

Pacific Island Women's Experiences of the 'Brown Glass Ceiling'  
in Senior Management in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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## Abstract

Research has illustrated how the glass ceiling hinders women from entering senior management roles. In addition, research has shown that ethnic women experience additional barriers because of their ethnicity and culture. The purpose of this dissertation is to provide visibility to the experiences of Pacific women in senior management in Aotearoa New Zealand and identify underlying factors that are contributing to their underrepresentation in senior management positions. This research uses a qualitative methodology with data collected through semi structured interviews. The findings illustrate the challenges, support systems, and strategies utilised to overcome workplace challenges for Pacific women. Specifically, racism, institutional racism and cultural values have impacted Pacific women through racial stereotypes, tokenism and not fitting into Westerns perceptions of the ideal manager. What has alleviated the challenges Pacific women have faced in advancing into senior management is support such as spirituality, family, organisational support and mentoring. Pacific women in this study demonstrated coping strategies such as gaining higher qualifications and assimilating into Western organisations culture, often at the cost of minimising their cultural identity. Consequently, this research demonstrates how the ‘brown glass ceiling’ impacts Pacific women’s career journeys into senior management, with the aim to provide solutions that will help improve the number of Pacific women entering senior management positions.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
List of Tables.....	vi
Attestation of Authorship.....	vii
Dedication.....	viii
Glossary.....	ix
Table 1. Māori and Pacific Definitions.....	ix
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Pacific Background.....	1
Pacific Women Underrepresentation in Senior Management.....	2
The ‘Glass Ceiling’.....	2
The ‘Ethnic Glass Ceiling’ and ‘Brown Glass Ceiling’.....	3
Research Question and Justification.....	4
Dissertation Structure.....	4
Summary.....	5
Chapter Two: Literature Review.....	6
Introduction.....	6
Women in Senior Positions, Globally.....	6
What is the Glass Ceiling?.....	7
Ethnic Women in Senior Positions, Globally.....	8
Male Dominated Organisations and Tokenism.....	10
The ‘Ideal Manager’.....	12
Work/Parent Identity.....	13
Lack of Opportunities: Training, Mentors.....	14
Institutional Racism.....	15
Pacific Women in Senior Positions in Aotearoa New Zealand.....	16
Brown Glass Ceiling.....	16
Discrimination.....	17
Stereotypes.....	17
Conclusion.....	18

Chapter Three: Methodology .....	20
Introduction .....	20
Ontology, Epistemology and Paradigm.....	20
Ontology.....	20
Epistemology.....	20
Paradigm .....	21
Methodology.....	21
Method .....	22
Sampling and Selection .....	22
Summary of Participants Demographics.....	24
Questions .....	24
Procedure.....	25
Analysing data.....	25
Familiarisation with the data .....	25
Coding .....	26
Searching for themes .....	26
Reviewing themes.....	26
Defining and naming themes .....	26
Writing up .....	27
Summary .....	27
Chapter Four Findings .....	29
Introduction.....	29
Challenges.....	29
Racism .....	29
Stereotypes.....	31
Institutional Racism.....	33
Tokenism.....	35
Cultural Values .....	35
Ideal Manager .....	37
Pacific women are under-represented .....	38
Lack of confidence .....	39
Support.....	40
Spirituality .....	41
Family.....	41
Organisation.....	42

Mentors.....	43
Strategies to Overcome Challenges .....	44
Assimilation.....	44
Education .....	45
Recommendations.....	46
Summary .....	47
<b>Chapter Five: Discussion .....</b>	<b>48</b>
Introduction .....	48
Challenges .....	48
Support.....	52
Strategies to Overcome Challenges .....	54
Summary .....	55
<b>Chapter Six: Conclusion, Implications, Limitations, Further Research .....</b>	<b>56</b>
Introduction .....	56
Conclusion.....	56
Implications.....	58
Limitations.....	59
Conclusion and future research.....	59
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>69</b>
Appendix A: Ethics Approval.....	69
Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet .....	70
Appendix C: Consent Form .....	73
Appendix D : Confidentiality Agreement .....	74
Appendix E: Interview Questions.....	75

## List of Tables

Table 1. Māori and Pacific Definitions.....	ix
Table 2. Participants Demographics.....	24
Table 3. Research Themes.....	27

## 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 acknowledgements), 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:

17 June 2019



## Dedication

I dedicate this work to the loving memory of my mum Ema Melenaite Mesui, a courageous warrior and navigator who broke through impossibilities, and to my darling daughter Emma-jane Mesui who will continue to overcome impossibilities. I also dedicate this to my father Maka Fa'oetau Mesui, my mum Saluni Mesui, my siblings Anau and Andre, Ana, Maake, Fusi and Mark, Joe and Selah, Maata and Filisione, Felicia and Josiah. Also, to Jenny Lieu Siddell, Wednesday Women's group, Francis Rangihuna, Grace Tong, Bronwyn Reid, Liberty Christian Church, Purely Girls, and to every girl that was told they could not make it.

## Glossary

These Māori and Pacific terms are used mainly by people that reside in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the definitions have come from the Maori Language Net (2018) and Online Information Literacy (2018).

Table 1. Māori and Pacific Definitions

Term	Definition
Aotearoa	New Zealand.
Karakia	A prayer or incantation.
Māori	Indigenous inhabitants of New Zealand, and the language of the inhabitants of New Zealand.
Pacific people	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Tonga, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
Pasifika	Pasifika is a term that is unique to Aotearoa and is a term coined by government agencies to describe migrants from the Pacific region and their descendants, who now call Aotearoa home.
Pākehā	New Zealander of Non-Māori descent, usually European.
Palagi	A white or non-Pacific person

## Chapter One: Introduction

### Introduction

This chapter looks at the background as to why the research on Pacific women in senior management and the ‘brown glass ceiling’ was conducted. It provides an explanation of where Pacific people come from and the different Pacific groups living in Aotearoa New Zealand. This chapter also provides a few statistics highlighting the underrepresentation of Pacific women in senior management in Aotearoa New Zealand, and how the glass ceiling differentiates from the ethnic ceiling, thus providing the notion for the ‘brown glass ceiling’ to relate to Pacific women. This chapter also discusses the research question and justification and dissertation structure, ending with a summary.

### Pacific Background

The Pacific people are a diverse and dynamic community and remain the largest ethnic group in Aotearoa New Zealand (Pasifika Futures, 2017). Research by Te Ara (2017) indicates that Pacific people belong to three sub regions that are distinct and unique in their customs, cultures, language and religion. The three sub regions are known as Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia (Te Ara, 2017). Polynesia is made up of Tahiti, Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Hawaii and Niue. Melanesia is made up of Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Fiji (Te Ara, 2017). Micronesia is made up of the republic of the Marshall Islands, Federal States of Micronesia, the Territory of Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of Palau, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru, Territory of Guam and the Wake Islands (Te Ara, 2017).

In 2017, research indicated that there were 295,941 Pacific people living in Aotearoa New Zealand and are a young population with the average age being 22.1 years old (Pasifika Futures, 2017), in comparison with the average age of New Zealanders which is 38 years old (Pasifika Proud Resource, 2016). The Pacific population is made up of Samoans 49%, the Cook Islands 21%, Tongan 20%, Niuean, 8% Fijian, 5%, and Niuean, Tokelau and Tuvalu (Pasifika Futures, 2017). Research by Pasifika Futures in 2017, who are a commissioning agency, aimed at building the capability and capacity of Pacific families, have forecast that by 2026 there will be 480,000 Pacific people living in Aotearoa New Zealand. That figure will equate to 10% of Aotearoa New Zealand’s population, and in 2038, the forecast for Pacific people living in Aotearoa New Zealand will be 650,000 (Pasifika Futures, 2017). The number of Pacific people born in Aotearoa New Zealand is 62% of the overall Pacific population, and 92% of Pacific Islanders live in the north Island and

65.9% live in Auckland (Pasifika Futures, 2017). Pacific Islanders are a multilingual people and one in three Pacific people speak two or more languages. The main Pacific languages spoken in Aotearoa New Zealand is Samoan, Tongan, Cook Island and Maori (Pasifika Futures, 2017).

### Pacific Women Underrepresentation in Senior Management

With the Pacific population in Aotearoa New Zealand increasing, Pacific women are still underrepresented in senior management roles. Research by Singh and Vinnicombe (2004) indicated that although Pacific women are getting through the front door in corporate organisations, they are not advancing into senior management. A report conducted by the State Service Commission in 2010 indicated that Pacific women in senior management had decreased by 4% to 1.5% in 2010, from 1.9% in 2001. Today those figures from 2010 have only slightly increased which is concerning considering that organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand have expressed that ethnicity and gender are diversity issues that are important (Terruhn & Spoonley, 2018). Another report by The Ministry of Pacific Affairs revealed that in 2010, 18 Pacific people were appointed or reappointed onto 14 boards in Aotearoa New Zealand. Only seven of the 18 Pacific people were women and they were on boards that had a community focus instead of an economic, business or financial focus (Human Rights Commission, 2010).

Therefore, it is important to understand why Pacific women are currently underrepresented in senior management. Gaining better understanding regarding this issue can better equip organisations when it comes to designing formal policies and programme initiatives to increase the number of Pacific women in senior management. Also, Aotearoa New Zealand is a multicultural society and increasing the number of Pacific women in senior management would only be illustrating the diversity that exist in its population. Research has also revealed that Pacific women in senior roles brings diversity in the skills, decision making and experience they possess which benefits organisation (Ministry for Women, 2018) and breaks down barriers like the glass ceiling that women have had to overcome (Ng & Sears, 2017).

### The 'Glass Ceiling'

The 'glass ceiling' is a metaphor used to describe how women in general can see the opportunities that lay ahead for them in their careers but are stopped from advancing forward due to invisible challenges (Chisholm-Burns, Spivey, Hageman, & Josephson, 2017; Ng & Sears, 2017). Those invisible challenges were mainly gender related because corporate traditions, and organisational policies and practices in America during the

1980's when the glass ceiling first came to surface, were instigated by white men, (McGee 2017; Wilson, 2014). Jeong and Harrison (2016) suggest, it is the 'old boys club' which is a group of white males that control the upper echelons of organisations making it harder for women to get into. Since then the recognition of the glass ceiling has gained global awareness and challenged countries to have more women in senior roles, which it has begun to achieve, but at a slower pace than anticipated (Kalev, Dobbin & Kelly, 2006). The understanding of the glass ceiling has also enabled ethnic women in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Asia, to come forward and share the challenges that they have encountered (Choi & Park, 2014; Davidson, Fieldon & Omar, 2010; Fearfull & Kamenou, 2006). The glass ceiling provided a platform for ethnic women to voice how the disparities they have experienced are different to what women are challenged with in relation to the glass ceiling (Davidson, Fieldon & Omar, 2010). This is because ethnic women disparities relate to their ethnicity, race and culture.

#### The 'Ethnic Glass Ceiling' and 'Brown Glass Ceiling'

Previous research suggests ethnic women encounter additional challenges to non-ethnic women because of ethnicity and culturally related differences (Davidson, Fieldon & Omar, 2010; Fearfull & Kamenou, 2006). The impact has seen ethnic women whom are trying to advance their careers be stigmatised and stereotyped by organisational traditions and culture in corporations (Choi & Park 2014; Davies 2009; Davidson, 1997; Wilson 2014). Terms such as the 'black glass ceiling' and the 'bamboo ceiling' were coined to illustrate how adverse the challenges were for ethnic women (Choi & Park, 2014; Davidson, 1997; Davidson, Fieldon and Omar, 2010; Davis, 2009). Women from ethnic minorities are underrepresented in senior management roles compared to white women. In addition to the "glass ceiling" that inhibits women advancing to senior management roles, ethnic women face additional challenges that collectively might be termed the "brown glass ceiling" (Tupou, 2011). Ethnic women who are trying to advance their careers may be stigmatised and stereotyped by organisational traditions and culture in corporations. Which can be true for Pacific women too, who have experienced racial stereotypes, institutional racism and not fitting into what the ideal manager is (Pio, 2007; Raela, 2017; Staniland, 2017; Tupou, 2011). This suggests that Pacific women do not fit under the glass ceiling because of the added layers of challenges that they have to overcome. Therefore, the 'brown glass ceiling' relates to the challenges that women who are non-white and part of ethnic minority groups face, because of ethnicity and culturally related differences, when trying to get into senior management like Pacific women. (Choi & Park, 2014; Davidson, 1997; Davis, 2009; Fearfull & Kamenou, 2006; Fieldon & Omar, 2010).

## Research Question and Justification

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore Pacific women's experiences of the 'brown glass ceiling' in senior management in Aotearoa New Zealand. As a Pacific woman myself who has been in management, I can attest to being subjected to racial stereotypes and not fitting into what the ideal manager looks like, in Western organisations. Therefore, this research has been of great interest to me to understand if my experiences were isolated incidents or shared amongst other Pacific women. In addition, to recognise what contributing factors have been a stumbling block for Pacific women advancing in their careers, and how to increase the numbers of Pacific women in senior management. Another aim for this research is to acknowledge that the 'brown glass ceiling' relates to the challenges Pacific women encounter whilst advancing to senior management.

## Dissertation Structure

There are five chapters in this dissertation and Chapter One, the Introduction, provides background on Pacific people in Aotearoa New Zealand to give rationale as to why this research has been conducted. It also provides the research question of what factors contribute to Pacific women's experiences of the 'brown glass ceiling' in Aotearoa New Zealand? and justification of why this is important to research.

Chapter Two, the Literature Review, discusses women in senior management on a global scale and how there has been an increase in more women getting into senior positions but that progress is still slow. It also looks at how the glass ceiling became a phenomenon and has challenged organisations on their gender equality policies and the need for more women to be visible in senior management role. This chapter also draws on the experiences of ethnic women in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Asia, to identify similarities to Pacific women in Aotearoa New Zealand and their experiences, of the 'brown glass ceiling', discrimination and stereotypes.

Chapter Three, Methodology, includes an explanation for the researcher's chosen approach of a relativist ontology, constructivist epistemology and interpretivist paradigm (Gray, 2009; Crotty, 1998; Elliot & Timulak, 2005). This chapter also describes the method used which was semi-structured face to face interviews and data analysis for which Braun and Clark's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis were used.

Chapter Four, Findings, illustrates the results regarding the participants' experiences of the 'brown glass ceiling' in senior management. This chapter was divided into three sections: the first of which shows the challenges participants experienced, such as racism, institutional racism, cultural values and the ideal manager. The second section

highlighted the support that enabled the participants to withstand the challenges they encountered. Those support systems were family, spirituality, organisational support and mentors. The final section is the strategies that the participants used to survive being a Pacific woman in senior management which was to assimilate and gain higher qualifications.

Chapter Five, Discussion and Conclusion, discusses the findings in relations to Chapter Two indicating similar findings between ethnic and Pacific women but no similarities were found in relations to spirituality. The conclusion section of this chapter reveals contributing factors to why Pacific women are underrepresented in senior management relates to their experiences of the 'brown glass ceiling' which is a metaphor like the glass ceiling. This chapter also discusses the need for future research into the lack of Pacific women in senior management, the 'brown glass ceiling', and spirituality as a support system for Pacific women.

