

Challenges to Women in Political Leadership in Samoa

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S.I.T. Samoa, Spring 2014



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Abstract

Samoan women hold an integral and valued place within their families and communities. Despite this, Samoa continues to report some of the lowest representation of women in political office in the world. The newly instated Constitutional Amendment guaranteeing 10% of Parliamentary seats for women will bolster female political involvement in the upcoming 2016 elections. An investigation into the challenges that face women entering political leadership roles at the village and Parliamentary level will bring awareness to the struggles encountered by women and contribute to dismantling the barriers which stand against them. Fourteen female politicians and experts in the field were interviewed on the obstacles they believe exist for women entering these roles. Interviews and secondary research suggest the challenges for women entering politics far surpass the challenges for men who pursue the same roles. Cultural and circumstantial barriers limit women's access to village support, traditional leadership knowledge, and mentorship, especially for women who lack political or familial connections. Much more needs to be done to address the cultural and tangible obstacles to women as political leaders. Respondents felt that a network of support from fellow women, especially politically active women who can serve as mentors, would be a positive first step in addressing the constraints they face.

Key Words: Gender Studies, Political Science, Peace & Social Justice

Acknowledgements

I would like to first thank the intelligent, witty, candid, and inspiring women who shared their time, experiences, and stories with me. Each of you have redefined and reaffirmed what true leadership and perseverance looks like, in Samoa and across the globe. Dr. Maria Kerslake served as my fearless advisor throughout this process, connecting me with many of the voices heard throughout this paper. She was always there to give me a dose of cultural relativism when I most needed one. To my assistant Director, Ronna Hadfield, thank you for pushing me to fiercely question my preconceived notions of leadership and women's equality. Jackie Fa'asisila, as so many have said before, I will be forever changed for having met you. Without you, none of this is possible. Fa'afetai lava.

Lastly, my parents are the cornerstone by which I build all things, and for them I am eternally grateful.

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Introduction

Women are integral and valued members of the Samoan community as seen through their commitment to family, village, religious, economic, and public life. Today women in Samoa dominate many fields once preserved for men alone. The 2013 film *Tamaitai: the Contribution of Samoan Women to Society* provides a wealth of information on women's success in many areas of development. Of those completing tertiary degrees in 2011, 56.14% were women. Women have an equal presence in many fields such as education, medicine (48% of physicians are female), business, non-government organizations, as well as government ministries and corporations. About 29% of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) positions in government ministries and 70% of the assistant CEO positions are held by women. Samoan women play a significant role in the economic development of the country. The 2011 census reports 92.4% of women are engaged in some type of paid labor (*Tamaitai*, 2013). In Samoa women hold a remarkably revered place as pillars of their traditional and modern societies. A Samoan businesswoman notes, "You don't see much suppression of women's voices at all and mainly because women have a strong cultural position, not just in families, but in village set ups and also nationally," (M.T. Naseri, personal communication, April 17, 2014). However, despite these advancements females are not as integrated into local and national leadership roles in politics. The problem is not a lack of qualified women for these positions, as is the case in other Pacific islands, but rather that these opportunities are not easily accessible or desirable for women (P. Schoeffel, personal communication, April 17, 2014). It is important to investigate the challenges women face entering political leadership roles at the village and Parliamentary level. Samoan women constitute nearly half of their nation, yet their voices are not currently being accounted for in equal number to men (Fepuleai, 2006, p. 36). Research of this topic will bring awareness

to the struggles encountered by women in political leadership and contribute to dismantling the barriers which stand against them.

-Background-

When Samoa gained independence in 1962 there was a desire to merge both a foreign democratic ‘Westminster’ system of government with pre-existing systems of traditional leadership. The emblem of traditional authority in Samoa is the *fa’amatai* (in the way of *matai*) (Toleafoa, 2007, p. 207). The *fa’amatai* operates on the village level and is made up of a hierarchy of *matai*, or family chiefs. The chiefs are chosen by family consensus and are entrusted with the care and distribution of family lands and assets, as well as several other monetary and representative duties. The defining characteristic for *matai* is their role as head of the family and the traditional instrument of family authority (Fana’afi, 1986, p. 129). Every *matai* title has been passed down through generations and holds varying degrees of significance and hierarchical prominence. *Matai* from every family within the village gather for council meetings, thus forming the local governing body, or village *fono* (council). Approximately 80% of the population resides within the 332 villages of Samoa, and each village abides by this *matai* framework (Schoeffel, 2013, p. 2). The *matai* system is the center and embodiment of the *fa’asamoa*, or the Samoan way and culture.

Traditional social organization under the *matai* system varies somewhat from village to village but essentially is composed of the council of chiefs (*Matai*), women’s committees, untitled men (*Aumaga*), and the children (*Tamaiti*). Status groups within the women’s committees are typically broken up into the *Aualuma* (daughters of the village) and the *Faletua ma Tausi* (wives of chiefs and orators) (Fana’afi, 1986). While the brothers of the village are

groomed to become *matai* or serve *matai*, the women's groupings tend to community needs, such as the health and wellbeing of the village, through committee work and church organizations. Although *matai* has no gender, sisters of the village are not expected to take titles and thus a large majority of *matai*, and therefore village council members, are male (So'o, 2007, p. 247). Female *matai* compose approximately 11% of the title holders in Samoa, 1,766 out of 15,021 as of 2011 (See Appendix A).

Matai have the right and responsibility to participate in the *matai* council. Few female *matai*, out of the already minority pool of women, choose to sit in on their village council meetings. Some villages dissuade or prohibit women from holding *matai* titles or participating in village *fono*, thus excluding women from political leadership roles at the village level (So'o, 2012, pp. 70-71). However, since independence more women are taking titles and involving themselves in village politics (So'o, 2007, p. 247). As more educational and entrepreneurial opportunities have become available to women, so too has the prevalence conferring titles to females. The integration of women into traditional leadership shows that the *matai* system is not static and can continue to evolve, preserve, and thrive (G.T. Afamasaga, personal communication, April 22, 2014).

Under the Samoan constitution, specifically the Electoral Act of 1963, only *matai* are eligible to run or serve as a Member of Parliament (MP) in the national governing body (Percival, 2013, p. 58). With a minority number of women serving as local political leaders, and village title holding as a prerequisite for candidacy, progress for women's integration into national politics has been slow. Parliament has no authority over sanctions initiated by local governing bodies, nor has any woman banned from holding a title or sitting in councils taken

their case to court (Schoeffel, 2013, p. 2; *Tamaitai*, 2013). Early evidence of women in political leadership roles began in 1970 with Taulapapa Faimaala who served two terms. She was the first female Deputy Speaker of the House in 1973, but was not reelected for a third term in 1976. The only woman before her ran as the first female candidate in 1964 but was not elected. Faimaala was followed by the current Minister of Justice's late mother, Laulu Fetauimalemau Mata'afa, wife of the first Samoan Prime Minister. Laulu took her husband's place as MP after his death in May 1975, and was joined by a second female MP in 1976. Five women ran that year with two female matriculates to Parliament. These numbers are not too dissimilar to the current 2011 elections results which saw 9 candidates and 2 female MPs elected. Ten years after Laulu was elected, her daughter Fiame Naomi Mata'afa began the longest running term count of any female, now totaling nearly 30 years of service. No woman besides Fiame has been elected to serve more than two terms in Parliament. Fiame became the first female Cabinet Minister in 1988 and has served as Minister of Education, Minister of Women, Community and Social Development, and currently Minister of Justice. Not until 1996 were more than two female candidates in any election successful (So'o, 2012, pp. 68-70). Five women were elected to Parliament in both 1996 and 2006. On both occasions, however, female MPs lost their seats in electoral petitions so five women have never actually sat for a term (Schoeffel, 2013, p. 4). But 2006 was successful for women in a number of other ways. A record breaking 22 women ran as candidates and three of the women elected served as cabinet ministers that year (See Appendix B). However, in the most recent 2011 elections the number of female candidates dropped by 53% and representation of women resumed success rates of the 1973-78 parliaments, with only two women attaining seats (So'o, 2012, p. 70; Schoeffel, 2013, p. 4). The UN Women Country Program Coordinator Suisala Mele Maualaivao speculates that the major drop in candidates from

2006 to 2011 was due to discouragement the women felt after such a large number ran and so few were successful (personal communication, March 18, 2014).

The Pacific region has the lowest rate of women in political office in the world, lower than the historically low Middle East (S. M. Maualaivao, personal communication, March 18, 2014). Currently Samoa comes in 131st place out of 139 nations ranked by percentage of female parliamentary representatives (Schoeffel, 2013, p. 4). In 52 years of independence Samoa's national government has witnessed thirteen female representatives in Parliament (See Appendix C). Underrepresentation of women in politics continues despite Samoa's ratification of various international and regional treaties including, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 1995 United Nations Beijing Platform for Action, The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015, and the 1994 Pacific Platform for Action (Urwin, 2006). In the words of former MP Safuneituuga Paaga Neri Fepuleai, "while I recognize the customary status recognition of Samoan women and the positive developments being made, the reality is that, gender equality in leadership positions has yet to be achieved," (2006, p. 36). In light of the statistics and recent decline in female representatives, Samoa's government began to contemplate the implementation of a temporary special measure, or quota system, to insure parliamentary seats for female candidates. Quota systems have had a great deal of success in other areas of the world, in fact, "no country has attained the critical 30 percent of women in government mark without some form of quota," (*A Woman's Place is in the House*, 2006, p. xii). This 30% refers to the percentage recommended by the United Nations to ensure sufficient female representation in national decision making (S. M. Maualaivao, personal communication, March 18, 2014). European nations with a history of gender balanced representation such as the Nordic countries

Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark have achieved an average of 40% women by adopting similar quotas. Western nations that have not implemented a quota such as the United States have not been able to reach recommended levels of political gender equality. The Pacific islands ranked highest are New Caledonia and French Polynesia due to the influence of French laws, while several other islands without such programs continue to have no female representatives at all (*A Woman's Place is in the House*, 2006, p. xii).

