The Future of Women's Leadership in Samoa

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Abstract

Samoan legends and myths documented that matriarchal leadership existed prior to colonization and Christianity. Queen Salamasina, a woman was the first official tafa'ifā (holder of four paramount chiefly titles) in the history of the country. With the advent of the missionaries matriarchal leadership was gradually superseded by male leadership, firstly by Christian missionaries in 1830, and later by colonial powers after World War 2. Even after Samoa became independent in 1962 leadership positions in families, churches, government, and organizations and culturally have predominantly been males. Aspiring women to leadership positions have met with many obstacles. As such the need for gender equality in participation and representation in traditional village judiciaries (local government) is the focus of this article. The many challenges that impede Samoan women entering leadership positions in local government are influenced by cultural values, religious beliefs, and social assumptions. Cultural values are considered significant as people's perception of a leader is equated to male leadership embedded in a village's cultural norm. Religious beliefs also emphasized the role of the father as the head of the family to further reinforce cultural restrictions on women access to leadership positions. Social assumptions that associate women's work with household tasks contributed to this belief. Consequently, women participation is on the periphery evident in women's committees but full participation in village councils (fono a le nu'u) are barred.
Keywords: matriarchal, leadership, challenges, participation

Samoan Leadership Issues

As the world entered into the 21st century women empowerment was gradually being recognized globally and also in small islands states like Samoa. Though the challenges were many and there continued to be hurdles to overcome, this only proved the Samoa axiom "*e au le inailau a tamaita'i*.

Cross-examining the extent which limited women's opportunities for authority and power in Samoa could bring to light obstacles that would ease the access of women in traditional village communities. Women encountered inequity in striving for leadership positions that are firmly entrenched and rooted in family leaders' (matai) predominant preference for males. Significantly, local governments endorsed male appointments through the establishment of cultural structures and social systems to curb potential women leaders. Religious beliefs that emphasized the position of the father as leader of the family sanctioned deep seated mentality of honoring males. Consequently, women are being forced to become peaceful activist in their desire to ensure their struggle is the struggle for all prospective women leaders'.

The significance of the Samoan leader's role is fundamental in the administration, implementation, and monitoring of village affairs (Iati 2000). Matai held the highest portfolio and took control of the judiciary in traditional village societies, a legal forum as practiced in the nineteenth century when chiefs were responsible for keeping order without an official central government (Davidson 1970).
The local government as it was known consisted of chiefly and oratory matai depending on the status of the title bestowed by respective extended families (Keesing & Keesing 1956). This decision-making forum was dominated by males due to women debarment from holding matai titles, and their refusal to

allow women's participation in local government meetings (Centre for Samoan Studies 2015). These so called erected barriers were attributed to cultural, religious, and social conventions.

Out of 240 traditional villages 41 do not confer matai titles to women. In addition, 34 villages do not allow resident female matai to participate in village council meetings or *fono* (Centre for Samoan Studies 2015). The Village Fono Act 1990 was legislated to give state recognition the importance of the village fono to local governance. Overall, less than 10% of the matai population in Samoa were women in 2011 (Sāmoa Bureau of Statistics 2015). These figures revealed the essence of two major impediments. Firstly, the authority of local government curtailed extended families from selecting women leaders and furthermore confined women heirs' access to family titles they belong to. Secondly, this discrimination hinders opportunities for women matai to become national leaders. In the general election of 2016 only five of the 49 parliamentary seats were occupied by women. Four were respective winners of their constituencies in the general election, and one was appointed as a result of the 10% allocation for women representatives, in response to Goal 3 of the Millenium Development Goals and Beyond 2015 (United Nations @ UNDP 2005). The figure, 10% is alarmingly low, considering the fact that women make up 48% of the country's total population (Sāmoa Bureau of Statistics 2015).

Historically, Samoan people have had a tradition of female chiefs as traditional leaders (Gunson 1987). The war goddess and female warrior Nāfanua, ruled some constituencies of the country, and Queen Salamasina, the original holder of the four paramount chiefly titles (tafa'ifā) gained sovereign control of the nation for more than 40 years (Meleisea 1987). Women supported their male kin during the colonial period to demonstrate unity that Samoa would one day be ruled by Samoans. They established their own Mau movement in 1930 against the New Zealand administration, irrespective of the harsh circumstances (MacQuoid 1995). The Women's Mau Movement appealed to the United Nations Organisations to grant independence for Samoa in support of the national petition filed by chiefs and orators. The success of the petition was evident when Samoa gained independence on January 1st 1962.

