

**THE EXCEPTION, NOT THE RULE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL ACTIVITY
IN PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES**

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An examination of overall trends in women's political participation in twenty-one Pacific Island states shows that, apart from Guam, women's electoral success is very low when compared with international figures. Using the concepts of supply and demand to examine why this is so, analysis points to traditional and cultural constraints as key factors that restrict women's participation. However, at the same time there is evidence of a considerable groundswell of women's political activity in nongovernment organizations and community groups.

ALTHOUGH IT IS MORE than one hundred years since women gained the vote in New Zealand, many of the women who live as our closest neighbors in the Pacific region have not shared the same basic human right. For many of our Pacific Island sisters, the right to vote and the right to be elected as political representatives are relatively recent events. It is only over the last forty years that some Pacific Island women have had the opportunity to participate politically as voters and candidates; for others it is even more recent. And their success in gaining elective office has been minimal.

Comparative research at an international level into the extent of women's participation in representative government and political party activity shows that, despite some improvement in the last decade, women are still profoundly underrepresented. As this article will show, for women in the Pacific region the picture is worse. In most cases they have yet to see evidence

of the acceptance of women's role in political activity within their own societies. These facts have attracted very little attention from political analysts and this inattentiveness promotes the continued invisibility of Pacific women. The New Zealand South Pacific Review Group summed matters up well in their 1990 report on the South Pacific when they claimed that "Pacific women are a neglected human resource."¹

My own research looks at women's political participation in the countries of the Pacific within the context of their political structures and asks why women have had so little electoral success. Information on women's involvement as elected members of legislatures, as candidates, as voters, and in women's organizations has been gathered and examined. In this article I discuss the circumstances that contribute to variations in participation as well as the barriers to greater involvement in order to provide some understanding of women's position within these communities.

I start with the big picture: the figures on women's political representation in national and, in some cases, local governments. I then consider these figures within an analysis of factors influencing political participation, such as political party activity, attitudes toward human rights, and cultural barriers. Finally, I consider current policies and women's activities that are promoting women's interests and involvement.²

The area covered in this research spans the twenty-one island groups of the Pacific area from Palau and Papua New Guinea in the west, the Northern Marianas in the north, French Polynesia in the east, and Tonga and New Caledonia in the south. In many areas information on such things as recent election results is minimal.³

The Number of Women in Pacific Island Governments

When compared with the politics and population size of other regions of the world, twenty-one governments in an area occupied by about six and a half million people is significantly high. Furthermore, the Pacific region displays uniqueness and diversity with respect to political status and structure (i.e., the formal context under which the various island governments operate). These polities range from independent states, territories of larger countries, associated states, and a commonwealth, all except one with some form of parliamentary or presidential government. Few of these governments have ever had women members. As Table 1 shows, of the twenty-one entities in the region, just over half had elected women representatives as of 1995; in the majority of these, however, only one woman has ever been successful in winning a seat in the legislature. The only exception to the rule is Guam.

TABLE 1. **Women's Political Representation in National Legislatures in Pacific Island Countries, 1994**

Country	Year All Women Were Eligible to Vote and Stand for Legislative Body	Legislative Seats Available ^a	Women Elected		Year of Latest Election
			No.	% of Total	
Micronesia					
Northern Marianas	1965	23	2	9	1993
Palau	1965	32	0	0	1992
Guam	1931	21	6	29	1994
FSM	1965	14	0	0	1991
Marshall Islands	1965	33	1	3	1991
Kiribati	1967	39	0	0	1994
Nauru	1951	18	0	0	1992
Polynesia					
Tuvalu	1967	12	1	8	1993
Western Samoa	1991 ^b	47	2	4	1991
Wallis & Futuna	1961	20	2	10	1992
American Samoa	1957	40	1	3	1992
French Polynesia	1953	41	0	0	1993
Niue	1960	20	1	5	1993
Cook Islands	1957	25	0	0	1994
Tonga	1960	30	1	3	1993
Melanesia					
Fiji	1963	71	3	4	1994
New Caledonia	1957	36	0	0	1989
Vanuatu	1975	46	1	2	1991
Solomon Islands	1967	47	1	2	1993
Papua New Guinea	1964	109	0	0	1992

Sources: Based on information cited in the country-by-country discussion. Suffrage dates from Peter Larmour, "A Foreign Flower? Democracy in the South Pacific," *Pacific Studies* 17, no. 1 (March 1994): 54-56.

Note: Tokelau, a dependent territory under New Zealand administration, is not included in this table as it does not have a directly elected national legislature. Nevertheless, discussion of Tokelauan developments forms part of the subsequent analysis of women's political activity.

^a In most instances all available seats are included, whether elected or appointed, whether in unicameral or bicameral houses.

^b Before universal suffrage there were two seats for which some women (i.e., those on the Individual Voters roll) could vote and stand for election.

Because of the large area covered in this research, a descriptive country-by-country overview proceeds from each entity's geographical position in the Pacific rather than its political structure or colonial experience, although affiliation with other countries, either in the past or at present, will be noted where appropriate.

Micronesia

At the northernmost point of the Micronesian islands in the Pacific region, the Northern Marianas has two women representatives at this time. In the 1993 elections Malua T. Peter, a former Board of Education member and women's affairs officer, was elected, as was Ana S. Teregeyo (who had already had one term in office).⁴ These were the first women candidates to gain election since some initial success by women about fifteen years earlier. Following a lengthy period of colonial rule, first by the Spanish, then the Germans, after them the Japanese, and finally the Americans, a referendum strongly approving a Commonwealth of Political Union with the United States, held in 1975, led to self-government. Strong interest in this referendum resulted in a growth in political activity, and a small group of young, educated women formed the Saipan Women's Association (SWA) to stimulate meaningful political dialogue on the issues involved. As McPhetres observed, "In a traditionally male-dominated society the emergence of the SWA as a political entity was an almost revolutionary event."⁵ This activity translated into success in the 1977 elections, the first to be held under this new constitutional arrangement, when two women became members of the legislature. However, this success was short-lived; although each of the political parties of the Northern Marianas endorsed a woman candidate in the 1981 elections, neither was elected.

Palau has no elected women representatives in its national legislature, despite a record number of women candidates standing for the most recent elections in 1992, four for the senate and one for the vice-presidency.⁶ There has been a traditional reluctance among Palauan voters to support women because of a belief that politics is men's business. Although it gained independence only in 1994, Palau has since 1980 had a bicameral legislature made up of a House of Delegates, comprising one delegate from each of the sixteen states, and an elected Senate of fourteen members. The president and vice-president are also elected at national elections, although the cabinet is appointed by the president. Before the 1992 elections, two women had been appointed to the cabinet, Dilmeii Olkeriil, minister of community and cultural affairs, and Sandra Pierantozzi, minister of administration. Pierantozzi went on to be the first woman candidate for the vice-presidency, in the 1992 election, but she was unsuccessful. All states have separate constitutions and a governor, with some being elected and others chosen on the basis of their traditional status. In 1992 Theodosia Blailes, the first woman governor, was elected in the Angaur State.⁷ And of four women candidates who ran for state seats in 1980, one was successful.⁸

Guam, an unincorporated territory of the United States, stands out in

stark contrast to the rest of the Micronesian group, as it has the highest number of women elected to any Pacific Island government, representing 29 percent of the legislative membership. This success has been long-term; the first two women were elected in 1954. Their number has grown, particularly since the 1980s; four women were elected in 1983 and 1985, seven in 1987, 1989, and 1991, and six in the 1992 and 1994 elections, many of these women holding their seats over several elections. Furthermore, a woman, Madeleine Bordallo, was elected to the post of lieutenant governor in the 1994 elections.⁹

No woman in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) has ever run as a candidate for a seat in the FSM legislature. A self-governing federation of four states, Yap, Truk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae, the Federated States of Micronesia is governed by a fourteen-member national Congress that includes a president and a vice-president. Despite the small size of the population in the four states, the largest 48,000 and the smallest 7,300, each elects its own legislature as well. In 1992 a woman senator was elected to Pohnpei's twenty-three-member Legislature, the first woman representative in the state's history.¹⁰

