, Helen described the CGA as a culmination of women's tireless efforts that were finally being acknowledged through giving equal representation:

It's because ABG and the men of Bougainville they all saw...it's just like a token of appreciation for the work that women have done. Continually during the Bougainville crisis, after the Bougainville crisis and up till now. You know articulating issues, particularly for people. For people like the referendum as well. So, women's voices are coming out loud and clear and the government is respectful of what women...have done during that period. It's a way of saying thank you to the women for what they have done...So, it's just like a token of appreciation because we were working our guts out during that period.

Helen talks of the respect that women have gained, once more showing how the journey for women's 'empowerment' has been intertwined with Bougainville's history. She also highlights the kind of work that women did – not just token efforts but valuable, even critical, to the eventual resumption of peace.

At the same time, this recognition is gendered as it frames women and their leadership as different to men, with the potential to bring change to stale and corrupt governance. Women

leaders described themselves as a necessary voice for women because, as my participants revealed, many men in power have little understanding or desire to address issues that affect women. This could be because achieving the three pillars of the Peace Agreement: weapons disposal, good governance and referendum, have been the main priority of the ABG. Since Joseph Nobeau was elected as Chief Secretary in 2016, there has been a big push (and open display) of weeding out corruption with another main focus being building a self-sufficient economy. This has left little space for addressing issues of domestic violence, access to reproductive rights, improving health care, or the many other hardships that women experience.¹³ Even within the CGA, with its promising equality measures, there are no specific references to gender or problems that may arise from gender inequality. Therefore it is important that women speak up for other women and the issues that affect them. At the same time, being the voice of women runs the risk of being seen as a voice *only* for women and not for the men. As has been argued by Baker (2015; 2017) this is an issue when it comes to women contesting in the open seats.

6.2.1 Recognition from others

Kabeer (2005) argues that recognition is a fundamental part of inclusive citizenship that respects “the intrinsic worth of all human beings” (p.4) without denying the differences between us. Recognition is a relational term and can be seen as an act of both witnessing and being seen. Therefore, one can be the object of recognition or the one performing the act of recognition on someone else. This principle is itself enshrined in the Bougainville Constitution (2004) which states: “Every effort will be made to integrate all the communities in Bougainville while recognising and respecting cultural diversity” (p.22). Specifically, it speaks of recognising the role that women play in Bougainville society and seeks to ensure “fair representation of women and marginalized groups on all constitutional and other bodies” (p.23). The CGA, as a policy,

¹³ This is the impression that I got from my ten months working at the Bureau for Public Affairs, Media and Communication, which reported on the actions of the different government departments of the ABG.

builds upon the tenets set out in the Constitution. It not only integrates communities into the wider structure of governance but also ensures equal representation of women and men within local government.

This notion of recognition was a common theme raised by the participants, particularly the women elected to Community Government. They viewed the CGA as a vehicle for fostering recognition of women leaders and a chance to forge stronger connections within the community. Mary Mamatau, Vice-Chair of Kogu Community Government, describes the changes that have taken place since women came to power:

I think now they are starting to respect the women and the women are being recognised and...I think by now they have been accepted...The leaders...our male Ward members, they rely on us. And they come, most of the Ward members they come to seek for some advice or what...they come to the women.

Mary describes how the men elected alongside the women have experienced a change in attitude and realise that women are competent and reliable leaders. Further, they have been turning to the women leaders for help and advice. Women have traditionally held influence in the background and, particularly in matrilineal regions, have been consulted in decisions concerning the land. Now the women are in a much more active and influential position, working alongside, not behind, the men.

The CGA has increased the women's standing within their Wards and allowed them to build relationships that they can draw on in the future. Martha Kareba is a Vice-Chair of her Community Government and unsuccessfully contested for one of the ABG women's seats in the past. She attributed her loss to the fact that she was not well known amongst her community due to her time spent studying for her Masters in Port Moresby and then running a business in Buka. She is using her time as a Ward Representative to strengthen her connection to and standing within her community with the intention of contesting again for the Autonomous Bougainville Government.

I have another four more years to go. I'm planning that I should contest for the next elections for the ABG. And I'm sure that if I contest now I'm definitely win. I feel that I will. Because now I'm working back at the village level people know how I work. They know my attitude, my personality. And most people are coming to me and saying "You will contest in the next election. We will support you. Financially and we are going to stand behind you during the elections."

Martha and a number of other women I interviewed described the experience of being a Ward Representative as a kind of training ground where they could prove themselves to their community. This notion of community recognition and building a potential constituency base is reiterated by Helen:

And [the CGA] is a way of engaging more women at the local level where they are better known...because they are better known by their clans, by their families, where they are respected and that is where a lot of power lies for the women. At the community level and women should continually use that power you know to elevate themselves to other key positions.

In the same way that certain politicians in PNG draw on church networks to support their political campaigns (Corbett, 2013), women Ward Representatives are using their leadership position within the community to gain recognition for future elections. Where before, church and women's groups were some of the only spaces for women to connect with their community, the CGA provides a chance to interact with a wider base of both men and women.

6.2.2 Self-Recognition

Recognition is a way of respecting our worth as humans (Kabeer, 2005), as searching for dignity and respect (Cornwall et al., 2011), or a recognition of difference and specific identities (Lister, 2007). However, recognition is not only something that seeks out another. It can be turned back in on itself in a self-reflexive act of validation. Many of the women I interviewed gained confidence and greater faith in their abilities through being elected by the

community and from successfully carrying out their duties. Joyce Noutai, a Ward Representative in the Makis CG, described the CGA as transformative:

It will help many women to become leaders and also plenty of the women will be educated nationally...first the men were highly educated...us women, we thought that we were nobody. We weren't able to make decisions. But now us women are recognised. We can make decisions. We can make better decisions than men.

For Joyce, the CGA allows women to transcend the internalised belief of their lack of worth (Horowitz, 2017) and instead recognise their capabilities as leaders. However, it also shows the way leadership attributes are gendered. As I will show in chapter seven, women's ability to make decisions within the family and manage the home are refashioned into gendered traits of leadership.

Ward Representative Cathy Bengko had at first been reluctant to stand in the CG elections. But after being asked on multiple occasions by the chiefs in her area to put herself forward, she had run unopposed and been elected. She found that, despite her initial reticence, she was happy because she had gained respect and recognition from her community:

Some good things, good outcomes is the respect I get from the community. That's one good outcome...And I have this thought. I have felt respected by the community and to this I have to show how I'm respected from my community.

Many of the women I interviewed had a similar experience of running unopposed. They recognised something in themselves that set them apart, though this was tempered by the knowledge that other local women believed they lacked the confidence or the skills to run themselves. Here we can see the gap that exists between what Dickson-Waiko (2003) terms "*ol grassroots mama* [and] *ol save meri*" (p.115), simply translated to grassroots mothers and educated women. Some women believed illiteracy amongst women in the village contributed to their lack of confidence and unwillingness to stand as Ward Representatives. Being a voice

for these women gave the Ward Representatives a sense of purpose and a way to serve their community but it also led to greater self-respect and confidence in their own leadership.

6.2.3 Negative recognition

Recognition can be positive but its inverse also exists. Women in leadership positions, particularly those elected through the use of special measures, find themselves under intense scrutiny and held up to a much higher standard than men in the same situation (Baker, 2017; McCleod, 2015). The CGA was described by some women as a space to prove themselves but it can leave them open to attack and criticism. Any perceived failure can be held up as proof of their inability to lead. Barbara Tanne, former President of the Bougainville Women's Federation (BWF), explained this:

It's like trialling them out...and if that woman we are trialling or putting in there does not display in a manner that [is] accepted... maybe 2020 they'll say "Oh, the women are just the same as men." But it's a lie because men tend to watch every step that women go through when they're in the leadership position and each step or mistake they [are] criticised...of course they just say "Stop."

Here Barbara points out the way women must prove themselves because men, and even other women, scrutinise their actions for any perceived failures. This sentiment is confirmed by research conducted into women's leadership in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. It argues that women are constructed as "cleaner" candidates and change makers who can face backlash, such as failure to be re-elected, if they are unable to live up to these high expectations (Baker, 2017). The quota is a necessary step in fostering women's leadership in Bougainville but as a policy it does not take an intersectional approach and consider "the complex drivers of gendered vulnerabilities and relations of power within which they are embedded" (Resurrección, 2013, p.37). Failure to address women's intersecting inequalities mean that any attempt to make citizenship, and representative bodies, more inclusive will be superficial and

unsustainable. In the following chapter I explore the intersecting inequalities of gender, *kastom* and mobility and consider how this has shaped Bougainvillean women's identities.