Women gained their strength from the ultimate Samoan philosophy, *feagaiga*, the covenant between sisters and brothers (MacQuoid 1995). Under the *feagaiga* relationship, brothers were obligated to serve and protect their sisters as well as any of their offsprings for life (Holme & Holme 1992). Women defendec their traditional *feagaiga* relationship to ensure family harmony and peace was maintained. With the arrival of the missionaries and colonial powers the traditional system was gradually eroded (Schoeffel 1979). The missionary and colonial eras saw changes in the social systems, and many of diminished the status of Samoan women. The leadership authority that had been equivalent to the chiefs and orators dissolved as a result of women's lesser rank. Alterations of some characteristics of the traditional Samoan culture were made when Christianity replaced the Samoan indigenous religion (Kamu 1996).

Women's leadership in Samoan village communities is neither recognized nor acknowledged due to cultural restrictions, religious beliefs, social assumptions, and the patriarchal nature of the administration of local government. Women leaders in women's committees are not usually consulted in the decision-making of village councils (Quay 2006). Therefore, the Samoan cultural system failed to acknowledge the existence of women leaders, since the expectation was that the village council was an all-male operation (Schoeffel 2015). However, in spite of the male-dominated leadership traditions,

women spearheaded avenues to strengthen leadership empowerment (Samoa Women Empowerment Project Report 2015). Women had training on basic sewing, tailoring, weaving, cooking, stencil design, fabric printing, floristry, maintaining cleanliness and hygiene, financial literacy, and child protection (Ministry of Women, Community & Social Development 2013-2014). Income-generating activities utilized the skills obtained to improve the financial status of families and people's living standards. Furthermore, women took the lead in safety precautions regarding their children and family members. Their success was proof of their increased understanding of community issues and applicability to life essential requirements in leaders to serve society. Nevertheless, their dedication to the advancement of communities did not provide eligibility to participate in the village *fono* or government and were confined to women's committees.

Women believed they have the right to shared leadership in their own right as part of their traditional birthright (Gilson 1970). According to Gilson the traditional activities which recognised the importance of Samoan women were undermined by the missionaries in the 19th century. Since then, the high ranking power of females gradually diminished until the traditional administration of village communities came to be dominated by males (Silipa 2008). Women categorised themselves as servant leaders by practising the qualities underlined in the servant leadership model (Prichard 2013) which included, valuing diverse opinions, duplicating and repeating effective tasks, cultivating a culture of trust, developing other leaders, planning long term goals, selling and not telling the goals of the organisation, encouraging partnership, and acting with humility. Women do not pay much attention to being labelled as second ranking leaders (pule na lua) in the hierarchal structure of traditional village communities, but prioritised other people's needs first. They believed that enabling the full potential of others allowed the leader to make the most out of every situation (Chemers 1997).

In positioning myself as a Samoan female leader, I gauged that ambitious women leaders are under many constraints established and enforced by local governments. The influence of local government in the selection of family leaders compromised the integrity of the selection process, threatening and prejudicing the participation of women matai in village council meetings. Furthermore, not providing women with equal opportunities to access matai titles like men eliminated the traditional form of leadership (Meleisea 1987) prior to the advent of the colonial powers and Christianity. Meleisea's documentation of the Samoan history of leadership illustrated Samoa had a ruling queen of more than 40 years, demonstrating the matriarchal leadership nature of the Samoan society before contact with foreigners. Therefore, exploring the barriers that stop women from accessing authority and power in local government is one the fundamental issues warranting further discussions on general gender inequalities in Samoa.

The Legendary Samoan Woman

Samoan people have respect for the status of women in the hierarchical structure of traditional families and village communities. The dignitary connotations or *fa'alupega* denoting the prestigious standing of the Samoan woman or *tama'ita'i* Samoa is highly honoured, stable, and respected. This inference implies the sacredness of the female who holds a ceremonial clergy-like position or *ositaulaga*. Sacredness was noted by Burrows (1939) as the most important aspect of leadership. In fulfilling this

role, the tama'ita'i conducts a morning-prayer utilising the light from a coconut lamp or *molipopo* that complements embers or *aloiafi* from a 24 hour fire burnt in the middle of the house *magalafu* for the old people's Samoan tobacco. The prayer calls for the spirits of the ancestors to protect family members from enemies and accidents. If the family is preparing for a domestic battle or the village planning a civil war, the *tamaita'i* submits requests for the blessings and guidance of the ancestoral spirits. This role is done by the *tama'ita'i* in her capacity as the leader of the family. The argument made is that she is already a leader and should be involved in the decision making of local government. Unfortunately, male chiefs and orators are territorial in safeguarding village councils to protect their own interests.