#### Summary

This chapter has highlighted that due to the young and growing population of Pacific people in Aotearoa New Zealand, an understanding as to why there are a lack of Pacific women in senior management need to be researched. It has also indicated differences of between the glass ceiling and the ethnic ceiling, determining that there is further investigation needed in relation to the 'brown glass ceiling'. This research is important because it will provide evidence and contributing factors in relation to the challenges that Pacific women face are ethnic and culturally related. This research will also bring to surface how Pacific women's experiences of advancing into senior management is different to non-Pacific women.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to understand if there is a brown glass ceiling in Aotearoa New Zealand and how it affects Pacific women and their advancement into senior management. To understand this, the literature review will begin by looking at women in senior positions on a global scale and the glass ceiling effect. The literature review will proceed to investigate the experiences of ethnic women in male dominated organisations, and in relation to the perception of the ideal manager, tokenism, the lack of opportunities for ethnic women and institutional racism. From there it will continue to look at how the glass ceiling has given ethnic women and now Pacific women, a platform to recognise that their experiences of the glass ceiling are different to non-ethnic women. In the limited research discovered, it has shown that Pacific women in Aotearoa New Zealand have experienced discrimination, and racism drawing to the conclusion whether the 'brown glass ceiling' exist and is stopping Pacific women advance into senior management.

### Women in Senior Positions, Globally

A significant and growing body of literature has investigated the progress of women into senior management roles and has highlighted how on a global scale, it remains a common problem for women not to be advancing into senior management roles in their careers (Bullough, Moore & Kalafatoglu, 2017; Fremion, O'Brien & Ford, 2018; Haile, Emmanuel & Dzathor, 2016; McKinsey, 2016; Orbach, 2017). Despite this, recent studies which suggest that globally, there is a demand for organisations to be more proactive and supportive towards women in the workplace through social agitation and developing laws and policy. For example, Haile, Emmanuel and Dzathor's (2016) study has shown, the benefits of women in senior management offer a general increase in management, productivity, growth, and sustainability. Thus, there is a global interest in organisations taking on women in senior roles (Haile, Emmanuel & Dzathor, 2016; Thompson, 2011; Chisholm-Burns, et al., 2017; Wilson, 2014). However, despite this rapid demand, global figures of women's advancement into senior management agree with McKinsey et.al (2018) in that it has been a slow and moderate progression (Barsh, Devillard, & Wang, 2012; Harris, Ravenwood & Myers, 2013), hence highlighting that despite efforts to increase the number of women into senior roles through organisational policies, women's underrepresentation's is still very stark in comparison to the efforts made, (Barsh, Devillard, & Wang, 2012). Recent evidence indicates that women currently hold under a quarter of senior management roles in the world, which only increased by three percent (i.e.



from 21%) since 2011 and in that same year, one-third of global business had no women in senior management, and this has not changed to date (Catalyst, 2017). In 2017, countries listed in Fortune 500 indicated the ratio between men and women employed was approximately 50%, yet only a third of these women were senior managers (Barsh, Devillard & Wang, 2012; Catalyst, 2017; Glass & Cook, 2016). These statistics, though alarming, indicate that throughout the world and across all sectors, women are not advancing into senior roles as they could (Barsh, Devillard, & Wang, 2012; Bennett, 2002; Bullough, Moore & Kalafatoglu, 2017). Overall, the literature indicated that there are challenges with women not advancing into senior management roles and that it is a concern on a global scale that needs attention (Thompson, 2011; Writh, 2011). Therefore, there is a need for more research into finding solutions on a macro and micro level to making women more visible in senior roles in organisations.

#### What is the Glass Ceiling?

The glass ceiling is a metaphor used to describe the struggles women have encountered in the workplace, due to invisible barriers that prevent them from advancing in their chosen careers (Chisholm-Burns, et al., 2017; Ng & Sears, 2017; Powell & Butterfield, 1994). Research has indicated that the glass ceiling is a metaphor that has been used to explain women's underrepresentation in senior management positions in organisations (Powell & Butterfield, 1994). Furthermore, it describes how at the same time women can see what opportunities lie ahead but invisible barriers will not allow them to advance through (Chisholm-Burns, et al., 2017)

The glass ceiling became a widespread notion in 1986 when Hymowitz and Schellhardt argued that women were being kept out of executive positions in corporate America due to unseen discrimination (cited in Wilson, 2014). Corporate traditions, organisational policies and practices, attitudinal barriers, and discrimination have all contributed to creating the glass ceiling (McGee 2017; Wilson, 2014). The result of this argument led to the U.S labour force delivering a report on the Glass Ceiling Initiative which in the same year of 1991, became the Glass Ceiling Act in America recognising that women and minorities were being discriminated by invisible barriers that were stopping them advancing up the corporate ladder (McGee 2017; Wilson, 2014). The Glass Ceiling Act 1991 challenged popular opinions in the 1980s that the glass ceiling was a myth. The myth debate suggests that many 40-year-old women in the 1980s had no college education or advanced degrees which explains why they did not advance into executive positions (Draulans, 2003; McGee, 2017). Another general belief that supported the myth debate suggested women

were not advancing into the upper echelons of the corporate world because they chose to stay home and look after their families (McGee, 2017; Wayne, Randel, & Stevens 2006). However, Barreto, Ryan and Schmitt (2004) and Wilson (2014) prove that women were educated and competent, and the myths' reasonings were not substantiated (Chisholm-Burns, et al., 2017; McGee, 2017; Wilson, 2014). Since then, the glass ceiling's awareness has highlighted disparities, injustice and discrimination against women in the workplace therefore challenging corporate traditions and cultures. The impact of this has seen governments implement change in policies regarding discrimination and inequality in the workplace (Kalev, Dobbin & Kelly, 2006; Morrison, 1992).

The progression of the glass ceiling theory has also brought to light minority women and their struggles of advancing into senior management (McGee, 2017; Wilson, 2014). The glass ceiling concept continues to challenge barriers that are holding women back from progressing in their careers and this is slowly becoming evident on a macro and micro level in different countries (Adler, 1995; Barsh, Devillard & Wang, 2012). The micro level looks at women as a group and the challenges that women as a group encounter because of their gender in the workplace (Adler, 1995, Barsh, Devillard & Wang, 2012). Whereas the macro level looks at the effect the challenges have on a larger scale such as a countries employment policy that discriminate women from entering senior management roles (Barsh, Devillard & Wang, 2012). However, with the growing awareness that discrimination against women in the workplace can no longer be ignored, a global movement has seen Western countries enforce changes to their employment policies to become more inclusive (Adler, 1995). The recognition of the glass ceiling has enabled ethnic minority women to come forward and share their experiences of disparities in the workplace which has led to a growing awareness that for women of different ethnic backgrounds they are encountering barriers that are different to white women (Brewer, 2016; Cain, 2003; Davidson, Fieldon & Omar, 2010).

#### [Ethnic Women in Senior Positions, Globally](#)

Literature regarding ethnic minority women and why they are underrepresented in senior management, imply that it is because the barriers that ethnic women confront are not the same as white women (Choi & Park 2012; Davidson, Fieldon & Omar, 2010; Fearfull & Kamenou, 2006; Li, 2014; Pio, 2007; Wilson, 2014). Research by Davidson, Fieldon & Omar (2010), Holder, Jackson and Ponterotto (2015), suggests that the barriers that ethnic women face in senior roles are due to multiple layers of discrimination because of race, ethnicity and culture. The reason why race, ethnicity and culture are barriers is due to

how ethnic groups have been stigmatised and stereotyped by organisational traditions and culture in corporations (Choi & Park 2012; Davies, 2009; Davidson, Fieldon & Omar, 2010; Pio, 2007; Wilson, 2014). For example, research has shown that African American women will straighten their hair and tone down on wearing bright colours, so that they can fit in and feel accepted in corporate organisations (Davidson, 1997; Davidson, Fieldon & Omar, 2010; Davies, 2009; Wilson, 2014). Evidence has also shown that Asian American women have been stigmatised by cultural stereotypes depicting Asian American women as passive and weak which they feel is a barrier to their advancement in their careers (Choi & Park, 2012; Li, 2014). Davidson, Fieldon and Omar (2010) agree, that ethnic women are treated more unfairly than white women. Recent literature also suggests that this is the reason why, there are even fewer women of ethnicity in senior management roles (Choi & Park, 2012; Datta & Agarwal, 2017; Fearful & Kamenou, 2006; Li, 2014). Different experiences between white women and ethnic minority women in the workplace, has brought to surface different terms to better describe the differences in the struggles ethnic women encounter while climbing the corporate ladder. The term the 'concrete ceiling' and 'bamboo ceiling' referred respectively to African American and Asian American women's experiences in the United States in the 80s (Davis, 2009; Davidson, 1997). It illustrated the idea that you cannot see through or beyond the barrier and that it is harder to break or smash it (Davidson, 1997; Davidson, Fieldon & Omar, 2010; Davis 2009; Li, 2014; Wilson, 2014). The glass ceilings have a 'dual transparency' (McGee, 2017, p. 2) where for white women they can look through the glass and see the challenges and who their main supporters would be (Chisholm-Burns, et al., 2017; Choi & Park, Li, 2014; Islam & Jantan, 2017). For African American women, Asian American women and ethnic minority women, they cannot see through the concrete or bamboo ceiling and it works as a separating and isolating barrier (Brewer, 2016; Cook & Glass, 2013; Datta & Agarwal, 2017; Davidson, 1997; Davidson, Fieldon & Omar, 2010; Li, 2014; McGee, 2017). By drawing on this concept, Cain (2013), McGee (2017) and, Showunmi, Atewologun and Bebbington's (2016) research findings confirmed that ethnic biases and racial stereotypes do contribute to obstacles in ethnic women progressing. However, Barnes (2017), disagrees with the notion that culture is a barrier for ethnic women trying to advance their careers because Barnes (2017) does not believe that culture should impact the way ethnic women lead staff. Cain (2003), Datta and Agarwal (2017), Choi and Park (2014), Li (2014), and Showunmi et al. (2016), argue that culture is an innate aspect of ethnic women's identity and it is this very reason that they are not visibly seen in senior management. Therefore, it is not about the impact that culture has on women's leadership

skills but the lack of women in senior roles that are of different culture and ethnicity to the majority in Western organisations. Research has brought to light that culture, race and ethnicity is what makes ethnic women distinct in who they are and the experiences they encounter which are very different from those of white women (Brewer, 2016; Davidson, 1997; Fearfull & Kamenou, 2006; Islam & Jantan, 2017). Furthermore, literature highlights that there are impediments to be an African American, Asian American, Indian, Chinese or, Korean woman trying to advance into senior roles in their careers (Choi & Park, Davidson, Fieldon & Omar, 2010; Fearfull & Kamenou, 2006; Islam & Jantan, 2017). There are also common obstacles to both white and ethnic women such as juggling being a parent and working mother, or navigating the male dominated organisational culture (Choi & Park 2012; Fearful & Kamenou 2006; Islam & Jantan 2017; Li 2014). However, for ethnic women, the added trauma of trying to advance their careers is often related to their race, ethnicity and culture (Choi & Park, 201; Fearful & Kamenou, 2005; Li, 2014; Islam & Jantan 2017). To resolve these challenges for ethnic women is to recognise that the glass ceiling does not take into consideration factors such as cultural and racial barriers that have impacted ethnic women negatively. For example, ethnic women have been stigmatised and stereotyped by organisations that are dominated by a white male culture, which previous research has indicated does exist in many Western corporations (Haile, Emmanuel & Dzathor, 2016; McGee, 2017).

#### Male Dominated Organisations and Tokenism

Research has suggested that male dominated organisations in the corporate arena have contributed to preventing ethnic women from progressing into senior management roles (Boxer, Jones, & Cortes-Conde, 2017; Brewer, 2016; Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, & Bongiorno, 2011; Wayne, Randel, & Stevens, 2006). The phenomenon of male dominated organisations is not a new phenomenon but a historical problem for women (Ryan, et al., 2011). Fearfull and Kamenou (2006) agreed with this notion and suggest the ‘old boys club’ have controlled the corporate organisations for too long. The ‘old boys club’ is a term that is often referred to in describing a group of middle-class white men who predominately make all the decisions at the top of an organisation (Boxer, et al., 2017; Johnson, Murphy, & Zewdie, 2008; Kamenou & Fearfull, 2006). This problem of male dominated organisations is not exclusive to western countries but is found in all societies (Johnson, et al., 2008; Wilson, F. M. 2017). For example, in a Confucian society like Korea, the government tried to implement gender equality legislation (Choi and Park, 2012), but it proved to be superficial and unsuccessful, because of male dominated organisations in Korea (Choi and Park, 2012). Datta and Agarwal (2012), agree and suggest

that in India women are still suffering because of the 'old boys club' phenomenon. The impact this has had on ethnic women is that it creates a culture that is male dominated which as a result has influenced male supervisors, who are not willing to assign women to more important and demanding positions (Boxer, et al., 2017, Choi & Park 2012, Islam and Jantan, 2017). Current research has also proven that male-dominated organisations distort what gender equality looks like in their organisation's policies because middle-aged white men have written it (Boxer, et al., 2017; Bullough, Moore, & Kalafatoglu, 2017; Glass & Cook, 2016). The impact this has on people in these organisations is the belief that ethnic women are not qualified or equipped to be in senior management (Islam & Jantan, 2017; Wilson, 2014). The problem with this is it reinforces strong prejudices about ethnic women and their place in society and in corporate organisations (Cook & Glass, 2013). It does not help that society and organisations view female characteristics as passive and less desirable when it comes to leadership, in comparison to male characteristics which are viewed as assertive and more desirable in leadership qualities (Cook & Glass, 2013; Islam & Jantan, 2017; Ryan, et al., 2011). McGee (2017) agrees with Cook and Glass et al. (2011), that male-dominated organisations reinforced the 'male model of organising.' McGee (2017) suggest, that this model views men as being better able to adapt and are more serious and committed to their jobs and deserving of their promotions. McGee (2017) also suggest that the challenges minority women face is because of the link between organisational culture, women's exclusion and marginalisation. Thus, creating layers of discrimination ethnic women must overcome which is being a woman, who has an ethnic background in male dominated organisation that are mostly run by white men in Western countries and where internal racism exist (Boxer, et al., 2017). The subtlety of these reinforced prejudices, invisible challenges and discriminations against ethnic women in organisations are infiltrated in the everyday running of organisations (Harris, Ravenswood, & Myers, 2013; Staniland, 2017).