In the Marshall Islands, however, there is one woman senator in the thirty-three member legislature, the Nitijela, which governs all the many islands in this group. Evelyn Konou is serving her second term in office, having first been elected in 1987.¹¹ The president, elected as head of state and head of government, also appoints a cabinet of ministers, and a woman minister of social services, Antonio Elio, is part of this cabinet.¹² Each of the Marshalls' twenty-four inhabited islands has a local government. One of the largest islands, Majuro, has a woman mayor, Amatlain Kabua, who is related to the country's president.¹³

Although Kiribati does not have a woman representative in government at this time, this has not always been the case.¹⁴ Before independence in 1979, when Kiribati was part of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, there was one woman member, Tekarei Russell, who had been a government minister. Women clearly were seen to have had a legitimate role in the establishment of independence, a reflection perhaps of their community activity, as a constitutional convention held in 1977 to develop the basis of an independence constitution included representatives from women's groups.¹⁵ Following the 1991 elections, a woman was elected at a by-election for a parliamentary seat. Nei Koriri Teaiwa stood as a candidate after her husband had been disqualified on bribery charges. Although her election was seen as "a pleasant surprise to the nation" in a predominantly male-controlled community, it was also seen as a measure of support for her husband. Following her election, however, Nei Koriri Teaiwa was also disqualified on similar grounds.¹⁶

Although three women candidates stood for the 1992 elections in Nauru, none was elected. However, one woman, Ruby Dediya, had been a member of Parliament for the previous two terms, from 1986 to 1992. Nauru gained independence in 1968 after having been administered by Australia since the First World War. It now has a government of eighteen members. Voting is compulsory for all Nauruans over twenty years of age, with 1,365 women registered as voters in 1991. Nauru also has a Local Government Council of nine members, one of them a woman.¹⁷

Polynesia

Women in Polynesian countries have clearly had the most electoral success overall in the Pacific area.

There is one woman member in Tuvalu. Naama Latasi, who was the first woman to be elected, held the position of minister for health, education, and community services in her first term, but since the 1993 elections she has been on the back bench. Her husband is the prime minister.¹⁸ Tuvalu, one of the world's smallest countries, gained independence from Britain in 1978. Its population of about eight and a half thousand is now governed by a single legislature of twelve elected members.

The smallest Pacific Island entity, Tokelau, which has a population of sixteen hundred, is a non-self-governing territory of New Zealand. It has no central parliamentary government, although it does have a form of village- and family-based elected local government. As a paper presented at the Women in Development Workshop for Pacific Island leaders held in New Zealand in 1993 succinctly puts it, "Women in politics is nil."¹⁹

There are presently two women members of Parliament in Western Samoa, Matamumua Moana Vermullen and Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, the latter having become minister of education, youth, sports, and culture following the 1991 elections. Mata'afa is the daughter of Western Samoa's first prime minister and was a leader in the movement for universal suffrage. At the time of gaining independence in 1962, Western Samoa opted for an electoral system in which only *matai* (title chiefs) could vote and stand as candidates for the legislative assembly. Although the passing of the Electoral Amendment Act in 1990 introduced universal suffrage, the right to stand for election has remained with *matai*. Only a few women are *matai*, and although the *matai* system has been seen to work against women and their interests, seven women *matai* have been elected to Parliament since 1972. The 1990 legislation is seen as a step toward changing the wider political scene for women. Before the 1991 elections, commentators suggested that the indifference of Western Samoa's members of Parliament to women's issues could only continue at their peril.²⁰

For the first time in the history of Wallis and Futuna, two women were recently elected to the twenty-seat Territorial Assembly, the legislative governing body of this French territory. Although other women have stood as candidates in the past, Malia Moefana, a school teacher, and Maketalena Pilioko, an accountant, are the first to succeed.²¹

In American Samoa, the other United States territory in the Pacific, women do not share the unique level of electoral success achieved by the women of Guam. This fact was highlighted in a summary of elections held in the American territories, which reported that, despite the varied quality of candidates in Guam and Hawai'i, "with men and women running for office, there is no such scene in American Samoa."²² Despite these evident disparities, one woman, Fiasili Haleck, was reelected in 1992 to the twenty-seat House of Representatives, and she was nearly joined by a second woman, Faga S. Fuala'au, who lost by only one vote. Another woman came to political prominence before the elections when, following the death of the lieutenant governor, his wife was appointed to fill out the remaining few months of his term.²³ American Samoa elects its House of Representatives and its executives (governor and lieutenant governor), while its Senate, of eighteen members, is chosen by *matai*. There are no women in the Senate; as in Western Samoa, few of the territory's women hold *matai* titles.

Another island group in Polynesia that continues to have constitutional ties to a metropolitan power is French Polynesia, a department of France. At this time there are no women elected to the Territorial Assembly that governs French Polynesia, although there is one appointed woman minister, Haamoetini Legarde, the minister of agriculture, environment, and women. One woman has been elected in the past, Huguette Hong Kiou, who served in the assembly between 1984 and 1992.²⁴ The French Polynesian capital, Papeete, elected its first woman mayor, Louise Carlson, in 1993.²⁵

In Niue women have had greater success at the polls. From the time of the first elections following self-government in 1974, women have stood as candidates for the Legislative Assembly. This twenty-seat chamber is made up of six common roll seats and fourteen village constituencies, the latter being subject to more traditional processes for selection of candidates. Consequently, women have had a greater chance of being elected to common roll seats and have often topped the polls in elections, two being elected in 1975, three in 1978, one in 1981, two in 1990, and one in 1993. Veve Jacobsen, elected in March 1993, has become the first female cabinet minister in a cabinet of four and has responsibility for community affairs, tourism, broadcasting, health, and education. Women have also been very successful in local government in Niue: seventeen women were elected to the fourteen councils in the last elections.²⁶

Like Niue, the Cook Islands is self-governing in free association with

New Zealand, New Zealand retaining some delegated authority for foreign affairs and defense while guaranteeing New Zealand citizenship and associated rights to the islands' residents. The Cook Islands has an elected government of twenty-five members. There are no women representatives at this time, although there have been in the past. Margaret Storey was speaker for about thirteen years before 1978, when her brother, Sir Albert Henry, served as the Cook Islands' first prime minister.

Tonga has had one elected woman representative since the elections in 1993. 'Ofa ki 'Okalani Fusitu'a is the first woman to be elected in the last twelve years. She is one of the nine people's representatives in the Legislative Assembly elected by universal suffrage. This assembly also includes a cabinet selected by the king as well as nine nobles elected by the thirty-three nobles of Tonga. In the 1970s two other women gained election as people's representatives, Princess Mele Siu'ilikutapu and Papiloa Foliaki²⁷ At the local government level, district and town officers are elected, but to date no women have gained one of these positions.²⁸

Melanesia

Like their counterparts in Micronesia (with the exception of Guam), women in Melanesian countries have had little success at the polls.

In elections held early in 1994 in Fiji, three of the ten women candidates succeeded in being elected to the seventy-one-seat Parliament, the highest number to do so at one time. Two of these women, Adi Samanunu Talakuli and Seruwaia Hong Tiy, were elected for the first time. Talakuli, who was made minister of Fijian affairs, is the eldest daughter of Fiji's late governor-general and paramount chief Ratu Sir George Cakobau, while Hong Tiy, who has become minister for health and social services, is a businesswoman whose husband is an appointed member of the Senate. Taufa Vakatale, in her second term, having been first elected in 1992, was reappointed minister of education. She had previously been a teacher and a prominent civil servant.²⁹ Before 1992 only six women had sat in the House of Representatives or the Senate since Fiji gained independence in 1970.³⁰ One of these women, Irene Jai Narayan, was in Parliament for nearly twenty years before the 1987 coup, and following the coup she was appointed to the position of minister of Indian affairs, the only Indian representative in Fiji's interim government.³¹ At the same time Adi Finau Tabakaucoro was appointed minister of women's affairs, and following the 1992 elections she was appointed to the Senate.

