

Journeys of growth: How have Cook Islands women overcome challenges to career progression in New Zealand?

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iv. Glossary

Te reo Māori Kuki 'Airani	English translation
'Aka'aka	Humility
'Akoromaki	Patience
'Irinaki	Faith
Akairi kite	Shared vision
Aka'ārāvei'anga	Introductions
Akapapa	Arrange, dictate, tell
Akauru	Concept of data collection
Apinga aroa	Something that is given with love
Aro'a	Love
Kite pakari	Wisdom
Kuki Airani reo maori	Cook Islands language
Meitaki maata	Thank you
Noa	Freedom
O'ora	Concept to present findings
Ora	Life
Paokti	Concept of analysing data
Papa'a	Caucasian
Rota'l'anga	Unity
Taokotai	Collaboration
Ta'unga	An expert, skilled craftsman
Te reo Māori Kuki 'Airani	Cook Islands language
Tivaevae	Hand sewen cloth or quilt
Tu akangateitei	Respect
Tu inangaro	Relationships
Uriuri kite	Reciprocity

v. Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgments), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed: _____

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vii. Abstract

Career theory, gender studies, and workplace literature are well-established research areas. There are emerging Pacific studies that are broadening these well-established research areas and providing a platform for Pacific people to enter the academic space in studies that are not only related to health, education, arts, culture, or socioeconomics.

This study aimed to provide a specific perspective on the emerging Pacific Islands studies – a Cook Islands perspective. Existing Pacific Islands research in New Zealand has small samples of Cook Islands descent participants and their findings are generalised to align with the majority ethnic culture represented. Therefore, the Cook Islands culture and perspectives are hidden. Currently, New Zealand has very restricted data regarding the industries that employ large numbers of Cook Island people, let alone Cook Islands women.

This study's main research question is how has Cook Island women overcome challenges to career progression in New Zealand. This research provided the opportunity to identify which New Zealand industries Cook Islands women were employed in, determine the challenges that Cook Islands women experienced when they progressed their careers in New Zealand, and understand the strategies and actions Cook Islands women implemented to progress their careers. This study used the Cook Islands tivaevae methodology to guide the research process and conducted five semi-structured interviews with five Cook Islands women. To answer our research question this study determined that education and training, having mentors and being mentors, expanding their networks, having a seat at the table or in other words being in a position of power and influence, knowing the value they could personally contribute, and demonstrating authentic leadership enabled the Cook Islands participants to overcome challenges to career progression in New Zealand workplaces. The challenges these women experienced included career breaks and re-entry into the workforce, managing the unconscious influence of Cook Islands cultural values that arose in the workplace, managing career mobility, and accepting or adapting to the embedded industry culture in the roles they were employed in and managing the additional pressure of making it to the top.

This study took place in Auckland, New Zealand.

1. Chapter one – Introduction

This dissertation is founded on my own experience as a New Zealand-born Cook Islands woman working in the education sector. I have experienced significant growth in my career journey since entering paid employment almost seven years ago. Reflecting upon my career journey from holding a graduate role then to a senior role, then to shifting teams and being a senior employee, I realised how fruitful my career progression had been within a short timeframe. I started to observe other Pacific Islands people around me and discussed with non-work connections about their career journeys. The results of these observations and discussions indicated that it was unusual to have received the training and professional development within the short timeframe that I experienced. In addition, I realised that particularly as a Pacific Island woman, my progression journey was uncommon. I then became curious and wanted to investigate if other Pacific Island people had similar experiences. I have found that the Human Rights Commission is leading the Pacific Pay Gap Inquiry to better understand and generate solutions to close the Pacific pay gap. New Zealand European men are the highest paid gender and ethnic group in Aotearoa, whereas Pacific women are the lowest paid gender and ethnic group compared to all ethnic groups (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020). Upon searching within the emerging research about Pacific Island people and careers, I identified the following opportunities:

- Pacific Islands, Pasifika, Pasefika, Pacific peoples is an umbrella but inclusive term that encompasses all Pacific Islands ethnic cultures in New Zealand, therefore existing research focuses on all Pacific Islands peoples rather than a specific ethnic group,
- Existing Pacific Islands research in New Zealand had small numbers of Cook Islands descent participants in their sample,
- Existing Pacific Islands research in New Zealand focused primarily on industries in health and well-being, education, environment, arts, and culture,
- There was no research about Cook Islands women and careers in New Zealand, and
- The researcher researching about or that included Cook Islands people, was in most cases of non-Cook Islands descent.

These opportunities fuelled my interest in investigating whether Cook Islands women experienced career progression opportunities and challenges they experience while moving in up the ladder or sideways in their workplaces.

1.1. Background: Pacific people in New Zealand

The migration of Pacific Islands people to New Zealand was fuelled by simple labour market supply and demand. With Pacific Islands people exposed to limited manufacturing and service sectors in the Islands, they sought work beyond their oceans (Bedford & Hugo, 2012). Pacific Islands peoples make up the youngest and fastest growing population in New Zealand (The Southern Institute, 2020). This population is forecasted to grow larger which means the New Zealand workforce will have a high percentage of Pacific Islands people's engaging in it (Duncan, 2007; Furbish, 2012). Figure 1 shows the increase of the Pacific population over time compared to the rest of the New Zealand population. Figure 2 depicts population forecasts for each nationality that falls under the Pacific Islands term.

TABLE	METADATA		
	2006 (count)	2013 (count)	2018 (count)
Pacific Peoples	265,974	295,941	381,642
NZ population	3,860,163	4,011,399	4,699,755

Figure 1: Population counts over time (Statistics New Zealand, 2021)

Despite an increase of Pacific Islands people in the labour market, Pacific Islands people will still be overrepresented in low-skilled and low-paid roles in sectors that are most at risk for automation and will be less likely to hold management or leadership roles (The Southern Institute, 2021; Vui-Talitu, 2019).

Table 1 Population projections, 2014 and 2029

	2004	2014	2029
Cook Islands	14,000	12,775	9,859
Fiji Islands	836,002	930,235	1,048,800
FSM	112,711	138,250	179,885
Kiribati	93,101	116,375	160,780
Marshall Islands	55,370	72,980	100,980
Nauru	10,100	11,320	12,730
Papua New Guinea	5,695,301	7,138,420	9,807,415
Samoa	182,750	198,280	227,560
Solomon Islands	460,104	588,760	806,540
Tonga	98,322	102,980	107,340
Tuvalu	9,639	10,630	12,750
Vanuatu	215,836	281,180	409,460

Figure 2: Population projections (Duncan, 2007)

These trends place Pacific Islands peoples at the center of current and future research. Pacific Islands research provides uniquely Pacific worldviews that are underpinned by Pacific belief systems, values, and ways to structure knowledge (Anae et al., 2001). Māori (indigenous peoples of Aotearoa, New Zealand) and Pacific Islands peoples are generally grouped. This ignores the differences amongst the different ethnic groups under the Pacific Islands umbrella and between the nations themselves (Earle, 1995). There are major and important cultural, historical, and legal differences that are often overlooked or misunderstood. The research focus for this study is Cook Islands women and their experiences whereas currently there is very minimal academic research that solely focuses on Cook Islands women.

1.2. Cook Islands people

‘Kia Orana’ is a Cook Islands greeting that is generally translated into English as ‘Hello’. However, Kia Orana is translated to ‘may you live a long and fulling life’ (Jonassen, 2003). Jonassen (2003) also helps to explain that ‘Kia Orana’ is also an acronym to describe the pillars of the Cook Islands culture:

K	Kite pakari (wisdom)
I	‘Irinaki (faith)
A	‘Akoromaki (patience)
O	Ora (life)
R	Rota’l’anga (unity)
A	‘Aka’aka (humility)
N	Noa (freedom)
A	Aro’a (love)

Figure 3: Cook Islands cultural pillars

Kite pakari means wisdom and developing wisdom as a person grows older. Each life milestone such as birthdays, baptism, entering education, entering employment, hair cutting, wedding, and so forth, a person accumulates wisdom. In addition, you gain wisdom through self-awareness of tradition which is developed and passed on through the language. *‘Irinaki* means faith or trust in a higher power. An example of this in current times is prayer, which is an integral part of everyday life. *‘Akoromaki* refers to patience, integrity, responsibility, and fairness. This term is often used during times of anxiety and disquiet. *Ora* refers to life or having a connection to the land by ‘knowing’ the land and sacred responsibility to the land. *Rota’l’anga* refers to unity in simple terms. To explain more this pillar means understanding protocol (formal and informal) and the importance of good citizenship, which is to complete duties to the family, village, and country. *‘Aka’aka* means humility. There is a belief that traditional ceremonies, that were practiced in the past and participated by certain people, helped create a humble character. *Noa* refers to freedom that is expressed within certain boundaries and *aro’a* refers to love through reciprocity, hospitality, and care towards people or materials. These pillars can apply across other cultures, but the way Cook Islands people express these values differentiates us from other Pacific Island cultures or other indigenous cultures. Unpacking ‘Kia Orana’ introduces non-Cook Islands people to the complexities of the Cook Islands culture.

1.2.1. Migration of Cook Islands people

Cook Islands people have been moving to different parts of the Pacific and New Zealand since the 1830s (Hooper, 1961), whereas other reports indicate Cook Islands people have been migrating since the 1920s (Anderson, 2014). Like other Pacific Islands migrants, Cook Island people wanted to try their luck at seasonal work in New Zealand to build a better future and life for their families. By the 1930s many Cook Islands migrants were young women who were assured a job as domestic workers (for

example, cleaners, launderers, childcare, and elderly care) (Anderson, 2014). By the 1940s, Cook Island women outnumbered Cook Islands men in New Zealand. Fast forward to 2018 New Zealand census, the Cook Islands community is the third largest Pacific Islands population in New Zealand with over 80,000 people (Statistics New Zealand, 2020). 39,828 of the Cook Islands population are male and 40,704 are female; of the female population 21% aged 15-29 years are employed in part-time or full-time employment, whereas 31% of the female population are aged between 30-65 years (Statistics New Zealand, 2020). Many females hold occupations in professional roles, community and personal service workers, clerical and administrative work, and sales workers. However, the census data does not specify the industries that employ Cook Islands people in New Zealand. This influenced the recruitment process discussed in Chapter 3.

1.3. Why study Cook Islands women?

Pacific Islands research in gender studies, career theory, career progression, and the glass ceiling are slowly emerging in academia. There is minimal research available primarily on Cook Islands people within New Zealand and even limited research on Cook Island women from singular or multiple sectors in New Zealand. I am a Cook Islands woman, and my research area provided an opportunity to identify and investigate the experiences of Cook Islands women living and working in New Zealand.

1.4. Research question and sub-research questions

The main interest of this dissertation is to understand how Cook Islands women are overcoming challenges to career progression in New Zealand. Established research on career progression and the glass ceiling highlights the barriers to women in senior positions. This study will present findings on this, but the primary focus of this study is exploring the actions or strategies Cook Islands women have used to overcome challenges to career progression. This study aims to shed light on their triumphs and share their journey of moving up or sideways in their careers.

The main research question for this study is how have Cook Islands women overcome challenges to career progression in New Zealand. The sub-research questions to support this are:

1. What key challenges do Cook Islands women in operational, management, and leadership roles experience as they advance in their careers within New Zealand?
2. How can Cook Islands cultural values and practices hinder or aid career progression?
3. What influence do culturally gendered roles have in career progression for Cook Islands women?
4. What initiatives are in place to assist career progression for Cook Islands women in New Zealand?
5. What initiatives could be explored to assist career progression for Cook Islands women in New Zealand?

1.5. Structure of dissertation

This dissertation is organised into six chapters:

1. Chapter one introduces the research topic, questions, and the Cook Islands culture and people.
2. Chapter two is a literature review that explores different career and career development theories, challenges to career progression, and factors or initiatives that support career progression.
3. Chapter three discusses the research paradigm and introduces and discusses the Cook Islands research methodology Tivaevae and discusses how data will be analysed.
4. Chapter four presents the findings of this research with the Tivaevae methodology.
5. Chapter five is a discussion of this study's findings and relevant theory mentioned in chapters two and three.
6. Chapter six concludes this dissertation with a summary of key themes, highlights areas of limitations and provides considerations for future research.

2. Chapter two – Literature Review

The previous chapter outlined the rationale for this research, which is based on providing an alternative perspective to career progression literature by using the experiences of Cook Islands women working in New Zealand. To underpin this research topic, in this chapter, the theoretical framework will be presented. In particular, the areas of career theory, career progression, the glass ceiling, and success factors that aid career progression will be covered. Finally, gaps will be identified, from which the research question is formulated. This chapter will then close with a summary and reflective description.

2.1. Careers

2.1.1. Defining ‘career’

The definition of the term ‘career’ has been debated for a very long time and the definition has transformed from a traditional description, where opportunities and constraints were determined by the company or the occupation an individual had (Humphries & Gatenby, 1996), to more contemporary definitions. Mullhal (2014) presents the evolution of the meaning of a career in four stages, using descriptions from different career theorists. In stage one, the meaning of career and the concept of career development is launched by Parsons (1909) career matching theory:

“In the wise choice of a vocation, there are three broad factors: (1) a clear understanding of yourself, your aptitudes, abilities, interests, ambitions, resources, limitations, and their causes; (2) a knowledge of the requirements, conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities and prospects in different lines of work; (3) true reasoning on the relations of these two groups of facts.” (Parsons, 1909, p.5).

In stage two the meaning of career is further evolved from a sociologist’s perspective, in which career definitions started to consider the relationship between a person’s professional and personal account:

“In a highly and rigidly structured society, a career consists, objectively, of a series of status and clearly defined offices. In a freer one, the individual has more latitude for creating his position or choosing from a number of existing ones.” (Hughes, 1937, p. 409).

Mulhall (2014) continues into stage three, where the definition of ‘career’ reverted to occupational and organisational positioning. Careers, career progression, and career

development were determined by the role a person held, the organisation they were employed in, and the availability of upward progression:

“A career is a succession of related jobs, arranged in a hierarchy of prestige, through which persons move in an ordered (more-or-less predictable) sequence.” (Wilensky, 1961, p. 523 as cited in Mulhall, 2014).

“A career is a sequence of positions held during the course of a lifetime, some of them simultaneously.” (Super, 1957 as cited in Mulhall, 2014).

Mulhall's stage three aligns with Humphries and Gatenby's description of career, which is the experiences of someone's working life, or a pattern of work-related experiences throughout a person's working life (Humphries & Gatenby, 1996).

The evolution of the description for 'career' enters a more modern understanding in stage four. Theorists like Sullivan and Brauch (2009) and Arthur et al. (1989) transform the description of 'career' to reflect how individuals live their careers in a constantly shifting world.

“...definition of career is the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time. A central theme in this definition is that of work and all that work can mean for the ways in which we see and experience other people, organizations, and society. However, equally central to this definition is the theme of time, along which the career provides a “moving perspective” (Hughes, 1958:67) on the unfolding interaction between a person and society...The notion of a career also links matters internal to the individual with matters external, such as those concerning official position. ...The study of careers is the study of both individual and organizational change ... as well as of societal change.” (Arthur et al., 1989, as cited in Mulhall, 2014).