Boxer et al. (2017) looks at Kanter's theory of role traps and suggest that ethnic women in senior roles are 'tokens' in male-dominated organisations, in which they are assimilated in to meet a quota. Morris (2010) describes token as a sub group within a larger group with an understanding that the larger group is the more dominate group. Kanter's suggestion that ethnic women are tokens, highlights their role in these male dominated organisations is to make the organisations appear inclusive. Tung (2008) agrees with this idea that minorities or people of colour who are in senior management are tokens. In addition, tokenism as Gustav and Andray, (2015) explain is to give the smaller group the

impression that there are no set boundaries between the two groups, even though the dominate group make all the decision. The 'role trap' proposes that women are not being their natural selves, because they must act and behave in a certain way that is most like their male counterparts, and patriarchal gendered environments encourage this (Boxer et al. 2017). Consequently, ethnic women who succeed in getting into senior management, still find that they need to work harder to prove that they are competent and capable of doing their job (Choi & Park, 2012; Datta & Agarwal, 2017; Tupou, 2011). McGee (2017) argues that it is not the role trap theory as Kanter suggest (Boxer et al. 2017) but it is the dual identity that hinder ethnic women from advancing their careers. The dual identity proposes that an ethnic woman in a Western society has two identities because at work she dresses like her Western colleagues, but at home she speaks her native tongue and dresses in her cultural ethnic dress. Therefore, literature has shown that male dominated organisation and roles are prevalent in all spheres of society regardless of who you are or where you come from. It also reinforces that ethnic women are often challenged by a system that is not only male dominated but white male dominated too (Datta & Agarwal, 2012; Islam & Jantan, 2017; McGee, 2017) and therefore there is the expectation to act and behave like them. The preconceived prejudice of being a woman and the racial biases and stereotypes of having an ethnic background, add to the layers that ethnic women must overcome and try and fit into what it looks like to be the 'ideal manager'.

#### The 'Ideal Manager'

Several authors agree that the entry of women into management is gender-based and what is keeping women from advancement into senior management positions is gender inequality (Adler, 1995; Guirado, Garcia-Ael & Molero, 2015; Harris, Ravenswood, & Myers, 2013; Ryan, et al., 2011). Adler and Guirado et al.'s (2015) meta-analytic research have shown that the ideal manager has masculine characteristics indicating that these qualities are more important than female characteristics. Ryan, et al., (2011), and Johnson (2008) agree with this as their meta-analytic findings reiterated the notion that to be a manager you had to think like a male. This idea to be more like men was even more prevalent in the 1980s among women (Guirado et al., (2015). Therefore, to see that the ideal manager being male, still exists today, implies that this continues to be a barrier for women in climbing the corporate ladder (Wilson F. M., 2017). The impact that it has had on women in general as research has shown, is that it puts them in a double bind, because when women act in a feminine manner, they lack leadership, yet when women exhibit male characteristics, they are accused of being insensitive (Guirado et al., (2015).

Ethnic women on the other hand, are in a triple bind because of the stereotypes of having an ethnic background. Li (2014) and Choi and Park's (2012) research indicates that although gender stereotypes are rooted in workplace norms and appear inoffensive, it is also ethnic stereotypes that hinder women advancing into senior roles (Li, 2014; Cain, & Kingston, 2003; Dezsö, & Ross, 2012). The idea of what a manager or a leader looks like have been institutionalised by white middle-class men (Haile, Emmanuel, & Dzathor, 2016; Harris, Ravenswood, & Myers, 2013, Staniland, 2017). Ryan et al. (2011) research also highlighted that if a company performed well it was because of its male manager and if a company did not perform well it was because of its female manager. Therefore, literature today continues to highlight that the ideal manager has male characteristics (Guirado, García-Ael, & Molero, 2015; Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie, & Reichard, 2008; Ryan, et al., 2011). However, several authors have argued and proven through their research, that women in senior management add more value to an organisation, through an increase in profits, production, management, sustainability and instrumental in decision making (Bolat & Kilic, 2011; Chislom-Burns et al. 2017; Dezsö & Ross, 2012; Fremion et al. 2018; Ravenswood et al. 2016). Therefore, this supports the idea that women are an asset when in senior leadership and that it is not their lack of skills, or qualifications that are holding them back from filling these positions in corporate organisations. It is the ideology of what an ideal manager looks like that has been infiltrated throughout western society and affected how women's roles and identities have been perceived and stereotyped throughout history (Guirado, García-Ael, & Molero, 2015; Harris, Ravenswood, & Myers, 2013; Staniland, 2017; Ryan et al., 2011). This barrier that has stopped ethnic women from advancing in their careers.

#### Work/Parent Identity

Ethnic women's progression into senior management has often meant the juggling of multiple roles, such as career woman, wife, parent or caregiver, as well as having an ethnic background and the demands that it has (Wayne, Randel, & Stevens, 2006). For ethnic women, having multiple of identities creates multiple of expectations, which is the result from societal and cultural stereotypes. For example, Choi and Park (2014), Datta and Agarwal, (2017) suggest that for Korean and Indian woman, the challenges are the result of the expectation to fulfil their primary roles as a wife and mother and then secondary to that is being a career woman. Dual identity is defined as identification with both one's ethnocultural minority in-group and one's society of residence (McGee, 2017). For women such as African Americans and Asian American women, it has brought to surface the added challenge of being a minority in a western society. It is not just the layer of

juggling being a parent and career women but the challenges of fitting into society where they are the minority. Literature has identified that for African American and Asian American women, this has been an obstacle they have had to overcome and are still working towards overcoming (Li, 2014; McGee, 2017; Tupou, 2011) Interestingly, for Pacific Island women and Asian women, gender inequality regarding their identity and roles are not evident while they are single: it is when they become married and have a family that, constraints become more visible (Choi & Park, 2012; Li, 2014; Tupou, 2011). This may be due to the cultural expectations of being a parent and a career woman.

Another impact, is the lack of organisational support for family values. For example, male supervisors not acknowledging women having to take time off work to tend to a sick child, and the pressure to cut their maternity leave time short so they appear serious and committed about their job (Datta & Argawal 2017; Islam & Jantan, 2017; Li, 2014), and qualified for promotions and evaluations (Choi and Park, 2012; Glass & Cook, 2016; McGee, 2017). The overall literature suggests that for ethnic women to be able to perform effectively as a working mother, they must overcome the barriers of their cultural expectations and organisational barriers (Barnes, 2017; Glass & Cook, 2016; Fearfull & Kamenou, 2006; Staniland, 2017). Current research indicates that the lack of ethnic women in senior management means that ethnic women lack mentors and support to encourage them that they can be working parents (Murrell, Blake-Beard, Porter, & Perkins-Williamson, 2008).

#### Lack of Opportunities: Training, Mentors

Davidson (1997), defines a mentor as an individual that is in a more senior position and can use their influence and experience to help the advancement of a mentee. Thus, acknowledging the positive impact mentoring has on women and the promotion of their careers. However, the lack of ethnic women in senior positions means that there is a lack of ethnic woman who can mentor up and coming senior managers and executives (Davies, 2009; Hoobler, Wayne & Lemmon, 2009; Murrell, Blake-Beard, Porter, & Perkins-Williamson, 2008). It shows ethnic women that are wanting to advance into senior roles and roles of influence that only the select few make it and that senior management it is not for everyone. Current studies have illustrated that mentoring has a positive impact on employees and supervisor relationships, increase productivity reduces employee turnover and boost company morale (Datta & Agarwal, 2012; Murrell, Blake-Beard, Porter, & Perkins-Williamson, 2008; Wilson, 2014). Aldrich, (1989) Davidson, Fieldon and Omar, (2010), and McGee (2017), have suggested that informal and formal networking has



helped African American and women of colour advance in their careers. However, Datta & Agarwal (2017), and Wilson (2014) argue that because of male-dominated cultures in organisations, ethnic women miss out on informal networking. Family commitments get in the way of attending after-work social gatherings, when most of the informal networking and mentoring takes place. Tupou (2011) and Li (2014) agrees with Wilson (2014) because like African American women and women of colour, Asian women in the United States felt left out of informal networking too. Therefore, all research indicates that mentoring is one of the keys to creating successful managers, however the lack of ethnic managers in senior management is a disadvantage for ethnic women seeking to advance their careers. Research has also shown that this is an impact on organisations thus the added barrier of institutional racism that ethnic women must overcome.

#### Institutional Racism

Institutional racism is not a new phenomenon (Came & McCreanor, 2015) and affects people of different races and ethnicities. Fearfull and Kamenou (2006) explain institutional racism as keeping minority black women from progressing into senior roles. Current research has shown that organisations are failing to deliver adequate services to people of different races, colour, culture and ethnic backgrounds (Barnes, 2017; Bennett, 2002; Bradbury, 2013). Bradbury (2013) suggests that organisations fail because the culture and policies are set up by white men. The problem is institutional racism enables discrimination and stereotypes affecting how ethnic women are treated (Datta & Agrawal, 2017). Li's (2014) findings illustrate how American Asians in the 20th century was given clerk roles compared to African American's who were given cleaning roles, because their skin tone was lighter. This demonstrates how institutional racism does exist and impacts organisations processes, attitudes, and behaviours towards ethnic women (Dezsö, & Ross, 2012; Fremion, O'Brien, & Ford, 2018). Institutional racism is presented through prejudice, ignorance, lack of consideration and racist stereotyping (Haile, Emmanuel, & Dzathor, 201 Li, 2014). Institutional racism has also led to androcentricity, where because organisations are male dominated, policies and processes are designed by men (Tupou, 2011). For ethnic women it means it is harder for them to advance their careers in these environments when, research has shown that CEO's are more likely to hire people that are like them (Adler 1995; Guirado, García-Ael, & Molero, 2015; Tupou, 2011). The implications androcentricity has had on ethnic women is that black women were subjected to domesticated stereotypes by their managers and Tupou's (2011) research has shown that Pacific women have been subjected to the same stereotypes from their managers.

### Pacific Women in Senior Positions in Aotearoa New Zealand

The literature on Pacific women in senior management in Aotearoa New Zealand is scarce and therefore it is challenging to know the scope of the experiences of Pacific Island women in Aotearoa New Zealand. Findings by Tupou (2011), Cain and Kingston (2003) have highlighted however that women of 'colour' experience discrimination differently to white women. Women of colour also face racial and ethnic discrimination, and organisational studies have shown that when ethnic women encounter social inequalities and other forms of discrimination, their career progression is slow (Cain & Kingston, 2003; Raela, 2017; Staniland, 2017; Tupou, 2011). Tupou's (2011) research, like Wilson's (2014) findings with ethnic women, reveal a similarity in that Tupou (2011) suggest that for some Pacific women, they like to wear vibrant colours with flowers in their hair, which does not fit into the conventional business environment. Thus, as Wilson's (2014) research suggest, ethnic clothing worn by women of other ethnicities is also often colourful and ethnic women feel they have to tone it down. Otherwise, as Tupou's (2011) research revealed, Pacific women may not be serious contestants for senior roles and therefore this can be used against hiring Pacific women. To illustrate, a study from The Ministry of Pacific Affairs showed that in 2010, 18 Pacific Island people were appointed or reappointed onto 14 business boards. Only seven of the 18 Pacific Islanders were women, and they were on boards that had a community focus instead of an economic, business or financial focus (Human Rights Council, 2010). This gives insight into how the invisible barriers influence Pacific women's positions (Tupou, 2011).

### Brown Glass Ceiling

The 'brown glass ceiling' is a term that has been informally created to gain a better understanding of the challenges women with brown skin experience while climbing the corporate ladder into senior management (Came, & McCreanor, 2015; Ravenswood, LeQueux, French, Strachan, & Burgess, 2016; Staniland, 2017; Tupou, 2011). Due to the lack of academic literature to support or define what the 'brown glass' ceiling is, makes it difficult to comprehend. However, Holeva Tupou's (2011) research suggest the glass ceiling does not fully explain Pacific Island women's experiences in the workplace and their lack of visibility in senior management roles. For example, the number of Pacific women in senior management roles in New Zealand has decreased slightly over the years. In comparison to women in Aotearoa New Zealand where 64.5% participated in the labour force, and 19.6% of them had board seats, (Ryan, 2014). These figures give insight into how Pacific Island women are grossly underrepresented in senior management roles compared to Palagi women. Unfortunately, there is little to none academic research to

support that the brown glass ceiling exists. However, literature on ethnic minority women and Tupou's (2011) findings would suggest that discrimination is a contributing factor as to why Pacific Island women in senior management are not so visible.

#### Discrimination

Discrimination is the biased or prejudicial behaviour and attitude towards different categories of people, and it encompasses the basis of race, age or sex (OxfordDictionaries, 2018). Women's race played a pivotal factor in the discrimination of Pacific Islanders when they first migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand, and that is because they spoke differently and looked different to the average New Zealander back then (Jones, Pringle, & Shepherd, 2000). However, as Tupou's (2011) research points out, discrimination against Pacific Island women still exists today in Aotearoa New Zealand's workforce. Tupou's (2011) research brought to surface how ethnic discrimination has been a struggle with Pacific Island women and their palagi male supervisors. The participants in Tupou's (2011) research felt they were treated like the servants and that stereotype of Pacific island women could affect their path into career progression. Tupou's (2011) research findings also illustrate that Pacific Island women, experience unfair treatment, and indifference. The impact of which meant they could not express themselves as Pacific Island women and embrace their culture in their organisations. However, they have understood that to advance in their careers they must make the decision to assimilate into western organisational culture. Therefore, Pacific Island women in management do encounter discrimination that relates to their ethnicity, which has been historically influenced by stereotypes of when Pacific Island people first migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand.

#### Stereotypes

Stereotypes transpire when people are judged by others through the lenses of their position and their cultural beliefs. Stereotypes suggest how people should talk, behave and so on, (Wilson, 2014; Ravenswood et al., 2016). Early stereotypes of Pacific Islanders were formed through a one-dimensional lens, where Pacific Islanders have been portrayed as colourful, exotic and more natural in tourist books and films (Fehoko, 2014; Kukutai, & Rata, 2017; Mitchill, 2010; NgaTaonga, 1983; Tupou, 2011). Thus, creating exotic fantasies for tourist (NgaTaonga, 1983). However, the impact of the change in immigration laws in 1968 and dawn raids saw a shift in how Pacific Islanders were perceived (Fehoko, 2014; Mitchill, 2010; Tupou, 2011). The Pacific Island migration in the 60s was labelled as the 'brown epidemic' (Mitchill, 2010). In addition, the 1970s, labelled Pacific Islanders as overstayers, which was reinforced by the media and politicians (Fehoko, 2014; Raela,

2017). The influence of media stereotypes has continued today (Mayeda & Sobieski, 2013). In 2013, two newspaper articles in Aotearoa New Zealand showed cartoons that depicted racist stereotypes of Pacific Islanders such as being obese, speaking with an accent, and relying on government assistance instead of getting a job. When Pacific Islander young adults responded to the cartoons they said they were sad, but that the stereotypes are common (Mayeda & Sobieski, 2013). However recent studies have expressed that Pacific Islanders are breaking down these stereotypes and are becoming high achievers when it comes to academia, sport, the arts and business. Tupou's (2011) findings illustrated that Pacific Island women are stereotyped as not being competent and skilled which are stereotypes that had stuck with Pacific Islanders when they first migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand. The impact that these stereotypes have on Pacific Island women needs investigation as there is a lack of research written about it.

### Conclusion

Literature on the glass ceiling has highlighted that women in general on a global scale face challenges when climbing the corporate ladder (Bullough, Moore & Kalafatoglu, 2017; Fremion, O'Brien, Ford, 2018; Haile & Friedrich, 2017; McKinsey, 2016; Orbach, 2017). However, literature on ethnic women suggest that they encounter more challenges than their white female counterparts due to ethnic and cultural differences (Choi & Park, 2012; Davidson, 1997; Li, 2014; McGee, 2017). Tupou's (2011) findings indicate that there may be a brown glass ceiling. Her findings highlight that Pacific Island women in management in Aotearoa New Zealand experience more challenges such as discrimination and stereotypes compared to their palagi female counterparts. Yet the lack of literature means that more research is needed to give evidence that the 'brown glass ceiling' exists in Aotearoa New Zealand.