Samoa has now become the first independent Pacific island nation to adopt a constitutional mandate for female parliamentary seats. The 2013 Constitutional Amendment Act guarantees that beginning with the 2016 elections 10% of seats in Parliament, 5 out of 49, will be guaranteed for women (Ofisa, 2014). The Amendment was passed unanimously by Parliament with 45 votes unopposed and 4 absentees in spite of initial pushback from various male MPs (S. M. Maualaivao, personal communication, March 18, 2014). The Amendment procures that if less than five women are elected in 2016 then up to five seats will be vacated for the female candidates with the most votes amongst their sex. Therefore, if only two women are successful in the normal election process, the three female candidates with the next highest amount of votes will claim seats (See Appendix D). There has been mixed reviews of the special measure, but most of the anxiety has been due to uncertainty about what the law actually entails. Some male MPs have expressed concern with the fairness of such a measure, or giving supposed “special treatment” to one gender over another. One explanation for such opposition may simply be threat to job security for the male members (S. M. Maualaivao, personal communication, March 18, 2014). “The men feel that we are targeting just the women alone, promoting their leadership... They think that the women are being singled out to be the leaders,” explains current MP Gatoloaifaana Amataga Alesana-Gidlow (personal communication, April 23, 2014). As a

Member of Parliament she has tried clarifying to those opposed that the decision to enter politics will be the woman's alone, but it is the government's role to provide her with the opportunity (personal communication, April 23, 2014).

Methodology

Fourteen interviews were conducted over the course of nine days to collect primary research for this paper. Eight interviewees, the main respondent group, were Samoan women ranging from around ages 38 to 85 who are aspiring, former, or current political leaders in Parliament and beyond. Four additional interviews were arranged with female experts in the field of women's leadership, one of which was a simultaneous discussion with two women researchers, bringing the total to five informants on the topic at large. Finally a consultation meeting was arranged at the Ministry of Women to procure any additional information needed. Of the thirteen women interviewed, all but one are Samoan. Most of these women, even those who have not been parliamentary candidates, can be considered political leaders since ten hold *matai* titles and all serve their communities with a vast array of contributions. Those who do not work directly in politics are employed by government ministries and organizations, university research and lecturing, non-governmental organizations, or are private business owners. The two current female Parliamentarians were kind enough to inform this study as well as a former MP. All three have served as Cabinet Ministers. Four other women ran for Parliament on at least one occasion (Manu has run twice) but were not successful in achieving seats (See Appendix E). Tea Tepora Afamasaga-Wright, the youngest informant, serves as the 'up-and-coming' perspective of this sample pool, as she has never run for political office before but is strongly considering

running in the upcoming years. Responses show that four of the eight women will most likely be running for Parliament in the near future, two are still deciding, and two are no longer pursuing a political career. A sample list of structured interview questions is provided in the Appendix (See Appendix F). These questions were subject to alterations depending the career history and current position of each woman interviewed, i.e. the list was tailored to fit the informant in question. The opinions these women shared are personal reflections and should not be interpreted as emblematic of every Samoan female or female politician. The researcher recognizes any biases present during the research process and crafting of this paper, and has taken the necessary steps to relieve these as much as possible.

I. Motivations

To feel motivated towards a career path in political leadership, especially for a woman, demands a special set of circumstances and personal drive. The leaders interviewed are markedly strong women, confident in their abilities, and willing to share these gifts for the betterment of the nation. This confidence was tempered with a desire to serve their Samoan people, villages, and extended families. Four women, including the three who have been successfully elected to parliament, said they were asked and encouraged by their village or constituency to run on their behalf. Many said their main motivation was feeling they had something to contribute. Current MP, Gatoloaifaana, explained, “I thought the best way to make a contribution to my village and my district was by representing in Parliament because you can only do so much within your own village; there are times when you need to go outside of that in order to benefit your village,” (personal communication, April 23, 2014). The most moving accounts of personal inspiration to

run for Parliament came from the younger female candidates whose dreams of political engagement are still in the making. Lutuiloa remembered vividly listening to the radio with her father when the first woman was inducted into Parliament and thinking, “I want to be like that woman.” When deciding to run in the 2011 elections Lutuiloa considered the qualities she could bring to the table if elected, “not being arrogant or anything, I know how to read the financial statements with the budget when it’s tabled, I’ve served my villages and my family, I run a business, and I thought to myself, I think can do this,” (personal communication, April 17, 2014). As a pastor’s daughter she had experienced matters the villages were facing first hand, especially those experienced by women of the village, and felt as a female voice in Parliament she could represent on behalf of women’s issues, “If I make it through I’m sure I can help them. Somebody needs to represent these women in Parliament where the decision making is. Someone needs to do something for the women and their children,” (L.V. Sialaoa-Solomona, personal communication, April 17, 2014). Another younger voice, Tea, spoke of Parliament being a place to implement change to help the Samoan people. Tea first considered a political career during her secondary school years, “being young and idealistic, wanting to make a difference and that’s the most influential place you can think of where you can influence a decision that’s being made,” (personal communication, April 22, 2014). Curiously, the mature female candidates had more unorthodox impetuses to share regarding why they ran for Parliament. Both Vaasilifiti and Galumalemana, who are at the latter end of this study’s age spectrum, said they did not run with the intention of actually being elected. Vaasilifiti explains, “I ran because my mother’s cousin was a Member of Parliament for years, he was a Minister, but what I was angry about is that he took us for granted, we just [kept] voting him in, but he didn’t even contribute to the people. So I just wanted to make a mark which I did!” She wanted to make a statement against neglectful

governance, but actually ended up fairing quite well in the polls and got worried. She said the elders of the village had great esteem for this MP and would pray for him daily. Vaasilifiti felt that if she won against him her family would suffer, and that the elders would curse her and her children. Now, however, Vaasilifiti believes it is time to run for Parliament again, this time with success in mind. Her motivation now is the wish of getting as many qualified women into Parliament as possible so that Samoa can achieve gender equal representation (V. M. Jackson, personal communication, April 23, 2014). For Vaasilifiti and others such as Gatoloaifaana, Fiame, and Galumalemana a primary drive for entering political leadership was the desire to continue their family legacies in national government. This motivational factor will be touched on in length later in Part III, Limitations.

II. Practical Considerations

-Cultural Constraints-

Women must take into account many practical concerns before pursuing a career in political leadership. Challenges facing women entering these roles might dissuade them from even considering the option. Perhaps some Samoan women feel there are better expenditures of their time and talents elsewhere. Many believe the grassroots women's councils in charge of health and well-being of the village are the groups with political influence at the local level (M. Kerslake, personal communication, April 17, 2014). *Matai* often make informed decisions in their councils based on recommendations from their wives or female family members in the women's committees, "so a lot of women will say why do I need to go sit in there [the *matai* meetings] when I can just tell him the decision I want him to make," (G. T. Afamasaga, personal

communication, April 22, 2014). This behind the scenes attitude may also be preferable to women because once a woman takes a *matai* title she is no longer a member of her women's committees, but instead is a part of the men's council, whether she is included in their meetings or not (G. T. Afamasaga, personal communication, April 22, 2014). Practically, if women feel they can make a greater impact on the grassroots level separate from local government, and if they would be an outsider in the *matai* council anyways, then desire for political involvement may be quite low. When asked why women feel comfortable advancing their education or career, but not political decision-making roles, the two most frequently cited justifications were pervasive cultural traditions and the element of risk. Fiame elaborates, "I think a lot of it is about job security. Politics is not a very secure career path. There are cultural elements, and social perceptions of what women's roles are," (personal communication, April 25, 2014). Every woman interviewed had something to say on the subject. Vaasilifiti disclosed, "The main challenge [to women entering politics] is our culture because women are born to be served by our brothers and we are born to die for our brothers and that is very difficult to break," (personal communication, April 23, 2014). The cultural heritage of prescribed gender roles pervaded many personal accounts. Parliamentarian Gatoloaifaana observes that, "culturally Samoan women tend to think men should be the leaders... being a women CEO is different from being a leader in your family. The women CEOs when they go home their husbands still make the decisions," (personal communication, April 23, 2014). Traditional family values are by all accounts strong and thriving in Samoa and political roles for women are still viewed as untraditional. These ubiquitous attitudes adversely affected every female candidate who was interviewed. Former MP Safuneituuga reminisced on her own challenges campaigning, "I had to be really strong to win the seat because there was still that feeling that people vote for men. It's not easy to run and win

as a woman,” (personal communication, April 17, 2014). There is a sense that the political structures, locally and nationally, are masculine models that are very difficult for women to enter or adapt themselves to (G. T. Afamasaga, personal communication, April 22, 2014). Fiame, who has been the most successful woman in national politics in terms of longevity and position, nevertheless felt she had to work, “twice as hard to bring change to people’s mindsets,” (personal communication, April 25, 2014). Vaasilifiti has held several high chief titles in her family for many years and has faced pushback as a fearless female leader for much of her life.