Another Samoan ritual addressed the woman as the wealth-maker or *fai'oa* pertaining to weaving, crafting, and producing handicrafts. Traditionally, the standard of economy depended on the number of fine-mats, tapa and other handicrafts in the possession of families. These customary necessities were prepared for weddings, funerals, bestowment of a new matai title, opening of a new house, hosting guests, and other ceremonies. In present times, labouring for the family remains a service which should be considered in the recruitment of matai, similar to the labour of the untitled man or *taule'ale'a*. However, the service of the untitled man is regarded by many as a service, while the woman's labour is labelled a contribution. Unfortunately, these adverse influences were introduced during the colonisation and reinforced by Christianity.

A Samoan woman is known as the most sacred or *tamasa* of the siblings. The concept literally meant that no one was allowed to contravene or defy her. Likewise, it was taboo for the brothers to lay hands on her. Added to this is the notion of being the most privileged lady or *'augafa'apae*, the peace-maker or *pae ma le auli* who irons out differences and harmonizes people. The female is also the liberator or tausala who rescues her family from defeat in a battle. These cultural connotations denote the privileges of the Samoan woman that is observed and treasured. Nevertheless, women leaders can only lament the loss of these ceremonial addresses as they lose status and are ignored by male leaders of local government and the church. In my view, the highly-regarded status of women has been compromised and prevented them from leadership positions in families, churches, and politics. As servant leaders they provide service to village communities through a variety of skills and talents.

With reference to human rights, one of the weaknesses is how the Western concept is interpreted in other societies. It is problematic because the message conveyed could affect people's understanding of what human rights are. This may have caused local government to minimize and limit women's participation in decision making.

Perhaps males feel that giving equal opportunities to women would either threaten or weakens their power. Samoans view criticisms of the church and the matai system as incorporating the divine, the traditional, human rights or women's rights on human constructs. In this logic, the Bible and the divinity of the Bible are beneath the power of local government.

Samoa

Samoa's beginning is explained in the language of marriages, genealogy, and heritage. Samoan myths and legends articulated Tagaloaalagi as the original creator. He was the ultimate autonomy, antecedent, and premier of other gods and humans. However, archaeologists concluded after assessing the Lapita

pottery remains, that people initially settled in the Samoan group of islands at about 1500 B.C (Turner 1884).

Samoa is a set of nine volcanic islands, located in the southwest of the Pacific Ocean. The two larger islands of Upolu and Savai'i have a land area of 2,820 square kilometres and there are seven smaller islands scattered around the two relatively big islands. Apia is the capital of Samoa, and is located in the main island of Upolu. The country lies between latitudes 13 and 15 degrees, and longitudes 168 and 173 degrees west of the Tropic of Capricorn (Fox & Cumberland 1962). Samoa is renowned as the heart of Polynesian, from which familial ocean-going voyages navigated to all four directions of the Pacific Ocean (Te'o 2011). The government is a constitutional monarchy led with the Head of State appointed by Parliament on a five year term. In 2015, an amendment to the constitution ensured that the appointment of the Head of State was vested with the Cabinet. The two official languages are Samoan and English.

Background to Pacific Leadership

This explored the leadership strategies in traditional communities in the Pacific before any outside contacts. According to the literature, the traditional framing of leadership in Pacific islands is uniform in terms of maintaining the intact fundamental values and beliefs. In Tonga most communities preferred to maintain the monarchical system (Taufe'ulungaki 2009). Similarly, the Vugalei clan in Fiji believed in the notion of "i solisoli – a gift from some spiritual source, an ancestor, or some unspecified and often mystical source" (Nabobo-Baba 2009: 148). According to (Teaero 2009), all Pacific cultures have indigenous philosophies, theories, and metaphors incorporated into their leadership paradigms. These leadership paradigms are executed in ways that reflected the conservation of cultural values and beliefs. Significantly, the practicality of leadership traditions in local government in Samoa, and the interpretation of leadership traditions in debarring women leaders is questionable. It also scrutinised the traditional leadership values and beliefs of other Pacific islands to determine the boundaries that thwart women's leadership in general. Examples are drawn from two unique roles that signify the leadership prerogative of women before the introduction of the male leadership concept in the 19th century. Subsequently, the discussion featured transitional factors which led to the diminishing of women's leadership, resulting in the establishment and continuation of male leadership precedents. Links to similar scenarios are drawn from international contexts as well as Polynesian and Melanesian settings to determine the degree of suppression Pacific women experienced in their struggle for authority and power (Tamasese et al. 2005).