“We define a career as an individual's work-related and other relevant experiences, both inside and outside of organizations that form a unique pattern over the individual's lifespan. This definition recognizes both physical movement ... as well as the interpretation of the individual, including his/her perceptions of career events ... career alternatives... and outcomes. Moreover, careers do not occur in a vacuum. An individual's career is influenced by many contextual factors ... as well as by personal factors.” (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009, p. 43 as cited in Mulhall, 2014).

These modern descriptions of the term 'career' begin to include women in the workforce, time spent developing experience, unpaid work-related jobs, and acknowledge that a person's career is not only restricted to their working life (Cabrera, 2007). The journey of the meaning of a career has evolved from referring to a specific job, occupation, or vocation, to a series of work-related and other relevant experiences. This study will adopt the meaning of career from Sullivan and Brauch (2009) because this study is exploring the journey of Cook Islands women career's which is assumed to

include exploring their familial and community roles that contribute to their career journey.

2.2. Career theory terminology

When reviewing the literature on career progression, studies included other terms such as career advancement and career development. This study raised the following questions: Are career progression and career advancement the same? What is career development? How are these terms related? This section explores these questions.

2.2.1. Defining career progression

Career progression studies by Amoa (2017), Bown-Wilson and Parry (2013), Kumara (2017), and Peshave and Gupta (2017) collectively describe career progression as the steps or short-term goals (personal, education, and employment-related) that enable an individual to advance into employment positions or advance towards a personally determined goal.

2.2.2. Defining career advancement and career development

Career advancement and *career progression* are terms that are used interchangeably in Amoa (2017), Chong (2010), and Stroh et al. (1992) which makes the line unclear the differences between these two terms. Stroh et al. (1992) was determining the gap in career progression between male and female managers in 20 Fortune 500 companies. Their study used Rosenbaum's (1984) definition of career advancement and progression:

“...defined advancement or progression with respect to changes in level of position and level of reward” (Rosenbaum, 1984, as cited in Stroh et al., 1992).

Stroh et al. (1992) research also included salary, number of promotions, and number of geographic moves as measures in evaluating successful career progression. Whereas other studies defined career advancement differently. Sangaria and Johnsrud (1988, as cited in Amoa, 2019) defined career advancement as entering employment positions with increased responsibilities. Smith and Crittenden (2012) refer to career advancement as career tournaments in which men and women are competing in different competitions but for the same outcome, such as promotions. Bowles et al. (2019) studied how women and men negotiated when advancing their careers and

therefore referred to progress toward achieving career aspirations as “career advancement” or “career gains”. Career progression and career advancement reflect upward movement into higher positions. But an additional layer to career progression is that movement could be sideways in improving knowledge-base and skillset.

Career development is a lifelong journey that enables an individual to make continuous choices in response to available opportunities, cope with rapid changes in employment, and effectively participate in the workforce (Furbish, 2016; Kumara, 2017). Individuals are likely to experience numerous transitions where they must continuously reassess their personal, employment, and education priorities (Hurd & Dyer, 2004). Career development is generally self-directed where individuals need to be aware of and respond to changes at work to remain employable (Hurd & Dyer, 2004) as career transition and development services are restricted to those at a strategic leadership employment level (Furbish, 2012). Career development is the “big picture” of an individual’s ultimate career goals, and *career progression* is embedded within career development through the steps or short-term goals that allow a person to advance upwards to achieve their personally determined goal.

2.3. Career development theory

Career development theory provides different ways to understand career paths, career success, and career behaviours. At the core of most contemporary career theories is the idea that if people engage in choosing their jobs rather than job hunt, individuals become more satisfied with their careers (Brown & Brooks, 2002).

Original career development theory was launched by Frank Parson’s ‘trait-and-factor’ theory (Parsons, 1909) which theorised if you could study an individual’s talents, skills, and personality; understand the characteristics of relevant careers; you can match this person to an occupation that is best suited to their abilities. This should result in high performance and productivity levels (Brown & Brooks, 2002; Chartrand, 1991). There have been many critiques against Parson’s theory such as Crites (1974) who mentions that trait-and-factor theory is too ridged and predominantly counsellor-led, but also, defenders of the trait-and-factor theory such as O’Shea (1984) who states that trait-and-factor theory is an approach that enables career exploration and self-exploration. The trait-and-factor theory continues to be the foundation of most career development and career counseling theory.

Career selection is based on a collective series of decisions and thus complementing the 'trait-and-factor' theory is Donald Super's (1953) 'life-rainbow' theory which recognises career development as a lifelong process and has a series of development stages. There are five stages that are categorised by ages, 0-14 years old is the growth stage, 15-24 years old is the exploration stage, 25-44 years old is the establishment stage, 45-64 years old is the maintenance stage and 65 years old onwards is the decline stage. Within each stage, there are role expectations and self-concepts, personal factors, and situational factors that influence vocational behaviour and development. In addition, there is vocational maturity which is the readiness to cope with the development of tasks across the exploration, establishment, and maintenance stages (Coleman, 1958; Super, 1953; Super & Jordaan, 1973). These grandfather career theories have paved the way for the following modern or next-generation career development theories.

2.3.1. Intelligent career theory

Another career development theory is the 'Intelligent Career' theory, introduced by Arthur et al. (1995), which focuses on subjective perceptions of the reasons behind a person's career decisions (Parker, 2005). Parker's study applied intelligent career theory to Pacific Island people, the first of many emerging studies in careers. Intelligent career theory has three independent components referred to as "ways of knowing" which are knowing why; knowing how; and knowing whom.

Knowing why: this component has two focuses, firstly, an individual's reasons – what are their motivations, values, construction of personal meaning, and their identity. Secondly, aspects that surround and influence the individual that affects career choice, adaptability, and commitment like their family, community, and non-work aspects of life. These aspects change as experiences, interests, and family situations change (Parker, 2005).

Knowing how: this component focuses on the individual's career-related skills and knowledge that can influence their career opportunities and employability. This allows the individual to utilise their expertise to invest in new areas for other people to use or for other people to further develop their skills and knowledge in areas outside of their current scope (Parker, 2005).

Knowing whom: this final component focuses on the individual's work-related and non-work-related relationships. Building and investing in relationships with internal company

contacts, suppliers, customers, clients, and networks; including family, friends, and social acquaintances allow the individual to provide career support, promote the transmission of reputation, and provide access to information (Arthur et al., 1995; Parker, 2002; Parker, 2005).

2.3.2. Kaleidoscope career model

Next-generation career theory that provides an alternative way to understand a person's career choices is the Kaleidoscope career theory or the Kaleidoscope Career Model (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). This model, which directly fits its name, describes how people change the patterns of their careers by rotating various aspects of their lives (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). In other words, men's and women's career patterns change over time as their needs and interests change (Cabrera, 2007; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). These changes may be internal organisational changes such as a restructure or being laid off, or in other cases can be personal such as committing to family. There are three boundaries within this theory that influence career decisions: *authenticity*, which is being true to yourself; *balance*, the ability to successfully integrate one's work and non-work lives; and *challenge*, the need to experience career advancement that contributes to self-worth (Cabrera, 2007; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Smith et al., 2012; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). To benefit from kaleidoscope thinking, organisations need to look away from linear career paths and provide opportunities for all workers to take a career interruption and return at a later point (Smith et al., 2012).

2.4. Gendered Careers

Making up half of the global workforce, women have made significant progress since entering the workforce in the 1900s (Goldin, 2006). In the twenty-first century, we are familiar with women having titles such as CEOs, Executives, Principles, Doctors, Prime Ministers, and Presidents (Keohane, 2020). These titles are held simultaneously with responsibilities expected from the gender roles of a daughter, sister, wife, mother, aunty, or niece. The journey of being a 'working-woman' is a well-established research phenomenon, despite women's career literature being complex and in some cases contradictory (Humphries & Gatenby, 1996), across the world, there is an estimate of 9 in 10 businesses have at least one woman in senior management positions. A potential cause or influence on the rise of females in leadership positions could be contributed to

the increase of diversity and inclusion policies (Davis, 2021). In New Zealand, the Ministry for Women (2018), encourages the increase of female representation in leadership positions, which will contribute to closing the gender pay gap and gives women the opportunity to contribute to a successful society. New Zealand's Exchange (NZX) comprises 22% of NZX female directorships, 48.8% of female executive management positions in New Zealand's public sector, and 22.7% of female executive positions in New Zealand's private sector (Ministry for Women, 2018). There are positive outcomes for women and their families when they are in employment and contributing to the economy. Still, workplace challenges experienced by women who are trying to achieve a balance between being a working woman and responsibilities for being a wife or daughter are also well-established (Ministry for Women, 2017; Ministry for Women, 2018).

Gendered careers are jobs that are designated as being male or female in nature (Wilson, 1998). Some examples of male-oriented careers include policemen, lawyers, and engineers. Some examples of female-oriented careers include childcare, nurses, and cleaners. Careers that are female in nature are automatically assumed to have low authority, limited career opportunities, low-paid, and a high need for women to have career breaks for childcare or other domestic responsibilities, holds negative assumptions about commitment and capability, and the only way to measure organisational and career success is upward mobility (Wilson 1998). These negative implications for female-oriented careers decrease their capacity to execute behaviours that are necessary to produce specific accomplishments (Bandura, 1997). Generally, people choose particular pathways to envision favourable outcomes however it seems that regardless of the type of career a woman enters there will be inherent challenges that they will face (Cunningham et al., 2007).

Horizontal and vertical occupational segregation allows us to understand the overrepresentation or underrepresentation of men and women in the workforce and the experiences they have in different occupations. When the workforce in an industry is largely comprised of a specific gender, this workforce is horizontally segregated (Hakim, 1992; Kwaku Ohemeng & Adusah-Karikari, 2015; Wilson, 1998). For example, the construction industry would be considered horizontally segregated as males are the majority of workers, whereas, in early childhood education women are the majority. This tells us that females are highly underrepresented in male-oriented workforces. Alternatively, within companies where higher-status roles are held predominantly by a specific gender and the opportunities for progression or promotion are a lot more

available, these roles are vertically segregated (EurWork, 2017; Hakim, 1992; Kwaku Ohemeng & Adusah-Karikari, 2015; Wilson, 1998). For example, in medical care, doctors are predominately male, and nurses are predominately female. These studies tell us that females are overrepresented in roles that are lower-pay and have minimal opportunities or restrictive mobility for growth.

2.5. Gendered organisations

Organisational functions, practices, and processes can be used to determine and explain gender inequality. Gender organisational theory argues that male and female stereotypes will be present regardless of the structure of the workforce (Mastracci & Arreola, 2016). Gender organisation theory was developed between the 1800s-1900s by Max Weber who held the belief that organisational structures, functions, hierarchies, and processes replicated the nature of governments and government officials. Therefore, organisational structures and jobs were clearly defined and tightly controlled by rules, policies, and procedures (Mastracci & Arreola, 2016; Sahraoui-Bentaleb, 2016).

Gendered organisational theory was revolutionised by scholars Britton and Logan, (2008), Mastracci and Arreola (2016), and Rosabeth Kanter who theorised female inequalities resulted from the status women held in the organisational hierarchy versus the overall number of women employed in the organisation (Acker, 1990). In other words, the role a woman held determined their success, power, influence, and career mobility. However, historically women have held low-paying roles which automatically placed them in disadvantageous positions.

Another scholar, Joan Acker, determined organisations can have a 'gender' which is determined in the way structures are built and jobs are characterised (Acker, 1990; Britton & Logan, 2008; Williams et al., 2012). Organisational structures embody the people who created them; and policies, procedures, and contracts consider the primary employee base that will be recruited to ensure organisational success which has traditionally been males. These characteristics can produce and reproduce discrepancies between women and men. Women were characterised as expressive leaders in the home and therefore considered unfit for the 'world of work,' and traditional personalities of being nurturing and comforting influenced their occupation choice (Britton & Logan, 2008).

Williams et al. (2012) utilise and broaden gender organisational theory to fit the context of the 'new economy' which is also known as work transformation. The new economy refers to "workforce change" where previously employees were loyal to one company. Whereas now, the new economy has increasing trends of changing employers to seek improved opportunities due to restructures and mergers, or changes in organisational logic where team projects and measurement of team performance is more common. These workforce changes broaden the inequalities experienced across the workforce including career opportunities. Gender organisation theory emphasizes that inequality is built into the structures, functions, processes, and practices of organisations.

2.6. Challenges women experience in the workplace

In summary of the previous sections, career theory helps us understand the career choices (Brown & Brooks, 2002) people make and sheds light on the structural and procedural challenges (Britton & Logan, 2008) that are unconsciously and consciously embedded in careers. This inherently makes it difficult for women to progress in the workforce. This section discusses common challenges that women experience when progressing in their careers. One historical challenge is the glass ceiling which is a metaphor describing an invisible barrier that blocks women from reaching the top of the ladder. The glass ceiling is a well-established research topic, which will be explored further in this section, is also starting to have emerging Pacific studies contribute to this well-established body of knowledge.

2.6.1. Phenomenon: Glass ceiling and glass metaphors

In the last few years, workforce participation for women has increased across developed countries (Ammerman & Groysberg, 2021). Even with the Covid-19 pandemic impacting the gains there were still milestones for women in leadership positions, gender-equal access to education, job training, and employment opportunities. These have enabled women to enter careers without being denied entry (Ammerman & Groysberg, 2021). More work needs to be done for people of colour and people from minority backgrounds who are still underrepresented and experience blocks in advancing their careers. The glass ceiling implies that gender and other disadvantages are stronger at the top of the hierarchy than at lower levels and the glass ceiling discrimination can sit within the middle to senior levels, affecting minorities, and represents racial differences in upward mobility, further worsening at

the higher end of management (Cotter et al., 2001). A very well-known definition of the glass ceiling is by Cotter et al. (2001) who defines the glass ceiling as the unseen yet unbreachable barriers that keep minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder regardless of their qualifications or achievements (Budworth & Mann, 2010; Bullough et al., 2017; Cubillo, & Brown 2003; Morrison et al., 1987; Powell & Butterfield, 2015).

Reflecting on the career theory mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, organisational structures, policies, and procedures embody the people who created them. Therefore, when faced with social inequalities, women and ethnic minorities in organisations raise concerns about fairness in decision-making and the outcomes of these decisions (Powell & Butterfield, 2015; Tupou, 2011). Women and minorities may progress in organisations but hardly ever the top position. The glass ceiling may not act as a barrier to individual women, but it operates as a barrier against a group of women. This is a simple case of discrimination based on gender (Baxter & Wright, 2000; Kwaku Ohemeng & Adusah-Karikari, 2015). Another perspective on the glass ceiling is having the “privilege” to break the glass ceiling. Not all women are equal and do not face the same struggles when trying to break the glass ceiling. In most cases, breaking the glass ceiling is a privilege afforded primarily to ‘heterosexual, white European, and non-disabled women (Atcheson, 2021). These women have the possibility to access opportunities, are afforded time to demonstrate skillset, and are aware of the opportunities once the glass ceiling is broken. Women who fall out of the common characteristics are left behind or do not have the chance to experience the journey of breaking the glass ceiling.

For the purposes of this study, established glass ceiling research applied to women will be referenced. This study acknowledges that there are ethnic glass ceilings which are explored below, but also different types of glass ceilings that are applied in different fields.