A lot of the problems I face are unnecessary. The reason is because they [the men] are looking at me as a woman. I tell them I am not here because of what’s between my legs, it’s what’s between my eyes, my brain that matters. I was selected because my family saw the leadership in me that is why I am sitting here. (V. M. Jackson, personal communication, April 23, 2014)

Even in modern times many Samoan women still find it a challenge or simply unnecessary to speak out against cultural stereotypes. Questioning one’s own culture is a difficult undertaking, especially in Samoa where questioning culture challenges one’s own center and *vā*, the sacred space and respect between the creator and the created (M. Maualaivao, personal communication, March 18, 2014).

-Balance of Family Life-

Throughout much of the world what continues to power the separation between women and direct influence in the political sphere is their predominant roles in domestic and family life (F. N. Mata’afa, personal communication, April 25, 2014). Gatoloaifaana Tilianamua Afamasaga from the Ministry of Education articulates, “many women still believe that the men should be the leaders and that they should stay in their houses and look after the children. That kind of thinking I suppose needs to be changed, the way women think of themselves, in terms of their own

perceptions of themselves as leaders,” (personal communication, April 22, 2014). This kind of thinking does not simply reside in the minds of village women, but also in beliefs held by political leaders as well. The Prime Minister admits in a film interview, “the status of mothers in Samoa [is that] their usual responsibility is to secure the lineage of a family and to spend their time looking after the children,” (*Exploring Gender Equality Issues*, 2013). Safuneituuga writes in her paper, “Women in Politics,” that pragmatically it is women’s domestic and motherhood responsibilities that can limit their interest and influence in politics. Samoa’s population being primarily composed of young people means that most females are busy with young children, and a husband would have to be “unusually cooperative” to support their wife undertaking politics (Fepuleai, 2006, p. 38). As in the case in many other countries, women attempt to take on roles once designated to men, but are still left to fill their female roles such as child care and household duties (S. M. Maualaivao, personal communication, March 18, 2014). For women contemplating moving into a male domain, again it comes back to security. “If there is a lot of risk involved I don’t think women will take that jump if they can’t be certain that their families will be okay, that their children will be okay,” says Tea, a new matai, young mother, and aspiring politician.

There’s money you have to spend campaigning towards elections. So women always put their families first before they’ll sacrifice those resources that are for the children. Men seem somehow able to do it without a problem, they don’t have the guilt trip about putting themselves first. (T. T. Afamasaga-Wright, personal communication, April 22, 2014)

This may be why in the past most women in Parliament have been unmarried or have *palagi* (non-Samoan/foreign) husbands, as is the case with the current two female MPs. There are some examples of successful female politicians whose husbands are also politically involved, but for a woman to have a Samoan husband who is not in politics or a *matai* would be very difficult (P.

Schoeffel, personal communication, April 16, 2014). This power dynamic would challenge traditional Samoan values of husband and wife roles. For Lutuiloa who ran in 2011, her husband passed away two years before her campaign,

I often wondered that if he was alive would he have approved? Because you need your husband's approval for something like this, and he was holding three titles himself. He might have strongly disagreed because it would drain our resources, it would put a strain on our children. (L.V. Sialaoa-Solomona, personal communication, April 17, 2014).

Another consideration is time spent away from home. If a Samoan woman has children to care for she will not travel away from her family for any career, let alone to Parliament every day. While a husband could be gone for a week with no problem, it is the mother who has to be at home for the children (S. N. Fepuleai, personal communication, April 17, 2014). As for the single female candidates, Manu felt that being unmarried made her "modern" and able to make her own decisions throughout her time in politics. However, being unmarried has not made things entirely easy for women leaders in Parliament either. Over her years in politics Fiame has noticed that her married female colleagues have certain advantages and openness with fellow Parliamentarians who are male, "in terms of one's usual expectations that you would socialize with your work colleagues, I can't say that really happens for me." As a single woman in public life she has had to be very careful of her relationships with the men and of building trust with their respective spouses (F. N. Mata'afa, personal communication, April 25, 2014). Essentially, the pattern shows that to be a woman entering a role of political leadership means confronting challenges of various degrees, irrespective of marital circumstances.

-Campaign Challenges-

The final practical concerns a woman running for political office should consider is access to large sums of money and the realities of campaign corruption. Campaigning has

undergone some significant changes over recent years due to the implementation of universal suffrage. Once again the matter returns to the authority of *matai*. Often times a chief will dictate to his family, council, or village which candidate to vote for, a decision typically influenced by gift giving (S. M. Maualaivao, personal communication, March 18, 2014). Another major issue is voting corruption within constituencies:

In the days when only *matai* were voting, there was only one place in which to vote and that was in the *matai*'s constituency. And if a *matai* had more than one *matai* title, she/he could only vote in the place where she/he resided. Today, many voters are frequently changing the places in which they vote. (Fuata'i, 2007, p. 180)

Safuneituuga had two successful terms as MP, one of which as a Cabinet member, before she lost during her third campaign. She attributes her lack of success to corrupt voting practices, “there were more people that were allowed to vote who have nothing to do with my constituency, so the voting involved a lot of outsiders and therefore they voted in people who were hardly ever present in my constituency,” (personal communication, April 17, 2014).

Another failed candidate Lutuiloa complained of voters bombarding her for money and handouts, “every single day people came here asking for things. You're vulnerable, you want their vote. It's a difficult system but in my heart I wanted to make a difference, I wanted to do good,” (personal correspondence, April 17, 2014). Many of the women expressed feeling caught between Samoan cultural practices of gift giving and reciprocity, and crossing the line into bribing or buying votes. Lutuiloa found out later that her competition was actually importing voters from other constituencies, buying them off to vote for him in his district. Some male candidates paid to fly voters in from American Samoa and New Zealand. Others had a boat full of people from Savai'i come to Upolu to vote for them, paying for their transportation, putting them up overnight, and providing meals and a stipend for their trouble. Lutuiloa says she could

not compete financially with those sorts of schemes. Treating and bribery have now been made illegal in the Electoral Act (See Appendix G). Modern day corruption of the system is sometimes blamed on the imported *palagi* Parliament system that does not seamlessly mesh with the Samoan way (V. M. Jackson, personal communication, April 23, 2014). However, the issue is not just voters foreign to a constituency, but also the candidates themselves. Male MPs in the past who have felt support waning for them in their constituency of origin simply take a title in another village and run from there. Gatoloaifaana Afamasaga believes a female candidate would not feel comfortable doing that because most women run with the intention of helping the people in the constituency that they serve directly. In the end both men and women end up spending money in the name of good will between themselves and the constituency, but the difference is voter loyalty. Women might give handouts but will never know if those people end up voting for them. As for most of the men who have developed a relationship in that district over many years, they already have a pool of people they can turn to for voter support (G. T. Afamasaga, personal communication, April 22, 2014). A bill being tabled in Parliament now, if passed, will amend the Electoral Act and make clear distinctions between acceptable cultural practices and corrupt ones before the 2016 elections. In the meantime Fiame believes women candidates can make a positive impact by not adhering to the corrupt practices of others.

As a *matai* people are always coming to me if they need help with anything from school fees, to fares to New Zealand, to fine mats, so it's a very common thing within our culture. I have to really be very clear whether they're coming to see me as a *matai* or whether they're coming to see me for what they think I should be doing for them as a Member of Parliament. So what I usually do is I engage with them in terms of what it is they're looking for. I find other ways to help them, but if they're just looking for a handout I like to bring home the message that I can help them in many ways, but if that's the way they expect then that's not what this relationship is about. (F. N. Mata'afa, personal communication, April 25, 2014)

On occasions where she feels the person has a genuine need she writes down the relation, the date, the request, the arrangement made, and has the individual sign the document so that it is clear she does not take handouts lightly. Fiame believes her candid approach can be a useful strategy for other female candidates to adopt in the future (personal communication, April 25, 2014).

III. Limitations: Access to Mentorship, Village Support, and Traditional Knowledge

-Family Background-

“Samoans they are lucky because before you are born you know where to sit, you know your place according to the title. It is your family that decides your place in the village,” (V. M. Jackson, personal communication, April 23, 2014). When running for Parliament many respondents noted that simply being a *matai* is not good enough, the title must have hierarchical significance or status. In traditional Samoan culture status was considered a, “requisite for being wise and fair... the general wisdom that people would respect someone with a higher title, was the unwritten rule,” (Simanu, 2007, p. 87). The individuals who have been successful in Parliament have had access to educational and career opportunities that others may not, “an untitled woman from a poor family, I don’t know what her options are. She’s definitely not going to be running for office; she may not have a voice in the village either. The hierarchy is there for a reason and those at the bottom are at the bottom,” (S. M. Maualaivao, personal communication, March 18, 2014). Fiame and Gatoloaifaana both hold senior titles, and the prominence of those titles would make it very difficult for people in their villages to vote or run against their paramount chief. A female candidate with a lesser status title will have to fight significantly

harder against the prejudices of others who see her as a less traditional candidate and perhaps also less qualified (G. T. Afamasaga, personal communication, April 22, 2014). Fiame admits it is essential to play to the advantages of a senior title (personal communication, April 25, 2014). This is especially true for a woman politician who is struggling against multiple barriers. A man may be successful without a paramount title, but status counts more for or against a female candidate than it does a man (G. T. Afamasaga, personal communication, April 22, 2014).