There is a gap in the literature for more research on the 'brown glass ceiling' and Pacific Island women in senior management not only in Aotearoa New Zealand, but abroad too. There is also a gap about racism and stereotypes Pacific Island women encounter in senior management roles. A comparison of Pacific Island women who are born in Western countries compared to those that migrate there would research that would contribute valuable information in the different barriers they encounter, if they do exist. The findings reported in many of the literature regarding ethnic women, were conducted on small and concentrated groups and there is still very little about ethnic women in management or business. The literature is scarce. There is also a gap for more research into institutional racism in Aotearoa New Zealand from a Pacific Island viewpoint and stereotypes too. To conclude

I hope that my research will be able to add to the gap in the literature that explores the 'brown glass ceiling' and the experiences of Pacific Island women in senior management in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Davidson (1997), Li (2013), Choi and Park (2012) and Holder, Jackson and Ponterotto (2015), suggest that the advancement of ethnic women into senior management has been slow and moderate, it is moving. For ethnic women including Pacific Island women in Aotearoa New Zealand, though the process is gradual, it still suggests that changes will happen. In overcoming the glass ceiling for ethnic women, there needs to be more academic literature written about the barriers and struggles that they encounter. There also needs to be changes made at macro and micro levels to ensure that policies are set at a national level.

## Chapter Three: Methodology

### Introduction

The methodology approach chosen for this research is qualitative because it allowed me as the researcher to gain insight and understanding into the experiences of Pacific women in senior management and the 'brown glass ceiling'. In this chapter the reasons behind why the qualitative approach was chosen will be further explained and so too will the choice of this research's ontology, epistemology, analysing data and reflexivity.

### Ontology, Epistemology and Paradigm

#### Ontology

Ontos is a Greek word which ontology derives from and means being. Logos is the Greek word for study, which makes ontology the study of being or reality. Biedenbach and Muller (2011) suggest that ontology is used within two frameworks, philosophical, which is the study of what exists in general, and non-philosophical, which is the study of describing what exists within a specific field (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Gray (2009) suggest that ontology can be split into two categories: realism, which embraces the notion that that an external reality exists and relativism, which seeks to understand meaning through individual experiences. The ontology used for my research was relativism because I intended to explore and understand my participants' reality. I also sought to understand how their reality has shaped the women that they are today and how they have coped in overcoming possible challenges in their journey of getting into senior management. Relativism would also help me understand their experiences and their reality which would lead me to find possible solutions as to why there is a lack of Pacific women in senior management in Aotearoa New Zealand. This will be achieved by understanding through my participants' experiences what their strategies have been to overcome barriers they have encountered.

#### Epistemology

Episteme is the Greek word for knowledge and this is where epistemology is derived from (Crotty, 1998). The study of knowledge in the Greek context as Killam (2013) proposes also centres on opportunity, range and everything that relates to knowledge (Crotty, 1998). This is because it relates to how knowledge is created, attained and conversed (Scotland, 2012).

The epistemology that I used in my research derives from constructivism. Constructivism is building on your own experiences with new knowledge. I believe that constructivism is suitable for my research design, because this research seeks to understand the meaning

of what the 'brown glass ceiling' is to Pacific women. I intend to build on that phenomenon through the experiences of my participants with the understanding that the glass ceiling is not a 'one fits all' phenomenon. Therefore, if this has proved legitimate for African American and Asian American women trying to climb the corporate ladder, then this could be the same for Pacific women in Aotearoa New Zealand.

### Paradigm

Paradeigma is the Greek word for pattern and this is where paradigm derives from. Paradigm relates to how one views the world or a set of beliefs about how something should be done, made or thought about (Killam, 2013). There are various paradigms and each ontological and epistemological outlook has a different one, which means how they view what exist and what is understood create different outcomes of reality. Different paradigms are positivism, interpretivism, critical enquiry, feminism and post modernism, (Gray, 2014; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

In this research, I used interpretivism, which is relevant because it is in alignment with constructivism and seeks to generate knowledge by looking at ways a phenomenon exists and why it exists (Elliot & Timulak, 2005). This is important for me because the 'brown glass ceiling' is a phenomenon.

### Methodology

A qualitative approach has been used for my research because this approach allows me as the researcher to connect to my participants' social and cultural environment. Qualitative research is ideographic, implying its findings are revealed in specific time frames and localities (Cresswell, 2012), thus focusing more on the connection of the depth and intensity of the findings rather than the breadth (Cresswell, 2012). This means that I can gain a better grasp of the context of my research, because I am able to collect data through direct contact. For example, since I will be conducting face to face interviews I am able as the researcher, to gather the information directly from the participants (Cresswell, 2012). The benefit this will have on my research is in gaining a better understanding of my participants' perspective and thus allowing me to tell their story (Creswell, 2012). In addition, it is most appropriate for qualitative research that aims to explore women's experiences of the brown glass ceiling (Grant & Booth, 2009) and compare it to the experiences of ethnic women overseas.

Through this exploration my aim is to highlight how the 'brown glass ceiling' is a metaphor like the glass ceiling and contributes to explaining why there is a lack of Pacific women in senior management roles. I intend to also investigate if like the concrete ceiling

and bamboo ceiling the ‘brown glass ceiling’ is a sufficient term to explain the differences in the experiences of Pacific and non-Pacific women’s experiences in advancing their careers. I hope that my research will contribute to the literature that differentiates the experiences of ethnic and non-ethnic women to highlight that all women do not have the same experiences in organisations.

### Method

The method used will be conducting face to face semi-structured interviews, which will investigate the experiences of the participants using open ended questions that allow the interviewer to investigate further if needed (Barriball & White, 1994). This method also allowed me to observe what was happening, for example, in the tone they used to explain events (Barriball & White, 1994). For example, when I asked the question about racism, most of the participants, when describing their experiences, used tones that were low or high to emphasise how the experience made them feel. This indicated to me that what they were sharing was serious and important. Body language (Barriball & White, 1994) was also key for me, in ensuring that all my participants were comfortable enough to share their experiences. In some instances, a few of my participants shook their head to indicate to me that the question that I was asking was not applicable to them. This was a good cue (Barriball & White, 1994), for me to recognise and move onto the next question or in some cases to reword the question.

### Sampling and Selection

The sampling was intentional in that the participants had to be Pacific women who were either currently in senior management positions or had been in the past. However, because there are not many Pacific women in senior management, I did make the exception for one participant who plans to advance into a senior role. The reasons behind this strategy was to ensure I had participants who would be able to give me information that will assist in me answering the purpose of this research. I was fortunate to use the Snowballing Sample because I did not have many women in my group of networks that fit the criteria, and therefore being able to be referred to by participants was a beneficial for this research because I knew they would have the experience and the wealth of knowledge I needed. The Snowball Sampling (Emerson, 2015) is where the researcher gets a single participant, who then nominates another participant, with the third doing the same. Like a chain, it continues and grows (Etikan, Alkassim, & Abubakar, 2015).

My responsibility as the researcher was to ensure that my sampling strategies were practical in collecting data that would help to answer the research question (Sandelowski,



2000). Since I was recruiting Pacific women, I was aware that I had to be culturally sensitive. Therefore, I sought the guidance of Pacific staff members at Auckland University of Technology, who encouraged me when sending emails, to greet the participants in their native language, to be respectful and mindful that these women are not just senior managers, many of them are also leaders in the Pacific community. Being a Pacific Islander, myself also made it easier for me because I am very familiar with the cultural aspects of Samoan, Niuean, Rotuman, Tuvaluan and Tongan people. Therefore, I made sure I used Pacific greetings in my emails on the information sheet and when first meeting them.

I also decided to ask for demographic question in writing to help alleviate pressure in responding to personal question such as those relating to age and relationship status. I made this an option, and there were four participants who filled out the written forms and two others who were comfortable with being asked during the interview. I found this to be very helpful in not commencing the interview with demographic questions. This was only because all my participants had to take time to remember details, for example, the number of years they had worked in senior management, or their qualification background. Therefore, filling out the demographic questions at the beginning proved successful and took the pressure off having to answer me directly.

### Summary of Participants Demographics

The six participants were Pacific women who reside in Auckland and speak fluent English and are working in the public and private sectors. All except for one of the participants are in senior management and the rest of the Participants have a minimum of five years' experience in senior roles.

*Table 2. Participants Demographics*

Participant	Age	Ethnicity	Qualification	Industry	Family Status
#1	45 - 49	Rotuman/Tongan	Masters	Healthcare (Public)	Married with child
#2	40 - 44	Niuean	Masters x 2	Healthcare (Non-Profit)	Married with children
#3	50 - 54	Samoan	Bachelors	Leadership (Public)	Married with children
#4	40 - 44	Tongan	Post Gradu- ate	Digital (Private)	Single No children
#5	40 - 44	Samoan	Post Gradu- ate	Banking (Private)	Married with children
#6	29 - 34	Tuvalu	Bachelors	Digital Commercial	Single No children

### Questions

The aim of creating questions is to be able to ask the questions without having to ask it directly and get a short answer in return. Several questions help you gain a better understanding and an in-depth perspective of what is being said and to assist in answering the research's question. (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The interview was based around seven open-ended questions.

- Can you tell me about your journey in advancing into the senior management role you are currently in?
- How is your Pacific Island identity expressed in your role?
- What are the support systems that have got you where you are today?
- As a female senior manager, what impact has your gender had on your career/work?
- Previous research in New Zealand showed that Pacific island women in senior management went from 32.7% in 2001 to 25.65 in 2010. That is a 7.1% decrease in nine years and it hasn't improved much today. Can you tell me what you think the contributing factor to this may be?

- What do you believe is the key to be a successful Pacific Island woman in senior management today?

Demographic questions were on a questionnaire that the participants had the option of filling out at the beginning of the interview.

#### Procedure

A letter requesting the participation of a selected individual was sent via email, with an attached copy of the information form giving a brief overview of what my research was about. Once the participant replied to confirm the date, time and location. I met them at the designated location with a copy of the consent form that they read and signed before the interview commenced. After my participants signed the consent form, I advised them how long the interview would take, which was up to an hour. I then advised the participants that they did not have to answer a question they were uncomfortable in answering and could at any time request the interview cease for a short break. Once the interview finished, I gave the participant a 'koha'. Koha is the Maori word for gift and this was to express my appreciation for the time they had taken to participate in my interview (Moorefield, 2018). I also informed them that they would receive a transcribed copy of the interview and a copy of the summary of my findings emailed to them when it had been completed. I used numerical identifications for each participant to keep their identity private.

#### Analysing data

Qualitative analysis is concerned with words and this is achieved through using questions that are open ended questions and probing, (Elliot & Timulak, 2005). Data was based on the descriptive interpretive approach, where I looked at what participants knew about the 'brown glass ceiling', why it is important and how this impacts Pacific women's experiences as senior managers in the workplace (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 1994). I used Braun and Clark's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis because it assists in analysing data from interviews regardless of the scope and help generate data driven and theory driven analysis.

#### Familiarisation with the data

The first stage of the analysis was using a transcriber who had agreed and signed to consent form to ensure the privacy of the participants was upheld. The next stage was highlighting the importance of material formation (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). This was achieved by taking notes during the interview of words and quotes that stood out for me. I then listened to all the interviews and made notes of words and themes that stood out

and were relevant to my research. Once I completed this task I then read and re-read the scripts, using highlighters to highlight words, phrases and quotes from each participant that were repetitive. This gave me an idea of commonalities all six transcripts shared. It also highlighted unusual issues, activities, and events (Liamputtong, 2009) for example, I had not considered that religion would be a theme in relation to support and strategies, but more than half of my participants expressed this as a commonality (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). This part of the analysis was the most time-consuming, but pivotal to when it came to be coding the transcript. This process is thematic analysis, where data is collected via interviews specifically for research and then themes are identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I had used the Braun and Clarke (2006) steps as a guide when analysing the data.

#### Coding

During this part of the analysis, I labelled relevant words or phrases and eliminated words that were too similar in meaning. I then highlighted any overarching themes and began to put quotes under themes the participants' experiences connected to. This part of the analysis is known as coding where you look for common words or short sentences (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

#### Searching for themes

Coding continues at this stage, but this time codes that are repeated or similar in themes are deleted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The purpose of this task is to reduce confusion. I went through my quotes and removed the ones that only had one sentence or were very similar to other themes and therefore chose the quotes that really got to the point of the theme (Evans, 2002).

#### Reviewing themes

Once the coding was completed, interpreting codes began, followed by grouping into relevant themes. This was done by ensuring that the codes I had grouped into themes related to each other and created a story that related to the objective of the research.

#### Defining and naming themes

There were three main sections that became evident during the coding process and they were challenges, support and strategies to overcome challenges. The main themes of challenges were racism, institutional racism, cultural values and ideal manager. I identified that the main themes for support was spirituality, family organisation, and mentors. Finally, for the strategies to overcome challenges, I identified education and assimilation. I then identified and wrote up secondary themes which only related to the challenges section and they were stereotypes, tokenism, Pacific women are underrepresented and lack

of confidence. This approach was a result of grouping the codes that were similar in meaning. The names of the three sections was a result of the themes highlighted through participants experiences such as challenges they have encountered, the support systems that have had assisted them in being a senior manager and strategies that have helped them advance their career.

#### Writing up

A table was created to illustrate the three different categories and the themes under each heading. This part of the process was much easier than the two previous stages because findings became more visible. This is the core of the study because it brings to light new knowledge from the participants (Lofgren, 2013). This is where the findings began. I was able to use the table that I had created as a guide for the headings. Under each heading I briefly described what the theme was and used my participants' quotes to back it up, whilst being neutral and unbiased. This was also an easy step because the findings were clear and concise and easy to connect (Lofgren, 2013). I then emailed participants a copy of their transcribed interviews.

*Table 3. Research Themes*

	Main theme	Secondary theme
Challenges	Racism	Stereotypes
	Institutional Racism	Tokenism
	Cultural Values	
	Ideal manager	Pacific women are under-represented Lack of confidence
Support	Spirituality	
	Family	
	Organisation	
	Mentors	
Strategies to overcome challenges	Assimilation	
	Education	
Recommendations	Take risks	
	Identity	
	Support one another	

#### Summary

This chapter has shown that the chosen methodology which was qualitative interpretive approach was best suited in exploring Pacific women's experiences of the 'brown glass ceiling'. The chosen ontology relativism allowed me to gain a better understanding of Pacific women's experiences in senior management and the epistemology, constructivism

allowed me to draw on previous research relating to ethnic women to see if there were any similarities and finally being able to interpret these findings when it came to be analysing the data.

## Chapter Four Findings

### Introduction

The purpose of my research was to explore the “Pacific women’s experiences of the ‘brown glass ceiling’ in senior management in Aotearoa New Zealand”. The analysis of the qualitative data has revealed three overarching themes that all connect and will be presented in the next sections. These are Challenges, Support, and Strategies to overcome challenges. The challenges section of this research is about the obstacles Pacific women have experienced as Pacific senior managers and how that had made their journey into senior management hard. The support section looks at the key support units or systems that have helped them juggle their work and home life, and finally the strategies section looks at what they did to survive being a minority in a senior role.