2.6.1.1. Other glass metaphors

Metaphors provide novel insights and help explain concepts through imagery to understand the struggles of the glass ceiling (Smith et al., 2012). The glass ceiling has alternative reference names such as labyrinth, firewall (Bendl & Schmidt, 2010); glass slipper (Ashcraft, 2013; Rudman & Heppen, 2003); or gossamer ceiling (Powell & Butterfield, 2015). The following metaphors describe career facilitators or barriers that can be experienced when progressing vertically or horizontally.

2.6.1.2. Glass cliff

The glass cliff refers to when women are appointed to leadership positions when an organisation is struggling, in crisis, or at risk to fail (Cook & Glass, 2014; Powell & Butterfield, 2015; Ryan & Haslam, 2007). The glass cliff is a second wave of discrimination when women have broken the glass ceiling. Women or minorities have broken the glass ceiling because they now hold an executive role. Measuring their success when facing a glass cliff, is how women or minority executives, change the performance of the organisation that is struggling, in crisis, or at risk of failure. In these cases, organisational performance may alter the perceived competencies required of leaders which can reduce the bias of those in these positions (Cook & Glass, 2014).

2.6.1.3. Glass walls

Glass walls refer to horizontal gender segregation or in other words, glass walls describe situations where women and minorities are unable to move sideways between departments (Mattis, 2004; Sandgren, 2014; Smith et al., 2012). On one hand, there can be an unequal distribution of men and women across an occupation. For example, some functions are female-focused, human resource, communications, and public-relations. Mid-level and low-level female managers are streamlined into staffing functions with limited opportunities for advancement. Alternatively, some functions are male-focused such as operations, sales, research and development (Powell & Butterfield, 2015).

2.6.1.4. Glass escalator

Glass escalators focus on fast-tracking men in female-dominated careers. Men can experience gender privilege and enter more senior roles despite holding the same position. Glass escalators are more advantageous to men (Ofe-Grant, 2018; Smith et al., 2012).

2.6.1.5. Glass floor

Gender inequality is more severe in glass floor situations (Smith et al., 2012). This phenomenon refers to employees in lower employment levels who have low education credentials, restricted career opportunities, and wage gap inequities (Barnet-Verzat & Wolff, 2008). Compared to higher levels of employment where career challenges and career opportunities are available (Smith et al., 2012). The glass floor links to the sticky floor effect.

2.6.1.6. Sticky floor

There are two layers to a 'sticky floor,' on one hand women are held back from progression and remain in low-paid occupations at the bottom levels of an organisation. On the other hand, sticky floors can relate to women self-sabotaging their careers and self-imposing their barriers in the workplace (Smith et al., 2012). Sticky floor and mid-level bottleneck, refers to overcrowding of ethnic minorities at entry and mid-level positions (De la Rica et al., 2008; Pedakur & Pendakur 2007; Yap & Konrad 2009). Both sticky floor and glass floor effects have similarities where employees are restricted to entry-level positions or mid-level positions.

2.6.1.7. Ethnic glass ceiling metaphors

There are additional glass ceiling metaphors that are specific to ethnic minorities which contextualise barriers to reaching executive levels in organisations.

2.6.1.8. Concrete ceiling

The concrete ceiling is similar to the glass ceiling, but the key difference is that the concrete ceiling implies it is harder to break and restricts people to middle-management. Concrete ceilings are commonly applied to women of colour and ethnic minorities (Catalyst, 1999; Davidson, 1997; Smith et al., 2012).

2.6.1.9. Black ceiling

The black ceiling implies a thick and impenetrable layer that is applied to people of colour based on historical and cultural domination of African heritage and slavery. The black ceiling is a thick and impenetrable layer of constraints (McGrit, 2017).

2.6.1.10. Bamboo and rice bowl ceilings

Bamboo and rice bowl ceilings are commonly applied to East-Asian and Asian-American people who hold a “model minority” perception. Model minority refers to being quiet, hardworking, studious, and rule-abiding. These are stereotypical characteristics that imply that Asian ethnicities are invisible (Chin, 2016; Leong & Tang, 2016; Woo, 2000).

2.6.1.11. Samoan Brown glass ceiling

The brown glass ceiling is a new model that is from a Pacific Islands perspective. Specifically, Samoan, the brown glass ceiling sheds light on cultural barriers based on indigenous values that can act as a career disadvantage. The brown glass ceiling shows that misalignment of Samoan va (spatial relations) with cultural identity produces organisational and cultural disadvantages (Ofe-Grant, 2018).

The glass ceiling is one type of barrier associated with career progression. This study focuses on an underrepresented group who are ethnic minorities. The glass ceiling has emerging Pacific Islands studies that are contributing to this body of knowledge, however, like most Pacific Islands studies the Cook Islands ethnicity has been combined under the broad Pacific Island umbrella. (Amoa, 2017; Tupou, 2011).

2.6.2. Other challenges to career progression

2.6.2.1. Queen Bee

‘Queen Bee’ is a label that was created by male scholars to describe successful women who did not support the women’s liberation movement or help other women who were pursuing promotions (Mavin 2006; Smith et al., 2012; Staines et al., 1973). When some women break through the glass ceiling, there are both positive (helping other women) and negative impacts (micro-violence across org levels, manipulating relationships, hindering the advancement of lower-level women) towards other women.

2.6.2.2. Career breaks and commitment to families

A career break is a term to describe leaving and re-entering the workforce, for whatever reason, career breaks is a term commonly associated with working women (Ministry for Women, 2013). Other terms that are used to describe leaving and re-entering the workforce are “off-ramps” and “on-ramps” (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). In male stream industries such as Military and Defence, Justice there is less tolerance for career breaks as the embedded culture and leadership styles are more masculine which influences the working behaviour of those employed in these careers (Edward et al., 2013). Due to masculine influences in these types of careers, male leaders generally assumed that as women chose to place priority on their families before their work, they were less reliable, available, and committed. These perceptions have historically been difficult to influence, especially for working mothers who take career breaks to prioritise their family commitments and the outcome for them is generally barriers to promotions. Murry et al. (2013) found in the case of female academics who were moving into senior roles, their progression was supported when there were minor to non-existent family responsibilities for them to focus on. Murry et al. (2013) also found that family had positive influences on their work lives.

2.6.3. Tokenism

Tokenism is a practice of making a symbolic effort to do a specific action, specifically recruiting a small number of people from underrepresented groups in a single gender-oriented career to demonstrate the appearance of sexual or racial equality in the workplace (Smith et al., 2012). In modern times, we would refer to tokenism as ‘tick-boxing’.

2.7. Careers in a New Zealand Pacific Islands Context

2.7.1. Intelligent career theory from a New Zealand-Pacific Islands context:

Pacific Islands peoples face the historical and current, problem of trying to sustain their Pacific identity and work within a dominant culture without betraying their traditional values (Parker, 2005). Parker (2005) applied the ‘Intelligent Career’ theory in a Pacific context to explore the subjective careers of Pacific leaders in New Zealand’s Public Sector and shed light on this cultural phenomenon. Parker (2005) determined that Pacific leaders’ motivation to work to enhance their family positions (knowing-why)

influenced their skills (knowing-how) required to make an impact from their positions in the Public sector, and further strengthened the relationships within their families (knowing-whom). Investing in relationships or partnerships with others through reciprocal relationships enabled these Pacific leaders to enhance their skills from a white-European perspective.

2.7.2. Challenges to career progression from a Pacific perspective

This section clarifies challenges to career progression from a Pacific Islands perspective. Emerging research by Amoa (2017), Cardno and Auva'a (2010), Ofe-Grant (2018), and Tupou, (2011) collectively provide Pacific Islands insights into the following challenges to career progression:

2.7.2.1. Lack of confidence

The assumption that Pacific Islands people are humble by nature can be misinterpreted as having a lack of confidence (Equal Employment Opportunities Trust, 2011). Pacific Islands communities are also structured and hierarchical and so the cultural role or place and behaviour that a person holds in their Pacific Islands environment may transfer to their work environment (Cardno & Auva'a, 2010). Additionally, Pacific Islands peoples have historically held low-paid roles, therefore, because they do not see "people like them" in management, leadership, or governance roles these are employment levels that are unattainable for them. Some Pacific Islands people tend to be content with the status quo or current hierarchy (Amoa, 2017).

2.7.2.2. Lack of career planning

Career planning is not very common amongst the Pacific Islands community as they enter roles that would immediately support their family or enter careers they have been told to by their parents (Ministry of Pacific Islands Affairs, 2014). For new generations of Pacific Islands people where career planning is being implemented at secondary schools, the results still indicate that students understand the need to have career planning advice but also do not utilise it. This feeds into Pacific Islands families (Ministry of Pacific Islands Affairs, 2014). Amongst the Pacific Islands communities in New Zealand, parents have a large influence on the career choices of Pacific Islands young people.

2.7.2.3. Pacific culture

The Pacific Islands community is diverse and unique, each ethnic group carries traditions, protocols, and practices that have rich layers of complexity (Tiatia, 2008). The cultural practices, behaviours, and concepts that Pacific Islands people have, can place them in situations where they may have to compromise their cultural self to align with the needs of their workplace. A clash of Pacific Islands culture and their work that many do not know how to navigate and instead adhere to the requirements of their workplaces.

2.7.2.4. Emerging Pacific Islands model – Brown glass ceiling

There is emerging literature that explores the glass ceiling experiences of Pacific Islands people in New Zealand (Amoa, 2017; Ofe-Grant, 2018; Tupou, 2011). The Brown Glass ceiling is reflective of Pacific Islands experiences and a new concept introduced by Ofe-Grant (2018). Her study was from a Samoan perspective, and she created the brown glass ceiling framework that would allow her to analyse and conceptualise any cultural barriers, based on indigenous values, that may cause career disadvantages for Samoans who are moving up the ladder in New Zealand.

My research study allows my findings to contribute to the wider career progression and glass ceiling literature, add another Pacific Islands perspective for women and careers, and for the first time provide insights from a Cook Islands worldview in career and gender studies. There are existing Cook Islands studies that are focused on similar research areas such as 'ownership and employment opportunities for all Cook Islanders' (Bailey, 1993) and 'women empowerment opportunities in civil society' (Stenson, 2013)

2.8. Facilitators in female career progression

2.8.1. Enablers to support career progression

Enablers such as further education or professional development training to increase knowledge and skills can assist career progression journey, can support career progression. Utilising Parker's way of knowing framework can guide individuals to establish and build enablers they need to progress their careers up the ladder or sideways in an organisation (Parker, 2005). Knowing why: having a strong purpose motivates individuals to make decisions that grow their wealth, skills, and health (Amoa, 2017; Bown-Wilson & Parry, 2013). Having support systems in place, such as family and friends or services, further affirms their decisions and actions (Amoa, 2017).

Knowing how: focusing on improving an individual's skills and knowledge by completing professional development programmes or obtaining formal education to match the progression they are aiming for, also participating in projects or activities outside of their current occupation scope or interests can further enhance their skills and expand their knowledge.

Knowing whom: Mentors and peer relationships can facilitate career and personal development. Mentors can enable an increase in promotability through personal guidance. Networking is a useful tool to obtain exposure, contacts, and receive new knowledge. Peer relationships, developed through networks, are different from mentoring relationships in that they often last longer, not hierarchical and involve reciprocal assistance (Amoa, 2017; Murray et al., 2012).

2.8.2. Implemented initiatives aimed to support female career progression

In New Zealand, there have been many initiatives to facilitate women and minorities into higher-paid roles. The Ministry for Women (2013) Affirmative action programmes are workplace policies and practices that are proposed to help create an equitable and diverse workforce through aiding historically disadvantaged groups. This was purposeful to eliminate or reduce the factors that maintain disadvantages. These programmes created controversy where the programmes were viewed as special treatment for those in the targeted groups, people from these "historically disadvantaged groups" were discriminated against, and female participants disengaged from these programmes as they were concerned about being seen to achieve promotions due to gender rather than competence.

New Zealand has also been changing and increasing its gender equality policies. As of 2018, 18% of women hold senior management roles (Davis, 2018) which were influenced by the government.

Companies say they are motivated to introduce gender equality policies primarily to attract and keep employees and because of the vision of senior leadership. Recruitment and retention are strategic priorities for businesses, and gender equality in leadership has become a core element of company branding. However, businesses say the barriers to introducing policies include the complexity of translating good intentions into practice and a business culture unsupportive of diversity.

2.9. Positioning my research

This literature review has presented career theory, career development theory challenges to career progression, careers in a New Zealand Pacific Islands context, and facilitators in female career progression. From this, we learn that unconsciously and consciously, careers and organisations embed “gender” into the structure of companies and the nature of job roles. This influences a high number of studies on women and marginalised ethnic groups which shed light on workplace issues because traditionally they were funnelled into certain societal roles. Intellectual career theory provides a framework to understand the subjective reasoning and strategies people use to progress in their careers. In addition, Pacific Islands contexts are an emerging context being applied to academic research. In a New Zealand context Pacific Islands peoples are at the centre of research because they are overrepresented in the New Zealand labour market in low-skilled, low-paid roles, but underrepresented in leadership roles. My study provides multiple opportunities such as applying career theory and career development theory to a minority group, enabling true ethnic insight from a minority ethnic group to be illuminated in academic research, and contributing to the wider gender, workplace, and Pacific research studies.

2.10. Summary of chapter

In summary of this literature review, this chapter has discussed the evolution of the definition of 'career,' and the differences and relationships between career progression, career advancement, and career development. In addition, explored challenges experienced by women and minorities as they progress their careers, and finally reviewed enablers and initiatives that support female career progression.

What we know is that the definition of a career reflects the workforce. Modern definitions are inclusive of women, paid, and unpaid employment because it reflects the current workforce environment. It is assumed that this definition will continue to evolve as working conditions change. We also know that the definition of career progression focuses on the upward movement into higher employment positions or side-ways movement into different roles where the skills and knowledge they develop contribute to their career progression. With the various career development theory included in this literature review, these models provide us with a diverse understanding of career paths, career successes, and career behaviours of people. These can be influenced by the choices or circumstances people experience. Career development theory has clarified that an influencing factor to why barriers to career progression and development arise is because the organisational structure, policies, procedures, and occupations reflect the person that created the organisation.

We also know the glass ceiling, family commitments, queen bee, and tokenism are challenges experienced by women progressing their careers. We also know that the layers of complexity regarding these same challenges are felt differently by ethnic minority women. Emerging Pacific research on challenges to career progression and the glass ceiling provide insight into being introduced to the layers of complexity within the Pacific Islands culture, and Pacific Islands people working within western societies.

What is unknown at this stage are the strategies Pacific Islands people employ to overcome challenges in their careers and career progression. What is also unknown from a Pacific Islands perspective is visible voices from the Cook Islands community in career studies. Therefore, the research question guiding this study is how Cook Islands women overcome challenges to career progression. In the next chapter, the methodology and methods used in this study will be presented.

3. Chapter three – Methodology and methods

This chapter discusses the methodological approaches that were utilised in this research. This chapter firstly discusses the paradigm and Tivaevae methodology that underpins this study, then explores each stage of the Tivaevae methodology and corresponding research activities that occurred. This chapter then closes with a summary and self-reflection on utilising the Tivaevae methodology in my research.