New Caledonia, a French department like French Polynesia, is another country with no women representatives either in its Territorial Assembly (of

thirty-six members) or in the provincial assemblies, following elections in 1989.³² There is no evidence of women's electoral success in the past.

Although gaining only minimal electoral success, women in Vanuatu have contested national elections since the move to independence. As one woman who has been prominent behind the scenes, Grace Molisa, puts it, 'Women and men were united in the bid for independence, and women along with men have had equal rights to exercise the power of their vote to determine Vanuatu's government system.'³³ But this power has not been translated into electoral success. A woman candidate stood for election in 1975 and another in 1979, the latter only missing out by five votes. The first women members of the forty-six-seat Parliament, Hilda Lini and Maria Crowby, were not elected until 1987. Crowby lost her seat in 1988, but Lini went on to become minister of health and rural water supplies in 1992 and held the position for a year before being dismissed.³⁴ Women have had more success at the local government level: four women have been elected to the Malakula Council in the last four years (Malakula is the largest island in Vanuatu). Two women were also elected to the Port Vila Municipal Council in March 1993.³⁵

Since independence in the Solomon Islands in 1978, women have also actively sought election to a seat in the National Parliament. In the most recent elections in 1993, there were ten women candidates, a significant increase from 1989, when there were only three. Women also contested the 1984 elections. However, only one woman has won a legislative seat. Mrs. Hilda Kari, a prominent public servant, was first elected in a by-election in 1989; she was reelected in 1993.³⁶ There is also a record of women being elected to the provincial government in 1985.³⁷

Despite being the largest country in the Pacific Islands region and having the largest number of parliamentary seats, Papua New Guinea has no women representatives. Maria Kopkop, president of the National Council of Women, described the result of the 1992 elections as a disgrace, declaring that "it is a sad day for women of Papua New Guinea that our womenfolk, who make up half of the country's population, cannot occupy any of the one hundred and nine seats in parliament and play an active role in making important decisions about the future of this nation."³⁸ Eighteen women candidates stood for election to the 109-seat National Parliament in 1992, the same number having stood unsuccessfully in 1987. Only three women have been elected to the PNG Parliament in the past. In 1972 Josephine Abaijah, one of four women candidates, won a seat, and in 1977 she was joined by Waiyato Clowes and Nahau Rooney, these women having been three of the ten women candidates at that election. In 1982 there were seventeen candidates, with only Rooney being successful.³⁹

This overview provides a clear picture of the elective performance of women in the Pacific region. In just under 60 percent of legislatures there is at least one woman member, although, except in Guam, this membership amounts to less than 10 percent. So why are there so few women? To attempt to answer this question we need to examine the factors that determine women's participation in political life.

What Determines Women's Political Participation?

The underrepresentation of women in positions of political power is a reality worldwide. Explanations range from the degree of industrialization a country has experienced, political ideology, the type of electoral system used, and the length of time in which women have had the right to vote. Randall identifies the constraints on women's political participation by using the concepts of supply and demand: the supply of women politicians is determined by factors including socialization and the situational limitations within their lives caused by such things as their roles as mothers and homemakers; the demand side comprises the political and institutional factors that control participation in political elites.⁴⁰ Randall's concepts of supply and demand will form the basis of my analysis of women's political participation in the Pacific. I will also attempt to explore apparent differences between women's experience in the Pacific and elsewhere.

Supply Factors

It would be a mistake to suggest that, for women living in the Pacific, life is uniformly similar. In fact the region is culturally heterogeneous and physically isolated in a way that creates and sustains variation in life-style. However, similarities and uniformities exist within the region as in other predominantly patriarchal communities. On the surface women have the same legal right as men to participate in the process of democracy. Women in Pacific polities have the right to vote, as recognized in their countries' constitutions, and--except in Western Samoa, one of the two legislative chambers in American Samoa (which is reserved for *matai*), and some parliamentary seats in Tonga (set aside for nobles)--they have an equal right to seek elective office.⁴¹ But, as the data on electoral performance clearly establish, in practice these formal entitlements have not been translated into effective representative participation. As Crocombe et al. point out, "Merely giving women a constitutional right to equality (which most Pacific constitutions provide) may not overcome cultural barriers to equality's full achievement."⁴²

Randall's research suggests that the supply of women is linked to their roles within society and the way in which they have been socialized, which can impede women's access to political office. Within Pacific societies women's status and activities are primarily linked to the duties of mother and housewife.⁴³ Several historical factors have entrenched these roles. Despite women's status being, in some cases, quite high prior to colonization, male colonial rulers "sought generally to impose the patriarchal, nuclear model with which they were familiar."⁴⁴ Postindependence governments have not remedied this, instead pursuing strategies for development that have had little to do with gender equity.

As a result of these strategies, today's women are faced with what Schoeffel Meleisea succinctly describes as "the reconciliation of old political traditions with new forms of democracy."⁴⁵ She notes that conflicts between customary law and constitutional law may lead to discrimination against women, citing as an example citizenship rights in Nauru. Women in Nauru who marry foreigners often have to leave the country, as, under Nauru's matrilineal line of inheritance, foreign men could otherwise gain rights to land and phosphate income through marriage. Changes made to customary law under colonialism may now be seen as "tradition," particularly in circumstances where matrilineal lines have been replaced by patrilineal systems. In Palau, for example, highly ranked women previously had considerable power. This position has not been translated into political power for women in the Paluan National Congress, however, as "women have been in the background, taking care of the home and clan affairs."⁴⁶

The influence of Christianity has also had long-term effects on Pacific power relationships and gender. The Christian model of the family and the status of women generally bore little resemblance to traditional life. While women's status was very low in some Melanesian societies, the converse was often the case in Polynesian societies. Therefore, "Christianity liberated Pacific women from one set of customs, which in some societies oppressed women but in others gave women high status or independence, only to replace them with another set of imported customs. These emphasised a woman's primary value as a mother and wife, her primary place in the private domestic sphere, and excluded her (or reinforced her seclusion) from the public sphere of political and ritual action."⁴⁷ Although detail on women's lives in the Micronesian group is somewhat scarce, information from Nauruan women cites male dominance, discrimination, and government regulation as restraints on women.

Existing research into the situational and structural barriers to women's political participation identify educational opportunities, occupational status, and levels of income as determinants of participation.⁴⁸ Education

and employment opportunities can be the biggest forces of change in a woman's life, influencing her life chances and her exercise of rights, both legal and political. Educational opportunities for children in many Pacific Island countries have been limited, with illiteracy rates being very high among rural women. It appears that some girls have seldom received more than primary schooling, although there are differences between Melanesia, on the one hand, and Polynesia and Micronesia, on the other. For example, in Enga Province in Papua New Guinea only 9 percent of thirteen- to sixteen-year-olds attended high school in 1981 and 22 percent of these students were female. These young women were actively discouraged from schooling, a process culminating in harassment and sexual abuse from male students at tertiary education levels.⁴⁹ In other countries, particularly in Polynesia, the picture is rather different. In Western Samoa research shows that in the mid-1980s 99 percent of females between the ages of ten and fourteen attended school as did 84 percent between the ages of fifteen and nineteen.⁵⁰ For women in Melanesian countries educational opportunities at the tertiary level have also been low, numbers only reaching about 17 percent overall in Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea in 1987. In Polynesian countries women comprise between 30 and 50 percent of university students. By contrast, in Guam women students constituted more than half--57 percent--of all university students.⁵¹