Samoan myths, genealogies, and traditional roles of women demonstrated the power attributed to them in the Samoan culture. Two significant core leadership roles of women were highly regarded and associated with specific responsibilities (Le Tagaloa 1996). Firstly, the female was considered the traditional priest *ositaulaga*, a role originally designated to the war goddess Nafanua (Williamson 2013). Hence, succeeding females inherit the *ositaulaga* role, personifying the spirit (mana) that guided, protected, and blessed daily activities of the family (Barclay 2005). According to Barclay Samoan females succeeded to the roles of a traditional healer or *taulāsea*, a person who leads in worship *ositaulaga,* peace maker *pae ma le 'āuli,* and health maker or *fai'oa*. These roles formed the foundation of professional nursing in Samoa (Barclay 2005: 206). Secondly, the female is esteemed as the covenant

feagaiga, the embodiment of the sacred relationship between the sister and brothers (Le Tagaloa 1996). The *feagaiga* relationship distinctly ascribed statuses and roles that are quite different, while being complementary. (Schoeffel 1979). This role assumed that the *feagaiga* finalised family decisions; rendering judgement irrespective of the circumstances. These fundamental leadership roles of Samoan females are now ceremonial (Maiava 2001), resulting in either diminished or halted the cessation of leadership privileges.

The colonial authorities destabilised women's leadership by establishing new types of leaders and power centres which contested islands' traditional systems in the 19th century (Feinberg & Watson-Gegeo 1996). These transitional structures confronted and threatened the traditional political leadership of the countries of Oceania. Furthermore, Christian missions overhauled the spiritual power that had often signified precedence in the old systems (Gustafsson 1992). These new systems did not acknowledge the Samoan myths and legends that documented the patriotic nature of women (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1996). Classic recorded examples of these included masterminding and executing civil war battles. Nafanua, the war goddess obtained four paramount chiefly titles (pāpā) as rewards of war victories (Isaia 1999). She contested leadership which required willpower, bravery, and perseverance. The legend, '*E au le inailau a tama'ita'i*' demonstrated the determination of women to compete and beat men in thatching and re-thatching, leaving men in embarrassment (Papali'i 2002). The myth from which the proverb, *'Ua fa'alava le Amoā'* emerged from Amoa's bravery in rescuing the people of Sa Tagaloa from Lu's mischievousness (Le Tagaloa 1996). In ancient times, Samoan females dedicated their lives to their families and the communities as evident in Amoa's determination to free her people. The holiness of the Samoan female as the *feagaiga* revealed dignity and legitimacy to the action of Amoa (Schoeffel 1995). The legacies of Nafanua and Amoa are told in Samoan myths and legends (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1996) to remind the present and future women about the leadership styles of Samoan women in the past. The leadership behaviour of these females and many others guaranteed the success of female leaders who participated in the administration of village communities in Samoa. However, females gradually withdrew in the wake of male matai (cultural title) domination.

A noteworthy feature of the appointment of Samoan leaders or matai is that anyone who is kin qualifies, regardless of gender or age (Holmes 1980). Nevertheless, gender is the most notable criterion that diminished women's chances of becoming a matai. The social notion of associating women with household tasks has influenced the selection of matai (Saolotoga 1995). The same supposition has affected women the world over in their battle for leadership position. Currently women are not selected for the top jobs in companies in the United States because those in senior positions contended women's family commitments would take precedence over their work responsibilities (Hoobler et al. 2011). In the same vein (Simpson 1997: 122) alluded stereotyping women into "role traps which includes the mother", a typecasting barrier that isolated women from management posts. Gender biases that regarded leadership qualities to be more suitable for men have endured and are hard to overturn in some organizational cultures (Schwanke 2013). In addition to gender bias is the influence of cultural norms which have resulted in some women's refusal to take leadership obligations (Akao 2008).