3.1. Paradigm

Pacific Islands research generally groups all Pacific Islands peoples under the Polynesian umbrella due to appearing to have similar socio-economic conditions. This blurs the cultural, historical, economic, and social differences between each ethnic nation (Earle, 1995). Therefore, this study has a large Cook Islands worldview and is supported by well-established theoretical concepts to influence how we seek to obtain knowledge and undertake research. Qualitative research provides the opportunity to understand people's words and actions (Gray, 2014). The nature of this qualitative study is to create meaning by exploring how Cook Islands women have overcome challenges they have experienced thus far to career progression and the Brown glass ceiling. Ontology refers to the nature of existence and what constitutes reality, or in other words determining what we believe about the nature of reality by asking is there one reality or is there multiple (Gray, 2014). Epistemology aims to understand the truth (how do we know, what we know?) and provides a logical background for determining what kinds of knowledge are valid and adequate (Carter & Little, 2007; Gray, 2014; Scotland, 2012). There is emerging Pacific Islands research, within the glass ceiling and career progression literature, which is providing new paths to determine the nature of reality and understand the truth from a Pacific Islands lens. This study will contribute to this literature and has adopted a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm which allows this study to construct and interpret the meaning of the world through the experiences of Cook Islands women employed in New Zealand.

3.2. Pacific research methodologies

This section acknowledges the Pacific Islands methodologies that have been used by Pacific Islands academics and research that focused on Pacific Islands peoples. Pacific Islands studies are increasing as more Pacific Islands researchers are entering the academic and research environment, where they are reclaiming and retelling their own Pacific Islands stories by using models and research frameworks that are culturally appropriate, to enhance our understanding of Pacific Islands peoples (Ofe-Grant, 2018; Thaman, 2003). Pacific Islands researchers can provide alternative perspectives to well-established research areas and contribute to new knowledge by applying indigenous frameworks that recognise Pacific Islands ontology and epistemology, promote research that is reflective of Pacific Islands peoples, empower Pacific Islands communities, and contribute to the improvement and wellbeing of Pacific Islands people (Anae et al., 2001; Nabobo-Baba, 2008; Naepi, 2019). Some examples of Pacific Islands research frameworks that have been used to conduct Pacific Islands studies are:

3.2.1. Kakala

The Kakala model originates from The Kingdom of Tonga and is based on the practice of garland making (Thaman, 2003). The Kakala methodology was introduced by Dr Konai Helu-Thaman (2003) and further expanded by Johansson Fua (2014). The making of kakala, or making the garland, reconceptualises the research process from a Tongan perspective, knowledge, and worldview.

3.2.2. Vanua

The Vanua research framework is a Fijian research methodology that follows Fijian core beliefs about protocol (Naepi, 2019). Vanua was introduced by Dr Unaisi Nabobo-Baba and was:

“...developed from within an organic Fijian context that legitimises the Fijian way of doing things” (Nabobo-Baba, 2008, p. 143).

For Fijians, research should be understood as physical, psychological, methodological, and spiritual in nature.

3.2.3. Talanoa

Another Pacific Islands research framework is Talanoa. Talanoa is a form of narrative inquiry that was developed from Pacific Islands peoples' oratory traditions, which is a cultural practice that can be found across the Pacific (Naepi, 2019; Vaiioleti, 2003). Though different Pacific Islands countries have different names and cultural nuances in how they conduct a talanoa, Pacific Islands peoples have a shared understanding that a talanoa is a relational exercise that enables Pacific Islands peoples to be open and share their stories, build, and strengthen relationships, reach a mutual understanding amongst those involved in the Talanoa (Naepi, 2003).

3.2.4. Teu Le Vā

Teu Le Vā is a Samoan research methodology that is based on Samoan vā (spatial relationships) (Anae et al., 2009; Anae, 2010; Airini et al., 2010; Ofe-Grant, 2018). Teu Le Vā allows people to form, maintain, and uphold relationships. "teu" means to preserve, keep, or look after (Ofe-Grant, 2018) and "vā" is described as the relational space between people, objects, and entities that connect them. Vā unites relationships through mutual respect and may alter as relationships and contexts develop (Ofe-Grant, 2018).

The final example of Pacific Islands methodologies is the tivaevae methodology which this study has utilised and will be explored further below.

3.3. Conceptual framework - Tivaevae

3.3.1. Cook Islands Tivaevae

The intention and responsibility of Pasifika researchers is to continue to address cultural issues and add to the collective wisdom of their culture (Anae et al., 2001; Vaoleti, 2006;). As this study includes the Cook Islands community, it is important to incorporate research approaches and techniques that link to this community (Vaoleti, 2006).

The tivaevae (or tivaivai) is unique to the Cook Islands. Tivaevae is a bedspread-sized cloth or quilt traditionally handmade by Cook Islands women, and generally depicts stories of natural fauna and flora found in the Cook Islands (Futter-Puati & Maua-Hodges, 2019; Koloto et.al, 2006; Maua-Hodges, 2018; Te Ava & Devi, 2019; Te Aue

Ava & Page, 2018). Historically tivaevae were made with fibre textiles but with the arrival of missionaries in 1821, tivaevae shifted to being made with cloth fabric textiles by the 1890s (Horan, 2012). It is common for a tivaevae to be hand sewed together by groups of women or by individuals. As a group or a sole sewer, women always sought the advice of a tivaevae ta'unga (expert). Tivaevae are used in ceremonies (such as weddings, funerals, and hair cuttings) and special events (for example 21st birthdays and graduation celebrations) or gifted as heirlooms to the eldest daughter or in the absence of daughters or the firstborn son.



Figure 4: Stitched Tivaevae – A hand-made section of a tivaevae by my, researcher, maternal grandmother Vaine Turuma Williams nee' Rota (deceased). This piece is over 50 years old and was the only piece left of her work before the tivaevae was used to wrap around my great-grand baby nephew who passed away in February 2021.

The process of making a tivaevae includes collaboration and conversation between women who gather to share ideas, and hand-stitched cloth patterns to create a piece of fabric that displays collective knowledge; time; and expertise. Creating a tivaevae allows for conversations to flow and ideas to arise in a familiar and safe environment.

3.3.2. Tivaevae Methodology

Tivaevae as a research methodology provides the cultural foundation and perspective for this research project. Originally tivaevae was introduced into the research environment by Maua-Hodges in 2000 to guide multiple components of research in a culturally responsive way (Te Ava et al., 2011). Ensuring that each stage of the research process, if the researcher was of Pacific Islands descent or non-Pacific Islands, maintained the values of Pacific cultures and presented their views appropriately. The process of making the tivaevae can be replicated in four broad stages of the research design (Futter-Puati & Maua Hodges, 2018):

1. 'Akapapa: which means planning the patterns, stitches, fabric, colours and timing for the tivaevae. Or in other words, planned research activities,
2. 'Akauru: having specialised knowledge and skills to collaborate with others, or data collection,
3. Paokti: to cut patterns, analyse and interpret designs for the tivaevae, or to analyse data,
4. O'ora: presenting the cloth or quilt for all to see or presenting findings and the final research report.

Each stage is guided by five key Cook Islands values (Futter-Puati & Maua-Hodges, 2019; Maua-Hodges, 2018; Te Ava & Devi, 2019; Te Ava & Page, 2018):

- Taokotai (collaboration): collaboration enables a fast pace to complete tasks and creates an atmosphere to share interpretive realities. This is important when there is learning occurring within a community group.
- Tu akangateitei (respect): being both a 'student' and a 'teacher.' Each person involved has different levels of experience and expertise that can be passed on to another (teacher). The same person can also receive knowledge to improve their skills and knowledge (student). The tivaevae becomes a useful means of explaining, structuring, and acknowledging the Cook Islands culture.
- Uriuri kite (reciprocity): this links very closely to respect as the creation of shared ideas is passed to another but is also received by oneself.
- Tu inangaro (relationships): relationships are established through family connections before the relationship grows in the community. These relationships will strengthen over time as the tivaevae is created.

- Akairi kite (shared vision): all involved in creating the tivaevae have a shared vision of how it will turn out.

These values are important to embrace and use through the research process as it demonstrates a commitment to maintaining the integrity of the Cook Islands, Cook Islands people, and in general Pacific Islands communities.

Cook Islands values are integral to Cook Islands research because they allow the researcher and participants to return to the past to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow (Te Ava & Rubie-Davies, 2011). These values are naturally embedded in each stage of the tivaevae-making process as they represent how Cook Islands women share stories and interact with each other to create and present a tivaevae.

The tivaevae-making process can be replicated into a very standard research process such as:

1. planning for your research ('akapapa): which could include activities like thinking about a topic, reading literature to build your knowledge base and identify any research gaps, obtaining supervisors, making a timeline for your journey, and submitting applications to conduct your research to name a few tasks within this stage,
2. collecting data ('akauru): which could include activities like selecting the research methodology and research methods, recruiting participants, collecting data, and writing transcripts and research notes,
3. analysing data (paokti): which can include activities such as selecting which process to analyse data, analyse data, interpret data, organise data to write about it,
4. and the final stage is the write up of chapters and presentation of final study (o'ora), despite being able to write the chapters of your study at any point in your research journey. This stage would include activities like obtaining feedback from your supervisors, editing, and proofreading your study, finalising your research, entering proofreading, and submitting your study for approval.

The significance of including tivaevae as a framework in this study is the opportunity to engage in cultural traditions by sharing lived experiences, creating shared and new meaning for both the researcher and participants and creating a comfortable space to have reciprocal engagement through the telling of stories.

Since then, the tivaevae methodology has been used for research in education (Koloto et al., 2006; Maua-Hodges, 2018; Te Ava & Devi, 2019; Te Aue Ava & Page, 2018), the Cook Islands youth sexual health (Futter-Puati & Maua-Hodges, 2019), and informing the development of strategic business model for Pacific art and design small businesses such as carvers, tivaevae makers, weavers, and textile art businesses (Tanner, 2018).

3.4. Research design and research methods

3.4.1. Stage ta'i: 'Akapapa | Research activities

The initial activities included exploring and brainstorming topic ideas that I was interested in. I was inspired by my own career progression journey, so I investigated literature to gather more information. I reconnected with a past lecturer who agreed to become my Primary Supervisor. I developed my research proposal with the guidance of my Primary Supervisor who during the process recommended an additional supervisor. After receiving approval from the AUT Post-Graduate Research Committee Business Faculty to conduct this research, with the condition to include a cultural expert to support the Cook Islands context of this research, I entered the development to complete my ethics application.

To support my writing of my ethics application, I sought support from the recommended ethics advisor, and I formed a consultation group. This group comprised of Cook Islands women who I knew or who were referred to me, to test my initial research idea with them. With the insights, I collected from this consultation group, guidance from the referred ethics advisor, and upon the approval of my supervisor committee, I submitted my ethics application. Some of the challenges that occurred while developing my ethics application were identifying and being able to manage potential conflicts of interest. As my study included my cultural background, I struggled with being unable to connect or include Cook Islands women within my networks. This received approval from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (21/28).

Following approval from the Ethics Committee, I started collating information from existing literature to establish a foundation of knowledge on the topics of career progression, glass ceiling, success enablers, and Pacific Islands research in careers. I also started to plan the data collection phase. The Cook Islands community within New Zealand is small and access to Cook Islands women within the requirements of my

ethics application proved to be a bit tricky. A challenge I experienced during this stage was determining workplaces that employed Cook Islands women at various employment levels. A solution to this obstacle was gathering publicly accessible contact details of Pacific Islands organisations based in New Zealand to use as channels to circulate the email invitation, Information sheet and consent form (Appendix 1 and 2) to their own staff and networks. The invitation was sent to Pacific Islands organisations or associations in health, commercial, public sector, and national Pacific Islands women associations. All these activities represent collecting the materials needed to prepare the tivaevae. Once this was all completed, this study entered the recruitment stage.

3.4.1.1. Recruitment

Participants were recruited on a referral basis to manage the lack of access to ideal participants and to eliminate any conflicts of interest. New Zealand-based Pacific Islands organisations and associations were contacted by email or with their company online 'contact us' form with an invitation to refer Cook Islands women within their organisations or networks to participate in this study. The invitation outlined for interested persons to contact the researcher if they wanted to participate. This was done to eliminate any opportunity for conflicts of interest. The invitations and interested persons received the information sheet and consent form. The criteria for participants included: women who are of Cook Islands descent, aged 20 years old and over and currently working, hold an operational role with a minimum of 3+ years' work experience, or management role with 8+ years' work experience, or a strategic role with over 10+ years' work experience; has sought career progression opportunities in their current workplace or their working history, and can speak in English and/or Cook Islands language.

Industries such as manufacturing, utilities, construction, health care and social assistance (Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2021) with large numbers of Pacific Islands people employed were not specifically targeted. This is due to employment statistics for Cook Islands people being unclear. Therefore, the invitation was circulated to all organisations that may employ Cook Islands women, openly inviting Cook Islands women of all levels to participate. The interested participants clarified their extent of expertise and I, the researcher, confirmed if they met the selection criteria.

Exclusion criteria were also included to eliminate conflicts of interest. Those who were immediate family or personally knew me, the researcher, were excluded from the research. Upon receiving interest to participate from potential participants additional information was circulated, meeting times confirmed, and consent forms requested to be signed. Seven (n=7) potential participants responded and met the selection criteria. The final list consisted of five (n=5) participants who confirmed and participated in this study. Primary data collection occurred after Auckland and the rest of New Zealand was in Alert Level 1 in March 2021. Participants were offered the option to conduct semi-constructed interviews face-to-face or online. Interviews will be explored further below.

3.4.1.2. Cook Islands participants

The Cook Islands community within New Zealand is small and the representation of these participants in these sectors is smaller. To maintain privacy and the integrity of participants, this study will not use identifiers that will easily identify participants. This study will represent data in a unified voice. Participants have experience in the following industries: public sector, law, arts and heritage, health, broadcasting and media. Participants were located across the North Island and with familial connections to the South Island. Most participants worked in one sector whereas other participants worked in multiple sectors. Participants have ties to the following islands in the Cook Islands: Aitutaki, Atiu, Manahiki, and Rarotonga.

Table 1: Participant employment level

Employment level represented	Number of participants
Operational (e.g., Intermediate – Senior staff)	1
Management (e.g., Managers & Advisors, Middle Management)	2
Strategic (e.g., Executive, Board Member, Business owner)	2

3.4.2. Stage rua: ‘Akauru | Data collection

3.4.2.1. Semi-structured interviews

This study utilised semi-structured interviews or korero (open conversations), with open-ended and closed questions in a non-linear way to allow the information shared

during the korero to weave in and out of several issues in an informal way (Page et al., 2020; Ofe-Grant, 2018). Korero as a Cook Islands cultural practice embeds identification of family, relationship building, sharing knowledge and skills, and reciprocal learning. Korero is similar to the Tongan philosophy and methodology Talanoa (Vaiote, 2006).

Participants were advised they had the choice to either participate in focus groups or interviews. Initially, two participants selected a focus group and three participants selected interviews. However, one participant who was selected to join a focus group fell sick and rescheduled which resulted in all data collection being interviews. Three (n=3) interviews occurred online as the timing of interviews coincided with Auckland being released from the March 2021 Covid-lockdown and could not sync the logistics to meet face-to-face, one (1) interview was also scheduled to occur online however at the last second occurred over the phone due to technical difficulties, and one (1) interview was conducted face-to-face at their workplace.