Coming from a family with a political background is another consideration. Both Fiame and Gatoloaifaana are daughters of former Prime Ministers, and can garner support from their constituencies who are used to seeing and supporting their male family members in politics (S. M. Maualaivao, personal communication, March 18, 2014). Gatoloaifaana comments,

I think my village's decision to put my name forward as a candidate would be partly due to the fact that my father was a politician. Perhaps they think that I'll become a good politician and to carry on the legacy that my father had in assisting the village and the community. My father having been a very exposed person in politics, my constituency knew who I was and that's one hurdle that you have to jump because quite a few of the candidates they come in practically new. (G. A. Alesana-Gidlow, personal communication, April 23, 2014)

Two such candidates who came in practically new are Lutuiloa and Manu. Both had failed attempts at running for Parliament, do not come from political families, and found they were naive to the process. Tea comes from an extended family with political background and feels that the women exposed to it from an earlier age are less scared of the campaign process, which therefore makes it easier for them to take on the challenge (personal communication, April 22, 2014). In fact, it seems young men and women not from political families would not be exposed to the idea of such a career as an option at all. Five of the eight female politicians or aspiring politicians interviewed have families with strong political backgrounds. This experience gave them the impetus and knowledge to consider a political career and also provided the platform to

create change in their villages. This leaves a gap missing for women who have the capacity to serve as national leaders but do not come from such a background. It comes down to a lack of exposure, education, opportunity, and mentorship:

We are from that kind of family and we would never consider that you need a female community to support you; it's more like your family. You have the family to fall back on and support you. And if you're from that kind of family of course it's in your mind all the time. But if you don't have that kind of family you would never talk about it. (G. T. Afamasaga, April 22, 2014)

Dr. Maria Kerslake explains that women in the village understand they have no chance unless the perfect set of circumstances is in place: education, connections, status, and that is before they even run. Dr. Kerslake elaborates, "They are fighting with the village even before they can fight for Parliament because the villages are not supporting them. And by the time the electoral part comes they are still fighting at that level," (personal communication, April 25, 2014). This is not an issue for women who are born into a paramount title, come from a political family, and live in their village. But Samoan women such as this are a rarity.

-Community Involvement-

Many *matai* titles bestowed on Samoan women have been in recognition of high achievement in education and employment, in acknowledgment of their ability to contribute in a meaningful way to family status and economy (So'o, 2012, p. 70). Running for Parliament also typically requires developing a personal profile through a professional career. However, to amount such achievements requires leaving one's village to pursue university degrees and a career in the urban capital, Apia. What is happening now is that these women leave their communities to be in a position to serve their village better, but then lose cultural knowledge and eventually village support. Tea is one of those women living in town, struggling to reconnect

with her village ties, “Most young educated women are not living in their districts and in order to get into Parliament they have to connect to their villages. It’s almost given that that has to happen,” (personal communication, April 22, 2014). Manu found that although an overseas education gave her a platform for career success, it limited her political success, “You are a bit too modern at times compared to what is going on in the villages... So now when we try to enter [politics] we really have got to go back to our basics,” (personal communication, April 17, 2014). Men do not seem to struggle with the same concerns, “from what I’ve seen men always have the link especially since as they are growing up they are the ones the family takes along to all the family ceremonies. Also when they get married they are more so the ones that keep the linkages with the villages than the women,” (T. T. Afamasaga-Wright, personal communication, April 22, 2014). On occasion voters will begrudge female candidates who have left the village for losing their local connections, “they say, ‘she doesn’t come to our village why should we vote for her?’ And they would not say the same thing about a man,” (G. T. Afamasaga, personal communication, April 22, 2014).

A candidate’s involvement in the constituent community is of greater importance in Samoa than in countries with stronger party politics; here people are elected based on an individual political profile, not a particular party or set of issues (F. N. Mata’afa, personal communication, April 25, 2014). Fiame advises, “It is very important for women that if they’re interested in politics they should make a regular practice of participating in village affairs. It’s not common [for women] but it’s very necessary if you’re interested in politics,” (personal communication, April 25, 2014). Lack of community or village involvement was the most commonly cited reason for why women fail in running for Parliament. “The black and white of it is that the only reason you need that connection to your village is because they have to impart the

strong basis for your election campaign. Because if you don't have the backing of your village it's really hard to win," (T. T. Afamasaga-Wright, personal communication, April 22, 2014). To be a serious contender for Parliament one has to be involved in village affairs, especially in the village they are from, and also the other villages of the constituency they plan to run in. This has been the case for every successful woman in politics so far, but it is not necessarily a prerequisite for the men. Male candidates have been able to move back from New Zealand, live in Samoa for only a few years, run for Parliament, and win (G. T. Afamasaga, personal communication, April 22, 2014).

For a woman to be truly involved in village life as a *matai* she must participate in her village council meetings. However, with so many female *matai* living and working in town, they are not often expected to participate in village councils (So'o, 2012, p. 70). Suisala Maualaivao is a female *matai* in her family who has requested to sit in on her village council but to no avail, "I have a title within my village, but that doesn't mean that I have the right to sit in council," (personal communication, March 18, 2014). However, she has noticed a palpable shift in village council attitudes in recent years, "There's no village that says, 'yes we don't recognize women and we're proud of that,' because they then can't turn to the women in their village and look them in their eyes," (personal communication, March 18, 2014). Safuneituuga consistently attends her village councils even though that means traveling off island to Savai'i, "I was the only women, and I don't think many women sit in on their village council meetings. And it's something I really encourage. I'd like more women not just to be holding *matai* titles but to also be present and participating in the meeting discussions," (personal communication, April 17, 2014). Safuneituuga claims a key reason not many women sit in their council is because their husbands are also *matai*, and it would be, "very difficult to be sitting with your husband in the

same meeting,” (personal communication, April 17, 2014). The status of one’s title also impacts the voice they have in the *fono*, so women without senior titles may not be privileged to speak in the council and would instead be represented by an uncle or other male relation (M. T. Naseri, personal communication, April 17, 2014). Yet, it is very difficult for a woman to gain support or to have a voice in her village as a *matai*, let alone a national politician, without sitting consistently in *fono* meetings. “We are up against the stereotypes. But if you want to make a difference, if you want to really be involved then you have to be right there at the *matai* level of decision making where you get to know your own council and earn their trust,” advises Lutuiloa who struggled with this process herself (personal communication, April 17, 2014). Tea is a new *matai* and has not started sitting in her village council as of yet. The main conflict she explains is that the meetings in her village, also called the “*Aso Gafua*” (the Monday), are always held on Mondays, a time that working women cannot attend (personal communication, April 22, 2014). Men who sit in her village council do not have salary careers that would prevent them from attending on a Monday. Suisala shared a similar experience of a female colleague who had taken on a *matai* title and began to attend her all-male village council for the first time. Because she had always attended the women’s committees in the past, the woman was unfamiliar with the different dynamics and cultural protocols of the men’s council. As is customary, the young men of the village from an early age served the *matai* during their meetings, and would listen and learn how the meetings were carried out, whereas the young women typically served the women’s committees and learned their domain. With no learning mechanisms in place to teach *matai* protocol, the young men may have more access to traditional leadership knowledge than the young women. A weighty discrepancy of this system is that women are not taught oratory skills, unless they are the daughters of high chiefs who reside in the village. Lack of oratory

knowledge is a challenge for men growing up outside the village as well, yet as noted before, male candidates are not often held to as high a standard as their female contemporaries.

-Importance of Oratory Skills-

Some women have managed to acquire skills once deemed the sole intellectual possession of male council members. As the daughter of a *faife'au* (pastor), 'Aumua Mata'itusi Simanu, often served the chiefs during church meetings, and watched from the background the various exchanges and speechmaking going on during village *fono* and events. "From this experience, I achieved competency in the *matai* language, and understood the complexities of *va fealoa'i fa'atamali'i* and how its proper usage normally moved mountains," (Simanu, 2012, pp. 86-87). This is an opportunity not commonly available to women, especially those who are not daughters of prominent men in the village such as pastors, politicians, or high chiefs. Manu complains that a downfall of her campaigns in 2006 and 2011 was her lack of oratory skills (personal communication, April 17, 2014). Lutuiloa also noted language as a common deficiency for female candidates which is why she made a special effort to take classes at the National University of Samoa (NUS) to be sure her Samoan was extra polished for campaigning (personal communication, April 17, 2014). Tea on the other hand is nervous to start sitting on her council as the only woman because she fears embarrassment, "participating and not sounding silly is more difficult when you have to speak," she says. "There is also a lot of ceremony and etiquette that has to be observed, ways of speaking to older people. So it can be daunting for someone who hasn't been around that since they were young. It has to be learned," (personal communication, April 22, 2014). This has been a challenge for her because of the way boys and girls were groomed differently, "boys were groomed to speak up for their families, be the voice of their

family in the village and in the district, and by extension in Parliament. Whereas women they didn't have that, they didn't have to know how to speak to an audience," (personal communication, April 22, 2014). Samoan children are raised to be quiet and serve their elders, a characteristic that may carry over into their adult lives. Tea is an assistant CEO within the government and notes how women's role of quiet service is echoed in their professional careers as well.

