Women and Politics in Presence: Case of Papua New Guinea

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Abstract

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Women and Politics in Presence: Case of Papua New Guinea

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One area that presents challenge for democracy is women representation, an important dimension for gender equality. However, there are major variations among countries. Papua New Guinea is one of the countries with the lowest number of female representatives in parliament. Two questions are asked in regard to the representation of women. First, why is it difficult for women to be elected in Papua New Guinea? And second, how do we explain where women were able to challenge others to be elected? Formal institution such as the electoral system is just one way to discuss gender equality. There are other areas of gender inequality that interact with the formal system relating to social, cultural, and economic factors. An analysis of these factors shows that even improving formal institutions to increase the number of women in political participation, gender inequality is still a challenge within and outside the legislative office. The findings are discussed within the theoretical framework of democratic principles of participation, representation, and feminist theory to better explain the phenomenon; particularly the theory of “politics of presence” is used as a model to argue that not only increasing the number of women, but also “substantially” representing the women do matter. Hence, gender representation does not necessarily mean gender equality.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Democracy needs women in order to be truly democratic, and women need democracy if they are to change the systems and laws that preclude them, and preclude societies as a whole from attaining equality (United Nations 2012).

The Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, under the basic rights section (section 32-56), guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals whatever their race, tribe, place of origin, political opinion, color, creed or sex. This is further captured in the National Goals and Directives Principles specified under the first goal - Integral Human Development, and the second goal - Equality and Participation. Despite the laws on rights and freedoms, equality is not addressed. Papua New Guinea (PNG) is ranked 134 out of 145 countries in the 2012 Gender Inequality Index (GII),¹ and is recorded as one of the countries with the lowest percentage of female parliamentary representatives, at 2.7 percent today.² Rwanda for instance has 67 percent women in parliament today (51 women out of 80 members in total) with a quota system of 30 percent of seats reserved for women. The chart below shows the variations of the number of women in parliament across different countries including Papua New Guinea.

Despite similarities in some factors that account for gender inequality across the globe, there are country-specific factors affecting individual countries. Apart from the general trend, Papua New Guinea also differs in cultural factors fostering gender inequality, particularly women representation in parliament. Further, the number of women elected has not increased since independence in 1975; it has remained stagnant at between one and three women sitting per parliament. These are disturbing facts that present PNG as an outlier, and raise the questions: Why it is difficult for women to be elected? How do we explain where women were able to challenge others to successfully win election? And, why PNG has not improved its number of women in parliament over time? These questions form the basis of this study. Hence, apart from the formal electoral system, other related factors also impact on gender inequality in PNG.

Thus, this chapter introduces the research topic “Women and Politics in Presence: Case of Papua New Guinea.” Women and politics in PNG has been a contested issue over time. One
area to understand why fewer women have been elected to parliament so far is the electoral system itself – a crucial formal institution to ensure democratic principles. The complex relationship between the political and the cultural systems of power yet brings another challenge.

Papua New Guinea is geographically diverse and better described as one of the most heterogeneous societies in the world, consisting of several thousand separate communities separated by language, traditions, and customs. The people of PNG speak approximately 850 different languages that depict their varying customs, traditions and ways of life. With eighty percent of the people living in the rural areas, the main income generating activity tends to be subsistence agriculture.

PNG regained her independence from Australia on September 16 1975, and became The Independent State of Papua New Guinea. With the adoption of the Westminster system of government, Papua New Guinea currently is represented by 111 members of parliament, comprising 3 women and 108 men. Historically, PNG was colonized by three different western powers: Germany (New Guinea 1884-1914), Britain (Territory of Papua 1883-1949), and Australia (1920-1942). After World War II, the territories of Papua and New Guinea were combined under the Australian colonial administration in 1949. Papua New Guinea was named as one territory in 1972, leading to the Independent State of Papua New Guinea in 1975. PNG is known culturally as a patrilineal society, with very few matrilineal island provinces. PNG’s patriarchal society has made politics in Papua New Guinea to be seen as a man’s game, as mentioned in a comment posted to the IKNOWPolitics blog on June 25, 2012.4

Overtime, these structures, among others, had an impact on formal institutions and present challenges for gender equality. Therefore, Chapter two discusses the historical

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background of election of women in Papua New Guinea starting from the House of Assembly with women appointed by the colonial administration for the first time in 1964 up until the country’s independence in 1975. It highlights the electoral system used at that time and illustrates the main contributions of PNG women to the country’s politics.