6.3 Active vs inactive citizens

A common phrase expressed by both the participants and also used in referendum awareness materials produced by the ABG (www.abg.gov.pg) is *wok bung wantaim*, which translates to 'working together'. This rhetoric of working together extended beyond Community Government members to all levels of leadership. Participants were aware of the need for local government to work with civil society, with church leaders and with the members of the ABG. There was a strong sense of connection amongst the women, forged through church networks, peace building activities and trainings with organisations such as the BWF. Josephine Getsi, the first woman ever elected to an open seat in Bougainville, spoke positively of the CGA. She saw the women elected as the grassroots, directly connected to the community and able to serve as a conduit between their Wards and the ABG.

Women viewed the CGA as bringing balance to political representation and spoke of working together with the men in order to achieve the goals of the Community Government. In speaking to participants it became clear, that despite the belief in balanced leadership and working together, women are taking the lead and see themselves as far more active than their male counterparts. Women were consistently described in my interviews as leading the way and doing the majority of the work within the CGs. They were widely seen as good managers, trustworthy, sound decision makers and a voice for women. This discourse of women as managers was also utilised by women who ran in the 2015 elections for the ABG, drawing on "essentialist notions of women's qualifications" (Baker, 2017, p.14). These are positive qualities to highlight but they also risk treating women as a homogenous group who speak with one voice and act in a specific, uniform way.

Scholly Dangerei, Vice-Chair for Baubake CG, highlighted the distinction between men and women's leadership, which was echoed by many others:

So now...at this time women are active. They don't trust...at this time, all men. Because they [the men] have corrupt personalities...Now, at this time, women are active. They are doing the work in Community Government as well, in communities as well...The men go around with money and act in a corrupt way and they are not trusted. And women are...I'll say here all the women who are elected they work well.

Women described themselves as active and hardworking, a distinct juxtaposition to the men who are seen as corrupt and untrustworthy.¹⁴ The optimism around the ability of men and women to work together, both historically and within the new government structures, was tempered by a recognition of the failure of men's leadership, particularly when it came to addressing women's issues.

Participants described men as stagnant, corrupt, lacking action or unwilling to make space for women. Barbara spoke of the difference between the women and men in her area:

They [the women] are doing a lot of work. I've also seen that the women members every time they have their meeting they go back to the community and they...talk with the community. They update the community on what is happening. So I guess in the past the community never heard from men because men they're too busy...I'm saying this because I'm seeing it... the women they are walking around the community, talking with them, giving them new information and the men, they just sit...Until we call them and say "Come the community wants to talk to you."

This dichotomy between 'active' women and 'inactive' men is reiterated by Mary:

Because as I'm seeing the involvement of the Ward members, most of the women members they participate. Where the male they...don't involve. They don't participate. Whatever meetings and whatever activities that we are supposed to take part. Like the last Community Government trainings for the Ward Recorders and the Ward members, most of the male members they did not turn up. Because they're complaining for the

¹⁴ The trope of the corrupt, 'Big Man' style politician has been widely discussed (Corbett & Spark, 2016; Huffer, 2006; Zetlin, 2014), and certainly criticised (Wood, 2016) but holds relevance in a region where money politics persists and can disadvantage women candidates who do not have the resources or the desire to engage in 'vote buying' (Baker, 2015).

money while the women members we don't...we don't complain a lot. We feel that it is part of our duty, responsibility to be part of the governing.

In both these quotes the inaction of men, who are stagnant and unchanging, is compared to the activeness of women who are gathering together, attending meetings and walking amongst the communities to share information. Many participants saw this as their moral duty as Christians to serve their communities and to advocate for women. A number spoke of God calling them to their work as a leader and this was a motivation on days where they felt tired or disheartened.

What arose from the interviews is a consistent use of 'active' verbs and verbs of movement to describe women and their potential. Women were portrayed as leaders, "not a follower", who are bringing change. They "didn't just sit there" or "didn't just lay back" instead they participated fully, they fought hard, they advocated and lobbied. The CGA had "planted a seed" and "fuelled" women, as "pioneers", who now "must go", "rise up", carry the voices of their people and keep the momentum. The process of becoming is clearly a liminal state, not a singular moment of arrival. It is constantly being renegotiated and reassembled in new configurations through acts and sites of struggle (Kabeer, 2005; Stokke, 2017; Sweetman, et al., 2011) and through individual moments of self-reflection and growth. The call to rise up was something I heard in multiple interviews, with a number of participants describing a future where women will dominate government, will take over and have a woman President leading Bougainville.

Women were describing their own moment of arrival, envisioning a future where women's leadership is normalised and accepted and women are given the space to lead. This "lived citizenship" [shows] how people understand and negotiate rights and responsibilities, belonging and participation" (Lister, 2007, p.55). Countless times the participants described women leaders as paving the way and laying the foundation for the future generation of women. Josephine broke barriers by becoming the first woman in Bougainville elected to an open seat and she spoke proudly of this achievement and its potential impact:

It inspires me...maybe, as a woman I would be the one that can sort of maybe change the mindset of people thinking that the seat where only the man used to contest for, should be for women also. So, it's only when women can maybe stand for that and win that the people can now change their mindset. Which is now ... that is very, very true. It opens the minds of all women to it. Women are more interested now. When they heard me winning that position... to maybe come and also contest for their seats in the constituencies in the next election in five years.

Women leaders are not just creating space for greater women's representation, they are actively changing mindsets and proving to men and women alike that women can lead and lead effectively. The women elected to the CG have a chance to make, as one participant described it, a *han mark* (imprint). They continue to fight for the right of women to belong in decision making bodies; spaces which are still dominated by men.

6.4 Self-determination

Women in Bougainville are on a journey seeking self-determination and autonomy reflected in Bougainville's own journey towards independence. Self-determination is a "struggle for rights...expressed in ways that reflect particular experiences of self-determination" (Kabeer, 2005, p.5). In fact we can see this laid out clearly in the opening paragraph of the Bougainville Constitution:

Mindful of the *restrictions* wrought on our freedom, autonomy and customs by colonial aggression, foreign influence and the devastation of foreign wars;

Proud of our long *struggle* to free ourselves from adverse colonial and foreign influences...

Chastened by the internal conflict that arose during our *struggle* for freedom;

Recognizing the sacrifice of Bougainvilleans for the causes of autonomy and *self-determination*

(Bougainville Constitution, 2004, p.1, emphasis mine).

The opening preamble clearly states that Bougainville has suffered through a history of restriction from foreign influences and has struggled for freedom, autonomy and self-determination - rights associated with inclusive citizenship.

The referendum is one of the foundational pillars of the Peace Agreement but is not the first bid for Bougainvillean self-determination. This was highlighted by Joycelyne Kupai, a Ward Representative in the Lenoke Community Government.

We were talking about independence long before. Back in the 1970's we had been talking about independence. So, independence it's not just something that's come up now. It's not just at this time that we have wanted independence. It's been a long time coming. For a long time we've wanted independence.

The desire for independence - the longing to belong- has existed in Bougainvilleans since the colonial period (Griffin, 1977) and was one of the catalysts for the conflict. The symbolism of the *wakabaut* to referendum implies a forward movement towards full nationhood. As Probyn (1996) attests: "The desire to belong propels, even as it rearranges, the relations into which it intervenes" (p.13). This quest for self-determination influences Bougainville's relationship with PNG and with other countries but it is also fixed in the mindset of Bougainvilleans.

The mood of the people is generally optimistic, with independence representing a hope or dream for the future.

Kate: What is something you hope for the future, for Bougainville? And maybe for your community?

C: That...one day if we gain independence we will be alright. That when we...breakaway from PNG we would be running our own affairs. We would be having our own military, police, army, finance, everything. We can run our own affairs. Because now money come from outside, come into ABG, Peter O'Neill [PNG Prime Minister] has stopped giving money. That's why we here in Bougainville just stay the way we are...It's no good. Peter O'Neill he is suffocating us a lot. So, when we throw off this rope around us...then we can run our own affairs.

(Participant interview, 2018)

PNG leadership is seen as a rope that is preventing Bougainville from attaining its freedom. It is ironic, however, that this participant wishes for Bougainville to be free to run its own affairs but also points out that the PNG National Parliament has failed to meet the financial reparations it is constitutionally required to pay. Bougainvilleans may long for a day when they are finally free but it appears they are still very much dependent on outside assistance, from PNG and international aid, to rebuild their government, their economy and the local infrastructure.