Employment and income-related opportunities follow a similar pattern, partly as a result of education levels. Although Pacific women make an important contribution to food production in family and traditional village life, these activities do not generate a regular cash income. Although participating in high numbers in subsistence and traditional agricultural sectors, women's labor force participation rates are not as high. Results from a 1986 census in the Solomon Islands, for example, showed that 71 percent of women were listed as economically active, doing unpaid village work, as compared with 51 percent of men. Among those in formal paid employment, women were only 17 percent: 83 percent of those receiving a cash income from employment were men.⁵² A 1987 study into Pacific Island women's participation in their countries' economies found overall that the rate was very low--10 to 15 percent--with the rate in the Cook Islands, New Caledonia, and Niue reaching about 30 percent.⁵³ The rate of economic participation was higher still in some Micronesian countries including the Northern Marianas, where it was 40 percent, and in Guam, where 1990 census figures for paid employment showed that women comprised 32 percent of the work force.⁵⁴

While some change may be slowly beginning to happen, traditional and colonial expressions of patriarchal domination continue and are expressed in

various forms. They are manifested, for instance, in the levels of violence found in many Pacific Island communities. In Fiji reported rapes doubled following the 1987 coup, while in Papua New Guinea three-quarters of the women murdered over a three-year period were killed by their husbands. As Grace Molisa puts it, women in her country "remain colonised by the Free Men of Vanuatu."⁵⁵ Other barriers to opportunities for women include their strong ties to cultural attitudes and values. An indigenous study of women in Melanesian countries in 1988 found that women interviewed were not necessarily concerned about the relatively low status of women, as they regarded their ascribed roles as being divinely sanctioned. Even those women who have rejected a lower status were reluctant to promote change, a predisposition possibly attributable to their relative isolation from developments elsewhere.⁵⁶ But as Schoeffel Meleisea points out, these women have been given the role of "keepers of traditional culture" and may be criticized when accepting change. As she puts it, 'While men may freely embrace modern economic activities, education, political institutions, mores and fashions, women must do so with caution, particularly in Melanesia.'⁵⁷

Demand Factors

The participation of women in political circles is clearly controlled by political and institutional factors. The right to vote, the nature of electoral competition, political recruitment processes, the electoral system, and barriers to advancement within the legislature itself are among the factors having an impact on women's successful involvement in the political system. All women in the Pacific Islands have the legal right to vote, even if this right may be very recent for some. But is the exercise of the franchise always an act of freedom? It would appear that for some women it is not. Women in Papua New Guinea have reported that they have been expected to vote for the candidate chosen by their husband or the community, or face the consequences. A woman who was divorced by her husband when she voted for the candidate of her choice described the beating she received as a result and her subsequent removal from her home. In an effort to counter such actions, before the 1992 elections the Papua New Guinea Women and Law Committee issued pamphlets and organized workshops informing women of their rights.⁵⁸

The nature of the electoral competition can also serve to exclude women. As Randall points out, 'Women who seek political power are operating within an entirely different political context than when they simply join in grass-roots political activity'⁵⁹ In a few Pacific Island countries, this difference is exacerbated by the practice of treating or bribery by candidates for

political office. Although this practice can often be passed off as part of the process of campaigning, it can lead to the election of a candidate who can exploit the needs of communities. In one case in Papua New Guinea, the candidate the village had chosen to support was "a person who had given us bags of rice, canned fish and money."⁶⁰ In the Northern Marianas, election campaigns mean entertainment, free food and drink, with vast amounts of money being spent to attract voters.⁶¹ These practices inevitably harm the prospects of women, who may have little or no access to the funds needed to campaign in this way. In Western Samoa the common practice of treating or bribing voters may have been weakened at the 1991 elections, the first at which there was universal suffrage. It was apparent that policies had more impact on many voters, as giving gifts did not gain votes despite this having been successful in the past.⁶²

The biggest barrier to women's participation in the Pacific, as elsewhere, lies with political parties and their candidate selection processes. International research has found that "it is not the electorate that does not want women, so much as the 'selectorate.'"⁶³ The main areas from which candidates have generally been recruited include office holding and service in the political parties themselves, local government positions, and trade unions. Is this also true in the Pacific? In many Pacific Island countries political parties are still relatively new phenomena, as the Western style of political competition is still coming to terms with traditional loyalties in which clan and local interests have tended to overshadow broader interests and claims. In many cases it is the younger generation that has been advocating change. Political party membership and activity is an area as yet not subjected to detailed research. As a result, there is little authoritative information about the role of Pacific Island women in party activity and candidate selection processes. The records of elections and other community activities form the primary source of evidence at this stage.

In the Micronesian group the Northern Marianas, Palau, and Guam each have had two parties, reflecting the party system in the United States, although the influence of the system has varied. In Palau traditional authority has remained strong; in Guam it has not, perhaps mainly because less than half of the island's population is indigenous (i.e., Chamorro). In Palau an analysis of the 1980 elections reports that of the three women candidates who missed election, one was "criticised by some for tainting god-given hereditary authority through participation in back-room political maneuvering," another "did poorly because she ran against the wishes of a politically powerful close relative," and the third missed out because a male relative had been chosen by the political powers of her area.⁶⁴ Family and tribal influences are also factors influencing election prospects. For instance, it

has been suggested that the new president of the Federated States of Micronesia was elected because he had the backing of local customary chiefs unhappy with the way the defeated president had run the government.⁶⁵ In the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, and Nauru political parties have only recently emerged. In the campaign for recent elections in the Marshall Islands, the president of the Government Party "criticised the Ralik Ratak Democratic party for its lack of links to traditional leaders."⁶⁶ In Nauru it is clear that the growth of political party activity is frowned upon by the government. The newly formed People's Movement Association, set up by Ruby Dadiya and mainly made up of women members, has already run into problems. Protests by the association against government expenditure on a London musical and the amount spent on running the 1993 South Pacific Forum meeting in Nauru led to Dadiya's dismissal from her job as a midwife as well as an ultimatum to other members that they would also lose their jobs if they continued to demonstrate against government actions. Information about candidate selection in Nauru suggests that candidates for political parties are nominated by groups who support particular parties and that women candidates are not actively recruited within this process.⁶⁷

Among the Polynesian islands Tuvalu, Niue, and Tonga provide examples of the tension between entrenched traditional loyalties and contemporary electoral politics. In Tuvalu tradition remains strong, the strength of ties to family and land being evident when candidates are nominated. Candidates are seen as representing a particular family, and if two close relatives stand for election, "voters may be more inclined to stay at home than to cross a clear 'blood line' on polling day."⁶⁸ Whereas Tuvalu's women welcomed Naama Latasi's historic election in 1989, many men felt that "the precedent set could be seen as the beginning of the breakdown of traditional values in the Tuvalu society where women have always played a subordinate role and their place is at home."⁶⁹

In Niue two (or, at times, three) sides form at election time; party labels have existed for the last two elections. The women who have been elected so far have been elected on the islandwide common roll seats, as villages tend to select only males for the fourteen village seats. Women's organizations have put forward candidates for election.⁷⁰ In Tonga pressures for change are more striking. The 1990 elections had a political awareness about them that was absent previously. The push for more democracy in Tonga has polarized people into groups that have become well organized. As a result, the battle for the nine "commoners" seats was "no longer just a desire by individual candidates to secure a seat in the House, but it was [a] confrontation of ideals between groups of like-minded candidates who drew the kingdom closer to party politics."⁷¹

The other Polynesian islands as well as the Melanesian states have political party systems, many of them quite fluid. There are similarities among French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Wallis and Futuna, reflecting their relationships with France. Support for women candidates in France has not been high, only reaching 5.5 percent electoral success in the 1986 elections. Randall argues that the power of the Catholic church has had an impact on voting choices, and this appears to be an influence in the French territories in the Pacific as well. Here the multiparty systems range between conservative and reformist factions. In New Caledonia there is evidence that women are active as members of the Kanak movement, which has a women's group; however, "in the movement women are expected to be secretaries, cooks, cleaners and mistresses while the men make all the important decisions."⁷²