Interviews lasted for one (1) hour in length, and they were each recorded with the permission of the participants. Each interview started with a brief introduction of who I, the researcher, was, informal greetings, opening the interview in prayer, explaining the guidelines of the research, informing participants of withdrawal and right to refuse to answer processes; obtaining their permission to record and sharing our aka'ārāvei'anga (introductions). Research questions were then asked through exploring their career journey, exploring how Cook Islands cultural values and practices influence their career experiences and decisions and exploring initiatives that may be created or assisted their current point in their career, closing remarks and closing prayer.

Following the interviews, the researcher transcribed all five (5) interviews and where relevant translated any reo Māori Kuki 'Airani (Cook Islands language). Participants were then emailed a copy of their transcript to check the accuracy before the researcher analysed the data. All participants have indicated in their consent form for access to an executive summary and the findings of the research once the dissertation is completed.

3.4.3. 'Apinga aro'a

As a token of my appreciation and in line with Cook Islands orientation of uriuri kite (reciprocity) participants received either on the day or by courier a 'apinga aro'a (something given with love) in the form of a Prezzy card. One participant completed a

face-to-face interview where refreshments were also provided in line with cultural practices of hospitality.

3.5. Stage toru: Paokti | Data analysis

According to Futter-Puati and Maua-Hodges (2019) paokti represents how data can be analysed by applying the different layers in a standard tivaevae to the data:

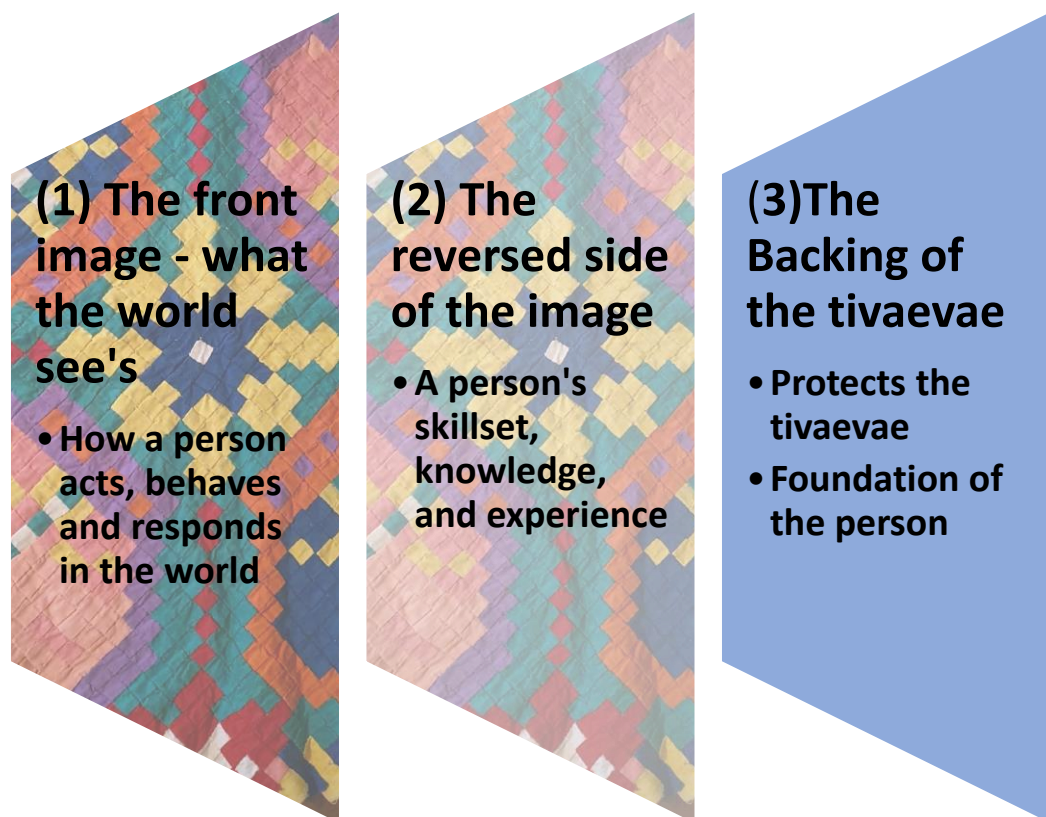


Figure 5 Layers of a Tivaevae - Analysing data with the three layers of a standard tivaevae.

1. The front (Layer one) shows the final image of the tivaevae to everyone. Displaying the craftsmanship of the woman or collective of women and the beauty of her design presented for interpretation. In a metaphorical sense, the front represents the way people act, behave, how to present themselves to the world, and the story they want to share.

2. The reversed side (Layer two) of the tivaevae displays every stitch and coloured thread used to create the tivaevae. When a tivaevae is assessed or evaluated it is turned over to determine the level of knowledge and skills that were employed to hand stitch the tivaevae. If the stitches are messy and uneven then there is a need to further refine and develop their skills. If the stitches are clean and strong, they are skilled hand sewers. The reverse image represents development, wisdom, growth, learning opportunities, and the total length of experience in this area.
3. The backing (Layer 3) is a large piece of blank fabric that is sewn to the reversed image of the patterned tivaevae. The backing is usually sewed on last once a tivaevae is finished to protect the stitches, so they do not unravel over time or catch onto rough surfaces when hung up. The backing metaphorically represents cultural and historical influences such as a person's identity or a person's core. The backing hides, straightens, and protects the work of the sewers.

Each layer enables the creation of themes in three different contexts:

1. the persona that is demonstrated for all to see (layer one)
2. the underpinning knowledge and skills that an individual has and is further developing (layer two)
3. the cultural and historical foundation that is part of an individual's identity, that is intangible and unique (layer three).

Each layer of the tivaevae allows this study to analyse and generate themes in line with the context of a layer. For example, layer three represents the cultural and historical foundation that is a part of a person's identity. A potential theme could be cultural values, and the investigation of this theme could explore what is the value, what did the participant do to demonstrate it, and how were they raised to show and receive this value.

For the purpose and nature of this study, analysing the data in this way is appropriate because it ensures the values of the tivaevae methodology are upheld, allows cultural nuances to naturally occur, ensures the research questions are being answered and allows us to read the overall stories of growth amongst the participants.

All five (n=5) transcribed interviews received confirmation from each participant, each interview was assessed to identify key similarities and differences. These similarities

and differences were colour coded to identify key themes. Themes were then matched to each layer of the tivaevae and then analysed alongside existing career and career progression literature.

3.5.1. Analytical approach within Stage toru: 'Akauru | Data analysis

3.5.1.1. Field notes

Field notes were taken during the interviews to assist with writing the interview transcripts. Field notes allowed me to note down key themes repeatedly mentioned by the participant, note down the tone of the participants, and note down the facial expressions during the interviews. My field notes captured insights that would have been missed by the recording, field notes were incorporated in the typed transcription to assist with recalling the interview.

3.5.1.2. NVivo Qualitative Software

NVivo Qualitative software was utilised to assist in organising and structuring collected data. I uploaded and read each transcript in NVivo. After reading each interview transcript, I analysed codes or key concepts that were in line with the research questions and line with the three layers of the tivaevae. NVivo is not an indigenous or Pacific Islands qualitative software however NVivo helps me to organise my data, quickly identify key relationships between ideas, and to analyse and determine my findings.

3.5.1.3. Analysing by hand

Writing by hand is a personal preference I revert to when handling a lot of information. I identified themes by highlighting and writing over a document, then arranging all grouped information into separate pieces of paper. This method re-evaluated the codes identified in NVivo and checked my understanding of my findings and my analysis. This process was suitable to do in my study because analysing by hand helped replicate the action of sewing designs together to form the tivaevae or in this case the findings.

3.6. Analysed data

3.6.1. Front image (Layer one):

The characteristic of this layer is 'what we show the world, the way we act, behave, and present ourselves.' This characteristic guided how we analysed and matched findings from the data. The following are key themes from data that are relevant to this layer:

- Female leaders (vainetoas)
Considering all types of roles (work and non-work) that participants held, what was very clear was the leadership qualities and leadership roles they each held in their organisations but also in the community. What they show to the world is being a leader.
- Mentors
In the workplace, participants had opportunities to obtain their own mentors to support their growth.
As they gained experience, they became mentors and offered their time to others and programmes that aligned with their interests as well.
- Authenticity
All participants identified the importance of being authentic and genuine. Authenticity is a reflection on you as a person and the work you do, when you are authentic people draw closer to you.
- Power to influence others
Being in a position of power is a privilege and a responsibility as you can grow others and influence their own worldview. Participants felt a duty of care and responsibility in their positions of power, beyond what the job description required.

3.6.2. The reverse image of the Tivaevae (Layer two)

The characteristic of this layer is 'the knowledge and skills set, their experience, and progression journey'. This characteristic guided how we analysed and selected findings from the data, and it was anticipated that this layer would have the most data. Similar to the reverse side of the tivaevae, this layer shows the sewer's skills and their journey in creating the tivaevae. The following are key themes from data that are relevant to this layer:

- Networking to build visibility and exposure

As participants participated in different programmes, they developed their own contacts and networks. Through these networks, they have been able to receive their own opportunities.

Many of the participants felt their strength was relationship management.

- Understanding the 'value' you add

What can we bring to the table and what can we be doing wherever we are?

These are key questions participants raised to themselves to understand if they could contribute or if they needed to fill in a gap in learning or skills they were missing.

- Internal progression

Applying for and accepting opportunities that were offered or advertised within their organisations or networks.

- Adapting to different environments

One participant specifically recognised the way she adapted was knowing the importance of "reading the room", which meant that not every environment requires entering with all the different titles a person holds, but knowing when to wear certain hats, knowing when to take them off and use the skills and knowledge to assist the environment you are in.

3.6.3. Backing of the tivaevae (Layer three)

The characteristic of this layer is 'the cultural and historical influences that make up the foundation of a person.' This characteristic informed how this study analysed and identified findings from the data. The following are key themes from data that are relevant to this layer:

- Faith

All the participants had some extent of a relationship with religious institutes and recognise the importance of faith within our cultures. Faith and values link together, and with faith, the participants try out new things, learn new skills, and grow.

- Identity

All the participants mentioned information that aligned the make-up of who they are, their ethnic language, where they come from in the Cook Islands, what familial roles they hold, the community roles they have, and who is their family and heritage.

- Cook Islands values

Key values that influenced the participants' worldview, actions, and words are humility, love, respect, reciprocity, and service.

3.7. Methodology limitations

The tivaevae methodology is still an emerging research framework that has been primarily applied in educational contexts. Initially, my research was to utilise the case study methodology and the tivaevae methodology, creating a hybrid to carry out my study. Through the journey of putting this research together, it became clear that my study should utilise the tivaevae methodology only. A few lessons that I have learnt with this methodology, referring to the reverse side of the tivaevae which shows the skillset of the sewer, is to

- allow more time during the interviews to collect information from participants,
- the tivaevae enables holistic data, so career and non-career information will arise.

3.8. Summary of chapter

This chapter focuses on the tivaevae methodology that is used in this study. The tivaevae is unique to the Cook Islands culture and in terms of research, is the only Cook Islands research methodology available. The use of tivaevae in this study is essential not only because the focus is Cook Islands people and worldviews, but also to broaden the use of tivaevae in a non-educational context.

This chapter found that the tivaevae methodology guides the whole research process and the layers of the tivaevae can be used to analyse data. Summary of key findings, which will be explored in depth in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, however, we know that layer one is the front of the tivaevae: participants are authentic leaders and mentors, and in positions to influence others. Layer two is the reverse image of the tivaevae: participants are relationship managers who can build networks to become visible, they understand the value they can add, they take advantage of opportunities that arise, and are adaptable. Lastly, in layer three the backing of the tivaevae: participants have a strong identity, faith, and values system.

3.9. Reflexivity

I, the researcher, do believe that due to being of Cook Islands descent, introducing my aka'ārāvei'anga (introductions), being a Cook Islands woman, and sharing my reason for conducting this research made it easier for participants to connect and share during the interviews. My personal experience with progressing my career was helpful to this research and in sharing experiences with the participants. In the case of participants who are at a strategic level of employment, whilst not having personal experience with the glass ceiling yet, I was able to hear and receive the in-depth wisdom these participants held. I found that all women were very helpful and honest when sharing their progression stories and sharing the challenges they experienced. All interviews were filled with humour which helped build rapport between the researcher and participants.

Initially, this study sought to investigate whether Cook Islands women experienced career progression opportunities and challenges. However, the stories shared by participants described different journeys of growth and triumph. Their stories influenced the change of the initial aim of this study, what are the challenges Cook Islands women experience in career progression, to investigate how are Cook Islands women overcoming challenges to career progression.

In line with the Cook Islands orientation, I would have wanted to conduct all data collection face-to-face. If I have the opportunity to conduct research in the future, I will carry out my initial intention to demonstrate Cook Islands hospitality practices throughout each interview or focus group. Some examples of these include refreshments that would have been made readily available for the interviewee or focus group participants, and cultural background music would have been playing softly.

4. Chapter four – Findings

This chapter reveals the findings of the data collection and analysis. The Cook Islands community is small in New Zealand and there is a smaller number of Cook Islands women who have careers in the industries the participants work in and hold similar levels of employment. Therefore, great care has been conducted to maintain the anonymity of participants. The findings will be presented as themes in the tivaevae layer format. To understand how Cook Islands people present themselves, present the final image of the tivaevae to the world, the structure of findings will begin with the backing of the tivaevae (Layer 3), then the reversed image (Layer 2), and lastly with 'the final image (Layer 1). As a reminder, the main research question is: *How have Cook Islands women overcome challenges to career progression within New Zealand?*

4.1. Backing of the tivaevae – Layer 3

The backing of the tivaevae hides, straightens, and protects the stitching of the tivaevae. The backing is a supporting detail on a tivaevae, not the main feature. The themes within this layer display the participant's protection and support structures and identify their motivators.

4.1.1. Identity

When we think about identity, from a Cook Islands perspective we ask the question, who am I? Identity is one key theme all participants identified during the interviews.

“Our culture, our language and our identity are crucial, and it makes us unique.”
– Participant 4.

A strong sense of identity helped the participants become assertive in their career decisions but also strengthened the direction of their career journeys. The participants mentioned key components that make up a person's identity are:

- who is your family and heritage – what are the Cook Islands and/or other ethnic family names they are connected to, and what village and Island or country does your family originate from,
- my language – the ability to speak in te reo Māori Kuki 'Airani and other languages
- the roles a person holds – family roles, community roles, employment roles,
- my values – respect, reciprocity, trust, love.

During the interviews, the participants explained 'who they were.' When Cook Islands people introduce themselves to other Cook Islanders, they follow a certain structure. A person begins by introducing their first name, surname, their mother's name, their father's name, the island or country their mother comes from, the island or country their father comes from, the country they were born in, the country they live in and closing with thanks. This format allows other Cook Islands people to determine who you are and who your parents are so they can connect with you better. As the semi-structured interviews progressed, the participants provided further detail of their journey in reconnecting with the reo Māori Kuki 'Airani or ability to use reo Māori Kuki 'Airani in their workplace, the values they hold and how their values provide guidance to their own career behaviour, decisions, and perceptions.