The Ward Representatives I interviewed expressed a connection and concern for their community and a motivation to develop and serve their Wards. This is tied to the wider project of nation building for the referendum. There is the idea that everyone must participate in order for there to be a peaceful society. Mary, who is part of the Referendum Dialogue Team, described the need for Bougainvilleans to be directly involved in their future:

Because we are going towards the unknown so, the unknown is in our hands. How we will go through it. How we will survive is in our hands. How...our security will be granted is in our hands. We must not see other people, everything is in our hands. Our freedom, our safety, our means of surviving is on our hands. Because I know that Papua New Guinea government is not giving us the money so how we survive it's just that we must to prepare or we have to educate our people how we will survive through this period...So, what lies ahead of us...I believe that it is milk and honey and I really think that we are going to achieve it.

Mary not only professes hope that the future will be better but is aware that people must bring foresight and directly contribute to achieving their desired future. Inclusive citizenship argues that having self-determination means having agency over one's life and one's future (Kabeer, 2005). Therefore, in preparing for the referendum, Bougainvilleans are hoping to achieve autonomy and be free to determine their future and the future of the region itself.

6.4.1 'Becoming' referendum ready

One of the major responsibilities that has fallen to the Ward Representatives is preparing their area for the 2019 referendum. The unofficial goal was to have all Wards declared 'referendum ready' by December 2018. In order to be designated referendum ready, Ward Representatives, working alongside their Ward Recorders, Ward Steering Committee and local chiefs, are preparing the common roll so the members of their Ward will be able to cast their vote. A Ward Representative described the process:

So, at the moment we are working on gathering all the names...registering all names. Who will be 18 years old in 2019. Get everyone ready to vote...Now we will collect them and send them all to Buka. And in Buka they will work on making the referendum roll. The common roll. When they have created it they will send it back to us. Once it's back here the Community Government will have to double check it. If there are some people whose name wasn't put on the common roll we will have to write it again. We will double check and then send it back to the electoral commission in Buka after that. And then they will print a new referendum roll again. So when everyone has checked again then they will tell us that everyone is ready for...all the names are already on the common roll and then all these people are ready.

Yuval-Davis (2011) discusses the different kinds of technologies that states use to define who belongs and who is excluded. In Bougainville it is the common roll that is being used to denote citizenship. Being included on the common roll ensures you are able to vote in the referendum and have a say in determining the future of the region. Ward Representatives are responsible for collecting the data that will allow people to be added to the common roll therefore they are directly involved in and responsible for the construction of formal citizenship and for providing access to the rights associated with that (for example, voting in the referendum).

6.4.2 Performing 'readiness'

Women in Bougainville have proven their ability and readiness to lead but this has not resulted in greater representation. Agnes, who was the founding chair of the North Solomons Provincial Women's Council in the 1970s, proclaimed:

They [men] were saying that women were not ready yet. And I said "When will you be ready? I've been ready all my life." Women are ready.

Even though women may feel they are ready, to be accepted requires external recognition.

Maybe they don't believe in us, in our leadership. Because we are women they underestimate our leadership. And to us in Konnou they say to us "It's not yet time for the women to stand...there is no total peace. So, maybe later in some years to come maybe you can stand."

(Participant interview, 2018)

The CGA is a chance for women to prove their readiness to lead, just as Bougainville must perform its readiness to be independent. Some argue that both are not ready for this task but how do you measure readiness? It is an arbitrary concept which people interpret, experience and act out in different ways. Readiness becomes a state that one must perform; an artificial threshold to cross. Therefore, 'readiness' is an example of "the performances of heterogenous actors that reflect power relations in productions of belonging" (Youkhana, 2015, p.15). Bougainville is the actor in its production of belonging but it is the National Parliament that ultimately has the power to determine Bougainville's future. There have been concerns from the National Parliament that Bougainville is not ready to be an independent nation but 'ready' is entirely subjective. It is not a switch to be flicked, but rather a constant movement towards belonging.

6.5 From longing to belonging

When looking to the future the participants professed hope that Bougainville will *kamap gut*, literally translated as 'arrive well', and become a safe, peaceful and prosperous society.

I want Bougainville to become great, become one nation, one Bougainville. If we can do it like this...we Bougainvilleans like we become as one. One in peace and unity. We can work together within Bougainville.

(Participant interview, 2018)

The participants identify as Bougainvillean and understand that achieving peace and independence means moving forward in unity to become citizens of their own nation. This will involve compromise – as it does in all post-conflict situations – but independence holds great significance for Bougainvilleans. It is a long desired moment of arrival continuously fought and hoped for.

You know we cannot gain independence and it's just political independence. It goes deeper than that. So that is why I am hoping we will arrive at the day, the day when people realise that what we are striving for here is more than just the political independence. We have to really feel that independence our own, our own selves. Both men and women. And it's not independence where the woman is suppressed by her husband and I think that will be the real independence we are looking for when we have a normalised situation where we respect one another. You know we really give each other the recognition with dignity.

(Participant interview, 2018)

This quote brings together the different threads of inclusive citizenship, namely recognition and self-determination and highlights what this thesis has been trying to argue, that the journey of women's leadership and the path to independence for Bougainville are intimately linked.

6.5.1 The embodiment of belonging

Taking the context of Bougainville, I want to consider the three overlapping processes by which belonging is materialised: through embodied acts and internal narratives; through regulations and resources; and through specific objects that hold great significance (Youkhana, 2015). The act of constructing citizenship involves mobility as Ward Representatives must move throughout their communities to collect names for the common roll. Gaining citizenship is not

only an abstract transformation that exists on paper but also involves the physical act of bodies moving in space, a kind of embodied citizenship (Youkhana, 2015). The collecting of names for the common roll and ensuring other necessary tasks, such as weapons disposal, are met are *embodied acts*. These acts are done in service of the deeply held *internal narrative* of and desire for independence. The ability of Ward Representatives to carry out these acts is impacted by the lack of financial *resources* CGs receive and, particularly for the women, informal gender *regulations* that do not recognise women as leaders. The *object* of the common roll is a physical representation of Bougainvillean citizenship, defining who belongs and who has the right to take part in the referendum. Therefore, we can see that the preparations for the referendum carried out by the Ward Representatives become a material embodiment of Bougainvillean belonging.

6.6 Conclusion

Both the women elected to the Community Government and Bougainville itself are undergoing their own journey of transformation. The actions of the women elected as Ward Representatives are directly tied to the performance of nation building required for Bougainville to become independent. In gaining recognition within their communities as leaders and as active citizens, Ward Representatives and other women leaders contribute to the recognition of Bougainville as a referendum ready state. Puar (2013) sees ‘becoming’ as an uncertain future, an ‘anything could happen’ moment. At this time it is unknown what the outcome of the 2019 referendum will be. It certainly seems as though the majority of Bougainvilleans will choose independence, but it is not a guaranteed outcome as Prime Minister Peter O’Neill has advised restraint and caution when approaching Bougainvillean independence (Radio New Zealand, March, 2018). Just as the power to determine Bougainville’s future lies with the very actor that has oppressed it in the past, so too does the future of women’s leadership rely on the support of men. It is still too early to tell whether the CGA will lead to more women elected to the ABG or whether, as one participant believes, it will take longer; that women’s representation is a slow burning fire that is yet to fully ignite. In the following chapter I will examine the intersection of

culture, gender and religion on women's leadership and how these influence women's experience as Community Government members and gendered social beings.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE INTERSECTION OF GENDER, *KASTOM*, AND MOBILITY

This chapter will explore the way culture, gender and religion intersect and interact to both enhance and constrain women's leadership and mobility. These intersecting inequalities are more relevant in a Western Pacific context than some of the original aspects of intersectionality, namely race and class. It will look at the way women draw on maternal imagery and gendered beliefs to inform their leadership. It considers how the patrilineal *kastom* of Buin and women's religious identity affect women's lives in complex ways. The chapter will also show how the isolation of many communities in the region hinders the ability of Ward Representatives to carry out their duties and communicate with other CG members, as well as the ABG. I argue that while the concept of intersecting inequalities usefully highlights gendered power dynamics, we must also critically assess the heterogenous and contradictory ways women experience their identity and environment.

7.1 Gender

In this chapter I want to show the agency that women have and how they use this to attempt to shift entrenched gender norms, however it would be remiss to ignore the many issues facing women in Bougainville. The following quote exposes the litany of problems that can affect women's lives:

There are big problems that men don't see, like gender based violence is a huge problem for women's participation at different levels of leadership... [and] there are no good toilets and water. Women have to walk long distances to fetch water from a well or there is...always fights over using water when one family has water tank there are fights in the village about that. So, water and sanitation it's a big problem. Climate change as well it is a big problem now for women. Women face a lot of issues like their food crops are not yielding as much as they used to before and they cannot go fishing in the sea. They find that the shells and their fishing have been covered by sea level rise. So women talk about these things but men say "No, no. These are just minor things."...And children's

education, food, women's health, reproductive health rights. These are issues that women face every day but they cannot take these issues up with a man. There are so many kids being born. There are no...spaces given by men or boys and young girls are pregnant and then they take illegal abortions...they abort the child you know in unhealthy conditions. Every day the women worry about where money will come from for their children's school fees or medication or clothes or food...I see when women do their marketing in the market and the men fight them for the money from the market or women make their copra. They work hard...in their plantations. The men come and sell and they drink up all the money and there is gambling in the villages, day and night which is a big problem for the women...these are just the tip of the iceberg of what the women's problems are.