From what I've seen of Parliamentarians they got in there by their talking skills. So that's where I think the difference is. There's less women that talk. Because essentially, while CEOs are at the top of the organization, their offices are still doing what the Minister wants, especially for government CEOs. So it's still a serving role. (T. T. Afamasaga-Wright, personal communication, April 22, 2014)

But in Parliament a woman needs to know how to speak for herself, and especially be outspoken and poised enough to have her voice heard over those of over 40 men. This is a rare trait to find among Samoan women, because although most have a strong voice in their families and interpersonal relationships, in the village the women's councils answer with one voice as a group. *Matai* in a council speak as individuals to advocate on behalf of their families, as is the case in Parliament where each man speaks with one voice on behalf of a constituency; one role lends itself to the other.

The women who can manage to cultivate the traditional oratory knowledge also need to know how to wield this tool carefully, especially as the minority gender. Women in Parliament have found there are times to be outspoken and other times when being an unobtrusive supporter is best. Fiame discussed how, as sometimes the sole female voice, she needed to take a position on something without threatening others (personal communication, April 25, 2014). This does not seem to be as much of a concern for the men who are used to communicating freely amongst

each other. Both current female MPs mentioned the sort of jokes that their male colleagues carry on with separate from the women, “We get on, they respect me, many times we talk, but I think at times men they do have their own jokes and I prefer not to go that way,” (G. A. Alesana-Gidlow, personal communication, April 23, 2014). Women facing these scenarios for the first time could benefit from the mentorship of experienced women on how to master their oratory skills.

IV. Implications for the Future

-Mentorship-

Many of the aforementioned limitations for women such as coming from a political family or difficulties getting involved at the village level can be assuaged or lightened with the support of mentors willing to aid and educate. To motivate future generations of leaders, perceptions of women’s capabilities must grow. Gatoloifaana Afamasaga, a lifelong educator, believes that the idea of Parliamentary politics is separated from young people’s realities, and that most do not think of politics as a powerful system. To give children the opportunity to understand the impact of national government the Ministry of Education and the Legislative Assembly have tried encouraging trips and tours of Parliament, but school participation has been low (T. T. Afamasaga-Wright, personal communication, April 22, 2014). Unfortunately strong networks of guidance or support for adult women looking to enter politics are also lacking.

If I answer honestly there is not much apart from your teacher your mother and perhaps your employer. But a mentor as such I don’t think there is much available... I truly think women have a lot to share with each other but there hasn’t been an avenue where we can formally do that or perhaps even informally. Because a lot of young girls want advice but they don’t have

anybody from the outside, and we need to have that sort of service available for our young girls. (G. A. Alesana-Gidlow, personal communication, April 23, 2014)

Tea who is hoping to enter politics claims a mentor would be very helpful, but that she does not have one, and neither do any of her likeminded female friends (personal communication, April 22, 2014). Former MP Safuneituuga wrote that in the 2006 elections she was pleased with the positive encouragement she received from many men but was disappointed by the weak support from fellow women (Fepuleai, 2006, p. 38). Dr. Kerslake has tried to set up informal meetings for women in need of a political network but none of the women who claimed interest attended (personal communication, April 25, 2014). The Samoan Association of Women Graduates (SWAG) has held lecture series for women in leadership in the past but has not been active recently (G. T. Afamasaga, personal communication, April 22, 2014). Another group, Women in Leadership Advocacy (WILA) is composed of the female Parliamentarians (Fiame is Chair) and women CEOs in the government ministries, but their primary focus thus far has been women's health awareness not leadership or politics specifically (F. N. Mata'afa, personal communication, April 25, 2014). These sorts of active groups and mentorship programs are important for women because, in the words of Manu, although, "women go through the same agonies as the men who run, the men are prepared because their minds have been set on it for a long time" (personal communication, April 17, 2014). During the 2006 elections the most promising mentorship resource for women appeared in the form of the *Inailau* Women's Leadership Network, which ran programs for the female candidates that year. Not surprisingly 2006 saw the best success rates for women Parliamentarians. After 2006 Fiame became Minister of Women, Community and Social Development, which she said put her in a precarious position for promoting women's political programs.

I think we might have dropped the ball a little bit on that one. So the lesson is for me is we really need to do it constantly and for each election, and build on it. There is the big question of why there was such a big drop after the election in 2011 and I think it is significant that we did not run the program that we did in 2006. (F. N. Mata'afa, personal communication, April 25, 2014)

Fiame also notes the downturn in the economy as another reason more women did not run for political candidacy in 2011, especially considering such large campaign expenses and the lack of job security Parliament provides (personal communication, April 25, 2014). Hopefully the *Inailau* Network will be up and running again soon as the 2016 elections are fast approaching. With MPs such as Fiame and Gatoloaifaana who are enthusiastic about helping the next generation of women in politics, an active network of support such as *Inailau* could be just the solution for women struggling to make political headway.

-Impact of the Quota System-

Every woman interviewed supported the new quota Amendment as a positive opportunity for women in politics. The clear consensus was that the quota system was a good thing for the women of Samoa, and for the national government at large to have more balanced decision making. Vaasilifiti was one respondent who did express some trepidation; as an outspoken woman she felt that entering Parliament through the quota system would set her up for verbal character attacks from male Members (personal communication, April 23, 2014). Manu conveyed excitement for the new law even though she says her days as a candidate are over. If the mandate had been in place for the 2011 elections then Fuimaono Te'i, Safuneituuga, and Manu would have been the three added MPs based on number of votes (M. T. Naseri, personal communication, April 17, 2014). For those who will run in upcoming years, they are pleased the

government is giving women more opportunities to contribute to national politics, but it will not be the sole impetus for them running.

It removes a little bit of the risk element. I guess it's a little bit comforting, but it's not a determining factor. I think men and women choose to go for different reasons and the Amendment tips the scales to encourage more women to go. Women need a lot more encouragement than men to even consider going into Parliament. (T. T. Afamasaga-Wright, personal communication, April 22, 2014)

Also encouraging for women is a new statistic by Fiamme comparing the success rate of women candidates to the success rate of male candidates. In 2011 one of every five women running obtained a seat and one of every seven male candidates received seats (F. N. Mata'afa, personal communication, April 25, 2014). This piece of data is highly vulnerable to the fact that so many more men ran compared to only nine female contenders, but it does mean that although less women do run, when they do they are more likely to succeed. Fiamme explains even though the system was put in place to ensure that in 2016 the numbers would not plummet to one female MP or none, it will still stimulate recruitment of female candidates. There have been predictions for many more female candidates in the next election and even some villages considering nominating a woman to increase their chances of getting a representative into Parliament from their village (T. T. Afamasaga-Wright, personal communication, April 22, 2014). With five or more women well positioned to be elected naturally, it is possible that the special measure will not be necessary for the upcoming election.

In line with the new Amendment, the government has been organizing forums to encourage and educate women on the new opportunity available to them come 2016. So far the UNDP has hosted one Parliamentarian information session for women active in the government ministries and influential in other private sector departments. The women took a tour of

Parliament House and heard a speech by the Attorney General on what the 10% provision can mean for them. The women were also given copies of *The Candidates Handbook* (See excerpts in Appendices D & G), which for the first time provides them with tangible information on what it means to run for an election. Women have struggled in the past because they are not equipped with the necessary information to succeed (S. M. Maualaivao, personal communication, March 18, 2014); for example a candidate registry does not get released until 2 months before elections, so for most of their campaign women may not be informed of who they are running against (T. T. Afamasaga-Wright, personal communication, April 22, 2014). Although these women are still in need of training and networking, Gatoloaifaana feels that the word should really be getting out to the village women at the grassroots level. “We need to take it out to the community so that the women are aware of what [the quota] is for, for them to make the most of this opportunity. In order for the policy to be of full benefit you’ve got to make the people [who it was designed to benefit] aware of it, otherwise there was no point in making that policy,” (G. A. Alesana-Gidlow, personal communication, April 23, 2014). She wants the next forum to reach a wider scope of women so that awareness can, “open up the eyes of the women to their importance, to their importance in society, their input. I think it’s going to open up the women’s thinking; that they can be much more than just a support for the man and his decision making, she can also be the decision maker,” (G. A. Alesana-Gidlow, personal communication, April 23, 2014). On a personal level Gatoloaifaana is eager for more female comrades in Parliament, but mostly is looking forward to the influx of new opinions to stir up debates and balance law making (personal communication, April 23, 2014). Fiamē hopes that the increased awareness for female leadership will spurn five or more women representatives, so that Samoa may one day elect many women without intervention from legislation (personal communication, April 25, 2014).

Analysis

The current gender imbalance within the Samoan legislature cannot hope to justly represent the interests of society as a whole. Interviews and secondary research suggest a pattern of double-binds for Samoan women entering political leadership, or the need for a woman in political leadership to meet particular criteria and be “the perfect package.” In other words the challenges women face entering politics far surpass the challenges facing men who pursue the same roles. Practical campaign and career concerns, that both male and female politicians encounter, impact the women differently because such structures are tailored for men. Cultural and circumstantial barriers limit women’s access to village support, traditional leadership knowledge, and mentorship, especially for women who lack political or familial connections. Women are not exposed to *matai* language and protocol from a young age unless they come from political or prominent families. To seek achievement and growth as leaders women leave their villages and sometimes Samoa for educational and professional opportunities, thus losing ties to more sources of traditional knowledge and ties to their village and extended family in general. Although success and service to the family through career achievement garners women *matai* titles, these are typically in name only and do not necessitate one’s ability to sit and contribute to local governing bodies such as *matai* council meetings. Women often feel daunted to participate in council meetings dominated by men due to lack of traditional leadership and oratory skills as aforementioned. Those who gain such knowledge and contribute meaningfully to their village governance may consider campaigning for a national role in politics. The confidence to do so could stem from the status of their family in the community or political involvement of their family in the past. Without these links a woman lacks mentorship outlets to assist her when faced with practical campaign struggles including, but not limited to, gender based prejudices and

election corruption. Some special cases of women meet the unwritten preconditions deemed suitable for their sex's participation in Parliament. These are the candidates most likely to succeed over other women.