### Challenges

Challenges are the difficulties, and disparities that the participants experienced in varying degrees in their senior roles and have therefore made it harder for them to get into senior management roles or to be treated the same as non-Pacific senior managers. The interviews have highlighted that the participants felt that they were treated differently compared to their colleagues and peers because of the colour of their skin, gender and ethnic and cultural stereotypes. This will be explored more in the overarching themes that came to light because of this research, and they are: racism, institutional racism, cultural values and the ideal manager.

### Racism

Racism was a challenge that all participants had experienced directly or indirectly in some shape or form. A common experience all the participants shared, was that racism was never overt, but the connotations of it was felt in other indirect ways. Participants also shared how people assumed that a Pacific woman in senior management who spoke good English could not have been born in the Pacific Islands. Also, there is the assumption that all Pacific people live in a certain part of town, Pacific people are servants, and people are likely to choose a person with a European name to be the CEO rather than a person with a Pacific surname. The secondary theme to racism in this chapter is stereotypes, and this related to historic stereotypes put on Pacific people by colonialist and stereotypes that Pacific people have been labelled with when they first migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand.

In relation to racism Participant One who is a senior manager in the public health sector, describes how in the past racism stereotypes more openly said without any filters and it was common to have derogatory racist words said directly to your face, for example “blackie”, or “go back to your own country”, compared to today where people are more aware that such terms are not acceptable, and will not say it out loud, yet it is still felt through their attitudes and behaviours:

*“It happens still, yeah, and people don't -- what's the word -- people do not say out loud, "Hey you're brown, go back to your country" or whatever, these days. Back when I was in primary school, that's what they said”.*

Participant Four who is currently a CEO for a medium size non-profit organisation, describes her encounter with racism where even though people will not say it out blatantly, they will still say things that shows it to be racist:

*“I don't think if I called them on it they'd say they were being racists; but people make stupid comments like, "But you were born in Samoa", and I go, "Yeah; "But your English is so good". And I'm like, "Yeah, because I went to school like you did and I learnt it like you did”.*

Participant Four also describes how racist perceptions of Pacific people create an assumption that Pacific people must all live in a certain suburb, because large Pacific communities reside there. She describes how this was one of the assumptions made about her by one of her European associates. Participant four, was surprised at this assumption, considering that she had known the associate and shared about her personal life, which would have indicated where she lived:

*“.... And I went, "Why would you think I lived in South Auckland -- she just went 'Brown -- South Auckland', and you should have seen, she went, "Oh, I'm so sorry, (participant four) ..... But it's that kind of thing, eh? I'm brown, I'm Samoan so I must live in South Auckland.....”.*

Participant One shares another example of racism, with Europeans she has worked with on projects overseas and describes how their attitudes towards Pacific people were that they were servants for example:

*“...and sometimes it's still happening here in this day and age and I see that sometimes in development. The racism is like, "Oh, that's a brown person so their job is to fetch and carry because brown people do all of the servant work etc”.*



Participant two who is currently a senior manager in a non-profit medium size organisation, has a European surname. She recalls how when attending meetings with her lawyer, they would always assume that her European lawyer was the CEO instead of her, and therefore would reach out and shake her lawyers hand first, because they assumed a European surname means a European CEO:

*“And I've turned up to meetings where I've taken my lawyer -- and they've shaken her hand.... Thinking that she's the CEO ..... No, they don't know I'm Pacific because they see the Palagi surname.....”*

### Stereotypes

Stereotypes is an overgeneralised belief that people have about other people. A stereotype about Pacific people is that they cannot speak English properly. This is different to racism that believes those that cannot speak English are inferior to them. The participants that did experience being treated differently was in connection to Pacific Island stereotypes that already exist in Aotearoa New Zealand such as Pacific people being overstayers and depending on government handouts. These stereotypes have been reiterated through the experiences of the participants in this research which were; Pacific women are not managers, they are not given the respect of being in management, and the attitude that Pacific islanders are easy customers because they will not question things. What also comes to light was historic stereotypes that were associated with some of the participants' experiences such as: white people are more intelligent than Pacific people, and Pacific women are exotic maidens. Participant five is currently in a senior management role in Human Resources. She described that when she was a branch manager she got used to the surprised reactions of customers, whom when they wanted to see the manager would be surprised when she walked out:

*But back when I was a manager when customers would come in with an issue wanting to speak to the manager and be shocked when I walked out.....they didn't expect a female manager and even less a brown face.....I'd just see it on customers' faces, “Oh, you're not what I was expecting”.....”*

Participant Two describes an example of being stereotyped in a previous senior role by staff. They assumed that because she is a Pacific woman, she will be fine with performing menial tasks, although she is the CEO. She explains that this has been her experience with staff under her that treat her as if she was on their level when she is not. That is why she

explains that the context of being a Pacific woman and the CEO expectations in her experience gets mixed up. For example:

*“Yeah, so those expectations, “Oh, (participant two), can you just grab all the bags out of the car?”..... “ Go and ask your CEO over there to go and help you pack your bags”. .... You know when I think about it, that happens often, and they get the context wrong”.*

Participant Four also describes how her staff have attitudes about Pacific people that are stereotyped, and she has had to call them out for these judgements which are that Pacific clients will not query a contract they are getting into. Her staff attitudes were Pacific customers are easy, offer them higher rates and they will not question it. For example:

*“If a Pacific Islander walks in I can charge any rate and it'll get taken because they'll just take it up, so there's no responsibility on me to explain anything". I'm thinking, hang on, no, that's not how we treat our customers”.*

Historic stereotypes came to surface when a couple of the participants explained that they had experienced being stereotyped by colonised ideas. This refers to the historic stereotypes of Europeans towards Pacific people when they first encountered each other, which was ‘our way is the right way and we know best’. Participant one explains her experiences of colonist stereotypes as working as a developer for business systems in the Pacific Islands. She describes how overseas developers (white people) from western countries would visit the island they were on and would have the attitude that they are more superior and intelligent than herself and other Pacific people. For example:

*“That default attitude is racism e.g. the people need a kick up the bum and they need to do this and we're here to help them – that attitude is colonistic [colonial] attitude and racism.... I am more intelligent.... Racism is still colonistic [colonial] .....”.*

Participant Four uses the example of how her managing director, thought it was fine to refer to her as a Pacific princess in the workplace, which has historic references to Pacific women being exotic maidens:

*“And then I used to get the Pacific Princess, which his kind of denigrating because it's that idea that we're these exotic maidens -- you know, my Managing Director used to say that and I'd say, "You know, I'm glad you think I'm lovely and exotic but I don't really appreciate it”.*

Participant six who runs her own IT company and is currently in a senior management role, did not speak at length about the brown glass ceiling and was the only participant in this research that did not experience racism directly:

*“I’ve never actually experienced racism.....directly.....”*

### Institutional Racism

Institutional racism has been defined as what keeps ethnic people from progressing into senior roles (Came & McCreanor, 2015). Therefore, unlike the glass ceiling that suggests it is a gender issue, institutional racism suggests that it is the organisation’s culture, policies and processes that can be a stumbling block for Pacific women to advance in their careers. The results have shown that policies and processes contribute to institutional racism because it creates a bias around the type of person that will get hired. Some of the participants have witnessed how the hiring process can be biased because the hiring staff are biased and will employ a person that looks like many staff working in that organisation. Another participant shared how she had been involved in a hiring process and was pressured to hire a European candidate over a Pacific island candidate, even though on paper they had the same credentials.

Participant One shares the example of how policies into hiring staff can be biased. She uses the example of Pacific women who are applying for roles in the health sector that require cultural awareness. Pacific women who apply will have the same qualification as the non-Pacific women, yet will still not be considered for the role, even though the role requires having some cultural knowledge because it is dealing with a large Pacific population:

*“So that’s what I’m saying, you know, if two people with the same credentials and stuff like that are being looked at by a non-Pacific person, they’ll probably choose the non-Pacific person over the Pacific; yet the additional cultural context, understanding and stuff like that is an asset which we don’t actually count sometimes”*.

Participant Three also describes an example of institutional racism about the culture of the organisation that she is working in and their preference in who to hire. She describes how she had two candidates to consider for a role in her team, but she felt pressured by her European manager to choose the European candidate instead of the Pacific candidate. This was because the Pacific candidate was considered a risk due to her attendance track record in the company. However, Participant Three saw the potential that the Pacific

island candidate had and knew that if she could work on her attendance rate she could go far. Also, the Pacific candidate had the right attitude and fit for Participant Three's team and in the end, she chose her despite the pressure from her manager to choose the European candidate. Participant Three shared that the attendance issue was a cultural problem, where when you come from a large Pacific family, there is an expectation that you must attend all family funerals. This can create problems for management who do not understand this and refer to stereotypes of Pacific people being lazy or unreliable or in this case be labelled as a risk. In the end, Participant Three was able to work with the Pacific candidate to prioritise her family commitments, bring her attendance rate up and since then, the Pacific candidate has been promoted:

*“and she encouraged me to hire the Palagi.... but she said, "Hire so and so because you're going to have issues with so and so" .....And on paper they were both competent..... the Pacific Island had the right attitude; she had the skills and the right attitude, but she had leave issues. The Palagi had skills and didn't have leave issues, but I was a bit worried about the attitude and the team fit in my space”.*

Participant Four shares that one of the keys to reducing institutional racism is through the leadership structures in organisations and that they must move forward with the times and be more diverse:

*“One of the challenges we talk a bit.....is around what structures -- what are the optimal structures of leadership that organisations are meant to evolve into to really be truly inclusive of diversity and to enable people to -- people want to go to work to actualise themselves as a whole person, they don't just go to work to do a job and then come home and then have a life.*

Participant Five agrees that there is a need for organisations to be intentional about creating programmes and policies that are more inclusive. She shares how the organisation that she works with was not intentional about being more inclusive, and this was because they put that responsibility on Pacific staff that were already working for the organisation. The expectation was the Pacific staff would run these programmes after hours in their free time. Participant Five shares how it was a fail because for herself her role was already demanding and then to run programmes after work hours was too much. Not much consideration had gone into how to increase the numbers of Pacific people in their organisation. Instead it was the attitude that there is a need to add more Pacific people so get Pacific staff to run it. Participant Five suggest that it would have been successful if they

had employed a full-time person to run the programme during working hours and get Pacific people involved in designing the programmes. In the end the programme failed for example:

*“I was part of a working group that brought in Pacific Island students from university and actually brought them in as a Cadetship..... However, it was all done off the back of your own free time.....”*

#### Tokenism

Tokenism is making the minimum effort to do a thing to give the appearance that it is say for example, (Morrison, 1992). Some of the participants have felt that their organisations have recognised their Pacific identity as just tokenism, filling in the quota to appear that they are inclusive. The participants really felt that it is just ticking the box, to appear that their organisation is diverse and inclusive. Participant One shares that although she works in a large public health organisation, based in an area where mostly Pacific communities reside, she feels that tokenism is still evident, because there is a lack of understanding of what Pacific really means. For example:

*“.....Yeah, I mean "token" in the sense of whether the rest of the organisation embraces that. And I think for (this area), they tend to be more embrative of the cultures -- because we are in the hub of Pacific..... But, as I say, sometimes it is still about, "Okay, tick box, done that".*

Participant Five explains that the organisation that she works with acknowledges that they need to be more inclusive and so have created programs to get more Pacific people on board. However, she feels to some extent they are doing it just to meet the quota and appear as if they are inclusive. As a Pacific woman in senior management she feels the pressure to support this but believes they are not really understanding what it is to be Pacific. For example:

*“And I don't want to be pushing people just to fill a quota or just to be seen as we're filling in the diversity box and ticking that box and winning awards for it. It's like, "No, that doesn't interest me". Let's build some really strong people”.*

#### Cultural Values

Cultural values are important because they are implicit values for an individual, group and organisation which is different to institutional racism because that looks at the organisations policies and processes that create indifference for minority groups in organisations. The participants have experienced different types of challenges when it comes to

Pacific cultural values. These are mainly to shift the wrong portrayal of how Pacific women in Senior management have been perceived, cultural expectations. Participant Four explains that the benefits of being a Pacific woman in Senior management is important, because she can shift these misconceived cultural differences and perceptions and bring to light how valuable Pacific women in leadership are, which is why it is important to see more of them there. For example:

*“So, it's not about me, but it's saying -- and that's about shifting their perceptions..... I forget there's a weight that I carry with having the title of Chief Executive of this place, and that opens doors for me to go in places that, if I was just the manager of something somewhere else, I wouldn't be able to do that”.*

Participant Four shares that occasionally cultural values can clash between cultural expectations with other Pacific people. She found this was because you have your cultural customs such as respecting your elders, yet this often came into conflict with her role as a senior manager and she found that she would be put in her place by older Pacific employees because they felt that they could:

*“..... Actually, in some of the challenges I had with older Pacific leaders..... "Well, you might be the boss of the organisation but actually you're just this little girl that I remember and..... I know your parents". So, for me I think this is some of the tensions working -- if you're Pacific in Pacific.....”*

Participant Three describes how her cultural values were put into question by another Pacific person whom she felt had undermined her and challenged her authority in a meeting. She explains that it was a meeting about some programs her company had run successfully, and he was from another organisation wanting to learn how her company achieved this. She says that there are few Pacific people in her field so when she saw the Pacific name, she was keen to meet them. However, this Pacific male was rude and disrespectful, and she explains she would expect that attitude from a European but not from a Pacific person. For example:

*“..... and some of the ways he addressed me in the meeting made people in the room feel uncomfortable....I think maybe if I had had that experience with a Palagi colleague I might get annoyed but I wouldn't be upset, and I think I was so upset about it because it was from a Pacific Island guy....”.*

Participant Three explains that the challenges of her cultural values mean that she would not choose to work for a Pacific organisation. This is because of the politics that comes within Pacific organisations which are mostly cultural clashes between the different Pacific groups. For example, in the Tongan culture women are esteemed and can speak on behalf of a group in comparison to the Fijian culture where they are not, and men mostly speak on behalf of groups. However, she was happy to be working in non-Pacific organisations, and to be making a difference by being the only Pacific senior manager:

*“My boss said to me, "Would you ever work for a Pacific organisation?" And I said, "I probably wouldn't"..... and the key reason, is because I've got nothing much to offer them, they've got all the Pacific talent that they need. But also, I don't want to get caught up in Pacific politics”.*

### Ideal Manager

The ideal manager refers to society's views of what an ideal manager looks like, and research tells us that it is a person who has masculine characteristics indicating that these qualities are more important than female characteristics (Guirado, Garcia-Ael & Molero, 2015; Harris, Ravenswood, & Myers, 2013). This is different to cultural values because cultural values look at what is important to a person and how it has been challenged in the context of this research. Some of the participants shared how they encountered being challenged by not fitting into what an ideal manager looks like, by being overlooked for jobs because they did not look like the majority of staff in that organisation who were European, under what the ideal manager should look like, challenged because their style of management and that there are Pacific women and men who have conformed to how society views the ideal manager. The secondary themes that came to light because Pacific women do not fit into this idealism is the underrepresentation of Pacific women in senior management. The lack of Pacific women's visibility in senior roles has influenced the lack of confidence in Pacific women to advance into senior roles. This is because they do not have role models to demonstrate that if they can make, other Pacific women can too. Participant One explains that as Pacific women we can be corporate, but that does not mean that we fit into their business mould which is grey and black, because Pacific women like to wear hibiscus in their hair, and colour and laugh out loud:

*“.....that person is not going to fit in within our square and our colour shade, she's bringing oranges and reds and yellows....."Oh, she wears too many hibiscus in her hair" ..... for our Pacific women we don't fit into those sort of moulds, we can be very business-like and stuff like that.....”*

Participant Four shares, that in her previous role as a manager, she was often challenged by other male managers because of her style of management which they did not agree with. She describes an incident where she was in a meeting with other male managers and asked to see a show of hands for all who agreed on what they were trying to implement. All except one of the male managers challenged her. She continues to explain that most of the men that had opposed her style of management left the company because management was evolving:

*"Where I had pushback was from my male peers, the Pakeha men..... "Oh, for goodness sake, (participant four), just make a decision, stop asking us", you know, like he said, "Good managers just make decisions".*

Participant Four said that it was not just the European men, but it was Pacific men too and how for Pacific men the 'brown glass ceiling' does not apply to them for example:

*"..... our brown men, because they relate to the traditional hierarchies of power, they can get themselves there -- because they're all mates, they could become mates with the other men where it doesn't matter what colour they are, because they kind of get that system -- they get the power structure".*

Pacific women are under-represented

The participants were all shocked to learn the actual numbers of Pacific women in senior management in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2010. In which it decreased 7.2 % from 2001 and there has not been any great increase since then (MinistryforWomen, 2016). This is because they understood that there were not many Pacific women in senior management, but they did not expect the figures to decrease from 2001 – 2010. Participant One gives an example in the Health Sector where a Pacific female manager had been appointed in one of the health departments. However, it has been a challenge to get another one appointed and there is still that sense of she has only been appointed to show that they as an organisation are being inclusive, especially because they are in a heavy Pacific populated area. For example:

*"...."Yes, we're in the hub of Pacifica being out here in South Auckland", and I think they tend to try and expand by including Pacific in some of the leaderships and stuff. Like, for example, (management) -- we have one Pacific (manager), which is fantastic, and that was a huge coup for us Pacific and, but I think sense of, "Oh, it's just tokenism".*



Participant Four sees the lack of Pacific women in senior roles related to trends changing in relation to women deciding to have children later in life and not being prepared to work an 80-hour week. Participant Four explains that a couple of decades ago, women had children in their twenties, so when they had worked their way up to senior management, their children were young adults allowing women to pursue senior roles. Compared to today, where women who are entering senior management have had children later in life and must juggle parenting and arranging childcare. Participant Four explains that the long working hours may not be that appealing to some Pacific women. Participant One agrees, and explains that since having her son, her priorities have changed. Participant One, shares how she once had goals to be general manager, but is now currently content in being a senior manager. This is because the demands of a general manager role would take her away from her family. Participant Four explains:

*“The 30 and 40-year-olds today, they're mums and CEOs or GMs and they're having to have house-husbands.....A lot of the Pakeha women that I know who are sitting in C-suite roles, they either have full-time nannies or their husband doesn't work... It takes a lot of energy to kind of survive in that field.*

Participant Five explains that lack of Pacific women in senior management is because the role requires a lot of energy and you must really want it:

*“Senior management or higher roles. You need a lot of energy, and that energy comes from doing what you really believe in. I'm not saying don't but take the time to understand what really spins your wheels otherwise you're going to get tired really quickly.*

#### Lack of confidence

The lack of confidence is a secondary theme that arose when the participants were asked why they thought that there was a lack of Pacific women in senior management. Most of them replied that it was because of Pacific women's lack of confidence which is associated with not fitting into what the ideal manager is. Participant Four shared that because Pacific women have been overlooked when it comes to filling those roles, it affects their confidence, and they believe that they are not good enough for those roles, so will not apply. It also does not help when they cannot see Pacific women in those senior roles to encourage them it is possible and therefore contributes to Pacific women missing out on opportunities:

*“.....It may be because we've been knocked back too often, do you know what I mean, overlooked because -- whatever it may be, overlooked by those in your superior and executive levels”.*

Participant two explains that the lack of confidence is also because there are not enough Pacific women in senior management in Aotearoa New Zealand, to inspire them and encourage them to be the same:

*“The difference, for me, is that we don't even have enough Pacific women leaders. I'm looking for leadership”.*

Participant three suggests that it's because Pacific women feel that they are not ready or equipped with the right education or experience to seek these roles:

*“.....men will look at a role and if they could do 50 percent of it they'll go for it, they'll apply. Women will look at a role and will need to feel that they could do 75 to 80 percent of it before they'll even apply.....they're not applying”.*

Participant five suggest, that our lack of confidence also is related to our cultural identity. Because ambition is seen differently compared to a non-Pacific person:

*“Yeah, I think it's all about perception. The putting your hand up and having a voice, and it's when being asked you say, "Yes" -- "Yeah, I'll give it a go" .....I think it is a cultural thing for us, because we see ambition in different forms as well.....”.*

Participant four also explains that because of our cultural upbringings, she has had to unlearn some things in relation to speaking up and being assertive:

*“And there's some ways we behave, and I'm conscious of those -- I've had to unlearn a lot of things about putting myself forward, speaking for myself assertively -- that's one thing I had to do .....”I will walk over there. I'll apply for that senior role”*

## Support

Support in the context of this research is leaning or depending on something or someone to hold you upright. Support has proved to play a pivotal role in the participants' lives. They all agree that support has been a key for them to be able to take on the pressures of their roles. The overarching themes in this section are spirituality, family, organisation and mentors.

## Spirituality

Spirituality can be referred to the connection to something that is bigger than ourselves. Four of the six participants all agreed that their faith in God has been an important support system in their lives. I was aware that two of the participants had spiritual connections because they were from my networks. However, I was very surprised that any of the four participants would mentioned that their faith was an important support system to them and it was only participant three who mentioned it later, after we had already talked about support networks. The participants share how their faith has helped them during difficult times and given them the confidence to apply for senior roles. Participant Six and Participant One agree that it is their faith has played an important role that has helped them in their journey to senior management. In particular Participant One shares how her faith has been one of her main sources of support throughout her career, and that it has helped her make decisions about her next move in her career and has got her roles she believes she otherwise would not have.

*“You know, without Christ in my life.....I wouldn't be where I am and with the sort of blessings that I have. Yes, education takes you so far and stuff like that, but when you come up with difficult issues and stuff like that ..... you know there is someone greater and beyond yourself.....”.*

Participants Two, Three and Six also agree that their faith in God that has given them the confidence and take risks and apply for jobs that are in senior management. For example, Participant Three shares that her faith has given her a resilience, an innate confidence, that when she walks into an interview she has confidence to get through it:

*“I think a really big part for me is my faith. That's given me confidence and the constant challenge to step out of my comfort zone, to extend my sphere of influence and to try things.... I think that is because of my faith; that I know that God is with me.....”.*

## Family

Family is another overarching theme that all the participants agree is important to have. They have all shared to varying degrees how their family have been instrumental in their success especially for the participants who have husbands or partners. Participant One explains how when they had their son, due to the situation with her role, both her and her husband agreed that he would stay at home and she would work. Participant One explains how it is because her husband is not your typical Pacific husband, where he does not expect her to work and then come home and make dinner, clean up and look after the

children, that she has been fortunate to work full time knowing he is looking after the household and their son:

*“... to have a wonderful husband who is very supportive, who is not have a traditional Samoan or traditional Tongan attitude that women do all the cooking, cleaning etc. So, (husband) been fantastic. He's the stay-at-home dad...”*

Participant Two explains that it's not just having a supportive husband and kids, but it's also having her parents and siblings live close by for example:

*“... But my mum lives four houses up the road -- my mum and dad; my sister lives across the road from their house. It helps that we're all home owners, it helps that Dad works so we have income there”*

Participant Four and Participant Six both agree that family upbringing plays an important role too. Participant Four shares how her upbringing equipped her with the sense that she could do anything which has been her approach in life:

*“...my dad and brothers and sisters were all expected to do well academically, and they did in business and all of that. So, having a high expectation to do well also came with a, "You can do whatever you want”*

However, the downside to be a mother and in senior management is as the participants explain, not getting to spend that much time with their children or being at home. Participant One and Two both agree that it is difficult and sometimes feel guilty, especially because they have children under five years old. However, Participant Two shares that her children enjoy the perks of her job which is income to go away on holidays. For example:

*“Because I do also get guilty feelings, you know, like motherly guilt; it's like "I wish I didn't have to do that". But then, you know, when you're getting paid and then you have to have your holidays you're really happy”*

## Organisation

Organisational support is how an organisation takes into consideration the wellbeing and socioemotional needs of their employees. Some of the participants have shared how this has been important for them because it makes their work life better knowing that they have the support of their manager and colleagues. The participants share how having a good relationship with your boss is important, having a good organisational culture that cares about their employees, and good friendships with colleagues make life easier.

Participant One explains that having a good relationship and the support of her manager is important because this is the person that she must answer to and it makes her working life better. For example:

*“But also, I’ve got a really good boss as well, so it’s a fairly open relationship, I can talk to her as well about certain things that I think is -- or if I have issues, or whatever it may be....”*

Participant Five and Six reveal that they belong to organisations with great cultures. Participant Five shares that her organisation is very proactive in ensuring that the wellbeing of their staff is looked after and that they are also very intentional that all employees have the same opportunities. For example:

*“But here (work) they do a really good job in understanding where people are at in their life stages; whether you’re a woman with a family or a father who is about to adopt, and they’re really proactive -- or they’re making a real intentional effort to make sure that the people that we have get equal opportunities”*

Participant Two who was on maternity leave but had to return to work earlier than anticipated explains that she was able to do this because she has the support of her amazing colleagues, who have made her return easy. For example, if she needs to work from home they are fine with it:

*“So, what helps me -- I’ve got an excellent colleague. So, I would never have gone back to work without knowing what my support systems are and using them. I wouldn’t have gone back, which is also a reason why I don’t take other jobs too”*

## Mentors

All participants explained how they have all had mentors, who have really helped them learn new skills and challenge them to aim higher. They all agreed that Pacific women need to seek mentors that have the same values but at the same time is someone that they want to aspire to be. For example, Participant One shares how her mentor is in the same industry, but in a more senior role and the key to their relationship was that this mentor had the same values:

*“I do have a mentor -- not formally, but I always tend to give her a call about things .....she’s a very well-respected lady and she’s very senior up in (a Government department), and a Christian lady -- so there’s some similar values,”*

Participant Four shares that it was having a great working environment and great mentors who were two English men that were both fundamental in her journey into senior management. This is because more than twenty years ago, there were no Pacific people in her organisation that could have mentored her. She was one of the first Pacific people to get into management in her organisation. This also brings to surface that not all white men she encountered were racist:

*“I had some very good mentors -- all men, senior managers, who were the ones who worked with me. .... I had two really strong Palagi mentors -- they were both English men, really strong family men, but they also loved people.....So probably it was them in particular, but also the environment we were in, it was always very 'what's possible, growing, moving forward”.*

Participant five explained that her mentor was able to help her break down her misconceived notion about senior managers and teach her how to have a balanced life. For example:

*“I have had a mentor in the past.....he was busting some huge myths for me during my time with him especially that people that in senior management roles are just people. They don't have special super powers ..... and he's recognised as a very well-loved effective leader with really strong values in community -- but just really balanced from a business perspective”.*

## Strategies to Overcome Challenges

All the participants have shared what they have done to cope in the roles that they have had or are currently in. They all agree that they all feel like they have to work harder, but that they have had to fit in and get advance degrees to be noticed more. These strategies have been put in place to cope in Western organisations, but it has been at a cost to their Pacific identity too. Two key strategies were assimilation and education.

### Assimilation

Assimilation strategies were what the participants did to fit into their workplace or be accepted in their organisations. The participants have shared how they have felt the need to work harder, be as European as possible like in how they look or be a reluctant leader, one who does not want to be in the front. For example, Participant Two says that when she has gone to meetings, she has seen other Pacific senior managers who have become ‘more palagi’ because she believes it's to be more accepted:

*“I find that when I'm in.....senior meetings with other senior leaders and there's a Pacific person in there, if they're female -- I feel that they act as Palagi as possible -- as much as a Palagi as possible.....they get their hair straightened and they're very swish and, you know, just over-white -- you know, super-white, like fake nails, the whole shebang”.*

Participant five explains that she has coped by being a reluctant leader because she never wanted to be a manager but is continually asked to lead. She believes this is due to her Pacific culture which teaches servant leadership and Pacific people tend to be more comfortable to lead from the back then from the front. For example:

*“I'm really reluctant because you get asked to lead because you either are very technically good or you work well in a team and you lead from behind -- and what we do naturally is servant/leadership.....And that's where I'm comfortable, because that's what we know, that's what we naturally do”.*

#### Education

Qualifications was also a very important strategy that the participants felt have helped them overcome challenges in advancing into senior roles. All the participants have degrees and post graduate qualifications. Participant Two shares that it was only when she got her Master's qualification that it really opened doors for employment opportunities. However, she explains that because there are so many expectations on Pacific women, sometimes having qualifications is not enough. For example:

*“Not only do we have to have Degrees and skills and competencies, we have to know how to do the hula and the haka and the prayer and cook the food and set the table”.*

Yet with all the qualifications the participants have attained, they expressed that they still feel the need to work harder than their colleagues to prove themselves. Participant one, who is currently completing her master's in Public health says that working harder is the key to getting recognised:

*“.....But I think also for Pacific in that sort of space, we tend to have to work a little bit extra..... to be sort of noted etc, you tend to have to do the extra bit to get over this sort of barrier, this sort of ceiling that ends up happening and stuff”.*

## Recommendations

All the participants gave sound advice for Pacific women wanting to enter senior roles in the future and the three key recommendations were take risk, identity and support one another. Some of the participants have shared that taking risk is important in your career journey because you can learn from it and it teaches you about potential. Participant four explains that you will never know unless you give it a try and that it is not about the mistakes you make but knowing that at least you gave it a go for example:

*"I'm only successful because I've made billions of mistakes". But if you don't try you won't get anywhere. For me, I mean, some of the stuff in mentoring in my early years was about -- basically, she said, you are a success if you try -- even if you fail... feel the fear and do it anyway".*

The second recommendation by the participants was to know yourself and to see being a Pacific woman as a strength rather than as a minority. Participant Three shares how she sees her Pacific identity as a cutting edge that non-Pacific people don't have:

*"I actually see it as my cutting edge, it's my point of difference ..... I see it as my strength".*

Participant three suggests that you should know what your strengths and limitations are, which can guide you to knowing what your purpose is:

*".... Really, really know yourself and your own limitations. You only know yourself if you know what you can do, but also what you can't do. And it's the "what you can't do" that's more important, because if you can do all of those things and you know you can do it then you'll be fine".*

The final recommendations by the participants was that Pacific women need to champion each other. Since there is already a lack of Pacific women advancing into senior roles, Pacific women need to encourage each other and be each other's cheer leaders because no one else will. Participant four explains that when one Pacific person has the courage to step up, it encourages other Pacific women to do the same:

*"We've just got to speak into each other's lives and support and encourage -- because we can be brave knowing sometimes I'll be braver, I'll do something because it's for someone else -- we don't always do it for ourselves".*



## Summary

In summary the four main themes that have come to surface because of the interviews conducted with the six participants have been challenges, support, overcoming the challenges and recommendations. The findings highlighted that racism, institutional racism, cultural values and ideal manager were the main themes in relation to challenges. The findings also brought to surface that even though the participants had encountered challenges, they also had good support systems in place that have helped them in their career. They were spirituality, family, organisation and mentors. However, some of the strategies that they have had to take on to be accepted in Western organisations have seen them try to be more European. Finally, the recommendations illustrated that taking risks, knowing your identity and what your limitations and supporting each other will hopefully mean that there will be more Pacific women in senior management roles soon.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

### Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of Pacific island women in senior management in Aotearoa New Zealand and, to investigate if the brown glass ceiling does exist. The research setting was conducted all in the city of Auckland. In chapter four it highlighted the main findings to be challenges that Pacific women experienced such as racism, institutional racism, the ideal manager and cultural values. The second theme that was highlighted was support the secondary themes to support were spirituality, family, organisation and mentors. The third theme was strategies to overcome challenges, specifically cultural assimilation and education.