(Participant interview, 2018)

Not only do women have to navigate this difficult physical, environmental and social terrain but the men possessing decision making power appear to care little for these issues.

Furthermore, women themselves often do not feel comfortable broaching this subject with men - in their families, in their villages or elsewhere. This is reiterated by Rose:

It's just the lack of understanding [from men]...of the issues that women face. Daily. Like they [men] don't give birth to children so they don't know that it's important that we have to have a nice bed that women can use to deliver babies. They don't know that it's important to have hygienic environment to deliver babies...So, it's not that they don't like women. It's just their lack of understanding. I think the more that men come to terms with the labour that women have in trying to make life better for *men* will be the time when men will start appreciating women's issues. About having good health facilities, good roads for marketing, good transportation. Like women carry loads and loads of bags at their back to get to a market. In Torokina women from the mountain they start walking at 5 o'clock in the night. And they're like horses.

Rose does not suggest, as the first quote does, that men do not care at all but rather places the blame on ignorance. The labour that women must undertake daily: caring for their family,

ensuring there is money to pay for children's school fees, walking to collect food, water or fuel, selling food at the market, much of this is invisible *and* unappreciated, even by their husbands.¹⁵

While the majority of women I spoke to had supportive husbands, who encouraged them to be leaders, the travel and late nights required by their position potentially expose women to accusations of infidelity. As one participant explained:

I usually say to the women, it's not easy to become a leader. There are challenges within your families....It's not easy to come out of the house. Especially for mothers with many children. Even the male will allow you to attend the meeting, when you go back they'll still challenge you: suspect of making friends other men...When I go back home, men is always standing with the question, he have to get all the stories....How you stay and for how many hour and what you did and all this. And sometimes they just seem to accuse you falsely. They just make up stories...But even though you say "No," the man will continue to accuse you. And there are other people at the back who usually will...try to influence your male partner...they'll feed him with those stories.

(Participant interview, 2018)

The women I interviewed are well aware of the gendered boundaries placed upon them and how their leadership duties may lead them to transgress these social barriers. Women with young children may find it especially hard as there is still the assumption that they should be at home caring for their families instead of fulfilling their leadership commitments. When mobility is seen as a threat to women's morality, it can prevent them transcending from the private into the public space (Nagel, 2012; Nazneen, 2018).

7.1.1 Invoking the maternal

Motherhood and maternal allegories were frequently invoked by the women I spoke to. The 'mothers of the land' narrative holds symbolic importance for many women, even those

¹⁵ Women's labour and the time they spend each day fulfilling their 'responsibilities' is something that is highlighted in gender awareness training materials used in the region. These materials compare the tasks in a woman's day compared to a man's to show the amount of (generally unpaid) labour women undertake daily.

who live in Buin, which is patrilineal. A woman's reproductive capability becomes closely connected to her gender identity. Women identify as mothers, refer to women as *mamas*, and are valued, in part, due to the matrilineal tradition. Being a mother is not limited to women who have given birth, rather it is being a 'mother figure' that is important. Sister Lorraine is a formidable and well-respected woman leader. Though she herself has no children, she is a mother to many in Bougainville because of the work she has done and continues to do – fighting for peace, addressing gender based violence, providing safe spaces for women and training other 'gender champions'. Therefore, while women may not need to be reproductive mothers they should still be *motherly*: which has been constructed as caring and peaceful.

Josephine, who is the ABG Minister for Community Development (a portfolio commonly given to women), saw leading as an extension of mothering:

You know that also interested me in standing for the election is I feel that as women we look at the picture as being the mother in the family. A mother is always very attentive to what issues maybe children can have and the father you know and also in serving the food. The mother makes sure that everybody has...a plate of food. So being...a female member its sort of that kind of feeling. That system we can also have in government. To serve our people, you know, everybody. To make sure that everybody is served with what needs to be.

Here motherhood, and by extension leadership, are acts of service to others. And it is not just government leaders who are serving their people. Many of my participants were drawn to leadership so they could help develop their communities. Josephine's comment suggests good leaders should provide for their people, just as a mother should provide for their family. She drew on these gendered tropes when contesting the open seat in the 2015 election, casting herself as a change from the corrupt politics of men in her constituency (Baker, 2015). Here again we can see the way that narratives of nation building are linked to women, with leaders, like mothers, constructed as providers for their people.

Women have also attempted to use their position as mothers to their advantage, especially during times of conflict. In the Solomon Islands, as in Bougainville, women were leading the way as peacebuilders and saw mothers as well-equipped to lead: “Their daily routines and responsibilities demand good organisational and administrative skills based on practice and experience. They use these competencies to manage themselves, their spouse, their children, their *wantoks* and relatives, their households, and their many tasks” (Pollard, 2003, p.44). Some of the women I interviewed used this kind of strategic essentialising (Spivak, 1987) to justify women’s inclusion:

J: We can make decisions. We can make better decisions than men.

Kate: So, why do you think that women can make better decisions than men?

J: Because we also manage the house ah? We look after children. We...also look after the family as you can see. It’s not easy for men to think about the food within the house and what is contained in the house. Women understand what is needed in the family, what is not there we can do it.

(Participant interview, 2018).

Women are taking on new leadership positions and drawing on specific skills they have, like managing their household. Yet this comment casts clear roles for men and women within the family, with men viewed as less competent in a domestic environment. It also discredits women who may not yet have families of their own but are still capable leaders. By suggesting that women have the skills to lead because of their experience as mothers or wives, could also imply that men are not capable of taking responsibility within the household. By this logic, either women remain in the home, or they must balance their leadership responsibilities with the burden of domestic expectation. The essentialising mother narrative can also be twisted to justify traditional gender roles and to undermine women’s ability as leaders.

7.1.2 A complex relationship to motherhood

Out of the seventeen women I interviewed only one had no children of her own, so motherhood is a commonly shared (but not essential) experience. Being part of the Community Government has been a valuable learning experience but at the same time some women felt guilt when leaving their children to attend trainings or meetings. Serah Komung is a Ward Representative and lives with her husband and six children in the village. Serah was shy in talking with me and spoke mostly in *tok ples*:

This experience for me...within the community...I'm getting experience from everyone because they are listening to me. When I say to...bring all the gas bottles¹⁶...they all bring them. All the young boys listen to me and they come...So, I'm also really happy that we are working and they are listening.

For Serah, the experience of being a Ward Representative has taught her about local governance and political structures. She has gained confidence and received respect from the members of her Ward. Serah also has the support of her husband, who will look after the children and take on household responsibilities when she attends trainings or meetings.

Kate: Does your husband support you? When you go to the meetings for the Community Government does he support you?

Serah: He supports me. I have support when I go travel around...He works when I go out. He does all the work. Getting food for the kids. He does it all. He's working like a woman in everything he does.

Despite this, she admits to feeling guilt over having to leave her family. She thinks about her children and worries whether she cooked enough food or if they will be alright without her. This tension, between her role as a mother and her role as a Ward Representative, as well as likening her husband to a woman, show the gendered expectations that are placed upon both men and women within the family in Bougainville. While the CGA has provided a space for women to

¹⁶ The gas bottles Serah is referring to are used to make home brew. Ward Representatives have been attempting to collect these bottles from their communities and destroy them.

be seen and recognised as leaders it has not erased the guilt that comes from leaving their children behind.

This internal conflict was echoed by Mary, who has been an active woman's leader since the time of the crisis. She has eight grown children and all but one completed high school, her youngest never having finished Grade eight. Mary believes this is a direct result of her absence:

And it's a big, big challenge because most of the time we are leaving children and that's what happened to my last born daughter. Because since she was a child, I was already going out. She was born in 1999. So, I was already going out, attending meetings and all this and she was just small. I had to leave her with her father and that's why she couldn't concentrate on her school, on her studies. Where all her other brothers and sister they went to high school. And I really, I really saw it from this, our daughter, it was my fault. It was because of me that I was leaving her alone with her father. And you know the father can also not concentrate too much on the children. So, I realised that it's my fault.