The newly instated provision guaranteeing 10% of Parliamentary seats for women will bolster female political involvement in the upcoming 2016 elections. However, much more needs to be done to address the cultural and tangible obstacles to women as political leaders. Respondents felt that a network of support from fellow women, especially politically active women who can serve as mentors, would be a positive first step in addressing the constraints they face.

Conclusion

The challenges to women in political leadership in Samoa are extensive and interconnected. Cultural preconceptions of traditional female roles and responsibilities to spouses and children keep political aspirations at bay for many women. Campaign corruption and want of money impacts others as well. Perhaps the largest limitation for Samoan women in politics, which is true to a lesser degree for men as well, is *matai* title status and the traditional status of their family within their village community. Women with paramount titles and from families with strong political backgrounds have historically been the main group of women allowed access to Parliamentary seats. Community and village involvement is exceedingly important for women looking to gain support for a campaign. However, certain factors limit a woman's ability to get involved at the village level as a *matai*. Women often disconnect from their villages to pursue educational and career endeavors and find it challenging to reconnect. Some women are

not permitted and many more feel uncomfortable participating in village council meetings which are predominately male and follow particular cultural protocol. This protocol and the way of speaking (oratory) in the *fono* are often observed by young men of the village who serve the *matai* meetings, but are rarely shared with young women of the village. These separations limit women's access to traditional knowledge, and later village support as a *matai*, and potentially as a candidate for Parliament. There is a lack of educational opportunities available that encourage young women to think of themselves as potential leaders, or to introduce them to the concept of national politics. This leaves political knowledge mostly in the hands of those introduced to the idea through their political families. Primary or Secondary school field trips to the Parliament have recently been tried and if continued would be a fairly simple way to familiarize youth with the impact national government has on their lives and on their country.

Not much information is available regarding women's history in Parliament in Samoa. Much less exists on women who have attempted to run for Parliament but have been unsuccessful. This research contributed to that need of information gathering and awareness. Researcher Measina Meredith at the National University of Samoa is Project Coordinator of a study currently being done on, "Political Representation and Women's Economic Empowerment in Samoa." This study has contributed her larger project through the sharing of informant contact information (See Appendix H). Such contact information will also be distributed amongst all study participants so that they might begin to network amongst themselves and seek or give mentorship and support as needed. More educational programs for professional women, such as the forum put on by the UNDP will go a long way in introducing women to the opportunities available to them, and equip them with knowledge based tools to succeed. Gatoloaifaana's idea of empowerment for women at the village level is also a good way to inform Samoan women on

the new laws in place for them. A hope is that the involved women continue to build on the *Inailau* Women's Leadership Network to make it a valuable resource for female candidates in 2016. As for candidates running in 2016, the women should go back to their villages and get deeply involved. A good first step is to start consistently attending every village council. They will need to put personal trepidations aside and make themselves a present force within the meetings. Lastly, candidates ought to reach out to other women, especially those who have gone through the same processes they themselves are going through, for wisdom and advice. A proper mentorship network of women supporting women has the capacity to create real impact in a small national community such as Samoa.

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Glossary of Terms

fa'amatai (in the way of the chiefs)

matai (chief)

fono (council or meeting)

fa'asamoa (in the way of Samoa; Samoan culture)

faletua ma tausi (wives of chiefs)

aualuma (daughters of the village)

aumaga (untitled men)

tamaiti (children)

vā (sacred space between the creator and the created)

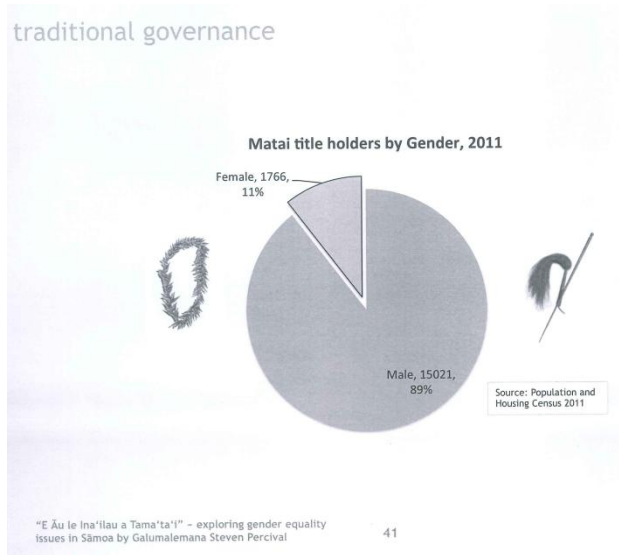
palagi (non-Samoan/foreigner)

Aso Gafua (Monday)

faife'au (church pastor)

Appendices

Appendix A:



Source: Percival, Galumalemana Steven. "A Profile of Gender in Samoa: Selected statistical graphs and gender issues compiled." April 2013.

Appendix B:

Political Development 69

Table 2: Women in politics in Samoa, 1961–2011

Parliaments	No. of Candidates	No. of Successful candidates	Success rate (%)	Members of parliament %	Deputy Speaker	Cabinet Minister
1961–63	0	0	0	0	0	0
1964–66	1	0	0	0	0	0
1967–69	0	0	0	0	0	0
1970–72	3	1	00.09	2.1	1	0
1973–75	2	2	100.00	4.2	0	0
1976–78	5	2	40.00	4.2	0	0
1979–81	5	1	20.00	2.1	0	0
1982–84	5	1	20.00	2.1	0	0
1985–87	4	2	50.00	4.2	0	0
1988–90	5	1	20.00	2.1	0	1
1991–95	4	2	50.00	4.1	0	1
1996–00	9	5	56.00	10.2	0	1
2001–05	10	3	30.00	6.1	0	2
2006–10	22	5	23.00	10.2	0	3
2011–15	10	2	20.00	4.1	0	1

Source: Records of the Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. The numbers include women who contested by-elections.

Source: L.M. Meleisea, P.S. Meleisea, & E. Meleisea (Eds.). (2012). *Samoa's Journey 1962-2012*. (pp. 69). National University of Samoa: Victoria University Press.

Appendix C:

WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT OF SAMOA**13 Members:****List of Members**

1. Taulapapa Faimaala – (Palauli Sisifo: 1970 & 1973)
2. Aiono Fanaafi – (Aana Alofi No. 1: 1985)
3. Matatumua Maimoaga – (Aana Alofi No. 1: 1982 & 1991)
4. Maiava Visekota – (Aana Alofi No. 1: 1996)
5. Fagafagamanualii Theresa – (Aana Alofi No. 2: 2001)
6. Fuimaono Na’oia Te’I – (Falealili: 2006)
7. Laulu Fetauimalemau – (Lotofaga: 1975 & 1979)
8. Fiame Naomi – (Lotofaga: 1985 up to date)
9. Gatoloai Faana Amataga – (Faasaleleaga No. 1: 2006 & 2011)
10. Iiga Suafole – (Faasaleleaga No. 4: 1976)
11. Tuala Tiresa – (Gagaa’emauga No. 1: 1996)
12. Safuneituuga Paaga Neri – (Gagaifomauga No. 2: 2001 & 2006)
13. Annandale Sina - (Individual Vote: 1976)

Note:

O Faimaala na sau i Iona suafa Taulapapa i le 1970 ae suafa Leaupepe ile 1973.

Source: Library of the Legislative Assembly (23 April 2014).

Appendix D:

14. AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

June 2013 was another milestone into the history of Samoa when an Amendment was made to the Constitution of the Independent State of Samoa, to provide for a minimum number of women Members of Parliament. Details are as follows:

1. Short title and commencement- (1) This Act may be cited as the Constitution Amendment Act 2013 and shall be read with and form part of the Constitution.

(2) Except for section 2, this Act commences on the date of assent by the Head of State.

(3) Section 2 commences on polling day of the next general election as appointed by the Head of State under Article 64 of the Constitution.

2. Members of the Legislative Assembly- In Article 44 of the Constitution:

(a) in clause (1), for “The” substitute “Subject to the provisions of this Article, the” and

(b) after clause (1), insert:

“(1A) Subject to this Article, women Members of the Legislative Assembly shall:

(a) Consist of a minimum of 10% of the Members of the Legislative Assembly specified under clause (1) which for the avoidance of doubt is presently five (5); and

(b) Be elected pursuant to clause (1) or become additional Members pursuant to clause (1B), (1D) or (1E).

(1B) If, following any general election:

(a) All members elected under clause (1) are men, the prescribed number of women Candidates (if any) with the highest number of votes shall become additional Members; or

(b) Less than the prescribed number of women candidates are elected under clause (1), the remaining prescribed number of women candidates (if any) with the highest number of votes shall become additional Members for the purposes of clause (1A)

(1C) Clause (1B) does not apply if the prescribed number of women are all elected under clause (1).