From the local to the global level it was evident that cultural, religious, and social barriers threatened the participation of women in positions of authority. Almost all cultures craft social distinctions between men and women and in many cases women's identities are compromised in social hierarchical systems
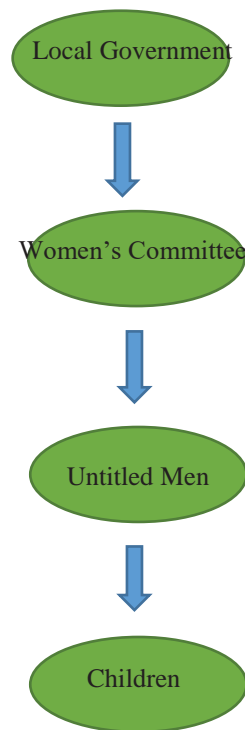
(Harris 1991). This incorporated certain matters of intimidation which labelled women as inferior and incompetent (Eagly & Mladinic 1994). Men with aggressive attitudes towards women targeted status-seeking women, and when women are in senior positions, they feel threatened in male territory. Coupled with the fact that women leaders are surrounded mostly by male colleagues, women are placed at further risk of discrimination (Broughton & Miller 2009).

Similar cases of the difficulties in accessing leadership positions also existed for women in other Pacific countries. The traditional kin-based stratification of the oldest male in the family having the final decision-making is culturally active in Tonga. Although the highest female holds a given title, she lacks any decision-making power in extended family matters (James 1995). In consequence, she cannot represent her family in the decision-making forum of her village community.

The same scenario affects women in Papua New Guinea. Here, women are confronted with culturally biased values and males' controlling power. Historically, the situation has been difficult with a strong gendered-bias against women in leadership positions throughout the country. The difficulty of challenging power and cultural barriers limit women's participation in making decisions. Consequently, women continuously experience hardship in striving for authority and power. Their voices are unheard because public spheres are traditionally-oriented and continued to be male domains (Vali, 2010). These harsh circumstances point to kinship. In most traditional Melanesian societies, these kinship systems prescribed the way people socialise and function (Sanga & Walker 2005). Leadership in these kinship systems is male-dominated. For example, in the case of extended families or *'āiga potopoto* in Samoa, the elected leaders are matai, and the majority of these matai are males. These male matai control the affairs of extended families as well as being members of the local government and the judiciary for traditional village communities. This was established by the Village Fono Act 1990 and the Internal Affairs Act 1995 (Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, & Internal Affairs 2016). The local government is the highest authority in village communities which creates and enforces rules and sanctions for the whole community.

The Leadership Structure is illustrated in the Following Diagram.

Diagram A. The hierarchical leadership structure of village communities

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        ┌──────────────────┐
        │ Local Government │
        └──────────────────┘
                 │
                 ▼
        ┌──────────────────┐
        │ Women's Committee│
        └──────────────────┘
                 │
                 ▼
        ┌──────────────────┐
        │   Untitled Men   │
        └──────────────────┘
                 │
                 ▼
        ┌──────────────────┐
        │    Children      │
        └──────────────────┘
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Critiquing cultural paradigms permits an understanding of the history of leadership in Samoa to inform understanding of the modern construct. The Samoan context of leadership signifies carrying the spirits of ancestors and representing the mauli of your family members in leadership posts (Sanga & Chu 2009). The mauli upholds the spirit (mana), equipping leaders of families ('āiga) and village communities (nu'u) with the wisdom to impartially execute leadership roles (Le Tagaloa 1996).

Cultural Context and Social Philosophy

The social philosophy of this research is exploring the validity of the leadership assumptions in Samoa that associates with being male, and the sincerity of the respect accorded to them in cultural, social, and religious activities. According to the foSamoa Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2010, Samoan women have limited access to customary land and are largely excluded from dealings in customary land, such as customary leases. Although they have equal rights over freehold land, women do not charge well in practice, as they do not often avail themselves of the right to be included on the title as a registered owner. This particular report explains land ownership as another hindrance to Samoan women's leadership due to restricted access and their exclusion from land dealings. There is a huge gender gap with leadership roles in the villages (Schoeffel 2015). For that reason, this study is intending to change people's mind-set about the male leadership preference by suggesting that women have equal rights to become leaders of their families by holding matai titles as mandated in the constitution of the independent state of Samoa.

Leadership Definition and Styles

Leadership definitions vary in the research and literature. However, I am drawn to a leadership definition by Burns (1978) who refers to leadership as a process and a property, and it is this framing that helps position this study. According to Burns, the leadership process entails how an individual or a group influences others towards a particular goal or objective, and leadership is about developments that occur across one's life span. This process is "where an individual inspires a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse 2007: 3). Burns (1978) also notes that leadership is a property of an organizational structure, mandated to align with the expectations and norms of the organization. In addition to Burns, (Gardner 1990) sees the components of process and property in leadership as a subset of the broader concept of communal purpose. Further, (Sanga 2005) denotes the village community as a setting for communal purposes. In Samoa, village communities and women's committees come together to do communal activities either as a collective body, or in separate organizations. Furthermore, the study explores the leadership styles and whether autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire styles (Lewin et al. 1939) are apparent in women leaders' practice of communal activities in women's committees and village communities.