Mary places the blame squarely on her shoulders, rather than shared between herself and her husband. In fact, she even shows how gendered roles affect men too, implying that fathers do not necessarily have the ability to parent properly. Women are constantly having to negotiate between forging a path for women's leadership and battling guilt over the perceived neglect to their family. It is worth noting that men in political office have also reported feeling guilt due to their absence from their family (Corbett & Liki, 2015). Political life involves sacrifices regardless of gender, though how these sacrifices are experienced personally and perceived socially are gendered.

For some of the women, it was during the Bougainville crisis that they first saw themselves as leaders for their people. These were inspiring stories of determination but they were coloured by suffering and hardship. Three of the participants spoke of traumatic experiences related to being a mother and how they drew on these experiences to give them strength. Helen recounted the event that served as the catalyst for the LNWDA:

I was pregnant and gave birth prematurely in that building where the bus stop is...I was fortunate there was a doctor who was around and he treated me there. I gave birth in that building. And two other women came and during that same day on the 20th May 1990 I can just remember it like yesterday and hearing them cry out “Save me. Save me. Save my child.” It gave me the...like I just didn’t want to see any other women suffer the way I did and the way those two women suffered.

Helen and her child survived, though the other women did not, and she formed Leitana Nehan with three of her high school friends. Mary, who lived out most of the crisis in care centres or in the bush, had to care for nine children, without access to medicine or doctors. When her young daughter became sick the family were unable to make the journey to the Solomon Islands for treatment and she passed away. Mary spoke of the strength she took from this experience:

The death of my daughter really made me strong again. That was one of the strength I got because I could not dwell. Because I had to move forward in order to serve my people.

Because that time I was the only one leading, especially the women.

Mary took her own suffering and used it as motivation to help other women who were in the same situation.

Marcelline Kokiai, the woman’s member for Central Bougainville also had eight children to care for during the crisis. Twice she gave birth in the jungle while on the run from the PNGDF, who had killed her brother. She witnessed how the crisis was affecting the women and described the “*krai bilong ol meri*” (tears of the women). This pushed her to organise her community to be self-sufficient by growing food, using traditional medicine and caring for the sick and dying. This shows that while motherhood can be a source of guilt, or something which holds them back, women also relate to it on many levels and use it as motivation for helping others. The traumas that they faced, which inspired their work in civil society and in peace building, can be seen as acts of individual citizenship. As Kabeer (2012) argues, “ideas about citizenship...help to mediate the translation of individual notions of selfhood into socially recognised identities” (p.217). The women transform their personal hardships into sources of

strength to draw on in their work, which contributes to a more inclusive society for Bougainvillean women.

7.1.3 A complex relationship to citizenship and identity

Dickson-Waiko (2003) paints of a picture of women's citizenship in PNG, arguing that women have been positioned as gendered subjects and family members:

The continuing insistence of the postcolonial state on representing female citizens as mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters - as members of families...includes all the excess cultural baggage those statuses entail...This construction...mirrors the term, used in the rural areas where kin-based communities conceive women relationally as family, clan, and community members and women normally represent themselves as *yumi ol mama* [us women]... Papua New Guinean women...enter the political domain as sexed beings and this construction interferes with and even sabotages their claims for equal citizenship (p.102).

This eloquently reveals the tricky positioning of women in PNG and Bougainville. Framed as gendered beings rather than individuals, they must push back against these constructions when advocating for their rights. Their religion, custom, and gender intersect to reproduce inequalities. At the same time these aspects of their identity are also sources of strength. As Jolly (1996) attests "insidious dichotomies can only be challenged by women insisting that human rights are not necessarily inconsistent with *kastom*, by appropriating and indigenizing notions of the 'human' to suit the local and by insisting...that tradition is not a static burden of the past but something created for the present" (p.183).

Women in Bougainville and the Pacific utilise their religion, church networks and their standing as mothers to push for development, peace and greater representation (Dickson-Waiko, 2003; Douglas, 2000b; George, 2010; Jolly, 2003; Paini, 2003; Saovana-Spriggs, 2007). Women engaged in peace building and activism spoke of women as different to men, with certain innate qualities, which exposes a kind of gender determinism. Discussing women's activism during

the conflict in the Solomon Islands Liloqula and Aruhe'eta Pollard (2000) argue that women's position as caregivers, nourishers, mothers and Christians render them peaceful and better equipped at resolving conflict without aggression. This narrative was also salient during the Bougainville crisis and in the transition to peace. Many of the women I spoke to took pride in and felt a deep connection to their gender, to their role as mothers and to the other women in their lives and consistently referred to other women as *mamas*. For many their motivation as a leader was to represent the 'voiceless mothers' of their community. Women are well aware that they can hold less power than men but use this as a justification to stand up and bring change.

7.2 Culture

The traditional patrilineal culture of Buin district is distinct to the rest of Bougainville and has placed women in a respected, but protected, position. The Bougainville crisis is seen as a destabilising event that eroded customs of respect and reciprocity and some participants expressed a desire to restore aspects of culture that have been lost. Christianity is an important part of everyday life in Bougainville and the church has been a space to develop confidence, foster leadership and form networks with other women. Both culture and religion can be used as a tool to hold women back but at the same time can be sources of empowerment and avenues for taking action. As Jolly (2003) argues "it is important...to credit the pervasiveness of Christian faith in the lived reality of the contemporary Pacific...despite all this, there is a continuing tendency to diminish the agency of Melanesian women in their relation to Christianity" (p.137). Women's church networks were vital sources of support during the crisis but they were not just a refuge for prayer. Women across the different denominations used their shared religious faith to come together, organise and fight for peace (Saovana-Spriggs, 2007).

7.2.1 Patrilineal *kastom*

Buin's patrilineal *kastom* historically confined women to the home, protected by their husbands, fathers or brothers. Women were seen as 'queens' one participant explained, but queens who needed to be kept hidden; safe-guarded by the men in their lives. The CGA has

begun to shift mindsets and show that women can be leaders in their own right but this has come up against patriarchal attitudes that constrain women's mobility. Tracey Metara, a Ward Representative in the Buin urban Community Government explained this:

But the problem in here what I said we women... within our custom, sometimes our husbands will not allow us to go anywhere. They will not allow us. That's what they used to do. Still this happens. Yes...they're equal but that happens. It used to happen. You won't let your wife go anywhere.

Here Tracey highlights that although women may have equality in the Constitution, or in the CGA, the reality is that many lack full independence because their husbands wish to control their mobility.

One participant saw men's control as a sign of respect within their culture, as it was meant to shield women from harm. When it comes to running for politics however, men have used this act of protection as a reason to refuse support. Mary, who has run twice for an open seat, and once for the reserved seats, did so without the backing of men in her family:

Sometimes...culturally the male...It's not actually they're against the women but maybe for protection they say that...Because they don't want the women to go and get...because most of the politicians have been challenged by words...we are a culture where our brothers must not hear any bad words about us. So...sometimes they discourage us to stand for those kinds of positions. Especially my brothers. They won't vote for me. Because they don't want me to win. Because they say that politicians are things where they call them all sorts of words and they don't want to hear people saying these words about me.

Politics undoubtedly invites criticism and slander, therefore when women run for office, or inhabit a public role, they open themselves up to attack, which men are expected to protect them from. This is an example of a cultural and gendered boundary women must face when they run for, or are elected to, government in Bougainville.

7.2.2 *Kastom* and human rights

Culture should not be seen as an oppressive monolith that women are fighting to cast off. In fact it is incredibly important to the women I interviewed, with many lamenting the fact that the crisis had a negative impact on Bougainvillean *kastom*:

Everything should be back to normal and we should bring back our culture. Some of our culture should be brought back. Where there's been maybe we are not actually practicing those cultures now. And I really hope that maybe we should bring those cultural practices that we had before. And also, with our young age that are now coming up, I think they really need to be transformed in order for us to have total peace and live in harmony.

(Participant interview, 2018)

Respect and reciprocity are customary values that women utilised during the conflict and peace building period to facilitate traditional peace and reconciliation ceremonies. Their involvement in the peace process and their use of customary mediation and dialogue gave women confidence, leadership experience and respect. Just as the maternal image is interpreted in multiple ways by the women, so too is culture a factor that can both inhibit *and* empower women.

So, it just happened that in 2000. It was a new year. They had an exchange of fire. They fought one of the group. They went and they ambushed the other group. So, during that time, one man was shot dead and some were injured. So, these divisions, these fighting amongst ourselves continued from 2000 onwards. That's why we, it continued to the post-conflict. To make it short, in such situations like that, the women were always ready to do *kastom* to stop the war from continuing.