(1D) If the seat of an additional Member becomes vacant, it shall, despite Article 48, be filled by the woman candidate (if any) who has the next highest number of votes at the last election or general election.

(1E) Subject to Article 48, if a seat under clause (1) held by a woman becomes vacant, to which a man is elected to fill that vacant seat, the woman candidate (if any) with the highest number of votes from that election or the last election or general election shall become the additional Member.

(1F) If, in the selection of the required number of women under clause (1B), (1D) or (1E), two (2) or more candidates have equal number of votes, the additional member shall be selected by lot before the Electoral Commissioner with the presence of the candidates or their authorised representatives and at least two (2) police officers.

(1G) If a woman candidate becomes an additional Member of a constituency (irrespective of a woman candidate being elected to that constituency), no other woman candidate from the same constituency shall become an additional Member unless

there is no other woman candidate from any constituency to make up the required prescribed number”; and

(c) for clause (4), substitute “(4) Members of the Legislative Assembly (including Additional Members) shall be known as Members of the Parliament”; and

(d) after clause (4), insert:

“(5) In this Article, unless the context otherwise requires:

“Additional Member” means a woman who is a Member of Parliament by virtue of Clause (1B), (1D) or (1E) for the purposes of clause (1A);

“Highest number of votes” means the percentage of the total valid votes in a constituency polled by a woman candidate;

“Prescribed number” means the minimum number of women Members of Parliament specified under clause (1A)”

Source: Maualaivao, Mele. (2014). *Candidates Handbook*. Office of the Electoral Commissioner.

Appendix E:

WOMEN IN POLITICS SAMOA 1961- to date

Term of Office	General/Bi-Election Years	No.	Names	Territorial Constituency	Member of Parliament	Candidate	Number of Votes	Remarks
1 st	GE-1961		None					3 yrs term
2 nd	GE-1964	1	LEAFINE Satia	Faasaleleaga No.3		Candidate	40	3 yrs term
3 rd	GE-1967		None					3 yrs term
4 th	GE-1970	2	TAULAPAPA Faimaala	Palauli West	MP			Elected unopposed from Palauli West
		3	IIGA Suafole	Faasaleleaga No.4		Candidate	30	
		4	SEUPULE Feenuu	Sagaga Le Falefa		Candidate	8	
5 th	GE-1973	5	LEAUPEPE Faimaala	AanaAlofi No.1	MP		102	Also known as TaulapapaFaimaala
	BiE.-1975	6	LAULU Fetauimalemau	Lotofaga	MP			Unopposed bi-election 30/8/1975
6 th	GE-1976	7	LEAUPEPE Faimaala	AanaAlofi No.1		Candidate	92	3 yrs term
		8	LAULU Fetauimalemau	Lotofaga		Candidate	37	3yrs term
		9	IIGA Suafole	Faasaleleaga No.4	MP		57	3yrs term
		10	TUALA Tiresa	Gagaemauga No.1		Candidate	31	3yrs term
		11	ANNANADALE Sina Hope Nelson	Individual Voters	MP		375	3 yrs term
7 th	GE-1979	12	LAULU Fetauimalemau	Lotofaga	MP		85	3yrs term
		13	AIONO Fanaafi	AanaAlofi No.1		Candidate	94	3yrs term
		14	TUALA Tiresa	Gagaemauga No.1		Candidate	98	3yrs term
		15	MOORE Francis Isabella	Individual Voters		Candidate	103	3yrs term
		16	MOORE Georgina Cecilia	Individual Voters		Candidate	158	3yrs term
8 th	GE-1982	17	MATATUMUA Maimoaga	AanaAlofi No.1	MP		131	3yrs term
		18	TAGALOA Kuinimere	Vaimauga East		Candidate	44	3yrs term
		19	AIONO Fanaafi	AanaAlofi No.1		Candidate	84	3yrs term
Term of Office	General/Bi-Election Years	No.	Names	Territorial Constituency	Member of Parliament	Candidate	Number of Votes	Remarks

		20	LAULU Fetuaimalemu	Lotofaga		Candidate	71	3yrs term
		21	TAITO Sieni	Gagaifomau No.1		Candidate		3yrs term
9 th	GE-1985	22	AIONO Fanaafi	AanaAlofi No.1	MP		121	3yrs term
		23	FIAME Naomi	Lotofaga	MP		82	3yrs term
		24	MATATUMUA Maimoaga	AanaAlofi No.1		Candidate	71	3yrs term
		25	TUALA Tiresa	Gagaemauga No.1		Candidate	89	3yrs term
10 th	GE-1988	26	FIAME Naomi	Lotofaga	MP		72	3yrs term
		27	AIONO Fanaafi	AanaAlofi No.1		Candidate	121	3yrs term
		28	MATATUMUA Maimoaga	AanaAlofi No.1		Candidate	112	3yrs term
		29	VAASILI Moelagi	Faasaleleaga No.1		Candidate	41	3yrs term
		30	FAALOTO Tupu	Faasaleleaga No.4		Candidate	115	3yrs term
11 th	GE-1991	31	FIAME Naomi	Lotofaga	MP		440	5yrs term
		32	MATATUMUA Maimoaga	AanaAlofi No.1	MP		425	5yrs term
		33	TUATO LetiTufuga	Palauli West		Candidate	444	5yrs term
		34	FEPULEAI Naifoua	Palauli Le Falefa		Candidate	320	5yrs term
12 th	GE-1996	35	AIONO Fanaafi	AanaAlofi No.1		Candidate	100	5yrs term
		36	AIONO Sia	AanaAlofi No.1		Candidate	234	5yrs term
		37	MATATUMUA Maimoaga	AanaAlofi No.1		Candidate	125	5yrs term
		38	TUILAIPA Niuisila	Aiga I le Tai		Candidate	13	5yrs term
		39	TOFAONO Anufesaina	Siumu	MP		406	Defeated petition election
		40	TUALA FalenaotiTiresa	Gagaemauga No.1	MP		613	
		41	TAVUI Lene	Satupaitea	MP		405	Defeated Petition election
		42	FIAME Naomi	Lotofaga	MP		451	
BIE		43	MAIAVA Visekota	AanaAlofi No.1	MP		1100	Bi-election
13 th	GE-2001	44	FIAME Naomi	Lotofaga	MP		363	5yrs term
		45	AIONO Fanaafi	AanaAlofi No.1		Candidate	128	
Term of Office	General/Bi-Election Years	No.	Names	Territorial Constituency	Member of Parliament	Candidate	Number of Votes	Remarks
		46	MAIAVA Visekota	AanaAlofi No.1		Candidate	154	5yrs term
		47	FAGAFAGAMANUALII	AanaAlofi No.3	MP		525	5yrs term

			Therese Mc Cathy					
		48	SUA Sulia	Lefaga&Faleaseela		Candidate	580	5yrs term
		49	TAPUSALAI Afaatonu	Siumu		Candidate	95	5yrs term
		50	UNASA EseSioVaeau	Faasaleleaga NU.3		Candidate	95	5yrs term
		51	TUALA FalenaotiTiresa	Gagaemauga Nu.1		Candidate	504	5yrs term
		52	SAFUNAITUJUGA PaagaNeri	Gagaifomau Nu.2	MP		525	5yrs term
		53	SILVA Elaine Meleane	Individual Voters		Candidate	335	5yrs term
14 th	GE-2006	54	FUJMAONO Avaioimoasina	VaimaugaSasae		Candidate	28	5yrs term
		55	FESOLAI LogolematagiTepaToloo	AanaAlofi Nu.1		Candidate	222	5yrs term
		56	MAIAVA VisekotaPeteru	AanaAlofi Nu.1		Candidate	460	5yrs term
		57	FAGAFAGAMANUALII Therese McCarthy	AanaAlofi Nu.3		Candidate	246	5yrs term
		58	MANU TaialofoTuitofaNaseri	AanaAlofi Nu.3		Candidate	238	5yrs term
		59	SEVE LeuRutaTofaeono	Safata		Candidate	219	5yrs term
		60	FUJMAONO Gaoia TEI	Falealili	MP		1065	5yrs term
		61	FIAME Naomi Mataafa	Lotofaga	MP		481	5yrs term
		62	LETIU ElisapetaTali Lee	Aleipaltitupa I Luga		Candidate	23	5yrs term
		63	GATOLOAIFAANA AmatagaAlesanaGidlow	Faasaleleaga Nu.1	MP		710	5yrs term
		64	TUALA FalenaotiTiresaMalletoa	Gagaemauga Nu.1		Candidate	103	5yrs term
		65	SAFUNAITUJUGA PaagaNeri	Gagaifomau Nu.2	MP		404	5yrs term
		66	MAMEA Minnie LofaTumanuao	Gagaifomau Nu.2		Candidate	109	5yrs term
		67	MANUTA Lavamaille	Gagaifomau Nu.2		Candidate	69	5yrs term
		68	POLATAIVAO IlaMatagi	Gagaifomau Nu.3		Candidate	77	5yrs term
		69	GISA Fuatai Purcell	Falealupo		Candidate	66	5yrs term
Term of Office	General/Bi-Election Years	No.	Names	Territorial Constituency	Member of Parliament	Candidate	Number of Votes	Remarks
		70	LEILUA Tutogi	PalauliSisifo		Candidate	148	5yrs term
		71	LAULU IanetaTuiLaulu	PalauliSasae		Candidate	544	5yrs term