My Standpoint

When I was a young woman in the village, I used to listen to narratives of great leaders, and I developed this philosophy of trying to be one of those great leaders. Now, I have finally realised that leadership is not about replicating someone's behaviour, or trying to be someone else. I have learnt that leadership is not about having power over other people, but it is about stepping up to lead. My upbringing in a village community revolves around cultural and religious principles. Hence, my leadership journey was guided by the moral values of respect (fa'aaloalo), love (alofa), and humbleness (loto maualalo). These principles were complimented with a comprehensive knowledge of the essence of Samoan and Christian ethics, learnt within the vicinity of the family, and taught by my paternal grandparents who additionally groomed me to be a leader at a very young age.

Fundamentally, my excursion into the leadership world began with learning basic survival skills by observing and assisting my grandfather in farming, carving, and fishing. Although I did not pay much attention to my grandmother's talents of traditional healing (taulāsea) and midwifery (fa'atōsaga), I credit her expertise in serving the village community. In addition to learning survival skills, I also learnt to be self-sufficient, relying on what I was able to afford. These trainings initially nurtured my leadership knowledge and experience. I commend my grandparents for envisaging my leadership potentials and I am forever grateful to them for making me the leader I am today. I am passionate about leadership in village communities because the environment is integral to upholding true Samoan values as well as keeping the culture alive. Through experience, I am of the opinion that these gender disparities need to be addressed in order to acknowledge women's statutory right to leadership. According to (Haider 2009), participation in decision-making must be inclusive, and should incorporate groups that are marginalized such as women. This argument is supported by (Freire 1983: 76) who states "Participation

in decision-making processes is the right of all people to individually and collectively speak their word". As leadership is not the privilege of some, it is my intention for local government to implement an innovative culture where people's ideas are expressed, recognized, and valued by involving them in decision-making. For example, community leaders must believe that implementing appropriate changes allows growth, reflecting maturity, and stability in leadership. As (Chambers 1983) suggests that participation can potentially develop into empowerment, it is my goal to see that many women are empowered to partake in local government. Though faced with a lot of challenges, my journey through the leadership sphere has enabled me to experience theoretical perspectives and practical approaches pertaining to female leadership. This leadership excursion has also familiarized me with the practicalities of leadership characteristics particular to female leaders in comparison to their male counterparts. I am inspired to explore the original status of the cultural context of the Samoan female as the feagaiga (covenant), adviser, and decision-maker. The literature documents the elite status of the Tama'ita'i Samoa (Samoan female), her unique responsibilities, and her decision-making power as evident in (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1996; Le Tagaloa 1996; Meleisea 1987; Schoeffel 1979). These literature carefully remind me, a Tama'ita'i Samoa about women's position in society, and motivate me to explore, identify, and address the hurdles that restrict women from leadership positions. Holding leadership posts such as a matai of the extended family, a deacon of the Congregational Christian Church, leader of the Aualuma (association of daughters of the village), and Dean of the Faculty of Education speak volume of my leadership achievements.

The Samoan Pathway to Leadership

"O le ala i le pule o le tautua" is translated as: *the way to authority and power is through service.* The Samoan proverb grounds the foundation of gaining leadership in Samoa. Some scholars refer to leadership as providing service. "Leadership is tautua [service]" (Rimoni 2009: 51) and "genuine leadership is true service" (Samala 2009: 63). The selection of matai to lead extended families is based on the quality of service rendered. Family decision-makers deliberate on the type of services and the standard of performance. In most cases, the final candidate is the one who provides the family with outstanding services **-** for example, serving the family with dignity and honesty in his position as an untitled man (taule'ale'a).

  This includes preparing and presenting food to the matai, rendering all expected services, doing as instructed, and protecting the matai and his family from enemies (Macpherson 1997). There are other factors such as seniority, having cultural knowledge, and being wealthy. In whatever manner, service is the most considered aspect in the selection process. Males have advantages because of the apparent nature of their services while the female's contribution is less visible. Contributions from females are neither announced nor revealed. Consequently, the preference for matai is males, and females are seldom selected after serious consideration. Hence, the patriarchal nature of the Samoan society continues to thrive.

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