(Participant interview, 2018)

Cultural practices of peace building and human rights training have also aided women's mobility. Women I interviewed had attended international conferences, travelled over mountains to conduct peace building in remote villages and attended trainings throughout Bougainville. Their mobility has given them access to training opportunities and they have used what they learned to raise awareness of gender equality and human rights amongst less mobile

rural populations. An awareness of intersecting inequalities is important as it highlights how women's ability to travel and attend workshops is affected by their social relations, by their economic status and by the physical landscape and infrastructure (Hunt, Bond & Ojambo Ochieng, 2015).

7.2.3 Christianity

Liloqula and Aruhe'eta Pollard (2000) draw on Christianity to argue that there are natural qualities associated with womanhood. They attest that the "core value of motherliness, which links culture and Christianity, has equipped women to respond appropriately in conflicts in the past, ...a woman in Melanesia...is blessed with natural, God-given qualities such as love, care, peace, patience, humility and sensitivity. These values make women different from men." (p.9). In this essentialist view, women, and more specifically mothers, are held up as a link between culture and Christianity with their inherently peaceful and caring nature setting them apart from men. Faith was important to many of the women I interviewed and the churches were places which allowed women to connect with one another, gain confidence through leading prayers, and a source of education through trainings and workshops. At the same time it could also be used to justify idealised gender norms and discourage the influence of 'Western' feminism.

Scholly saw gender inequality as rooted in one interpretation of the Bible:

Buin district...the man is the boss. Women are underneath the men. Like in the bible during creation Adam was the one who God made first and then after he took his bone from here and he made woman. Therefore, we are following the way it is in the Bible.

Men are at the top and women are below them.

What is interesting about this comment is that even though the patrilineal culture of Buin predates colonialism and Christianity, Scholly sees male dominance as stemming from one interpretation of the Christian creation myth. Another interpretation speaks of the bone being

the rib and therefore women should be alongside men. What this shows is how the interpretation of deeply held religious beliefs can be used to justify gender inequality.

While she was parish secretary Barbara also worked with Leitana Nehan to advocate for women's rights. A man she worked with in the church disparaged the 'import' of feminism and claimed there was no place for it in Bougainville. Though religious she understood that the church can still uphold gender inequality:

I think that...culture and church are also a part of it. That you women you have your space or your position is down there.

Women have had to fight against the belief that their place in society is fixed. Certain men believe that by promoting gender equality and pushing for women's leadership they are somehow transgressing cultural and religious traditions. Yet this fails to acknowledge that both religion and culture are not static, rather they are constantly shifting and evolving over time.

To place the blame squarely on religion and culture is too myopic. It is the intersection and interaction of these entities with particular environments that leads to gender inequality. Agnes, who comes from Nissan Island, which is also patrilineal, disagrees that religion and the bible are antithetical to women's rights:

I know the Catholic church gets criticised for things but I always stand up for the church to be the most gender [equal]...Not in its physical senses we see that it's male dominant but, in its preaching...And the person of Jesus Christ who the church here teaches us much about and we hear every Sunday of Christian principles and to me I always say...Jesus was love, you know freedom, equal...and loved everybody disregarding whether you are man or woman. We are all equal in his eyes. And that's what we say.

Agnes believes it is the way the bible has been interpreted that has caused inequality and that it can be re-interpreted so that love, which she sees as the true tenet of Christianity, is the foundation for promoting inclusion and equality.

The church has also provided a necessary space for women to connect, strengthen networks, work together on issues that affect them and build leadership skills (Dickson-Waiko,

2003; McDougall, 2003; Pains, 2003; Scheyvens, 2003). It became especially vital during the conflict, as described by Helen:

So, women again took up the role as peace builders. That was during the conflict in church leadership...at the clan level, in the communities, church leadership and then through the church leadership programmes that we had gone through...'cause most people during that time they were much more closer to the churches. And the churches had more respect for women and they started to include women...you know to participate in decision making at the church level. So, during that period that leadership within the churches was really strong. So, women in churches started to form groups to protest against all the atrocities that happened throughout Bougainville and to call for peace.

Women connected across denominations and regions, formed the Inter-Church Women's Forum (Saovana-Spriggs, 2007), organised meetings and demonstrations and worked together to demand peace. Many of the women who were involved in these efforts are now civil society leaders, Members of Parliament and Ward Representatives, showing how the church can be fundamental to women's leadership.

What the interviews begin to reveal is that gender, culture and religion cannot be constructed in total opposition to women's rights and gender equality. Instead they need to be understood as part of both the external environment and internal values of the women in Bougainville. Women interact with these aspects on a daily basis, sometimes pushing against them and at other times drawing on them for strength and motivation as they continue on their journey of becoming and belonging. Though not explored in-depth in this thesis, when we look at the different educational histories of women elected as Ward Representatives we can see how an intersectional analysis deepens our understanding of how women are differently positioned to 'become' successful leaders.

All of the older women leaders I spoke to had finished high school, if not pursued higher education, while the majority of the younger women leaders had not completed high school. The women elected as Ward Representatives represent diverse educational and professional

backgrounds and one participant admitted that she believed a high number of Ward Representatives, both men and women, were illiterate and lacked the requisite experience to lead. As one participant explained:

We had a ten years gap...we were the last ones who just came out of the field before the crisis started. Those who came after the ten years some were out in schools. And in between there, you know some did not even complete Grade 6 or Grade 10. Right now, those are the ones who are the [elected] leaders.

(Participant interview, 2018)

A woman's gender is one aspect that can disadvantage her but it is clear, even among my participants, that these gendered women are not part of a homogenous group. This challenges the essentialising narratives of women and allows for a more insightful understanding of difference. For instance, the intersection of gender and education can either present a challenge to women in local government or, for the more 'educated' women, reduce the gendered restrictions on their mobility (Nazneen, 2018).

7.3 Mobility

Critical feminist geographers argue that space and place are not just where power relations and identity play out but it also shapes and constructs them (Hopkins, 2018; Rodó-de-Zárate & Baylina, 2018). When we consider the often unequal distribution of resources and infrastructure between rural and urban communities in Bougainville we see why intersecting inequalities, geographical location being one, is vital to understanding how the way in which women experience their gender is never uniform (Unterhalter, 2009). Outside of the three main centres of Buka, Arawa and Buin, the majority of Bougainvilleans live in rural communities. These villages are often isolated, with poor or non-existent road networks, minimal services and little, if any, cellphone reception. Isolation and poor infrastructure can disproportionately affect women as they are the ones who must travel to the market to sell their goods. Many parts of Buin are mountainous and during the rainy season can become cut-off from the rest of the

region. The rainy season increases the vulnerability for some women as they must walk long distances to collect water and are at risk of landslides. One woman I interviewed came from a community that had recently suffered the loss of two young boys who had been buried during a landslide.

This isolation presents another challenge to the Ward Representatives. Cathy, a Ward Representative from the Konnou Constituency, described how communities are completely ‘in the dark’:

Right now...we are communication breakdown here. We don't have a [cellphone] tower here. To catch the network. So that's one of our problems too long here because when we want to use the mobile to email we go all the way to town. And access the network there now, come back. Come back to the dark again. (Laughs). Why I said dark because there's no media. There's no radio that we can hear news from. New Dawn¹⁷...we don't know too where it went to...Whereas for news, the Chairmen have to go to Buka or go to town to ring and receive news so they can let us know what is happening. On Sundays they also give announcements at church.

The CGA casts the Ward Representatives as conduits between the ABG and the community yet most communities have no internet access, no mobile network, no television to watch the news on and newspapers are not delivered to their village. Not only does this make it difficult to communicate with the ABG and Constituency Members but it has also meant that raising awareness around the referendum and distributing awareness materials has fallen short. Hassall et al. (2019) argue that the “quality of relations between local government and other levels of government is crucial to how well local governments deliver goods and services and meet other desirable goals” (p.118) and, therefore, the isolation of Community Governments and the difficulty of communicating with the ABG could have a detrimental effect on the outcome of their plans.

¹⁷ Radio Station based in Buka

The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Community Governments have also found it difficult to organise meetings with Ward Representatives and the members of the Ward Steering Committee. As they are not able to communicate through phone or email, organising meetings can often mean walking from village to village, relying on word of mouth or announcing it through the church. To receive news from further afield they must travel to town, imposing a burden on their finances and on their time. This puts them at a distinct disadvantage to Ward Representatives who live in areas with better roads, or who are closer to urban centres. Many trainings are held in Buka or Arawa which involves travel and nights away from home. Holding meetings in towns and “neglecting to put in place measures to include women who cannot travel alone...for cultural or security reasons, and expecting participants to arrange transport...can all limit the participation of women” (Hunt et al., 2015, p.16).