In the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and Western Samoa, parties tend to shift alliances around prominent individuals. In the Solomons the role of traditional chiefs and leaders is still important, and political support is usually built around local ties and personal relationships. Political parties approach potential candidates to stand for election, and they have begun to see the importance of involving women as a way of attracting the women's vote. Many candidates for office are senior public servants who have to resign their jobs to run for election, reapplying if defeated. This presents a particularly difficult dilemma for women, as there are very few women in senior government positions and, not surprisingly, they are reluctant to give up their positions to face an electorate whose voters still traditionally support male candidates.⁷³

Papua New Guinea has a multiparty system, with recent governments formed from coalitions among several parties. The very high number of candidates standing for election in each electorate--forty candidates for one seat, for instance--means that a candidate can win by a very small proportion of the vote, which leads to a high turnover of members of the National Parliament. "A candidate from a substantial tribe or clan inevitably enjoys a staggered start."⁷⁴ With a couple of exceptions, all women have stood as independent candidates, campaigning on women's issues and their lack of parliamentary representation. One woman elected to Papua New Guinea's Parliament in the 1970s suggests that this focus may be a problem, arguing that women candidates might have more success if they focused more on community and national problems. However, she does acknowledge that the traditional concept of politics as a male profession and the expectation that women vote according to their husbands' preferences are more compelling obstacles.⁷⁵

Conservative ideology also under-pins the ruling party, the Human Rights Protection Party, in Western Samoa. As noted, parliamentary seats can only

be contested by *matai*. Although competition for seats is now the norm, the Samoan candidate selection process has always been based on the *matai* in an electorate assembling to agree on a candidate, one who is "usually a much respected high chief, or one who has served his people well or is believed to have made his village or region well known in the country or overseas through outstanding achievements (in sport or the professions, for example)." ⁷⁶ Fiamē Naomi, one of Western Samoa's two incumbent woman members of Parliament, suggested at a recent Women in Politics seminar that there are two major problems for women entering parliamentary politics in Samoa, the first occurring at the entry point and the second being staying power. She suggested that, in order to increase the numbers of women in national politics, women must obtain a *matai* title for use as a power base, gain an understanding of the political system, and become economically independent with a solid support base while remaining clear about their goals--all outcomes that are likely to be unattainable for all but a handful of Samoa's women. ⁷⁷ Following the change to universal suffrage, there were obvious effects on election strategy at the 1991 elections, as both major parties sought to capture support from the newly enfranchised women. In particular the governing Human Rights Protection Party ran a Mother's Day event, introduced an annual one-day holiday in honor of women, and pledged to set up a women's affairs department that would work closely with village-based women's committees. ⁷⁸

As an American territory, not surprisingly, American Samoa has a political party system that, at least in its broad outlines, corresponds to that found in the United States. In other words, there are two parties, the Republicans and the Democrats, and the candidates for positions in the territorial government and, for that matter, as representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives carry these party labels.

In Vanuatu two women have been prominent in political party activity for a long time, Grace Molisa and Hilda Lini, the latter now an elected member of Parliament. Lini had been an activist in the Vanua'aku Party for almost two decades, setting up a women's wing as well as raising a family and pursuing a career as a journalist. Despite her background of party service and anticolonial struggle, when she first stood as a candidate, she was obstructed by men in the party who used other women to oppose her candidacy. ⁷⁹

For women in Fiji, the two 1987 coups led to a deterioration in economic, political, and social status, a setback that was fueled by Christian fundamentalism and traditionalism. The 1987 election, which preceded the coup, had seen women's issues placed prominently on the political agenda for the first time, with both major political parties being forced to address issues related to women's inequality. At the same time, the Fiji Women's

Rights Movement had been established to lobby the government for legislative changes. However, according to Lateef, the coups generated a reemphasis on structural inequalities and an ideology that stressed that "Pacific women are essentially different from Western women and therefore have no need for feminism, which is after all a foreign Western concept."⁸⁰ One of the results was that following the coup the then minister of women's affairs stated publicly that she would "not push the cause of women at the expense of the national interest."⁸¹

Despite these reversals, women have been very active in political parties. The Fiji Labour Party was led by Adi Kuini Bavandra following the death of her husband and subsequently by Jokapeci Koro. The governing Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei (SVT) party has selected several women candidates in parliamentary elections, while a new party was formed by Marama na Ka Levu Bulou Eta, who had previously been part of Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei.⁸² This activism produced results, as the number of women elected in Fiji's 1994 snap election increased, when, for the first time, three SVT party women were successful.

A common thread in the different islands is the strength of traditions that either impede the development of political party activity or have considerable power within political parties. These traditions obstruct, in most cases, women's political advancement. In addition, in some countries, particularly those in Melanesia and much of Micronesia, there remain effective barriers to equal access to education, employment, and income, impediments that impair women's opportunities to participate fully in political and electoral matters. This assessment is compatible with the information about Guam, where women have had more success at the polls, as the island has had strong Western acculturation, has a higher number of Westerners than indigenous peoples, and is characterized by women enjoying greater access to education and employment opportunities. Although Crocombe et al. suggest that territories under the influence of major powers are more likely to have higher rates of participation by women in politics, apart from Guam and, to an extent, Niue, this has not become apparent to date.⁸³

So What Political Activity Are Women Involved In?

It would be a mistake to assume that the underrepresentation of women in national legislatures means that women are not politically active in Pacific societies. On the contrary, there is a groundswell of activity throughout the Pacific that is linked to government, nongovernment, and community-initiated activity. It would be a disservice to Pacific Island women to accept the national election results as a complete portrait of women's action and suc-

cess (or lack thereof) in the political arena. We need to examine other areas of women's political activity in the Pacific.

The international decade for women appears to have acted as a catalyst for change among Pacific women's organizations, as their focus shifted away from a specific concentration on family concerns to broader issues related to the status and safety of women and the need for a greater involvement by women in formal decision-making roles. This move has not been an easy one, as the establishment of strong national councils of women has been criticized as challenging the few resources available to long-established church and traditionally focused women's groups, who fear the diminishing of their values. This situation has been reflected in the minimal support given by government agencies to national women's agencies. For example, there are only seven established women's affairs offices or departments in the region--in the Northern Marianas, Guam, the Marshall Islands, Western Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, and Vanuatu.

In the Northern Marianas the Women's Affairs Office monitors and initiates legislation on the rights of women, encourages women to run for elective office, nominates women for appointment to government agencies, and actively promotes networks for information sharing among women.⁸⁴ In Guam a Bureau of Women's Affairs in the governor's office runs an annual conference for women (attended by approximately five hundred women from throughout the island) that makes recommendations on concerns and issues including environmental matters, women's roles, gender equality in employment, and violence affecting women. The bureau's chairperson at the 1992 conference challenged those attending to "break all barriers, all predisposed notions of the separate roles of women, and transcend the boundaries set forth by tradition to create a world in which women partake in all roles."⁸⁵

The Western Samoa Women's Affairs Ministry was set up in 1991 almost immediately after the elections, fulfilling a campaign promise. It is clear that much progress has since been made on women's issues, despite the small number of staff and the slim budget allocated to the department. The ministry's Action Plan includes providing information on women's political and voting rights as a way of improving the results for women at the polls. The plan also aims to widen training and career opportunities for women, to find funds for development projects for women, and to provide a focal point for women's concerns.⁸⁶

Tonga is in the process of setting up a Women's Affairs Unit within the Office of the Prime Minister and a National Committee on Women's Affairs. A women's policy is to be developed as well. These developments reflect pressure from Tongan women for promotion of women's interests. Even

Queen Halaevalu Mata'aho has publicly spoken of her disquiet over the failure to make women's affairs a priority.⁸⁷

Fiji has a Department of Women, Culture, and Social Welfare that before the 1992 elections networked widely throughout the country, particularly on women's rights issues, legislation, and resources available to women.⁸⁸ Vanuatu also has a Women's Affairs Office, although policy development has been hampered "by the continuous changes to Ministries responsible for women and the lack of commitment by government to provide the necessary resources to support development programmes and the establishment of support services for women."⁸⁹