This chapter evaluates these findings against the previous research findings in chapter two, whereby similarities and differences between these findings are recognised and discussed. This chapter will also outline the limitations and recommendations for future research and possible implications the research can have in society.

### Challenges

The results of this study have indicated that challenges are one of the overarching themes that all the participants had experienced in their journey to senior management. The specific challenges were with racism being the main challenge. Most of the participants had experienced racism and related it to the colour of their brown skin as is evidential in prior research such as the findings in Davidson (1997), Davies (2009), Wilson (2014), Li (2013), Staniland (2017), Pio (2007) and Choi and Park (2012) research. The findings also suggested that ethnic women experience challenges that white women do not (Choi & Park, 2012; Davidson, Fieldon & Omar, 2010; Wilson, 2014). Similarly, Davidson (1997) further imply that these challenges are because of ethnic women's race, culture and ethnicity, which is reiterated through stereotypes ethnic women experience in Western organisations. Jones, Pringles and Shepherd's (2000) research found that women's race played a pivotal factor in the discrimination of Pacific Islanders when they first migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand, and that is because they spoke differently and looked different to the average New Zealander at that point in time. Examples of this have come to surface in the findings, pointing out that racism affects Pacific women, not only because of their gender, but also their race and culture. The findings in this research supports current research by Holder, Jackson and Ponterotto (2015), who also agree that women of colour encounter discrimination, that makes their career progression slow, thus,

indicating that the notion of the 'brown glass ceiling' may be a reality here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The biggest gap in the literature about racism is the limited research there is on this topic and in relation to ethnic women. This may be because there is a need to explore the diversity of racism to gain a more in-depth understanding to the challenges ethnic women face. Still this created difficulty when trying to draw similarities that related to Pacific women in Aotearoa New Zealand. Furthermore, there was also very limited research on the challenges ethnic women in senior management encountered yet in contrast there was more notable challenges that related to women and the glass ceiling. The reason for this may be that factors such as male dominated organisations, the ideal manager and stereotypes can relate to all women regardless of ethnicity (Chisolm-Burns, et al., 2017). Yet what makes it an added barrier for ethnic women is the colour of their skin and cultural backgrounds.

In this research stereotypes were found to cause some of the participants to feel that being a Pacific woman in senior management carries stigma that are gender, race and historically related. Similarly, Wilson (2014) and Ravenswood, LeQuex, French, Strachan and Burgess's (2016) research explain that stereotypes are the result of when people are judged because of people's position, cultural beliefs, how they speak, behave and so on. This is what the Pacific women in this research experienced: being judged for being a woman and a Pacific one too. For instance, an example in this research highlighted that people in Aotearoa New Zealand today, still get surprised when they see a manager or senior manager who is a Pacific woman. Some of the participants were also surprised if they attended a board meeting and saw another Pacific woman present. The findings of this research are consistent with Tupou's (2011) research, whereby Pacific women in management face challenges because of being stereotyped. Similarly, Mayeda and Sobieski's (2013) research, agree and suggest that the problem lies in the stereotypes that are reinforced through media. The issue with stereotypes being reiterated through media is that it reiterates to historic stereotypes, such as Nga Taonga's (1983) film archive showing how historically Pacific people were seen through a one-dimensional lens to create exotic fantasies for tourists. It may have existed in 1983 but exists much less today. The impact it has on Pacific women is it affects their performance and influences how western organisations and institutions treat Pacific women, such as asking them to perform menial tasks that is outside their role.

Prior research investigated by Barnes (2017) and Bradbury (2013) suggest that institutional racism is the reason why organisations are failing to deliver policies and programs that consider individuals race, colour, culture and ethnic backgrounds. This supports the findings in this research where some of the participants felt the hiring processes and leadership structures in organisations are discriminatory, because Pacific women were being overlooked for Pacific roles that had a Pacific focus to it, and most of the clients were Pacific, yet were given to European people.

Furthermore, the findings in this research argue that it is not just the hiring processes and leadership structures that are discriminatory, but the people that sit at the top of these organisations and are the decision makers that create these policies too. Brewer (2016) supports this idea and his findings show that male dominated organisations are stopping ethnic women from progressing in senior management positions because ethnic women do not fit into what the ideal manager looks like. Though this can be true for all women, for ethnic women it is even harder because of their ethnicity. Similarly, Fearfull and Kamneou (2005) agree, suggesting the 'old boys club' 'make all the decisions at the top of the organisation.

Tupou's (2011) research demonstrated that institutional racism breeds androcentricity, where women's careers are defined by male work patterns emphasising organisations are institutionally sexist and racist. Therefore, it is fair to suggest that institutional racism is one of the contributing factors to why Pacific women in this research have found it hard, when they have applied for senior roles and have not gotten the role, even though on paper they have the same credentials and experience as the non-Pacific person. This is because institutional racism like male dominated organisations have attitudes and behaviours that view ethnic women as being less competent. Tupou's (2011) research gives an example where a Pacific woman in management was requested to carry out domesticated jobs, even though that was not her role.

Tokenism was an unanticipated finding of this research because tokenism was a theme that was evident during the 90s, (Hekman, Johnson, Foo, & Yang, 2017) where women were the tokens because there was a lack of women in senior roles. Today it is the ethnic women who are tokens as Tung (2008) suggest in her research, however because of the limited research in relation to the glass ceiling or women advancing their careers into senior management, it is hard to suggest that this is a factor for Pacific women and more research needs to be done to see if this is a problem. However, for the number of participants that were interviewed in this research, some of them did express how they felt like

tokens and that their organisations were taking advantage of them. Tung (2008) agrees and Hekman, Johnson, Foo and Yang (2017) suggest, tokenism relates to making organisations appear to have diversity policies and programs operating in their organisations when they employ a minority into a senior role. The downside to this is that these women hold no real power when it comes to making changes or decisions in these organisations Morris (2010). However, Hekman, Johnson, Foo, and Yang, (2017) research also suggest that tokenism can benefit ethnic women and therefore should stay away from diversity behaviour. This is because diversity would promote more non-ethnic women to senior roles, pushing ethnic women to the back (Hekman, Johnson, Foo, & Yang, 2017). Nevertheless, participants in this research see tokenism as exploiting them and taking advantage of them. It would have been interesting to see what their reactions would be if Hekman et al. (2017) tokenism theory was explained to them, suggesting that since they are in senior management they are sitting in a seat of power. The literature review also highlights a link between tokenism and institutional racism (Barnes, 2017) which relates to previous research when it was women in general who were seen as a token in a male dominated organisation (Ryan, et al., 2011). However, this finding while exploratory suggests that the link is weak link although it does exist yet requires further investigation.

Culture was a secondary theme to challenges and the results in this research is similar to the findings of other research by Fearfull and Kamenou (2008), Davidson, Fieldon and Omar, (2010), and Islam and Jantan (2017), which found that culture is an added obstruction that non-ethnic women do not endure. However, the central investigation of this research is based on Pacific women and the authors mentioned above, have based their findings on Ethnic women. The findings in this research demonstrated that culture has resulted in Pacific women being put in awkward positions where they have had their senior roles challenged by other Pacific staff members because of the cultural expectations, norms and values that their culture puts on them.

Similarly, McGee's (2017) dual identity theory implies that ethnic women juggle with the demands of a working women whilst overcoming being a minority in a western culture. This has been true for some of the participants in this research, whom felt that they had had been discriminated by their culture, because it views women to be subservient. This has then crossed over into how Western organisations see women, thus creating a double bind for Pacific women. The impact this has had on the participants as senior managers is as McGee (2017), Fearfull and Kamenou (2008), Davidson (1997), and Islam and Jantan (2017), stated, another thing that they must overcome while trying to advance

their careers in senior management or last the distance whilst in senior management. The conflicting cultural expectations, values and norms that they receive from Pacific staff members who will not take instruction from them, because they are a woman and younger than them. Then there are the cultural norms they get from their organisations, such as Pacific women are good at serving, so will be alright to perform menial tasks. However, Tupou's (2011), research points at that cultural values, expectations and norms are not so much experienced by single Pacific women, as it does for married Pacific women. Fremion, O'Brien and Ford (2018), Glass and Cook (2016), and Choi and Park (2012), share similar views with Tupou (2011), highlighting that there are the added pressures of being an ethnic working mother who is married or has a partner and trying to fit into what Western society views as the ideal manager.

The findings have highlighted that because Pacific women do not fit into how society views what the ideal manager looks like in Aotearoa New Zealand, it lessens their chances of advancing their careers into senior management. This is because Pacific women are not white or male. Instead Pacific women as the findings have suggested like to wear bright and vibrant colours and flowers in their hair (Tupou, 2011). Therefore, suggesting that for Pacific women there is an added barrier of not fitting into what the ideal manager looks like because of the colour of their skin and their culture (Adler, 1995; Guirado, Garcia-Ael & Molero, 2015; Harris, Ravenswood, & Myers 2013; Ryan, et al., 2011).

### Support

The objective of this research was to explore the experiences of Pacific women in senior management and reveal what those experiences were. One of the main themes that came to surface was support. Support has played a key role for the participants in this research who have had to juggle family life while being in a senior role and the demands that both these roles require. Governments globally have acknowledged that women do not make it to the top and therefore have tried to implement policies to increase the number of women in senior management roles (Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006; Morrison, 1992).

Surprisingly, spirituality was found to be a secondary theme, in this research, that more than half of the participants revealed were of importance to their personal lives and their careers. Tupou, (2011) briefly mentions in her research that Pacific peoples are known to have an affiliation with Christianity and religion which is part of their culture. However, because there is limited research on this topic, further research is needed to see if this is true for other Pacific women.

Another important finding was the role of the family as support to Pacific women. Especially having supportive spouses or partners who were comfortable in sharing the domestic duties. This contradicts previous research by Choi and Park (2012) who suggests that in a Confucian society women are still expected to come home from work and do the cleaning, cooking and look after the family. Datta and Agarwal (2017), agree that women in India are expected to do the same. Their research focuses more on the lack of the support systems that ethnic women encounter and the impact this has on them (Datta & Agarwal, 2017). Rather than family as a 'barrier' the findings of this dissertation show that a supportive spouse or partner who shares household chores is an important aspect for Pacific women to be a successful senior manager and parent.

The findings also indicated that mentoring is a key support system for the participants and revealed that this also holds great significance in Pacific women being able to succeed at being in senior roles and their journey to advancing into senior roles. Hoobler, Wayne and Lemmon, (2009) support these findings suggesting also that mentoring positively impacts women and their careers by demonstrating to mentees how to get into senior management and learn from the mistakes that they made. The same research also found that mentoring positively impacted employees and supervisor relationships which increased productivity and reduces employee turnover. Aldrich (1989), Wilson (2014), and McGee (2017), further imply that mentoring has also been beneficial for ethnic women careers. Although these findings support the notion the mentoring is a key in increasing the number of women into senior management roles, there is a gap for more research that relates to Pacific women. This is a significant finding suggesting that there needs to be more research done in relation to mentoring and Pacific women to highlight if there are any similarities. Interestingly, the findings in this dissertation also brought to surface an example of cross-race/gender mentorship, in that some of the participants had European male mentors whom they were really inspired by and have even commented on that these men played a vital role in their careers. This contradicts the findings of Davidson, Fieldon and Omar (2010) whom findings suggested that ethnic people should be mentored by ethnic people. One of the possible explanations for Davidson Fieldon and Omar's (2010) suggestions is that her sample was students and therefore in that context and setting ethnic mentors proved to be more appropriate. The main purpose that a mentor support system provides, is that it has beneficial impacts towards Pacific women, their careers, organisations and families. In addition, a question that needs to be asked is what strategies the Pacific women in this research have used to help them advance into senior management?

### Strategies to Overcome Challenges

The two main factors that have enabled these participants to be able to be a Pacific woman in senior management were assimilation and education. The findings have highlighted that for Pacific women to get into senior roles and be successful in their jobs, they have had to assimilate. This has not always been easy for Pacific women because it is losing a bit of their authenticity to conform to organisational norms and expectations which are Western. Staniland's (2017) research supports this but, in the context, that it relates to Māori people. Boxer, Jones and Cortes-Conde (2017), similarly agree but in the context of ethnic women, and how they have had to conform to fit in and get the promotions. However, Boxer, Jones and Cortes-Conde's (2017) research looks at assimilation through the role trap theory which suggest that women in general are not their natural selves and take on male behaviours to fit into male environments. While Boxer, Jones and Cortes-Conde's (2017) results differ from this research, role trap theory may still apply to this research because participants felt that they must conform to behaving more Western or more European so that they can be more accepted. McGee (2017) suggests that it is not the role trap theory, but the dual identity theory which suggest that ethnic women in Western societies will act like Westerners at work. For example, talk English and dress in Western attire, but at home they will speak their native language and dress in their 'traditional clothes'. This is because ethnic women like Pacific women are defined by their ethnocultural minority in-group and one's society of residence. Both theories highlight how assimilation can have its drawbacks, however for the participants in this research, assimilation has been the key to surviving western organisations getting into senior management.

Education was another strategy that the findings indicate was important in the career advancement of the participants. For some of the participants, gaining a higher qualification has opened doors to opportunity that otherwise were not available regarding senior roles. Choi and Park (2012) and Li's (2014) research share similar views where Asian women have had to attain higher qualifications to get into senior roles. However, the findings in this research also suggest that for some of the participants, even though they have attained higher qualifications, they still feel the pressure to work harder and prove themselves so that they can feel accepted and this is a view that relates to all women regardless of race or colour.