Due to the gap between the government and the community, Ward Representatives must go out into their areas, foster dialogue and mediation, and raise awareness about the referendum. A massive undertaking for the Ward Representatives, as part of having their village declared referendum ready, is trying to eradicate the illegal brewing of home brew, known as *JJ* or jungle juice. Ward Representatives have been trying to collect and destroy the gas cylinders used in making *JJ*, advising the youth on the negative impacts of drinking and suggesting alternative activities to engage in. During this process many of the Ward Representatives have been met with resistance. Georgina Metara, a young Ward Representative spoke of her experience:

I find it takes a lot of hard work. If I go around and talk with all of the young men they're all against what I have to say. Also, this morning I went and talked with the boys that have...gas bottles [to] stop cooking home brew, *JJ* and they are against this and they are still hiding from us. They don't want to see us. When we go to talk to them they don't want to listen to us. I know this is a big problem. With all the people in the area. Sometimes they don't like to listen to me.

Not only have the Ward Representatives been met with vocal resistance, some have even been threatened and this has left some of the women Ward Representatives reluctant to continue in their duties.

So, a lot of the Ward members...the women who are from that area...they [people in the community] don't listen to those women [Ward members]. Now a lot of the Ward members...especially the women have said. "We are tired of being Ward members now. So, we will just resign and leave the men to keep doing the work."

Kate: Because of the experience they've had trying to do that.

J: Yea.

(Participant interview, 2018)

This antagonism from certain community members, could be a barrier to women's leadership at the local level. At the same time, the work the women must undertake as Ward Representatives has increased their mobility, allowed them to move outside of the home and gain greater independence in the process.

7.3.1 Lack of resources

A massive handicap for the Community Government members is the lack of funds they have at hand to mobilise. What little budget exists for the Community Governments goes directly to the Constituency Member and is only enough to cover administration costs. Martha described the difficulties of developing her community with so few resources:

Our big challenge is the financial constraints. We need money to move. That's why I can say...our development or our plans are stagnant. We have drawn up plans from the Wards up to the Community Governments. Five year plans. But then we need money to implement those. That is one big challenge we are facing since we came into the Community Governments.

Here we can see Martha drawing on the metaphor of mobility but this time in the negative sense. Though they have put in the work to create a five year plan they are mired by the lack of money and unable to move forward towards full autonomy. Community Governments are able to

institute a head tax and business tax (Community Government Act, 2016) however this takes time and, given the remote and isolated conditions of many communities, may be difficult to implement.

Another issue is that many Community Governments have no centralised space where they can meet to discuss and develop plans for their Wards, which has frustrated participants:

And problem that we have...as a Community Government we don't have an office. We are not on any pay. Not on any allowances. Not anything...It's really bad...No office means no computer, no A4 paper. So that's a big problem. So, when we have some typing to be done sometimes we'll go all the way to town. Long way to go. You pay 5 kina go 5 kina come back. 10 kina¹⁸...It's...a big thing...for my Community Government. The work is good but we don't have an office and we don't have any pay. None...on no pay. No nothing. It's...sad.

(Participant interview, 2018).

The CGA has offered women Ward Representatives increased mobility but this can come at a high price. Literally. Ward Representatives often need to travel long distances to access cellphone networks, print materials or gather information. This is at their own expense as they do not receive any allowance for the work that they do. This lack of salary has caused friction within the families of some Ward Representatives. Yet, even in the face of such challenges, women Ward Representatives showed a willingness to work and to sacrifice their time for their communities.

Sometimes they work and they don't get...what...any pay (laughs). But we know all the same. We want good things for Bougainville and so we know we have to work. Forget it, we don't have money. Even if they don't pay us we work.

(Participant Interview, 2018)

¹⁸ 10 kina is around \$5 NZD.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored what Douglas (2003) has described as the “slippery intersection of custom, [and] Christianity” (p.4) coupled with the influence of motherhood and the impact of geographical location. In doing so, I argue it is important to reject thinking of identity in terms of a disjuncture between two seemingly opposing beliefs. It is not a case of denying all gendered tropes nor wholly embracing them. Just as we cannot call for a total removal of cultural affiliation on the one hand or complete immersion within it on the other, so too can we not reduce identities to either secular or religious. What is needed is a careful examination of the way women choose to interpret their gender, their religion and their culture and in which contexts they draw on these aspects of their identity. Women in Bougainville use culture, maternal imagery and gender in strategic ways to support and enhance women’s mobility, rights and voice. Their work must be understood in a way that does not homogenise Bougainvillean women and their experiences nor ignore the many issues that they continue to face on a daily basis, often as a direct result of their gender or culture.

The gendered expectations placed upon women Ward Representatives as mothers, particularly those with young children, intersects with a culture that traditionally restricts women’s mobility. Hackfort and Burchardt (2018) argue that “analysis of social inequalities should concentrate more strongly on the informal, including the subjective mechanisms of power involved in the processes, institutions and structures of political participation at the local level” (p.173). The different levels of education amongst the women could have implications for the Community Governments, as participants explained that the Ward Representatives who could not read or write or did not feel comfortable speaking Tok Pisin, participated less in CG meetings. It is not enough to bring women into the space of local level government. The ABG should ensure that both men and women are given the support they need, including literacy training, so they can be better positioned to achieve positive outcomes for their community. Yet,

both the ABG and Community Governments, lack the funding required to move forward with their development plans.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

My research into the Bougainville *Community Government Act* seeks to fill a gap in the literature around women's representation at the local level, particularly in a Western Pacific and post-conflict context. While an in-depth study of Local Government Councils took place in Bougainville just prior to independence (Griffin, 1977), this was at a time when there were no women representatives. The Pacific has received scholarly attention as it has some of the lowest levels of women's representation in the world but to date little has been written on women in local level government. This could be due to the fact that many of the Pacific Island Countries do not have a significant presence of women at the local level (Hassall et al., 2019).

Women Ward Representatives are fighting for a more inclusive citizenship; one that gives them recognition and self-determination. They achieve this through an active and embodied form of participation and in doing so contribute to Bougainville's own journey toward recognition and independence. The CGA has certainly had an impact, though it remains to be seen whether this will translate into a more substantial presence for women after the 2020 election for the ABG. This chapter summarises the main findings in relation to the original research questions. I will show how I came to these conclusions before offering some final reflections on the research.

In the beginning I introduced my overall research question of 'What have been the effects of new equality measures in local governance structures on gendered social and political relations in Bougainville in the build-up to the 2019 referendum?' I will answer this by discussing the findings in relation to the four sub-questions.

1. What political transformations have already occurred in local governance activities since the new *Community Government Act*?

The Community Governments are playing a pivotal role in preparing the region for the 2019 referendum. Most of the training that the Ward Representatives have received since being elected has been focused on referendum awareness and how to prepare their areas through

updating the common roll, assisting in weapons disposal, holding reconciliation ceremonies and ensuring communities possess the necessary information to make an informed decision. Villages are being transformed into 'referendum ready' areas as part of the good governance guidelines laid out in the Bougainville Peace Agreement. Another transformation as the result of the CGA, though not discussed in this thesis, is the act of creating Ward areas themselves. This is itself a process of inclusion and exclusion. The transformation into distinct political units has not necessarily been welcomed by everyone. While conducting my research it was suggested anecdotally that this has created tension when the borders of different Wards cut directly through clan land.

Many of the Ward Representatives, both men and women, are new to governing and have had to learn on the job. Women in particular have had to push back against traditional gender roles that seek to confine them to the home. Both women and Bougainville are pushing for recognition, therefore the journey to independence is closely tied to women's own journey to greater acceptance and inclusion within decision making bodies. I will return to this key finding in the final section of this chapter.

2. What transformations have occurred in individual Ward Representatives and in the families of elected representatives?

Women have gained confidence since being elected as Ward Representatives and see themselves as part of a greater movement for women's equality. The trainings and workshops they have attended have enhanced their understanding of governance and allowed them to move beyond the space of the home. Most of the women I spoke to had supportive husbands, with their new position requiring their partners to take on a more active domestic role. Therefore, the CGA does not just influence the political sphere but extends into the private domain of the home. This has not been the case for all of the women elected to the Community Government however. Trainings often require women to spend up to a week away from home or return late in the night if meetings run overtime. This can create tension with their husbands who do not always

appreciate the benefit of having wives as Ward Representatives, especially as they receive no remuneration. Being away from the home and having to work closely with a male counterpart has also created distrust for some and can lead to accusations of infidelity. Women spoke of having to prove themselves and their trustworthiness by dressing modestly and not exposing themselves to gossip. This is a moral and bodily form of policing that men politicians are not subjected to. This shows that quotas, while crucial to increasing women's political presence, do not erase the gendered expectations that are placed upon women, in both the public arena and the home. It is not just the men that create these expectations, women themselves felt guilt over leaving their children, showing that their role as mothers can create internal conflict in fulfilling their duties as Ward Representatives.