		72	SILVA Elaine Meleane	Individual Voter		Candidate	100	5yrs term
	Bi-Election 22.9.2006	73	LEOTA Rita Pau	Faasaleleaga Nu.2	MP		540	5yrs term
		74	GALUMALEMANA Netina	Faasaleleaga Nu.2		Candidate		5yrs term
	Bi-Election 6-10-2006	75	LETIU Elisapeta	Aleipaltitupa I Lalo		Candidate		5yrs term
15 th	G.E 2011 March 4 th	76	FIAME Naomi Mataafa	Lotofaga	MP		469	5yrs term
		77	GATOLOAIFAANA AmatagaAlesanaGidlow	Faasaleleaga Nu.1	MP		817	5yrs term
	BiE-2011, 29 July	78	ALAIASA Elena	AnoamaaSasae		Candidate	58	5yrs term
	G.E	79	ALAIFEA Laititi Belford	Falealili		Candidate	550	5yrs term
		80	MANU TaialofasNaseri	AanaAlofi Nu.3		Candidate	252	5yrs term
		81	FALAILA VaiulaSialao	Falealili		Candidate	660	5yrs term
		82	FUJMAONO GaoiaTei	Falealili		Candidate	1023	5yrs term
		83	MANUTA LavamailleUesile	Gagaifomau Nu.2		Candidate	117	5yrs term
		84	SAFUNAITUJUGA MOAFANUA PaagaNeri	Gagaifomau Nu.2		Candidate	409	5yrs term

Source: Library of the Legislative Assembly (23 April 2014).

Appendix F:

Sample of Structured Interview Questions:

1. What years did you run/serve in Parliament? What position(s) did you hold?
2. What *matai* titles do you hold and in what villages?
 - a. How often do you sit in on your village council meetings?
 - b. Are there other women who sit in your meetings as well?
 - c. Why do not more women sit in?
 - d. How important do you feel sitting in council is for women?
3. What constituency did you run in?
 - a. Did you have the support of you family and village?
 - b. Did you have the support of a particular political party?
 - c. Are you married/singe/widowed? Do you have children? How do you balance your family life with career goals?
4. Do you come from a political family?
 - a. Is getting into politics different for a woman who does not come from a political family?
 - b. Did family status in your constituency impact your success/failure?
5. Did you face any challenges as a woman running for Parliament?
6. Did you experience corruption amongst Parliamentarian candidates?
7. Did/Do you face any challenges as a woman serving in Parliament?
8. How easy is it to voice your opinion as a part of the gender minority?
9. What are your thoughts/opinions on the new quota system?
 - a. How do you foresee the Amendment impacting the political future for Samoa and Samoan women?
10. Why do you think more Samoan women do not run for Parliament or involve themselves in politics?
11. Is there a network of support for Samoan women in or entering politics?
12. As a mentor, what advice would you offer a Samoan woman running for Parliament or entering politics for the first time?

Appendix G:

16. CORRUPT PRACTICES

96. (ii) Bribery: (1) In this section the terms “elector” and “voter” includes any person who has or claims to have a right to vote.

(2) Every person is guilty of a corrupt practice who commits the offence of bribery.

(3) Every person commits the offence of bribery who, directly or indirectly, by

himself/herself or by any other person on his/her behalf-

- (a) Gives money or procures any office to or for any elector or voter or to or any other person on behalf of any elector or voter or to or for any other person, in order to induce any elector or voter to vote or refrain from voting; or
- (b) Corruptly does any such act as aforesaid on account of any elector or voter having voted or refrain from voting; or
- (c) Makes any such gift or procurement as aforesaid to or for any person in order to induce that person to procure, or endeavour to procure the return of any person at an election or the vote of any elector or voter-
or who, upon or in consequence of any such gift or procurement as aforesaid, procures or engages, promises, or endeavours to procure, the return of any person at any election or the vote of any elector or voter.

(4) For the purpose of this section-

- (a) Reference to giving money shall include references to giving, lending, agreeing to give or lend, offering, promising, or promising to procure or endeavour to procure, any money or valuable consideration.
- (b) References to procuring any office shall include references to giving, procuring, agreeing to give or procure or to endeavour to procure, any office, place, or employment.

(5) Every person commits the offence of bribery who-

- (a) Advances or pays or causes to be paid any money to or the use of any other person with the intent that, that money or part thereof shall be expended in bribery at any election; or
- (b) Knowingly pays or causes to be paid any money to any person in discharge or repayment of any money wholly or in part expended in bribery at any election.

(6) The foregoing provisions of this section shall not extend or be construed to extend to any money paid or agreed to be paid for or on account of any legal expenses incurred in good faith at or concerning an election.

(7) An elector or voter commits the offence of bribery if before or during an election he/she directly or indirectly, by himself/herself or by any other person on his behalf, receives, or agrees or contract for, any money, gift, loan, or valuable consideration, office, place, or employment for himself or for any other person for voting or agreeing to vote or for refraining or agreeing to refrain from voting.

(8) Every person commits the offence of bribery if after an election he directly or indirectly, by himself or by any other person on his behalf, receives any money or valuable consideration on accounts of any person having voted or refrained from voting or having induced any other person to vote or refrain from voting.

97. (iii) Treating: (1) Every person is guilty of a corrupt practice who commits the offence of treating.

- (2) Every person commits the offence of treating who corruptly by himself/herself or by any other person on his/her behalf, either before, during, or after an election, directly or indirectly gives or provides, or pays wholly or in part of the expense of giving or providing any food, drink, entertainment, or provision to or for any person-
- (a) For the purpose of corruptly influencing that person or any other person to vote or refrain from voting; or
 - (b) For the purpose of corruptly procuring himself/herself to be elected; or
 - (c) On account of that person or any other person having voted or refrain from voting, or being about to vote or refrain from voting.
- (3) Every elector or voter who corruptly accepts or takes any such food, drink, entertainment, or provision also commits the offence of treating.

97A. (iv) Conduct of O’o and Momoli: (1) Despite the other provisions of this Act, the traditional presentation of “O’o” and “Momoli” by a Member or Candidate shall not be considered as treating or bribery or an illegal or corrupt activity or practice provided that the presentation is made within the period commencing with the 180th day and ending with the 90th day from expiry of the then Parliament at 5 years from the date of the last preceding General Elections.”

This part of the Act could change if the recommended amendments to the Act is approved by Parliament.

The Electoral Amendment Act 2009 provided a new provision 97B as “Tautua Fa’auau” as stated below:

97B. Conduct of Tautua Fa’auau – (1) Despite the other provisions of this Act, the traditional service or assistance of “tautua fa’auau” by a Member of Parliament or a person acting on behalf of such Member shall not be considered as treating or bribery or an illegal or corrupt activity or practice, where the service or assistance is given before 90 days from the expiry of Parliament at 5 years from the date of the last preceding General Elections.

(2) For the purposes of this section, “tautua fa’au’au” means the provision of service or assistance in any form or manner rendered or given to any person or organization provided such service or assistance:

- (a) is considered to be culturally appropriate or expected;
- (b) is not excessive in the circumstances; and
- (c) is not a “O’o” or “Momoli”

(3) This section does not apply to the provision of service or assistance at a funeral or to the Member of Parliament’s church minister.

Source: Maualaivao, Mele. (2014). *Candidates Handbook*. Office of the Electoral Commissioner.

Appendix H:

*Personal cell phone numbers have been deleted for privacy. Please contact the author for further information

Women willing to mentor:

Politicians-

*Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata'afa Minister of Justice, FMFM II Building; 24629; fiame@nus.edu.ws; naomimataafa@yahoo.com

*Hon. Gatoloaifaana Amataga Alesana-Gidlow, current MP

*Safuneituuga Paaga Neri Fepuleai; former MP and Cabinet Minister; Commission Member Public Service Commission, FMFM II; 22123/23522; spnfepuleai@psc.gov.ws

*Afioga Vaasilifiti Moelagi Jackson; candidate 1988; vaasilimj@gmail.com

*Galumalemana Netina; candidate 2006; Vailele

*Manu Taialofa Naseri; CEO Apia Employment Company, Le Sanalele Complex; candidate 2006 & 2011; 22743; apiaemployment@ipasifika.net

Others-

*Suisala Mele Maualaivao, Country Program Coordinator UN Women; 23670 ext 54 mele.maualaivao@unwomen.org

Dr. Maria T. Kerslake; Commission Member Public Service Commission, FMFM II 23522/22123; mkerslake@psc.gov.ws

Gatoloaifa'ana Tilianamua Afamasaga, Ministry of Women; tiliafamasaga@yahoo.com

Women in need of mentorship:

*Lutuiloa Vaiula Sialaoa-Solomona; CEO Apia Insurance; candidate 2011; 25500; insure@samoa.ws

Tea Tepora Afamasaga-Wright; Assistant CEO Qualifications Division at Samoa Qualifications Authority; 20976/26314; tepora.wright@sqa.gov.ws

Women I could not reach:

Politicians-

Aiono Fanafi, Former MP 1985; 31614/ 31615

*Laititi Belford, Ministry of Education; candidate 2011

Maiava Visekota Peteru, Maiava Law Firm; former MP 1996; maiavalaw@gmail.com

*Manuta Lavamaila; Ministry of Education; candidate 2006 & 2011