4.1.2. Family

"the choice was always about what was best for my family." – Participant 1

"I think that has been my "why" in life, in terms of my career...and I guess it is similar to a lot of people, for me it has been my family." – Participant 4

"It's got to be about you and your family and what you want to achieve long-term." – Participant 5.

The concept of family is central to Pacific Islands communities as 'family' also refers to a village or community. Family creates and strengthens an individual's identity and sense of belonging. The importance of family was very clear amongst the participants. Family is an influencing factor in their career decisions and is a central component of their support structures.

Participants are daughters, sisters, mothers, wives, nieces, and aunties. With these roles come the responsibilities of being guided, supportive and protective whilst simultaneously providing guidance, support, and protection amongst their family groups. When participants used the term 'family' they are referring to their immediate family, extended family and community, and work family. Participants made career decisions if the opportunity (for example promotion into a new role or access to professional development) aligned with their immediate family needs. The different groups of 'family' act as support groups and advisors for participants in making career decisions. Each group aids each participant to identify and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of opportunities the participant receives or seeks. Because of this, the participants' learnings transferred to their spouses who participants utilised as second opinions and personal advisors to support their journeys family members were

also provided with the opportunity to experience. Family, especially immediate family, was a key influencing factor in determining whether to accept or decline progression opportunities.

4.1.3. Faith

Faith is a value embedded within the Cook Islands culture. There are two key concepts regarding faith: (1) the religious concept of faith, and (2) the belief in yourself.

“This is more about our faith. I was really prayerful about it because I had another opportunity in another organisation.” – Participant 1.

Firstly, the participants shared how their religious faith influenced their ability to face and preserve through workplace challenges and before making serious career decisions. Though the interviews did not explore the depth of how embedded spirituality or religion was in each of the participant's upbringing, there was an understanding that the participants had a form of connection with a religious community. A way the participants demonstrated their religious faith was through the practice of prayer. The participants prayed when seeking new employment role changes, upskilling, or facing negative interactions from their peers.

Secondly, participants expressed how important it is to have faith in your own capability, take risks, be resilient, and surround themselves with a supportive family community. Participants took “leaps of faith” when applying for different roles, professional development opportunities, seeking mentors and expanding their networks.

“...It took a while to go out on my own to take that step of faith, in God, in myself and my abilities. It took a while to get there, then I said “oh just do it, if I fall then oh well” you know I can just get another job.” – Participant 5.

4.1.4. Cook Islands values

Across all Pacific Islands cultures are values which are guiding principles in the way people live, speak, and treat others. These values are influenced by the religious frameworks or the structures of a community. Participants were asked specifically about how the following values help them in their work and their progression – collaboration, respect, reciprocity, shared vision, and relationships. One key context is how these values aided their career progression.

“There's no other way to work other than all those values that you've mentioned, you just can't get things done especially when you're trying to deliver outcomes, not outputs and outcomes needs the centre of people thinking in the way that we work. So yeah absolutely.” – Participant 1

. “...definitely aided me, personally, from start to where I am today. But that's hard for me to comment on because I don't know where I would be today without them. I can only reflect living with those values” – Participant 5.

All participants shared how the values of collaboration, respect, reciprocity, building and maintaining relationships, and having a shared vision are inherent. Participants were raised with these and other values, some of these values were also embedded in the social circles, institutions, and workplaces they have been employed in. The participants found it easy to utilise these values in their workplace. Participants shared that collaboration allowed them to grow their networks, learn to appreciate different perspectives and exposed the participants to different opportunities.

“Respect is everything, no matter where they come from, what they did, or who they are. I think, if we do that...I hope I would do that quite respectfully because that's how we're raised” – Participant 3

Participants shared how they naturally demonstrated respect to all people they engaged with and would receive respect, which helped build how others perceived participants in their workplace and the community.

Participants shared how reciprocity is very important in the Cook Islands culture but also amongst Pacific Islands communities. Reciprocity is an exchange of knowledge, time, and equal valued products or services.

“...reciprocity is the one that just jumped out at me. Mostly because it is an exchange. In my role, it is an exchange of knowledge, exchange of encouragement, both ways not just one.” – Participant 3

Participants finally shared that people are at the centre of all that they do and therefore, relationships were key to their success. The backing of the tivaevae represents the participants' “why” – their purpose, the participants improve for the benefit of their family. When participants experience career and non-career challenges or opportunities, they utilise their faith, family, and identity as support and guidance to navigate challenges and opportunities.

4.2. The reverse image of the Tivaevae – Layer 2

With the backing of the tivaevae describing the participants' foundation, their “reason why” and the supporting social and spiritual structures they have in place, we can now begin to explore the experiences of the participants' career progression through the reverse image of the Tivaevae. The reversed side (Layer two) of the tivaevae displays every stitch and coloured thread used to create the tivaevae. The reverse side is only viewed when the stitches are being assessed for their quality and are therefore hidden. The reverse image represents the knowledge, skills, experiences, and lessons participants have gained throughout their careers and non-career experiences. The themes within this layer describe all the knowledge, skills, and experiences participants have obtained.

4.2.1. Challenges participants experienced in their careers and career progression

4.2.1.1. Career breaks

Career breaks are common for women to take and two participants took career breaks to raise their children.

“...the choice was always about what was best for my family...” – Participant 1.

For this participant, their decision was made despite slowly progressing up the ladder. Her career break was for a few years and when she was ready to re-enter the workforce, she had to restart in entry-level roles.

4.2.1.2. Cultural values have an unconscious influence

Cultural values can also have an unconscious influence in the workplace. One participant made a self-realisation comment during the semi-structure interview:

“Humility with respect can hold someone back because I want to be humble and respectful to my team [and not] step over boundaries that I'm not comfortable [with]...perhaps they're not helpful” – Participant 4.

Some participants also recognised that these cultural values can also be a barrier to career growth and progression. As the quote from participant 4 implies, placing others before your interests is a natural act for Cook Islands people and Pacific Islands people. Because of this instinct, participants reflected that Cook Islands women, Pacific

Islands people, and themselves can unconsciously self-sabotage their chances of growth in the workplace.

“We are so humble and so reserved sometimes, and we’re not about turning the spotlight on us.” – Participant 5

The result of this unconscious influence can cause the rise of negative perceptions such as “Cook Islanders and Pacific Islands people do not advance in their careers”, “they do not promote themselves”, and “cannot be suitable candidates for growth opportunities”.

4.2.1.3. Career mobility

Participants have experienced different levels of career mobility. One participant has been on a journey of secondments within their organisation in the Public Sector which has led to various Team Leader or Management roles. These secondments have allowed this participant to move vertically and horizontally within the organisation. These secondments have also equipped her with the confidence and skills of navigating salary negotiations, managing people, and taking advantage of opportunities.

Another participant who has held a Management role for over 10 years and has a long history of being in positions at this level can feel blocked from entering higher positions.

“How are you going to help me to get to your job because that’s the next step of progression, of all things being equal it’s in the higher level.” – Participant 5.

One participant has received professional development to enable her to move roles and continue to grow. This participant is very open to the lessons and experiences as her growth has been at a pace, she is comfortable and confident with.

4.2.1.4. Industry-culture

“you have to accept it. You don’t have to display the same behaviour or characteristics, but you need to be aware of the industry’s culture to survive.” – Participant 5.

One participant who works in Justice commented that working in her industry is like a “pressure cooker,” there is pressured systems, high stress, and a low tolerance for mistakes.

“...a female who is working parttime, is still working the same amount of time and producing the same amount of work as a full-time employee, but they are doing it on part time hours and getting paid part time wage and having to fit it in the pressures of their family.” – Participant 5.

The industry is “live and breathe in your work” which is a long-standing culture in Justice, and any deviation from this type of standard is perceived as staff being uncommitted. The options available for working mothers and part-time working females are either accepting this standard, adapting to this standard and having to miss out on opportunities, or creating a new path for yourself which this particular participant ultimately did.

4.2.1.5. Harder at the top

“...when people move from position to position there is an assumption that the higher up the chain you get the more you kind of have it together. I think it gets harder.” – Participant 2.

Two participants are in positions that have enabled them to break the glass ceiling, but one participant specifically mentions the ongoing challenges at this level. Pacific Islands descent leaders continue to be placed in the “brown-face” boxes or are pigeonholed, as opposed to being strong and credible executive leaders or entrepreneurs. Participant 2 mentions the need, and in the initial journey the consistency, to educate her peers on her expectations to mitigate the unconscious behaviour of being placed in the “brown-face” box.

“...it is important to set the expectations of what you bring to the table from the beginning so that your value is not determined by those who already ‘have a seat at the table’” – Participant 2.

One of the participants at this level, entered executive roles when she was a young mother and early on in her career. Being an executive as a young mother was manageable as opposed to working a full-time or part-time employment, this is due to knowing a year in advance the commitments that would be required of her in this role. The positive experiences of breaking the glass ceiling are firstly a sense of achievement. Both participants are self-made entrepreneurs who have the freedom to determine where their time is allocated which also allows them to manage familial commitments, explore new opportunities in educating and growing others, and reinvest into personal ventures.

4.3. Participants' strategies, actions, and/or initiatives utilised to overcome challenges to career progression

Below are themes of strategies, actions, and/or initiatives participants have utilised to overcome challenges to career progression.

4.3.1. Education or training

All participants have completed or are completing levels of higher education and training within their current careers. Some training is specific to their sector such as the Public sector used to have an emerging leaders programme that some participants had the opportunity in being involved in. Participants have identified gaps in the training area such as Pacific Islands executive training programmes, Pacific Islands mentoring programmes, and employability programmes for first-time workers in the industry. They have developed programmes themselves to close these gaps and prepare other Pacific Islands people who are on a progression journey or new to their careers.

4.3.2. Mentoring

"I feel a real responsibility I guess as Cook Islands women part of my own progression is supporting other people's progression. Because I think about the times when, some of the stuff I had to work out myself, and that's okay, whereas other times I wish I had someone to say to me, think about this and try this" – Participant 2.

Participants have mentors for different needs such as career guidance, social networks, and personal guidance. For some participants, they recognised the need of having mentors as they became more exposed to opportunities and progressed their careers. Other participants, naturally obtained mentors when they sought a third or fourth opinion on the career choices they were evaluating. All participants have built strong relationships with their mentors and have become mentors.

4.3.3. Networking helps build connections, improve visibility, and exposure to new opportunities

Participants all shared they understood the importance of networking and shared reflections on building their own networks. The groups of networks participants mentioned were personal networks which consisted of their family members and friends, work-related networks which consisted of their managers, other staff, or people

within the same industry, and non-work networks such as church members, sports clubs, community, and mentors.

“I do have a couple of mentors one informal than one formal mentor where I get lots of really good coaching sessions” – Participant 1

“[I am a] supporter of mentoring but also a strong supporter of getting a range of perspectives or ideas from people with different experiences” – Participant 2

Regarding personal networks, four participants commented how their mother secured their initial employment for them with her networks. This started their occupational interests and led to their career journey.

“my Mum. It was so funny she knew a Cook Islands woman, that was like second tier and quite high up at a government agency. So, Mum rings up, this Aunty, this relation. You know how it is, not blood relation. Then next minute I got a job in a government agency” – Participant 4.

In addition, three participants commented that their connections such as friends secured them roles which enabled these participants to re-enter the workforce.

“...came back to Auckland and started looking for a job and then I got a job through a friend.” – Participant 5

In terms of work-related networks, as participants obtained work experience they started each build their own work networks. Three participants commented they built strong working relationships with their own managers and amongst their staff by being respectful, collaborative, genuine, meeting work requirements, and proactive in offering ideas and solutions. All participants consider many people in their work networks close friends.

Four participants are currently in positions of power and influence, holding a Management or Strategic role, and shared that their career networks grew as they participated in career opportunities such as sector-run leadership programmes or referred to participate in sector-run advisory groups, and governance groups, and Pacific Islands Association groups. One participant specifically shared that in her line of work, which is a male-oriented professional career, it was natural for Pacific Islands people in the same occupation to gravitate towards each other to provide each other support and share knowledge with each other.

“...Pacific circles [are] a friendly environment where people care about you and uplift each other...” – Participant 5.

Participation in these networks improved their visibility in their industry and their communities which enabled participants to further extend their list of opportunities to move up the ladder or across the organisation.

“I’ve always had the full support in the fact that I got shoulder tapped from my Manager saying “look I think you should apply for this” – Participant 1

“Someone from a government agency got in touch with me and asked if I was interested in being on a board.” – Participant 2

All Participants have been shoulder-tapped or referred for opportunities that would progress their career or would provide them with additional knowledge and skills to support their progression journey.

In terms of non-work networks, all participants hold church leadership roles, roles in local community groups (such as cultural groups and sports groups), are mentors, and mentees. These additional networks have enabled participants to become adaptative, contribute back to their communities, further extend their knowledge and skill-base, and improve their leadership and relationship management capabilities.

4.3.4. ‘Seat at the table’

Participants recognised the importance of sitting at decision-making tables such as executive boards or a company’s senior leadership team. Some are in a position, they are striving towards in their workplaces, whereas some participants are already there. In non-work environments, such as community boards, local church committees, and industry associations, participants sit at decision-making tables.

“I get to put myself in Pacific spaces so I can have a voice with other Pacific people, and so I sit on a couple of Boards that are Pacific, and I’ve set up some working groups specifically for the work that are very specific to Pacific.” – Participant 1

“I want to make sure that as Cook Islanders and as Pacific people, we get a say in the decision making” – Participant 2.

For some participants, there is a responsibility of ensuring that if they can influence and improve outcomes for Pacific Islands people and Cook Islands people, then they need to be active in these groups.

4.3.5. Knowing the 'value' you add

As participants developed their experiences, knowledge and skills, and their confidence in their capabilities increased the participants started to understand the value they could bring to different environments.

“...for me you still have to prove you can make a contribution it's not enough looking pretty you have to contribute to the strategic success of the organisation. So over time, I've become more confident, I have something to offer as a Cook Islands woman and I've gotten better at articulating what that looks like.” – Participant 2.

Being able to know what you can contribute or what you bring to the table provides certain freedoms in a workplace context. Two participants have strategic level roles and are self-employed, work in governance, or hold an executive position.

“I get to put myself in Pacific spaces so I can have a voice with other Pacific people, and so I sit on a couple of Boards that are Pacific, and I've set up some working groups specifically for the work that are very specific to Pacific” – Participant 2

Their freedoms are the ability to make a change at the top of organisations, choose and select which areas they want to make an impact in and which areas they want to influence. These participants hold Professional qualifications, are strong Cook Islands women and have a diverse set of knowledge and skills that can complement other people or close gaps amongst the skillset of people in positions of power and influence. These participants have broken the glass ceiling as they are in positions of power, influence, and leadership.

Two other participants hold Management level roles, roles in middle-management or Team Managers. These participants are confident in their capabilities, are strong Cook Islands women, have a diverse set of knowledge and skills, and they can influence those who are in positions of power and influence and influence those who report to them. These participants are in positions of influence. The final participant holds an operational role and is confident in her capabilities, is a strong Cook Islands woman, has a diverse set of knowledge and skills, and is on a progression journey.