3. What is the nature of the gendered political and social relationships between people in the Autonomous Bougainville Government, civil society organisations, Community Government and the community at large?

A common theme that was discussed by the women was the idea of working together. This included working together with civil society, with the community and its leaders, with their constituents and with external donors. Not only did they see it as important for the development of their community, but also as part of a wider process of nation building in preparing for the referendum. At the same time, the women acknowledged that the majority of the ABG leadership were men and expressed frustration at the lack of communication between leaders in the ABG and the Community Government members. One of the biggest sources of frustration, besides the lack of dialogue between the two tiers of government, is the limited funds allocated to the Community Government. This money goes to the Constituency Member for that area, rather than directly to the Community Governments. This top-down approach, is often found in neo-liberal imaginings of democracy, that place responsibility upon individuals and communities but ensures the power remains at the top (Ilcan & Lacey, 2011).

The two women members of the ABG that I spoke to saw the Ward Representatives as the foundation for grassroots development and much closer to the community than the ABG. Ward Representatives were seen as a bridge that linked the ABG to the community, but many ABG members have failed to utilise this connection and remain distant figures in the lives of many. Women support each other, as they always have, and the participants from civil society organisations who run community events explained that they utilised the support of other women leaders. They share resources, knowledge and even provide spaces to hold workshops. Solidarity is one of the core tenets of inclusive citizenship and though I was unable to explore it more fully in my thesis, the women in Bougainville clearly display a deep solidarity that was forged during the crisis and remains strong today. All experienced the trauma of the war, lost children or their husbands, or saw their homes destroyed. They witnessed the suffering of their people and the suffering of other women. These moments effected them profoundly and their shared experiences of struggle bring the women leaders in Bougainville together, driving them forward. They come together with a very strong aim in mind – to make life better and more peaceful for their communities, to speak for the ‘voiceless women’, to push for gender equality so that women no longer face domestic violence, sexual abuse and the burden of domestic responsibility and to increase the number of women representatives at all levels of government.

4. How are women negotiating the gendered political and social boundaries that mark their movement to higher levels of leadership?

Women are active and hardworking leaders who are not just ‘taking up space’. They have fought hard to be included within decision making bodies and continue to advocate for gender equality and greater representation. Yet they do this with the awareness that it is men who persist in dominating these spaces. For women to ‘take over’ as many participants foretold (or to even increase their presence in government) needs more than just the introduction of equality measures. Men must be willing to take a step back, find power in being a supportive husband and father, and transfer some of the formal power they hold onto women, without

feeling diminished. The women I interviewed were critical of men's leadership but also recognised that they needed to work with, rather than against, the men. This meant showing how they could provide balance to decision making without threatening men's power.

What is trickier, especially for the women in Buin, is convincing the men in their lives, their fathers, brothers and husbands, to vote for them when they run for office. There has been a lot of training by different organisations in Bougainville, such as the BWF or the Nazareth Centre, that aims to shift attitudes, raise awareness of gender inequality and advocate for a more inclusive and equitable society, so there is hope that this will generate more positive outcomes for women. Though traditional and religious beliefs can contribute to entrenched gender roles, the women I spoke with also utilised church networks and their customary traditions to connect with their community, broker peace and increase their 'recognition' as strong and worthy leaders.

8.1 Limitations

There are several limitations that may have affected the findings of this research. The first is the small number of participants in relation to the number of Ward Representatives. There are 888 Ward Representatives (including both men and women) in the rural Community Governments and 152 in Buin alone. For my research I interviewed nine women Ward Representatives, only a very small proportion of the total. Therefore, I cannot say with certainty that these women and their experiences are indicative of all women Ward Representatives throughout Bougainville. Rather, they provide a rich insight into the hopes, dreams and challenges of the women elected to Community Government within Buin district.

I had originally intended to conduct a focus group discussion with both men and women elected to Community Government as a way of gauging the gendered social relations between Ward Representatives. However, most Ward Representatives live in rural areas and many are without access to mobile coverage. Though I endeavoured to contact potential participants, in the end it proved too difficult to find enough participants to conduct a focus group. This small

act was a poignant moment as it gave me first-hand experience of how difficult bringing together groups of people can be, even those who are elected officials. This is a difficulty Ward Representatives know only too well and is a massive challenge in achieving the desired outcomes of the *Community Government Act*.

A final limitation is that the participants had only been Ward Representatives for a little over a year when I conducted my research. While they were able to shed light on the short-term outcomes it is hard to know what the impacts will be on women's representation long-term. The next election for the ABG is set to take place in 2020, following the referendum in 2019. It will be interesting to see if there is an increase in the number of women running in an open seat and if an increased presence in local government becomes a catalyst for a greater number of women elected to the ABG.

8.2 Final thoughts

I want to return to the four aspects of inclusive citizenship laid out by Kabeer (2005) of recognition, self-determination, solidarity and justice. These four interlocking parts are achieved through struggle (*ibid*) and highly relevant when we consider the gendered context of Bougainville. The CGA has increased recognition of women leaders amongst their community and contributed to a strong sense of self. It is seen by many as acknowledging and appreciating the efforts of women before, during and after the conflict, and redressing the failure of men in power to substantially include women into decision making bodies. Women want greater autonomy and self-determination and to enact policies that will improve the lives of women. This solidarity with '*ol mamas*', is what motivates so many of the participants to step up and lead. They do so with a recognition that women deserve, but do not adequately receive, full justice. This is clear when we consider the high rates of domestic violence and the difficulty in accessing reproductive rights.

While the gendered construction of 'woman' and 'mother' is something that can constrain women in Bougainville, the traditional frame of intersectionality is not wholly

relevant. Instead, women draw on different aspects of their gender, religious and cultural identity in advocating for greater women's representation. Patriarchal attitudes still prevail in the region, with politics still largely a man's game. Women have had to negotiate cultural boundaries that position them within the home and re-interpret religious teachings to advocate for equality. Identities are not immutable, they are complex and contingent. Factors such as religion, gender and culture should not be viewed as solely negative in how they shape the social and political landscape. Instead we need to consider how identities shift across time and space and how people interact and relate to them. As Puar (2013) argues, we must move beyond an intersectionality that is grounded in bodies and extend it to other forms. Bougainville is not a passive physical environment but a symbolic space for Bougainvilleans. Land has always held spiritual and material significance but in the build up to the referendum it has taken on even more importance, representing a hopeful and hoped for future of unity and peace for the island.

In this thesis I have framed the journey of women's leadership in Bougainville as a metaphor of arrival – a moment of becoming. The potential for the CGA to increase representation is a culmination of women's advocacy efforts and an example of Probyn's (1996) longing to (be)long. Although some participants were well-known and established leaders, for others being in the Community Government is their first experience in a leadership position. It provides a chance to not only learn through experience but to gain confidence and valuable skills. In fulfilling the duties of a Ward Representatives, moving through spaces and places, the women become embodied leaders. They gain experience and are recognised as leaders not only by their communities but within themselves. Their actions represent a specific kind of citizenship, one that sees "citizenship as a process not just an outcome" (Lister, 2003, p.6). We are always struggling to belong to something or somewhere. As much as we gain recognition from others it is never fully given or realised and this is what drives us ever on.

The process of becoming: of gaining recognition, of becoming citizens, occurs through interactions and actions. Peace, Connor and Trigger (2012) argue "activists *are made*, they are

brought into being by external forces and agencies which impinge on their normal worldviews unexpectedly and hegemonically” (p.219, emphasis original). In Bougainville the civil war was a site of formation and fermentation; a moment of becoming for women leaders and activists. Turning to Bougainville, the concept of a unified ‘nation’ was brought into being through multiple encounters with outside forces. This transformed it from a geographically small, yet culturally diverse, land of small-holder groups into the autonomous state we see today. A state with a deep desire for unity and self-determination, as was expressed by my participants. This show of unity and togetherness is necessary in order to progress to the referendum but also as a way of healing and forgiving the violence of the past. Peace and reconciliation ceremonies, which hold cultural and symbolic importance, have taken place in villages throughout Bougainville, and are a condition to being declared ‘referendum ready’. The differing journeys of women leaders, the struggles and the gains for gender equality, the peace building work undertaken by women, the introduction of inclusive gender equality measures and the practice of creating a strong and independent Bougainville identity - these acts and struggles are all part of an ongoing process of becoming; the continual movement towards recognition and inclusion.

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