## Summary

This section has discussed the three key aspects of this research findings which was challenges, support and strategies to overcome challenges. It has indicated that there have been similar findings to previous research and they are racism, stereotypes, institutional racism, ideal manager and Pacific women underrepresentation in senior management. It is also the same in the support section where there was similar research with families and mentors but none regarding spirituality. were no research similarities for spirituality.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion, Implications, Limitations, Further Research

### Introduction

This chapter will highlight what the main findings for this research has been by beginning with the conclusion. The conclusion, highlights that the main factors that are holding Pacific women back from entering senior management roles is related to their ethnicity and culture. These are challenges that are experienced through racism, racist stereotypes, male dominated organisations, the ideal manager and institutional racism. The conclusion section will also highlight the support that Pacific women have had to help them in their journey of advancing their careers and the strategies Pacific women used to overcome the challenges they experienced. This chapter will then continue to the implications section which will highlight the brown glass ceiling and the impact it can have on individuals, communities and society, and the recognition of spirituality being a support for Pacific women. The limitations section will explain how the size of the sample and the little available research of Pacific women in research affected the research, and that Talanoa research could be an option. Finally, it will summarise all the section with future research focusing on spirituality as a support system for Pacific women in senior management.

### Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore the notion of the 'brown glass ceiling' and how it impacts the experiences of Pacific women in senior management. Research has shown that like women of colour, Pacific women do not fit into the conventional business environment in Aotearoa New Zealand today (Tupou, 2011). This is largely due to Pacific women being culturally and ethnically different to the status quo in these western organisations which is mainly made up of European men (Tupou, 2011). The effect it has had on Pacific women has meant they have had to face more challenges than just gender issues like that of their European female counterparts (Choi & Park, 2012; Tupou, 2011). In 2001 the number of Pacific women in senior management was 1.9% however it dropped to 1.5% in 2010 which is a -4% depreciation (McGregor, 2010; State Services Commission, 2010). Unfortunately, those figures have only slightly increased today, raising concern that the underrepresentation of Pacific women in senior management needs urgent attention.

The results of the findings have shown that racism is a key factor that is stopping Pacific women from advancing into senior management, because of the racist stereotypes,

attitudes and behaviours that is evident in the daily running of Western organisations, (Barnes, 2017; Bennett, 2002; Davidson, Fieldon and Omar, 2010; These organisations are mostly male dominated and have been able to create organisational cultures that are bias and racist too (Boxer, Jones & Cortes-Condes, 2017). Creating the stigma that ideal managers are masculine and therefore making it harder for Pacific women to enter senior management roles.

The idea of the 'brown glass ceiling' suggest that the opportunities for Pacific women advancing in their careers are not as transparent as the glass ceiling is for white women (Chisholm-Burns, et al., 2017; Ng & Sears, 2017; Tupou, 2011). This is because those opportunities have been tainted by added barriers making it hard for Pacific women to see through the glass (Tupou, 2011).

Therefore, the results in this research illustrate how the 'brown glass ceiling' comes to surface through Pacific women's experiences of racism. Racism which was not overt but experienced through the attitudes and behaviours from their co-workers because of their brown skin. As well as the experiences of being subjected to cultural and historical stereotypes (Wilson, 2014), such as being treated like servants or labelled as exotic maidens and therefore not taken seriously by their colleagues. The 'brown glass ceiling' also comes to light through the Pacific women participants' experiences of how institutional racism (Came & McCreanor, 2015) has influenced the hiring process to be biased and not hire Pacific women. Even though the Pacific women candidates had the same qualifications and experience as European women. Institutional racism (Came & McCreanor, 2015) has also contributed to the Pacific women in this research, feeling like they were tokens to make their organisations appear as though they are diversely inclusive when these organisations lacked the understanding of what it was to be culturally inclusive.

This dissertation identified that spirituality, family, organisational support and mentoring (Davidson, Fielden, & Omar, 2010) have contributed to Pacific women being able to face the challenges of being in a senior role, and in an ambiguous organisational culture. Previous research supports the benefits mentoring has on helping ethnic women advance their careers (Murrell, Blake-Beard, Porter, & Perkins-Williamson, 2008). Therefore, is it significant that organisations recognise that mentoring and families have a direct positive impact on Pacific women in senior roles and the organisation and why they need to take these elements into consideration in their organisational processes and consider creating more family-friendly policies.

Thirdly, assimilation (Boxer, Jones, & Cortés-Conde, 2017) into mainstream organisations and gaining higher qualifications has opened more doors of opportunity for Pacific women because they have been strategies to overcome the challenges they have faced. The downside of this however, in relations to assimilation, is that Pacific women lose some of their cultural identity being recognised by organisations just so that they fit in. This research suggests that tokenism can result from organisations wanting to appear inclusive, when in fact they lack the understanding of cultural identity and inclusive becomes a ticking of the boxes that an organisation has met. Therefore, it is important for management in organisations to create practices that allow for more inclusion in relation to cultural identity being acknowledged and implemented into some of the practices of an organisation.

### Implications

The implications for theory is the brown glass ceiling which is a relatively new concept. The reason why it is important is because it identifies that the experiences Pacific women encounter whilst advancing into senior management is relevant, important and can be justified through previous research which agree that ethnic women encounter more challenges than non-ethnic women. The significance that it has for Pacific women is that it creates a metaphor like the glass ceiling to bring more understanding to the challenges they face.

Another implication for theory was the spiritual aspect of support. The reason why this is important is because more than half of the participants expressed how their spiritual support system was important to their careers and family life.

The implications for practice is the potential for positive social change on an individual, organisational and societal level. At the individual level the implications are how it can benefit the individual. The results of this study suggest that having a strong support system is the key for Pacific women to overcoming challenges they may encounter when trying to advance their careers. The findings of this research also suggest the importance of having a mentor and how it taught and inspired some of the. The findings in this research also brought to light how organisations can be biased in who they hire. Therefore, a key policy priority should be a plan for hiring more Pacific women in senior management. The results of this research also highlighted how Pacific women encounter racism in their journey of advancing their careers. An implication at the societal level would be working to teaching the business sector of Aotearoa New Zealand that racism does exist and how they can recognise it and work to eradicating it in their organisations.

## Limitations

The objective of this research has been affected by limitations due to the sample size that conducted only six interviews, therefore it cannot be generalised that all Pacific women in senior management share similar experiences to the results in this research. The snow-ball sampling (Emerson, 2015) permitted easy recruitment for Pacific women in a limited field, but the limitations in this approach meant the women may know each other and share similar views compared to women who don't know each other and hold different views. Qualitative method (Cresswell & Poth, 2013) was beneficial in gaining data through semi structured face to face interviews, (Opendakker, 2006). Another limitation was the lack of current academic literature relating to the 'brown glass ceiling, and Pacific women in senior management in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## Conclusion and future research

To conclude the 'brown glass ceiling' just like the glass ceiling, is a metaphor used to describe the challenges that Pacific women have experienced whilst advancing into senior management (Cain & Kingston, 2003; Davidson, Fieldon and Omar, 2010; Tupou, 2011). However, with a good support system, mentors, higher qualifications and being able to work alongside mainstream organisations, Pacific women have a good chance of advancing their careers. Through the partnership of organisations and governmental influence, changes if done on a macro and micro level nationwide can bridge the gap of the lack of representation of Pacific women in senior management. The micro level changes can be implemented into the everyday running of organisations, for example, through greetings on their stationary, and signs in the workplace. The macro level could be for the government to implement policies in Aotearoa New Zealand that require public and private sector organisations to have a Pacific woman in senior management and for this to be monitored every two years to see that the number of Pacific women in senior management has increased. It would also be helpful to make mentoring part of the internship programmes at universities for Pacific women (Haile, Emmanuel & Dzathor, 2016; McKinsey, 2016; Tupou, 2011).

Future research could explore the 'brown glass ceiling' further, perhaps focusing on the key findings of this discussion that spiritual support and mentoring have a significant role in supporting Pacific women to be successful in reaching senior management, because there is limited research and around spiritual support and management. Also, future research could employ the Talanoa Research Methodology (TRM) to add knowledge to the 'brown glass ceiling' (Timote, 2015). This is because Talanoa research creates a

space that discusses Pacific indigenous values and how they relate to Pacific people in Aotearoa New Zealand (Timote, 2015).

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Ethics Approval

13 March 2018

Katherine Ravenswood  
Faculty of Business Economics and Law

Dear Katherine

Ethics Application: 18/92 **Pacific women managers' experience of the 'brown glass ceiling' in New Zealand**

I wish to advise you that a subcommittee of the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) has **approved** your ethics application.

This approval is for three years, expiring 12 March 2021.

### **Non-Standard Conditions of Approval**

1. Amendment of the Information Sheet as follows:
  - a. The withdrawal statement in the Information Sheet needs clarification and completion with respect to the withdrawal of data;
  - b. Revision of the 'what is purpose' section in regards to 2016 and the statement that starts 'since this will be the case';
  - c. Advice that limited confidentiality only will be offered, as indicated in H.1 of the application

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

### **Standard Conditions of Approval**

1. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>.
2. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form: <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>.
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.

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

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval for access for your research from another institution or organisation then you are responsible for obtaining it. You are reminded that 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.

For any enquiries please contact [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz)

Yours sincerely,



## Participant Information Sheet

### Date Information Sheet Produced:

12 02 2018

### Project Title

Pacific Island Women in senior management and the “brown glass ceiling”.

### An Invitation

Talofa lava, Kia orana, Kia ora, Malo e lelei, Fakaalofa atu

My name is Mary Mesui and I am currently a student at the Auckland University of Technology, where I am studying towards my Master of Business. As part of my qualification, I need to complete my dissertation and would like to invite you to partake in my research.

### What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to explore the concept of the ‘brown glass ceiling’, which derives from the ‘glass ceiling concept, that has been described as a metaphor relating to artificial barriers to the advancement of women and minorities (Bolat & Kilic, 2011, Choi & Park, 2014). The glass ceiling is an invisible barrier established by organisational stereotypes and discrimination that stops minorities and women from advancing in their chosen fields (Islam & Jantan, 2017, Datta & Argawal 2017). The brown glass ceiling is a relatively new concept with little academic literature to support the notion, that women of indigenous and minority backgrounds encounter more barriers than women who are not minorities or indigenous. In relation to Pacific women in Aotearoa New Zealand, statistics illustrate that the number of Pacific Island women in senior management roles has decreased by 7.1% in 2010 from 32.7 percent in 2001 (McGregor, 2010). It has also been forecasted that by 2026, the Pacific Island community will make up 10 percent of Aotearoa New Zealand’s overall population. Given these figures, there is a need to understand more about the brown glass ceiling, because of the growing Pacific Island community in Aotearoa New Zealand. I hope that my research will contribute to an enhanced understanding of Pacific Island women and the brown glass ceiling, to support change that benefits Pacific Island women in work and for future generations.

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

In selecting potential participants, the process involved seeking Pacific Island women already in senior management roles. Your names were suggested by people in your



field of expertise. Therefore, I hope that you will accept my invitation, so that I will be able to arrange a face to face interview with you. Your expertise and knowledge would add great value to my research.

### How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you do wish to participate, please confirm with me by email and we will arrange a convenient time for the interview. Please sign the consent form (attached in my email) and bring it with you to the interview. Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether you choose to participate will neither advantage or disadvantage you. You can withdraw from the study at any time before the data analysis and that will be two weeks after the interview has been done.

### What will happen in this research?

The research will involve face to face interviews that will be conducted at a mutually agreed location which will be confirmed closer to the time. The interview will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes long.

### What are the discomforts and risks?

It is highly unlikely that you will experience any discomfort or risks, however you can at any time not answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable and/or take a break during the interview when required.

### What are the benefits?

This research aims to contribute to an enhanced understanding of the 'brown glass ceiling' from the perspectives of Pacific Island women managers in New Zealand, to help future generations of Pacific Island female managers. It will also assist me in completing my Master of Business and the findings may be used for academic publications and presentations.

### How will my privacy be protected?

I will be following AUTEK guidelines in ensuring that your privacy is protected. My priority as the researcher is to protect the privacy and confidentiality of my participants and therefore your identity including their age, ethnicity and business characteristics at all stages of the research will remain protected, unless you give consent to disclose any of that information. However due to the nature of the research in which the sample is small scale only limited confidentiality can be offered.

### What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You will have two weeks to consider this invitation and you can withdraw up to two weeks after the interview.

### Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You will also have the option to view the transcription of the interview and this will be emailed to you. You will have a week to either email or phone me to state if there is anything in it that you would like to change. If I do not hear back from you within

that week, I will accept that you are happy with the transcription. A summary of the findings will be made available to you once the project has been completed.

### 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, Katherine Ravenswood, Katherine.ravenswood@aut.ac.nz, (09) 921 9999 ext. 5064

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, 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:

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:

Mary Mesui, marmes92@autuni.ac.nz

#### Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Katherine Ravenswood, Department of Management, Faculty of Business, Auckland University of Technology, (09) 921 9999 ext. 5064, or Katherine.ravenswood@aut.ac.nz

Dr Nimbus Staniland, Department of Management, Faculty of Business, Auckland University of Technology (09) 921 9999 ext. 6594, or nimbus.staniland@aut.ac.nz



## Consent Form

*Project title: Pacific Island women’s experiences of the “brown glass ceiling” in senior management in New Zealand.*

*Project Supervisor: Katherine Ravenswood (Primary Supervisor)  
Nimbus Staniland (Secondary Supervisor)*

*Researcher: Mary Lopakitea Mesui*

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 29<sup>th</sup> May 2018.
- 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

Participants signature : .....

Participants Name : .....

Participants Contact Details (if appropriate) :

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

Date :

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 13th March 2018, AUT Reference number 18/92

## Confidentiality Agreement

*Project title: 'Pacific women managers' experience of the 'brown glass ceiling' in New Zealand'.*

*Project Supervisor: Katherine Ravenswood (first Supervisor) Nimbus Staniland (second supervisor)*

*Researcher: Mary Lopakitea Mesui*

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- I understand that all the material I will be asked to transcribe is confidential.
- I understand that the contents of the tapes or recordings can only be discussed with the researchers.
- I will not keep any copies of the transcripts nor allow third parties access to them.

Transcriber's signature : .....

Transcriber's name : .....

Transcriber's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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

Date:

Project Supervisor's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....  
.....  
.....  
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***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 13th March 2018, AUT Reference number 18/92***

*Note: The Transcriber should retain a copy of this form.*

## Appendix E: Interview Questions

### **Work History**

- Can you tell me about your journey in advancing into the senior management role you are currently in?
- How is your Pacific Island identity expressed in your role?

### **Support System and what has helped**

What are the support systems that have got you where you are today?

- Family support
- Organisational support
- mentors

### **What have been barriers and challenges for you?**

- As a female senior manager, what impact has your gender had on your career/work?
- Have you encountered racism in the workplace and if so can you please elaborate?

### **Change Focused**

- *Overcoming the glass ceiling*
  1. Can you tell me why there are not many Pacific Island women in senior management positions in New Zealand?

Previous research in New Zealand showed that Pacific island women in senior management went from 32.7% in 2001 to 25.65 in 2010. That is a 7.1% decrease in nine years and it hasn't improved much today. Can you tell me what you think the contributing factor to this may be?

What do you believe is the key to being a successful Pacific Island woman in senior management today?
  1. What advice would you give Pacific Island women who want to be senior managers or in higher roles?
  2. Suggestion: If there was one thing you could do to improve things for Pacific women, what would that be?