Chapter three describes and analyzes empirical data on election outcomes (1975 - 2012); it shows the trend of women elected in Papua New Guinea after independence and presents the challenges and the opportunities the women face. The division between chapter two and three shows the timeframe difference before independence (1964-1975) and after independence (1975-2012). The empirical analysis of Papua New Guinea as a case study examines the evolution of elections before and after independence. Both qualitative and quantitative data are used deriving from media reports, publications, articles and personal communication. Similarly, use of secondary data also provides sufficient information to analyze the phenomenon of why fewer women are elected to parliament. (Discussion is partly based on experience as a Papua New Guinean, which contradicts the emphasis of bias in analysis; however, I believe experience provides a broader perspective on PNG women).

This work takes an explanatory approach that draws on literature in political theory and comparative politics with the area focus on Papua New Guinea. It contributes to the existing literature on how relevant theories can be used to explain the empirical situation on the ground; in particular, it brings different theories together to explain women’s political participation.

There is substantial literature that has analyzed electoral politics in PNG since independence, which established what are likely to be common and continuing features of election in the country. The literature on women and politics in Papua New Guinea illustrates

5 Andrew Ladley and Jessie Williams. Electoral Education in PNG. A survey of the existing literature and reports, Institute if Policy Studies, Victoria University of Wellington. 2007.

6 Included but not limited to- Ray Anere (2007). Options for increasing women’s representation at the National and Local Level Governments: The need for a comprehensive Analysis: Spotlight with NRI:
that there are challenges pertaining to women’s representation. For instance, the general
traditional attitude on gender roles is not only common but is also a widespread belief that pose as
a hindrance for women to “fully” and “actively” participate in the politics of the country.\textsuperscript{7} People
are caught between leaders viewed as \textit{bigmen}\textsuperscript{8} especially in the rural areas; and women
increasingly seen as capable to be leaders particularly in the urban areas.\textsuperscript{9} However, significant
changes have also been observed with the increased number of women candidates in every
election year. This includes the victory of three women in the recently held elections in 2012,
which marks the second time in which three women won in an election in the last 39 years. This
slight increase in the number of women elected is partly due to recent improvements including
women’s increased movements, amendment of electoral laws, and some increased political
support. For the first time, two women who were declared winners in the 2012 election came
from one political party, the Triumph Heritage Empowerment Party (THE Party). This
demonstrates continuity of variables as well as changes in some areas since women first entered
politics in 1964.

\textsuperscript{7} Radio New Zealand, “Push for more females in PNG Parliament held back by traditional attitudes,” July
3\textsuperscript{rd} 2012, accessed April 23 2014. \url{http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/205642/push-for-
more-females-in-png-parliament-held-back-by-traditional-attitudes}.

\textsuperscript{8} Mike Wightman, “”Levelling the playing field: female candidates in the 2012 Elections” (June 21, 2012)
\textsuperscript{9} Radio New Zealand, July 3\textsuperscript{rd} 2012, “Push for more females in PNG Parliament held back by traditional
attitudes,” accessed April 23 2014. \url{http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/205642/push-for-
more-females-in-png-parliament-held-back-by-traditional-attitudes}.
With the increasing visibility of women’s movements internationally, PNG women are gradually standing up for their right to participate in their country’s political activities and be represented. As a result, there has been increasing advocacy in recent years for equality and representation of women in parliament. Previous attempts to implement temporary measures in the last thirty-nine years have been unsuccessful. The popular suggestion which proposed the appointment of three women as a temporary special measure (the Parliamentarian 2009) which culminated into the *Equality and Participation Bill 2009* that proposes 22 reserved seats for women in Parliament (despite being passed in December 2011), did not get sufficient votes to be introduced in the 2012 elections. In spite of this, the country continues to sign international commitments and agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which was adopted on July 30, 2010. While international development agencies have increased programs to help women candidates, such as UNIFEM, UNWomen, Centre for Democratic Institutions, and United Nations Development Programme,\(^\text{10}\) there has been no significant effort on the part of the government to increase the number of women in parliament. The outcome has been very low in the last eight elections that resulted between one and three women (the maximum number) serving in parliament since independence. In fact, there were two consecutive terms where the Parliament had no woman, but all men occupied the 109 seats in the Parliament (1987 and 1992). This tends to indicate the degree of the role of the government in addressing underrepresentation of women. Thus, there has been minimal governmental response to women’s underrepresentation especially in institutional reform.