As an alternative to a separate women's affairs office or department, some governments have appointed women's officers or established bureaus within existing state departments, often as a result of strong lobbying by women's groups. Women in the Federated States of Micronesia urged the government to establish a ministry for women and set a national policy, and although this has yet to happen, a national women's interests officer was appointed in 1993 within the Department of Human Resources and a National Women's Advisory Council was also established.⁹⁰ The Ministry of Health, Family Planning, and Social Services in Kiribati developed a women's section within its Social Services Division in 1991.⁹¹

When Naama Latasi was Tuvalu's minister of health, education, and community affairs, she had responsibility for the development of programs for women. Although she advocated women's participation in the changes happening in Tuvalu society, she stressed that this must happen in harmony with men. In particular she emphasized "that our concept of women's development is not what it may be in some western cultures. We wish to raise the status, the contribution and participation of our women in national development within the parameters of our culture and traditions."⁹² In Tokelau the Department of Education at the Office for Tokelau Affairs has a liaison officer for women's affairs, one of her responsibilities being to strengthen training opportunities for women. In the Cook Islands a Women's Development Division in the Ministry of Internal Affairs is responsible for coordinating development programs for women in government departments and nongovernment organizations.⁹³

New Caledonia has six territorial delegates for the rights of women, two for the northern province, one in the south, and three for the Loyalty Islands. The Solomon Islands has a Women and Development Division within the Ministry of Health and Medical Services. In Papua New Guinea a specific women's section has been set up in the Home Affairs Department.

Almost all of the countries in the Pacific have a variety of active nongovernmental organizations, some of them reflecting women's political needs

and aspirations. Nongovernmental organizations in Micronesia include a National Council of Women in the Northern Marianas, established in 1990, and Otil A Belaud, a women's organization in Palau with a strong environmental focus concentrating on upholding the country's constitution, particularly its nuclear-free clause, as well as monitoring legislation, enhancing networking among women, and promoting education on electoral issues.⁹⁴ Both the Marshall Islands and Kiribati have national women's federations, the WUTMI in the Marshalls, which has responsibility for a task force that has developed the first-ever women's policy for adoption by the government, and the National Women's Federation of Kiribati, formed in 1982 and known as AMAK, which has taken a lead in skills training for women and representing women's interests and concerns to government.⁹⁵ Nauru has several women's organizations including two that are church-based, another that focuses on cultural activities, and the Nauru Women's National Council, which is a strong consciousness-raising group, their theme being "Equality, Development, and Peace" and their major target being to establish a women's welfare bureau in government.⁹⁶

Among the Polynesian states, Western Samoa's National Council of Women has been established for about forty years, its focus changing in more recent times away from health and welfare to wider issues such as nuclear testing in the Pacific, legal rights, and violence against women.⁹⁷ By contrast there is no nationally organized coordination of women's activities in American Samoa.⁹⁸ Wallis and Futuna is another Polynesian entity with a long-established national council of women, although the organization has been inactive during the past few years.⁹⁹ In Niue a National Council of Women, which receives some government funding, provides skills training for village-based activities.¹⁰⁰ A third of the population of Tokelau belong to the Tokelau National Women's Association, Fatupaepae, which works to unite the women of Tokelau's three atolls. Allocated a small budget, the association also generates its own funds through the sale of vegetables and baking goods, enabling workers to be paid. Although focusing on women's development programs that are home- and family-related, and acknowledging the limitations of tradition and culture on their roles as women, the association also acknowledges the need to keep up with changes in Tokelau society and involve its members in decision making.¹⁰¹

Despite having a minister of women's affairs, French Polynesia does not appear to have established a government department or an officer within a department with special responsibilities for women's issues. However, there are women's organizations that have focused in more recent years on circulating family planning information to both women and men in response to the high number of births, particularly among women under twenty years of

age.¹⁰² The Cook Islands women's organizations also appear to be quite single-issue focused, at least for the moment, concentrating on the increase in violence through a high-profile information campaign to fund a women's crisis center.¹⁰³

In Tonga there is a nationally based Council of Women, the Laugfonua a Fefine Tonga. In addition, village-based women's groups flourish, with a main focus on production of handicrafts for sale. Women in these groups have been concentrating on developing their business and marketing skills.

Although their predecessors were based on religion and tradition, newer women's groups in Fiji have focused on issues such as violence and women's rights. The Women's Crisis Centre, opened in 1984 and affiliated to the National Council of Women, arranges temporary accommodation for women who have been abused. The center also provides information on rights and related legal and social issues. Another organization set up in 1984 is the Women's Wing, which focuses on women's rights in the workplace including maternity leave and minimum wage levels.¹⁰⁴ In Contrast, women in New Caledonia remain firmly within more traditional roles, notwithstanding a high level of activity in community projects. Under French law women's groups can only receive state support and participate in provincial and territorial projects for women if they form an association under a law enacted in 1910. The only women's group formally established under this legislation is the Evangelical Church women's group.¹⁰⁵ However, among recent signs of change was the establishment in 1992 of a new association, SOS Violences Sexuelles, to deal with growing problems of sexual abuse. As reported in a women's newsletter, "Such is the scale of the problem of sexual violence in the territory that unity has overcome traditional barriers."¹⁰⁶

Like many other Pacific countries, Vanuatu has a National Council of Women, formed in 1980 in response to the need for a clear policy on women. The council has had problems getting legislative change for women. For example, it lobbied for legislative change on marriage, divorce, and custody practices, but the legislation that resulted proved inadequate to solve the problems.¹⁰⁷ The Solomon Islands also has a government-funded National Council of Women, which has prepared a national policy for women that is still to be approved by government. There are also several church-based women's organizations, and cultural norms that enforce women's subordinate role remain strong despite some signs of change.¹⁰⁸ A National Council of Women was legally established in Papua New Guinea in the mid-1970s, but women's groups have had difficulty in accommodating "their differences, and this has hampered effective mobilisation and co-ordination of their interests from the village level up."¹⁰⁹

Overall, therefore, there is considerable women's political activity on gender-related concerns throughout the Pacific, some still clearly within the confines of tradition and culture but much that has moved on from these boundaries. In many communities violence against women appears to have been a motivator for this change along with women's rights, family planning, and environmental issues.¹¹⁰ These changes have no doubt been aided by the strong networks that have developed throughout the Pacific, networks that have to an extent politicized women. The Pacific Women's Resource Bureau, which was established within the South Pacific Commission in the early 1980s, has taken a lead in providing women throughout the region with information on women's activities, progress, and successes, and it has coordinated women's activities and networks through newsletters and conferences held in the region. One such meeting, held in Guam in 1991, saw four hundred women from Pacific Island countries meet to establish "ties of solidarity and understanding."¹¹¹ These activities have led to regional meetings such as one held in Pohnpei in 1992 for women in the Micronesia area, with two hundred women attending from five of the seven countries.¹¹²

Another outcome of this networking is the annual celebration of International Women's Day; the *Women's News* newsletter reports on celebrations and activities held throughout the Pacific. Intraregional contacts among Pacific Island women have raised the profile of human rights for Pacific women, many of whom have held regional meetings to discuss the United Nations Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified only by Niue and the Cook Islands (and then only "by virtue of a declaration made at the time of New Zealand's accession").¹¹³ A seminar held in Rarotonga in 1991 forwarded several recommendations to the South Pacific Forum later that year. Although these were not acted on by the forum, action has since been taken to provide Pacific Island women with information on CEDAW.¹¹⁴ Other initiatives include a "Mainstreaming Women in Development Planning Project," which aims to accelerate national development by promoting women's participation in economic terms.¹¹⁵

Conclusion

Women's political participation in many Pacific countries shows marked similarities with early political activity in New Zealand, the first to give women the vote in national elections. The parallels include the fact that many women stood as candidates over a long period before the first woman was finally elected; the election of women first to seats that had been held by other family members; and political movements that were activated and

strengthened though violence and alcohol issues, with their disproportionate impact on women. A further resemblance is found in the growth in the number of women's organizations and the gradual acceptance of women in some areas of local government.