External to the workplace, these participants are in positions of power, influence, and leadership. From being wives and partners, mothers and aunties, church leaders, leaders to youth, Chairs of committees and Boards, teachers, and more. These participants also have hobbies and interests that allow them to provide different

perspectives on the work they voluntarily complete and are paid to complete. These are invaluable factors that have contributed to their success in progressing their careers.

4.4. The final image – Layer 1

The front (Layer one) shows the final image of the tivaevae to everyone. Displaying the craftsmanship of the woman and the beauty of her design presented for interpretation. In a metaphorical sense, the front represents the way people act, behave and present themselves to the world. The theme in this section represents the image participants present to the world which is underpinned by their foundation, discussed in Layer 3, and their knowledge, skills, and experiences that have been discussed in Layer 2.

4.4.1. Strong and authentic Cook Islands leaders

What the participants show to the world is being an authentic leader of growth and change. This “image” while clear and concise, has different facets that add depth and complexity to the image.

“I believe you take your whole self wherever you go, and in those spaces, you use all your skills whenever you touch.” – Participant 1.

“Our culture, our language and our identity are crucial, and it makes us unique” – Participant 4

The first facet is *being true to yourself* in which participants are confident in their identity and values. This enables the participants to choose areas in which they will invest their time and skills.

“Set up strategic development programme for the Cook Islands over the last 5 – 6 years” – Participant 2

Another facet is *acts of service* which refer to their actions. Participants aim to give back to their communities, to mentor and develop others, and develop solutions that block Pacific Islands people and Pacific Islands women from succeeding.

“You know what I think I’m a good connector...all at different levels, over the years people have probably seen that about me that is attractive to them, that I am a people’s person and for me it is about relationships” – Participant 4.

Another facet is *being a connector* which refers to connecting with people and connecting others together. Participants all have the capability of being strong connectors and conduits between people who have a different statuses, experiences, knowledge, and skills.

“That’s why I took this job because I really believed I could do that and in terms of a leadership influence I have the ability to be quite deliberate around creating a diverse team and you know I’ve got a real passion for bringing up, particularly Māori and Pacific women.” – Participant 1

Another facet is *being powerful* which refers to participants being in a position of power, utilising their power to influence and make changes, but also empowering others to grow. Being “powerful” is a privilege and a responsibility to take care of other people.

“...guess it took a while to go out on my own to take that step of faith, in God, in myself and my abilities. It took a while to get there, then I said “oh just do it, if I fall then oh well” you know I can just get another job.” – Participant 5

Another facet is viewing *failures as lessons* and *mistakes as learning opportunities*. Participants experienced challenges that have interrupted their career journey but because they “pick themselves up again”, reflect, pivot, and continue to step forward demonstrates their perseverance and determination.

A final facet of being a strong and authentic leader is *continuous growth*. Participants are champions of growth; they seek growth opportunities and develop opportunities to grow others.

4.5. Summary of chapter

This chapter presented the findings collected from the interviews with Cook Islands participants. To understand how Cook Islands people present themselves to the world, the structure of the findings began with presenting themes that aligned to the backing of the tivaevae (Layer 3), then the reversed image (Layer 2), and lastly with 'the final image (Layer 1). The participants of this study face the following challenges such as taking career breaks to meet familial needs, unconsciously allowing cultural values to be a barrier to progression or being misunderstood in the workplace, their employment level influencing their career mobility, they have to choose how to navigate the embedded industry-culture, and finally being pigeonholed while still breaking the glass ceiling.

Strategies, actions, or initiatives participants conducted to overcome challenges to career progression by completing formal education that allowed them to enter professional employment, complete workplace training or access professional development opportunities, obtained formal and informal mentors, utilised and expanded different work and non-work-related networks, and grew confident in their own knowledge, experience, and skills to educate others on the value they bring to decision making situations and environments.

When participants reflected if Cook Islands cultural values aided or hindered their progression journey, the answer varied: one participant confirmed that unconsciously cultural values can be self-sabotaging, in other cases participants commented it aided their work, in another case the participant didn't recognise any difference of cultural values impacting their work because they naturally demonstrate it.

Amongst the experience and knowledge of the participants, there are no Cook Islands-specific initiatives in their line of work or in their sectors. In some cases, participants have recognised gaps in their own careers and are developing initiatives to support Cook Islanders, Pacific Islands people, and everyone in general.

5. Chapter five – Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings from chapter 4 in relation to the reviewed literature in chapter one. The discussion has been structured in the form of the layers of the tivaevae methodology. The main research question for this study is how have Cook Islands women overcome challenges to career progression?

5.1. Interpreting the results

5.1.1. The backing of the tivaevae and ‘knowing why’

The data was displayed according to the layers of the tivaevae and we begin this discussion with the backing of the tivaevae, layer 3. Layer 3 of the tivaevae is generally a blank fabric that is sewn to the reversed image of the patterned tivaevae (Futter-Puati & Maua-Hodges, 2019). The backing metaphorically represents cultural and historical influences such as a person’s ethnic and cultural identity and the values that are core to them. The backing hides, straightens, and protects the work done by the sewers of the tivaevae. This section identified the support structures participants had in place which influenced their career choices and maintained their motivation to progress in their careers. These structures included identity, family, faith, and Cook Islands cultural values. Ultimately the participants wanted to improve and obtain higher career statuses and higher paid roles to enhance the wealth and growth of their own families, themselves, and their communities.

5.1.1.1. The role of identity, family, and faith in career progression

Parker (2005) intelligent career theory factor “*knowing why*” refers to understanding a person’s purpose, motivations, values, and identity. In addition, to understanding how their surroundings and what influences affect their career choice, adaptability, and commitment (Arthur et al., 1995; Parker, 2005). The participants of this study have a strong sense of identity which has enabled each of them to become assertive in their career decisions and has strengthened the direction of their career journeys. The participants are mothers, wives, daughters, aunties, and sisters. The health of their family is one of the main influencing factors in their career progression journey. Their parents had a level of influence on the beginning of their chosen careers. As the participants’ knowledge and experience grew, their self-efficacy motivated their progression journey, the strength of their identity and blending it within a workplace context strengthened as they obtained more experience, and now as mothers and

wives with their own families has provided additional fuel to move up the ladder and break the brown glass ceiling. Changes in their family dynamic or surroundings would influence their decisions to take or accept opportunities. When faced with career progression challenges, participants drew strength and confidence from their identity, faith, and cultural values. Participants relied on “who they were,” the religious and spiritual beliefs they had been raised with and integrated these into the workplace to build their self-confidence, and determination, and strengthen their resilience when they made career-determining choices. Lastly, cultural values of collaboration, respect, reciprocity, shared vision, and relationships acted as a compass when participants were presented with multiple options to progress their careers and, influenced how other staff members in their workplaces perceived the participants. When Parker (2005) applied the intelligence career theory in a Pacific Islands context they found that the successes of Pacific Islands leaders are due to family, faith and values, and a strong foundation in knowing who they were. These factors aid the progression of the Cook Islands participants.

5.2. The reversed image and ‘knowing how,’ the brown glass ceiling, and ‘knowing whom’

The reversed side, layer two, of the tivaevae displays every stitch and coloured thread used to create the tivaevae. When a tivaevae is assessed or evaluated it is turned over to determine the level of knowledge and skills that were employed to hand stitch the tivaevae (Futter-Puati & Maua-Hodges, 2019). Layer 2 looks at the career journey of the participant. Each participant is their own metaphorical tivaevae but this study collectively displays all their knowledge, skills, and experiences. Therefore, *knowing how* and *knowing whom*, are applicable concepts from the intelligent career theory as ‘knowing how’ focuses on an individual’s career-related skills and knowledge that influences their career opportunities and employability. In addition, ‘*knowing whom*’ refers to an individual’s work and non-work relationships (Arthur et al., 1995; Parker, 2005). Within the ‘knowing how’ of layer 2, participants demonstrated resilience as they re-entered the workforce after taking career breaks to look after their families. Participating in informal training within their workplace enabled these participants to broaden their knowledge about the Public and Justice sectors, develop their leadership skills, and build their career-related networks. This training helped initiate their career progression journey.

Cook Islands cultural values such as collaboration, respect, reciprocity, shared vision, and relationships were viewed as a double-edged sword. Positively, the values are embedded within each participant and make up their moral foundation and personality. Alternatively, these values unknowingly resulted in participants self-sabotaging a few of their own chances for career opportunities. Sticky floors, which is a glass ceiling barrier, where women self-sabotage their own progression and self-impose their own barriers resulting in staying in the same position or hierarchy (Smith et al., 2012). In this case, cultural values can create sticky floors where Cook Islands women do not move upwards or sideways. A different perspective is utilising the concept of the brown glass ceiling. The brown glass ceiling shows that the misalignment of Samoan *vā* (spatial relations) with cultural identity produces organisational and cultural disadvantages (Ofe-Grant, 2018). The cultural values and cultural nuances can cause career disadvantages because we want to maintain harmony across our workplace relationships. The participants of this study did not misuse their cultural values, but their values clashed with the opportunities that were presented to them and the relationships involved. A clash of Pacific Islands culture in the workplace is a common theme in Pacific Islands workplace literature (Amoa, 2017; Cardno & Auvaa, 2010; Ofe-Grant, 2018; Tupou, 2011). Knowing how to develop self-awareness when this happens is a learned skill as career and non-career experiences broaden.

For the Cook Islands participants in this study who have broken the glass ceiling, due to the nature of their careers in Justice (law) and Public Sector (governance), they would maintain positive relationships with other decision-makers whilst taking on the responsibility to advocate the Pacific Islands worldview, advocate their own expertise, and ensuring that the decisions they provide, or support is for the benefit of the collective. Both participants have higher education qualifications in professional careers which assisted in applying their institution-based learnings to real-life work. All participants have sought mentors who have been necessary guides and advisors on their upward journey and navigating male-dominated sectors

The second idea within Ofe-Grant's (2018) model of the brown glass ceiling is systemic and organisational barriers such as labour market segregation and discrimination, and tokenism. Regarding labour market segregation, the two Cook Islands participants in this study are in careers that are already segregated, male-dominated and have low representation of ethnic minority community groups in their field. Gender discrimination is also dominant in the careers these two Cook Islands participants hold, and for one participant who broke the brown glass ceiling, so is tokenism. Smith et al. (2012)

describe tokenism as gathering a small number of people from underrepresented groups to demonstrate the appearance of sexual or racial equality in the workplace. In the modern workforce, we refer to this as 'tick boxing'. One Cook Islands participant viewed tokenism as an opportunity to leverage and get involved in as many decision-making environments as she could to make a change.

Movement within their career, in which all participants are employed within traditionally male-dominated sectors, varied depending on the status of occupation participants held during their progression journey. Acker (1990) revolutionised gendered organisation theory to explain that inequalities women experienced in the workplace were a result of the status they held in the organisational hierarchy and not necessarily the number of women employed in the company. Strategic level participants have broken the glass ceiling. Management level participants have hit a plateau or are still using opportunities to move sideways within their organisation or further their upward progression journey. Lastly, the operational level participant is embracing their progression journey.

Within layer 2 of the tivaevae, the reversed image also includes *knowing whom*. The Cook Islands participants are relationship focused and have utilised their career and non-career networks to enable their progression within the workplace. Their capability to connect, build, and maintain relationships has allowed participants to share their knowledge and learn from others – reciprocal relationships. In addition, to demonstrating and improving their skills, and increasing their reputation, their chances of referrals increase amongst their networks.

5.3. Strategies, actions, and/or initiatives utilised to overcome these challenges within layer 2

5.3.1. Education and training

All participants have completed either formal education or training in their progression journey. Parkers (2005) *knowing how* encompasses the formal and informal education and training that occurs to boost their skills, broaden their knowledge, and increase their experiences. Individuals who continuously reassess their personal, employment and education priorities are provided with more progression opportunities. Education and training can block people from opportunities which can be called, glass floors, which refers to those who have low education credentials and have low opportunities to

progress (Smit et al., 2012). The participants have seen this as a barrier for other Pacific Islands people in their sector but also themselves, so they are developing programmes to fill these gaps such as Pacific Islands executive training programmes, Pacific Islands mentoring programmes, and employability programmes for first-time workers in the industry.

5.3.2. Mentoring

Mentors and peer relationships can facilitate career and personal development (Burke & McKeen, 1994). Participants of this study have mentors for different needs such as career guidance, social networks, and personal guidance. The method of obtaining mentors differs according to the journey of the individual, but the findings align with theory. Especially, as all the participants have developed long, strong, and close mentoring relationships or peer relationships that have contributed to their career progression journey. An additional perspective is that through this process of being mentored and as participants increased their career experiences, they have learnt how to authentically mentor other people.

5.3.3. Networking

Networking is both a necessity that supports progression and acceptance from others, but networking can also act as a barrier for women. “Old boy” networks are traditionally composed of individuals who hold power which in many cases are men who have leadership roles, are credible, or have high-paid roles. Women are still less integrated into these important groups despite the increase of female managers across organisations (Burke & McKeen, 1994; Linehan, 2000). In the case of this study, the participant’s career progression journey included career and non-career networks. Arthur et al. (1995) and Parker’s (2005) intelligent career theory component, knowing whom, focuses on all the individual’s relationships that provide career support, enables the promotion and transmission of the individual’s reputation, and provide access to information for the individual. Participants’ personal networks such as their mothers and their close friends, secured many of their first employment or assisted in re-entering the workforce. Their personal networks were a part of the supporting structures in their career progression journey and in most cases, participants’ personal networks were their first points of contact. Participants’ career-related networks grew as their experiences grew. An important insight is that those in the participants’ networks eventually became good friends, demonstrating that Cook Islands people are relational and good connectors. Peer relationships, developed through networks, often

last longer, are not hierarchical and involve reciprocal assistance (Amoa, 2017; Murray et al., 2012). Part of having strong relationships amongst their networks is recognising the natural place of having other Pacific Islands descent people in their networks. Pacific Islands people naturally gravitate towards each other. Another important insight is how non-work networks are important to the career journey of the participants. Participants hold different community roles that enhance their skills, knowledge, and experiences and the lessons they obtain from being active in the community can relate to their careers.

5.3.4. Seat at the table and knowing the value you add

Having a seat at the table is a privilege and a responsibility. A seat at the table is the opportunity of contributing to the strategic success of an organisation. It is a privilege as not everyone gets to contribute at this level. But it is also a responsibility to represent people and their interests. Participants who hold these positions in their organisations still face the challenge of articulating their contribution amongst their fellow decision-makers. One way to reduce this challenge is to know the value they add. Participants knew that their value comes from connecting and strengthening their personal identity and workplace identity. This is done because of the different career and non-career roles they hold, and the skills and knowledge that they developed because of progressing their careers. When participants are seated at the table with the ability to make decisions, the value they provide is a result of their experiences, skills, and knowledge.

5.4. Image presented to the world layer 1

The final image of the tivaevae is what is presented to everyone. Layer one shows the final image of the tivaevae to everyone and represents the way people act, behave, how they present themselves to the world, and the story they want to share. The Cook Islands participants in this study show the world they are authentic leaders of growth and impactful change. Through their reflections presented in this study, we see the challenges they have experienced in their own career progression journeys, the strategies they have implemented to overcome these challenges, and the supporting structures in place supporting their growth. We are presented with colourful, bold, and beautiful stories that present unique insights into academic gender, diversity, and workplace studies.