\(^{10}\) Centre for Democratic Institutions, supported by UNDP, and working with the PNG Office for the Development of Women (ODW) conducted Women’s candidate trainings, and practice parliament first time for PNG Women, from April 17 – 20, 2012. [Pacific Women in Politics](http://www.pacwip.org/future-elections/papua-new-guinea/).
At the Provincial Assembly level, the Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local Level Governments (1997), under section 10(e) “permits one woman representative [be] nominated in accordance with an Act of Parliament and appointed by the Provincial Executive Council”.

It is evident that women have been winning elections at the local level and this has increasingly been seen as women “are more capable of taking on difficult issues” (Korari 2002, p.43). Following a twenty year conflict, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ARB) developed a new constitution and a new electoral system in 2002. Three seats were allocated for women representing the three biggest constituencies in ARB: the North, Central and South. Their new electoral system allows a voter to cast three votes: one for the legislative assembly representative, one for the reserve women’s seat, and the third for an ex-combatant seat. These are reflected in their constitution (Pacific Women in Politics 2012). The ARB government employed special measures to recognize women’s contribution during the twenty year civil conflict by allocating seats specifically for women. National level politics, however, continue to demonstrate a persistent gap for women.

Despite the fact that equality for women is enshrined in the constitution and other national legal instruments and policies, formal systems impede on their active and full political participation. Papua New Guinea has used three different electoral systems over different periods of time: the Alternative Voter (AV) in 1963, First-Past the Post in 1975, and the Limited Preferential Voting (LPV) in 2007. The current LPV system was adopted to improve conditions from the previous election experiences. One fundamental area considered was the lack of women’s political participation. The change in part was aimed to promote more support for

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women candidates, to encourage more freedom of choice for women voters, and at the same time to increase the chances of women to be elected to the National Parliament. Election outcomes after the implementation of the LPV system indicated an increase in the percentage of female voter turnout and the number of women candidates, but not in the number of women elected into parliament.\footnote{The Papua New Guinea National Research Institute conducted an assessment on various elections over the years as well as in many centers presented their finding of improvement with the LPV system compared to the previous First past the post (NRI report 2007)} This shows improvement in some areas of women’s participation but not in representation at the national level.

An important factor tends to be lack of support from the political parties for the women candidates, despite the incentives to include them. Out of the 3443 total number of candidates running in the 2012 elections, 1245 candidates represented 42 different political parties. The major parties that secured most members were the People’s National Congress (PNC) with 27 seats, while the Triumph Heritage Party (THE Party) secured the second highest number of seats at 11 (Electoral Commission 2012). PNG Party won 8 seats, national Alliance and United Resource Party 7 seats each, People’s Progress Party 6 seats, People’s Party 4 seats. Others who have 2 members succeeded include Reform Party, Melanesian Liberal Party, People’s United Assembly Party, Social Democratic Party, New Generation Party and People’s Movement for Change Party. Parties that had only one winning candidate included the Indigenous People’s Party, Our Development Party, Pangu Party, PNG Constitutional Democratic Party, PNG Country Party, People’s Democratic Movement, Stars Alliance Party and United Party (ibid.) Out of the 135 women candidates in the 2012 elections, 60 women were endorsed under political parties while 65 ran as independent. The parties that endorsed the women candidates include Prime Minister’s O’Neil’s party, People’s National Congress party endorsed one woman and 88 male candidates; Former PM Michael Somare’s National Alliance Party endorsed two females among 74 candidates. Opposition leader, Belden Namah’s PNG Party did not endorse any woman, and
neither did former Prime Minister Julius Chan’s People’s Progress Party who had 40 male candidates.\textsuperscript{14} In contrast, Triumph Heritage Party (THE), led by Don Polye, endorsed 3 women out of 73 candidates, and set the record of two of the three candidates elected, Delilah Gore and Julie Soso; while Loujaya Toni was under the Indigenous People’s Party. The numbers demonstrate the lack of interest that parties have in endorsing women candidates. Furthermore, not all parties endorse at least one woman candidate, and this has been a continuing trend in every election as women candidates get less to no support from the political parties. Political parties tend to endorse women who they see have the potential to win; again preferences of party members comes in based on resources, status and history of the women determining factors of selection and endorsement. The women generally lack these factors, as they are further implicated by traditional patriarchal perceptions.