Randall's concepts of supply and demand, which draw attention to many of the factors influencing women's political advancement in the Pacific, make it clear that overcoming traditional and cultural constraints is the key to women's greater political participation.¹¹⁶ However, along with the shift to democratic systems of government, with its tensions with traditional and tribal sources of power, in many cases there is a move toward the political right. This move corresponds with changes in governments bordering the Pacific and with the increasing political influence of business worldwide. Unfortunately, the conservative ideology that accompanies such political developments often further obstructs women's political advancement. Despite this conservative trend, there has been some slight increase in women's political participation in Pacific Island legislatures as well as a phenomenal increase in their political activity in organizations, particularly those that are not tied to island governments beyond at times receiving some financial assistance from public funds.

The push for basic human rights may herald further change in the future, as it is apparent that in some cases public support for women is being undermined by private opposition. An increase in educational, employment, and income-generating opportunities is likely to lead to an erosion of this difference.

Further research into women's political participation needs to consider more thoroughly the impact of the associations women have with male politicians through their family and marriage relationships, as it would appear that a significant number of Pacific women in political positions are wives, daughters, and sisters of other political figures. There is also a need to refine this study, adapting it to distinctive cultural and political environments, to clarify the informal networks of power that women exercise in family, village, regional, and national settings.

A more systematic study of political recruitment would also explain the correlations between women's participation at the local government level and their moving on to central government positions. There is not enough clear information on the numbers and structures of local authorities in many Pacific communities as yet, although it is clear that in Niue over a period of time, the high number of women in local government has contributed to women's active pursuit of political seats at the national level. The impact of electoral systems on women's political success also needs more rigorous treatment. Research suggests that the party-list system of proportional rep-

resentation may be more favorable to women's electoral success than the single-member, first-past-the-post electoral systems found in Westminster models (adopted, in turn, by many states emerging from British, Australian, and New Zealand rule).¹¹⁷ The majority of the relatively new evolving Pacific democracies have the first-past-the-post system, which is less conducive to an expanded political representation of women.

A final cautionary note with respect to research on Pacific women and politics may be in order. There is unfortunately very little information on what is actually happening politically for women in many areas of the Pacific, particularly Micronesia. It is essential that women's activities be made visible, through the mainstream Pacific news media, as an acknowledgment and endorsement of what they are doing. That it is only in a women's newsletter that much information on women's political activity is reported only prolongs the invisibility of women.

There are some clear signs of strength and political awareness among women in the Pacific, most apparent in nongovernment women's organizations but not as yet reflected in national legislatures or executive branches. Laura Torres Souder summarized the challenge to Pacific Island politics in a speech to Micronesian women in 1991: 'We are the women of yesterday's tomorrow. Our time is here and now. We choose to define our reality in view of our sense of what must be done to shape a better world. We do not want men to choose without us what must be done that will have an impact on what we are all to become. But if we remain normal by traditional scripts, we will be left out.'¹¹⁸

NOTES

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34. David Robie, "Hilda: A Lini in a Woman's World," *Pacific Islands Monthly*, September 1991, 14; Robert Keith-Reid, "Maxime Carlot Comes in from Cold," *Islands Business Pacific*, January 1992; information from Grace Molisa, who responded to my questionnaire; and Ian Williams, "Hilda Lini Speaks Out," *Pacific Islands Monthly*, December 1993, 27.

35. Letter to the editor by Madlaine Regenvanu, women's affairs officer, Norsup, Malekula, Vanuatu, *Women's News* 7, no. 4 (October 1992).

36. "One Out of 10 Women Win Parliament Seat," *Solomon NIUS*, 30 June 1993. In an interview with Alice Puia, general secretary, National Council of Women, Ministry of Home Affairs, Solomon Islands, information was provided on another woman, Lily Biznanski, who was elected in the past, although the dates are unknown.

37. Alice Pollard, "Solomon Islands," in *Pacific Women: Roles and Status of Women in Pacific Societies*, ed. Taiafoni Tongamoa, 46.

38. Eileen Kolma, "PNG Election: Bad News for Women," *Women's News* 7, no. 3 (July 1992): 4.

39. Nahau Rooney, "Women and National Politics in Papua New Guinea," in *Women in Politics in Papua New Guinea*, Department of Political and Social Change Working Paper, no. 6 (Canberra: Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1985), 39-48. For further information on women in Papua New Guinea, see Ann Turner, *Views from Interviews: The Changing Role of Women in Papua New Guinea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

40. Vicky Randall, *Women and Politics: An International Perspective*, 2d edition (London: Macmillan, 1991), 122.

41. Stephen Levine's *Pacific Power Maps: An Analysis of the Constitutions of Pacific Island Polities* (Honolulu: Pacific Islands Studies Center for Asian and Pacific Studies, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, 1983) outlines many constitutions of Pacific Island countries that, although paying special attention to customary laws and traditional rights, also emphasize equality. For instance, the Solomon Islands constitution states: "We shall uphold the principles of equality, social justice and the equitable distribution of incomes" (p. 7), while the Kiribati constitution declares that "the principles of equality and justice shall be upheld" (p. 6).

42. Ron Crocombe, Uentabo Neemia, Asesela Ravuvu, and Werner Vom Busch, eds., *Culture and Democracy in the South Pacific* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1992), 246. There are, of course, significant differences in the historical content of custom and tradition between and within Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. For one overview see Douglas L. Oliver, *Oceania: The Native Cultures of Australia and the Pacific Islands*, vol. 2 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989).

43. This is not to deny the importance of women as producers of subsistence and cash crops as well as the many other roles they fulfill.

44. Randall, *Women and Politics*, 175.
45. Penelope Schoeffel Meleisea, "Women and Political Leadership in the Pacific Islands," in *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1994), 107.
46. Elicita Morei, "Working for Change in Belau," *Tok Blong SPPF*, August 1992, 32.
47. Schoeffel Meleisea, "Women and Political Leadership," 111.
48. *Women in Politics and Decision-Making in the Late Twentieth Century: A United Nations Study* (Vienna: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1992).
49. M. J. Meggitt, "Women in Contemporary Central Enga Society, Papua New Guinea," in *Family and Gender in the Pacific*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 143-144.
50. Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, "Women, Education and Development in Western Samoa" (Ph.D. diss., Philosophy, Macquarie University, 1991), appendix 2.
51. Ron Crocombe, *The South Pacific: An Introduction* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1989), 60.
52. "The Role and Status of Women in the Solomon Islands and Key Issues of Concern to Them: A Country Paper" (paper presented at the Women in Development Workshop for Pacific Women Leaders, 1993).
53. Carol B. Hetler and Siew-Ean Khoo, *Women's Participation in the South Pacific Economies*, Islands/Australia Working Paper, no. 87/4 (Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, Australian National University, 1987).
54. *Women's Perspective* (quarterly newsletter of the Guam Bureau of Women's Affairs) 1, no. 3 (July-October 1992): 3.
55. Grace Molisa, *Colonised People* (Port Vila: Black Stone Publications, 1987). For discussion on domestic violence, see *Domestic Violence in Oceania*, special issue of *Pacific Studies* 13, no. 3 (July 1990).
56. Taiamoni Tongamoa, *Pacific Women: Roles and Status of Women in Pacific Societies* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1988), 89-90.
57. Schoeffel Meleisea, "Women and Political Leadership," 115. See also Evelyn Hogan, "Controlling the Bodies of Women: Reading Gender Ideologies in Papua New Guinea," in *Women in Politics in Papua New Guinea* (Working Paper No. 6, Department of Political and Social Change, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1985).
58. "PNG Women at the Polls," *Women's News* 7, no. 2 (April 1992): 10.