5.5. Summary of chapter

This chapter discussed the key findings of how participants overcame challenges to career progression through examining their support structures, the challenges they faced in their career progression journey, and the strategies they have used to overcome these challenges. A challenge which resonated with me was the tug-of-war participants had with Cook Islands cultural values in the workplace. These values are embedded within the participants' identity but became unknowingly internal barriers to career opportunities. All participants have utilised further higher education or informal training to expand and enhance their knowledge and skills, sought and built strong relationships with mentors, utilised their non-career networks to assist their career progression journeys, and built their career networks to enhance their progression journeys, and finally taking opportunities and being confident in the value they bring which allows them to sit at the table to be part of the decision making process for organisations. Many of the participants have utilised internal programmes, formal or informal training, mentoring, and networks to assist their career progression. They have identified gaps in their spaces where they have created programmes to support Pacific Islands people on their own career journeys.

6. Chapter six – Conclusions

This final chapter will present the conclusions of this study which aimed to explore how Cook Islands women have overcome challenges to career progression in New Zealand. This chapter provides an overview of the study and how this study has answered the main research question. In addition, this chapter will include how this study contributes to existing literature, the limitations of this study, and recommendations for future research.

6.1. Overview of this study

This study presented many opportunities to further emerging Pacific Islands research in gender, diversity, and workplace literature. The primary opportunity was enabling the voices of Cook Islands women in New Zealand to be presented rather than be included amongst other Pacific Islands ethnic groups. This opportunity emphasizes the importance of researching Cook Islands women.

In chapter 2, we understand that the definition of ‘career’ has evolved over time and that the nature of the current workforce influences the meaning of the term “career”. This study applied Sullivan and Brauch’s (2009) definition of career because it encompasses both work experiences and non-work experiences that contribute to a person’s career journey. Career progression is a person’s movement within their organisation. Their movement into higher positions or sideways into another position to further their knowledge and skills. The concept of intelligent career theory aligned with the understanding of career and career progression, and to this study. The framework of knowing who, knowing how, and knowing whom structures and clarifies the influences that impact our career choices. The application of intelligent career theory is done in chapter 4. Chapter 2 also collates the emerging Pacific Islands studies in the gender, diversity, and workplace research areas which echo similar barriers such as lack of self-confidence, lack of career planning, and Pacific culture negatively impacting the movement of Pacific Islands people. Only one of these themes was prevalent in this study – the clash of Pacific culture.

In chapter 3, this study explores the Pacific Islands worldview and research approaches such as the Tivaevae methodology. The embedded values; taokotai (collaboration), tu akangateitei (respect), urirui kite (reciprocity), tu inangaro (relationships), and akairi kite (shared vision); and three layers of the tivaevae (the

front, the back of the image, and the backing of the tivaevae) was important for this study because it resulted in creating a meaningful research process, collecting and analysing data in a culturally safe way, connect theoretical frameworks to the research findings, maintain the integrity of Cook Islands values, people, and the Cook Islands worldview, and allowed the researcher to embrace this research journey to provide true ethnic insights.

6.2. Key themes from this study

The main research question for this study was how Cook Islands women overcome challenges to progressing their careers in New Zealand. In chapter 4, this study determined that Cook Islands women experience challenges such as career breaks to fulfil parental duties, managing the unconscious influence cultural values can have in taking career opportunities, industry culture is very strong in long-standing traditionally male-dominated industries, and there will still be challenges even when you hit the highest leadership role. In this chapter we come to understand the strategies Cook Islands women have used to overcome challenges to career progression which are completing formal education, further training and professional development, obtaining mentors to support their career and personal development, increasing their career-related networks and utilised their non-career networks for their career, knowing their own value to educate others on what they can bring to the table.

In chapter 5, the discussion comes to comprehend that the challenges and strategies of the participants of this study are similar to other findings of similar academic studies in gender, diversity, and workplace literature. The uniqueness of this study is the context of Cook Islands culture and women, but also the emphasise on the foundational characteristics of Cook Islands and Pacific Islands people, and how they manage these in the workplace and in their career progression journey. The structures of values, faith, and family in the form of relational family, work family, or community is what influence their self-drive, their selection of available career opportunities, and their strategies to becoming successful women and successful leaders in their workplaces.

6.3. Contribution of this study to existing literature

This study contributes to the minimal research available on Cook Islands people within New Zealand and even more limited research on Cook Island women from singular or multiple sectors in New Zealand. This study adds another context to intelligent career theory, tivaevae methodology, and provides an alternative perspective to the challenges and strategies minorities and Pacific Islands women are employing to progress upward or sideways in their careers. This study also adds to the understanding that people and relationships are important to Pacific Islands people, and across the Pacific Islands studies building and maintaining relationships is generally at the core of every Pacific study.

6.4. Limitations of study

The utilisation of the tivaevae methodology is still a new framework in gender, diversity, and workplace literature. The tivaevae methodology is still an emerging Pacific Islands methodology in Pacific Islands studies, and because it is an emerging framework there is a possibility to question the gaps in this study. Also, my study included participants from all levels of employment and may have merged lessons that were specific to certain hierarchal employment levels. Also, as it is unknown which industries employ many Cook Islands women, contextual experiences may have been blended. There were five participants in this study, additional experiences were needed to provide contrasting perspectives. As a novice researcher, this study attempted to provide a Cook Islands perspective on intelligent career theory, the brown glass ceiling model, and other established strategies used to break barriers to career progression.

6.5. Recommendations for future research

This study was intended to be completed in the Rarotonga Cook Islands before Covid-19 in 2019 when there was emerging research on female careers in the Cook Islands. Obtaining an indigenous perspective on career progression is important as the influence of western structures may be minimal therefore the findings could provide contrasting or similar results, and another unique perspective on Pacific Islands career studies, career progression, and gender literature.

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8. Appendices

8.1. Appendix 1: AUTECH Approval Letter



Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECH)

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

8 March 2021

Swati Nagar
Faculty of Business Economics and Law

Dear Swati

Re Ethics Application: 21/28 Challenges to career progression: Do Cook Islands women experience the glass ceiling in New Zealand?

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECH).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 8 March 2024.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTECH in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTECH prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTECH Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTECH Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.

AUTECH grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTECH Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: eva.joseph06@gmail.com

8.2. Appendix 2: Information Sheet

The logo for AUT (Auckland University of Technology) is displayed in white text on a black rectangular background.

TE WĀNANGA ĀROMU
O TĀMAKI MĀKAU RAU

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

1/01/2021

Project Title

Challenges to career progression: Do Cook Islands women experience the glass ceiling in New Zealand?

An Invitation

Turou, turou! Oro mai, Aere mai!

My name is Evangeleen Joseph, preferred name Eva, I am of Cook Islands descent and a Master of Business student at AUT University. I am the daughter of Mr. Vaine Mati Joseph and Mrs. Vaine Turuma Joseph (nee' Williams). I am interested in finding out challenges my fellow Cook Islands women have experienced when progressing their careers in a western society. This research project is in partial fulfilment of my Masters degree. I invite you to read the below information to express your interest to participate in my research.

What is the purpose of this research?

With this study, my intention is to inform and to empower Cook Islands women in providing their unique perspectives that will contribute to the wider body of literature about gender diversity, career progression, and Pacific Islands research. The findings of this research may be used in my future PhD research.

This study aims to determine if Cook Islands cultural practices and values have any influence on career progression. In addition, explore key challenges to career progression experienced by Cook Islands women who hold operational, management, or leadership roles, and explore initiatives that may be in place to support career progression for women.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have either been referred or notified to participate by an organisation who identified you as an ideal participant who has unique insights and a wealth of knowledge for this research.

It is anticipated that the findings will be based on 5-7 participant voices. Participants of this research have been recruited on a referral basis and the selection criteria of participants include:

- Women who are of Cook Islands descent
- Aged 20 years old and over
- Currently working
- hold an operational role with a minimum of 3+ years' work experience; or management role with 8+ years' work experience, or a leadership role with over 10+ years' work experience
- has sought career progression opportunities in their current workplace or in their working history
- Can speak in English and/or Cook Islands Reo Maori

As I (the researcher) am of Cook Islands descent and the scope of this research is on Cook Islands women, there is a need to have exclusion criteria. Those who are immediate family or personally know me (the researcher) will be excluded from this research.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you want to take part in this study please contact the researcher with the details provided below. Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. It may not be possible to destroy all records of focus group discussions, but participants in focus groups will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. Once the findings have been produced, removal

of your data may not be possible. A consent form entailing the details above will be given for your consent prior to commencement of your interview.

What will happen in this research?

I will be carrying out semi-structured focus groups and interviews. Focus groups will be used to understand the nature of participants and make you comfortable with the study. One-on-one interviews will be used to follow up insights collected during the focus groups. You are invited to choose which method you will like to participate in. We will agree to a date, time, and location. Locations for focus groups and interviews will be held in public settings such as your place of work and/or public meeting rooms. Both focus groups and interview questions will be based around the topic area and you will have the opportunity to refrain from answering any questions if you feel uncomfortable. It is anticipated that the focus groups and interviews will take up to one hour each in length. With your permission, interviews and focus groups will be voice recorded and I will take notes. The recordings will be transcribed after which the transcript will be sent to you for review and confirmation.

What are the discomforts and risks?

This study draws on your professional experiences that may cause discomfort and embarrassment when answering some questions about the topic area. This study also embeds and practices Cook Islands cultural values that those who identify as a Cook Islander but was not raised in the cultural framework may feel cultural dissonance.

At all times you will be respected and can choose to refrain from answering questions or withdraw from the study.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

It is anticipated that any discomfort will be minimal as you will have the option to refrain from answering at any time or withdrawing from the study.

What are the benefits?

The study is being undertaken as part of my Masters in Business – International Business qualification, in which the research output will be a dissertation. In addition, this study will inform and empower Cook Islands women by providing unique perspectives that will contribute to the wider body of literature about gender diversity, career progression, and Pacific Islands research. The findings of this research may be used for future PhD research.

How will my privacy be protected?

You will be given confidentiality as only I (the researcher) and my academic supervisors will know of your identity. As mentioned, your identity will not be disclosed in the write-up of this dissertation and where appropriate the use of pseudonyms may help in conveying any quoted responses. No form of identifiers will be connected to transcriptions of your interview. You will also be given the opportunity to review and make changes to your transcript and confirm before it is used in the next stages of this study.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

Your time. It is anticipated that focus groups and individual interviews will take approximately one-hour in length each and further discussions may take place if there is any need for clarification of responses to questions.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Two weeks.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

If you have selected yes in the Consent Form an executive summary will be sent to you after the final write up by email.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr. Swati Nagar, swati.nagar@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 extension. 5093.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTC, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Researcher: Evangeleen Joseph (Eva)

Contact email: eva.joseph06@gmail.com

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Primary Supervisory: Dr. Swati Nagar

Contact email: swati.nagar@aut.ac.nz

Contact phone: 09 921 9999 extension. 5093

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 8 March 2021 AUTEK Reference number 21/28.

8.3. Appendix 3: Consent form



Consent Form

Project title: *Challenges to career progression: Do Cook Islands women experience the glass ceiling in New Zealand.*

Project Supervisor: *Dr. Swati Nagar, Dr. Fiona Hurd, A/Prof. El-Shadan Tautolo*

Researcher: *Evangeleen (Eva) Joseph*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐
- ☐ I agree to allow the Researcher to securely store data collected during the interview to be used for my future PhD research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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.....
.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 8 March 2021 AUTEK Reference number 21/28

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

8.4. Appendix 4: Indicative Questions

AUT

TE WĀNANGA AROMUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU EAU

Protocols and structure for Interviews

In full transparency, this document is to inform you of what will happen in our interview. Our interview is a semi-structured discussion. We aim to have share information, respect each other, collectively create a picture, and have a few laughs along the way.

1. Privacy – You will be given confidentiality as only I and my academic supervisor will know your identity from your signed consent form. Your identity will not be disclosed in the write up of my dissertation, in the form of quoted responses I will use pseudonyms. No form of identifiers will be connected to transcripts. You will have the opportunity to review and make changes to your transcript and confirm before it is used in the next stages of this study.
2. Discomfort and risks – This study draws on your professional experiences and may cause discomfort or embarrassment when answering questions. At all times you will be respected and can choose to refrain from answering questions or withdraw from the study.
3. Obtain permission to record – before the discussion proceeds, I will seek your permission to record. This will help transcribe our discussion to support my analysis for my write up. If you disagree, I will take handwritten notes.
4. Structure
 - Welcome, housekeeping
 - Prayer
 - Purpose
 - Background information
 - Introduce yourself
 - Briefly describe your current role, level, and the industry you work in. How long have you been working there, when did you decide to seek progression opportunities, and describe other employment experiences where you've decided to progress your career.
 - Employment (participants will be asked depending on what kind of role they hold)
 - *Employment – Operational role*
 - Describe your career progression journey
 - What motivates you to look for and apply for job opportunities?
 - Describe the challenges (if any) you have faced when applying for the role?
 - How far in the application process did you proceed?
 - If you have requested for feedback about your application/interview, can you share the theme(s) of that feedback?
 - If you have not asked for feedback about your application/interview why haven't you asked?
 - What kind observations (about yourself, about others around you) arise when you sought to progress your career?

- Reflecting, is there anything that you would change? Why?
- *Employment – Management role*
 - Describe your journey of reaching this level of employment
 - Describe the challenges or barriers you have experienced in relation to progressing your career.
 - Why do you think you experienced these challenges or barriers?
 - How consistent have you experienced these challenges or barriers when you progressed your career?
 - Do you still experience them now?
 - Describe the kind of support you have received or sought out throughout your employment journey.
 - Have you ever requested for feedback about your application/interview?
 - At any point of your employment journey moving up the ranks, how has your Cook Islands values been an influence?
 - What are the advantages of having women, Cook Islands women, and Pasifika women at this level – Management role?
- *Employment – Leadership role*
 - Describe your journey of reaching this level of employment.
 - What has been some of the challenges you have experienced?
 - Why do you think you experienced these challenges?
 - How consistent are these challenges to career progression?
 - Do you still experience them now?
 - Reflecting on your employment journey, what has been your motivations behind your success in progressing your career?
 - What have you experienced that has supported your employment journey?
 - What are the advantages of having women, Cook Islands women, Pasifika women in leadership/strategic roles?
 - When reviewing job adverts, what do you look for when progressing your career?

- What kind of advice would you pass to other Cook Islands women who are trying to progress their careers?
 - Cultural values
 - What are your thoughts about Cook Islands traditional values or practices regarding, girls and women?
 - Do you think general Cook Islands cultural values, and values and practices for our women fit in the workplace? How?
 - How can we use our cultural values (respect, collaboration, reciprocity, relationship building) to help our progression journey? How can it help others? Or by upholding these values do they become barriers?
 - Initiatives
 - Do you know of any existing initiatives that can support career progression for Cook Islands women?
 - What would be ideal to support successful career progression for Cook Islands women?
5. Post interview comments/observations, ending of recording
 6. Closing

Thank you and look forward to meeting you and discussing with you all.

Meitaki maata,