59. Randall, *Women and Politics*, 131.
60. *Women's News*, April 1992, 10.
61. Samuel McPhetres, "Elections in the Northern Mariana Islands," *Political Science* 35, no. 1 (July 1983).
62. Fata Sano Malifa, "Why Tofilau Won, Tupua Lost," *Islands Business Pacific*, April 1991; and Peter R. Leitch, "The Introduction of Universal Suffrage in Western Samoa: An Analysis of the Plebiscite and the 1991 General Election" (M.A. thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1992).
63. Randall, *Women and Politics*, 140.
64. Shuster, "Elections in the Republic of Palau."
65. "Beaten by Customary Chiefs," *Islands Business Pacific*, April 1991, 19.
66. John Connell, "No Changing of the Old Guard," *Islands Business Pacific*, February 1992, 28.
67. Information provided by Pamela A. Scriven, Nauru Women's National Council.
68. Barrie Macdonald, "Tuvalu: The 1981 General Election," *Political Science* 35, no. 1 (July 1983): 73.
69. Milosi Manoa, "Why Tuvalu Women Are So Ambitious?" *Review* (School of Social and Economic Development, University of the South Pacific) 13, no. 20 (4 October 1993): 87.
70. Information from questionnaire filled in by Mrs. E. F. Talagi, director of community affairs, Community Affairs Department, Niue.
71. Pesi Finua, "Victory for the People," *Pacific Islands Monthly*, March 1990, 16.
72. Susana Ounei, "Kanak Laments French Ploy," *Pacific Islands Monthly*, May 1992, 9.
73. Information from interview with Alice Puia, Solomon Islands, 1993.
74. Rowan Callick, "The Powers in Their Hands," *Islands Business Pacific*, June 1992, 22.
75. Rooney, "Women and National Politics in Papua New Guinea," 39-48.
76. Leulu Felise Va'a, "General Elections in Western Samoa," *Political Science* 35, no. 1 (July 1983): 80.
77. Speech by Hon. Fiamē Naomi, M.P., at the Women in Politics Seminar held in Western Samoa by the National Council of Women, 1991.

78. Ulafala Aiavao, "Wooing the Women Voters," *Pacific Islands Monthly*, December 1990, 60.
79. Robie, "Hilda: A Lini in a Woman's World," 14.
80. Shireen Lateef, "Current and Future Implications of the Coups for Women in Fiji," *The Contemporary Pacific* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 122. See also an unpublished paper by Deborah Garrett, "Violence against Women: A Study of the Political Behaviour of Women's Groups in Fiji" (Victoria University of Wellington, 1993).
81. Lateef, "Current and Future Implications," 125.
82. Deryck Scarr, "Fiji and the General Election of 1992," *Journal of Pacific History* 28, no. 1 (1993): 75-92.
83. Crocombe et al., *Culture and Democracy in the South Pacific*, 246.
84. "Marianas in Action," *Women's News* 8, nos. 1, 2 (May 1993): 15.
85. Senator Marilyn Manibusan's address to the Second Annual Governor's Conference for Women in Guam, reported in *Women's Perspective* 1, no. 3 (July-October 1992): 1.
86. "The Position of Women in Western Samoa" (country paper for Women in Development Workshop for Pacific Women Leaders, Wellington, 1993).
87. "Tonga," *Women's News* 7, no. 2 (April 1992): 5, and 8, nos. 1-2 (May 1993): 7.
88. "Fiji," *Women's News* 7, no. 2 (April 1992): 4.
89. "Summary of an Integrated Programme for the Development of Women in Vanuatu" (paper presented at Women in Development Workshop for Pacific Women Leaders, 1993), 1.
90. "Spotlight on Micronesia," *Women's News* 8, nos. 1-2 (May 1993): 14.
91. Country paper, Republic of Kiribati, presented at the Women in Development Workshop for Pacific Women Leaders.
92. Diana McManus, "A Women's Champion," *Pacific Islands Monthly*, May 1990, 56.
93. Mrs. Mii Rairi and Ms. Nga Teao, "Cook Islands Country Paper" (presented at the Women in Development Workshop for Pacific Women Leaders, 1993).
94. Elicita Morei, "Working for Change in Belau," *Tok Blong SPPF*, August 1992.
95. "Credit to the Marshalls," *Women's News* 6, no. 3 (September 1991): 4-5.
96. Information from questionnaire returned by Pamela Scriven, Nauru Women's National Council; and "Looking Forward in Nauru," *Women's News* 7, no. 3 (July 1992): 5.

97. "How Do You Farewell a Woman Like This?" *Pacific Islands Monthly*, January 1990, 21.
98. "American Samoa," *Women's News* 7, no. 3 (July 1992): 7.
99. "Wallis and Futuna," *Women's News* 8, nos. 1-2 (May 1993): 10.
100. "Niue," *Women's News* 7, no. 4 (October 1992): 5.
101. Paper on Tokelau presented to the Women in Development Workshop for Pacific Women Leaders by Maseleisa Simi and Teresa M. Pasilio, 1993.
102. "French Polynesia," *Women's News* 6, no. 1 (March 1991), and 7, no. 2 (April 1992).
103. Ngapoko Short, "'Aware March' in the Cooks," *Women's News* 6, no. 3 (September 1991): 3.
104. Jessie Tuivaga, "Fiji," in *Pacific Women: Roles and Status of Women in Pacific Societies*, ed. Taiafoni Tongamoa, 11.
105. "PWRB Makes Contact with New Caledonia's Island Women," *Women's News* 6, no. 1 (March 1991): 6.
106. "SOS in New Caledonia," *Women's News* 7, no. 3 (July 1992): 4.
107. Kathleen Rarua, "Vanuatu," in *Pacific Women: Roles and Status of Women in Pacific Societies*, ed. Taiafoni Tongamoa, 86.
108. "The Role and Status of Women in the Solomon Islands and Key Issues of Concern to Them: A Country Paper" (paper presented at Women in Development Workshop for Pacific Women Leaders, 1993).
109. Tony Deklin, "Culture and Democracy in Papua New Guinea: Marit Tru or Giaman Marit?" in *Culture and Democracy in the South Pacific*, ed. Ron Crocombe et al. (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1992), 43.
110. The growing level of political activity demonstrated by women's organizations throughout the Pacific raises the question of whether their focus on social issues will have a long-term impact on public policy.
111. *Women's News* 7, no. 1 (January 1992): 2.
112. "Spotlight on Micronesia," *Women's News* 8, nos. 1-2 (May 1993): 12. Note that women from Kiribati and Nauru did not attend.
113. *Women's News* 5, nos. 2-4 (December 1990): 13.
114. "Whatever Happened to CEDAW?" *Women's News* 7, no. 4 (October 1992): 15.
115. ". . . Putting Gender on the Map," *Women's News* 8, nos. 1-2 (May 1993): 19.

116. Some issues relating to the tension between tradition and democratic values, and their implications for the position of women, are explored in Stephanie Lawson, "The Politics of Tradition: Problems for Political Legitimacy and Democracy in the South Pacific," *Pacific Studies* 16, no. 2 (June 1993). Other studies dealing with inequality, culture, and gender issues within a Pacific regional context include Marilyn Strathern, ed., *Dealing with Inequality: Analysing Gender Relations in Melanesia and Beyond*, essays by members of the 1983/1984 Anthropological Research Group at the Research School of Pacific Studies, the Australian National Library (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and Jocelyn Linnekin and Lin Poyer, eds., *Cultural Identity and Ethnicity in the Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990).

117. Randall, *Women and Politics*, 140.

118. Keynote speech given by Laura M. Torres Souder, "Conflict Management by Micronesian Women: A Strategy for Progress," at Palau-Pacific Women's Conference held in Koror, Palau, 8 July 1991. See also her *Daughters of the Island: Contemporary Chamorro Women Organizers of Guam*, 2d edition (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1992).