PNG has a multiparty system which saw a total of 46 political parties contesting in the 2012 elections (the highest so far), where 21 political parties won seats, with 11 forming the coalition currently in the government. The Prime Minister’s party (People’s National Congress Party -PNCP) had the largest number of winning candidates which stood at 27. Political parties are largely described as weak and seem to be irrelevant in the process of election in PNG.\textsuperscript{15} This description is likely due to a range of factors, including party preferences. According to Haley and Anere (2009), in PNG, political parties choose their candidates based on mere party preferences than any established criteria. In other words, the selections of candidates are usually based on the individual candidate, and not according to the parties’ set criteria. For instance, if a candidate has resources, he/she is likely to be endorsed by political parties for the reason that the

\textsuperscript{14} Centre for Democratic Institution (20 March 2013) \url{http://www.cdi.anu.edu.au/png/2012-13/2012_10_PRO_PNG_WCT_FP.html}

parties most likely will spend less because the candidate already has resources to spend/use for campaigning and so on. And resources usually come certain degree of power within the community. These factors are not limited as the next chapter elaborates on some of these factors. Where some candidates were not endorsed by political parties, they stood as independent candidates and aligned with parties after elections. As noted by Ben Reiley, political parties tend to combine personalities more than ideologies or issues, “although they do play a limited role in mobilizing and campaigning at election time, and in the formation of governments following elections” (Reiley 1999, 227). This situation further disadvantages women to be endorsed by the parties because most of the parties endorse men with money, history and status that advantage the parties. This tend to be true as the study carried out by the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties and Candidates showed that among their findings in the 2012 elections: parties are secondary compared to the wealth of the individuals, parties are financially poor, parties not willing to endorse women, and small parties have no impact at all.16 These findings shows the continuing trend where political parties lack the interest in endorsing women, and if the women were endorsed by the Political Parties, the women had less support from the party. Such challenge the nation is facing questions the legitimacy of the electoral system. Hence, is the formal democratic institution (such as the electoral system) effective in realizing equality in political participation?

Therefore, the last chapter, chapter four concludes with the theoretical framework, linking the findings to theories that better explain why it is difficult to elect women into parliament; participation, representation, and feminist theory are used among others. Particular attention is given to the theory of “politics of presence” which not only explains why it is difficult for women to be elected, but also provides an alternative to the existing situation. Analyses of these theories explain the phenomenon on the ground, and help identify other explanations useful.

16 Alphonse Gelu, Registrar of Political Parties and Candidates, email dated April 7, 2014.
in studying gendered politics. The conclusion presents an alternative model of representation – quota system – which has proven to be successful with the increase number of women in some developing countries. Finally, drawing from the study lessons to learn about women and politics.

Feminist theory argues that increasing the number of women to promote gender representation does not necessarily mean gender equality. This is because there are other areas that present challenges for gender equality aside from representation. The proposed theoretical model of the “politics of presence” (Phillips 1995) argues that women representatives substantively represent the interests of women, including the various factors that intersect gender, such as diverse ethnicity and class differences.

Politics of presence further claims that women represent women’s issues better, thus increasing the number of women allows better representation of various women’s issues.17 The politics of presence model is used to clarify both the difference and the connection between participation and representation (two different concepts in the discourse of political equality) towards understanding that not only increasing the number of women, but also truly and substantially representing the women is important. According to Phillips, the cornerstone argument for any politics of presence is:

One, symbolic significance of who is present; two, policy consequences, if we can anticipate changing the composition of elected assemblies; and three, politics of transformation in opening up a fuller range of political options (Phillips 2005).

The politics of presence model explores the question of why it is difficult for women to be elected to parliament in two dimensions. First, it points out the theoretical implications that hinder women’s representation; second, it illustrates why it is important to increase the number of women both as leaders, and as performers who influence transformative public policies (ibid).

Thus, its application to the PNG case study provides an approach to explain the

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17 And the same can be said for men and other minority/disadvantaged groups.
underrepresentation of women at the national level politics. Further, it illustrates why it is important to improve the number of women in parliament. This can be applied not only in PNG but universally. The politics of presence model emphasizes affirmative action through gender quota as a viable alternative mechanism; a “temporary measure” to increase the number of women in parliament. Where gender quota is not adopted women are represented in fewer numbers as in the case of Papua New Guinea. According to interviews conducted in Papua New Guinea with women candidates and elected leaders during and after the 2012 elections, few of them argue that PNG women can compete with their male counterparts on an equal basis, because the quotas really do not provide equality. Hence, women leaders in PNG have different views on the proposed quota system. However, the general view of women – especially those involved in active lobbying for the increase in women’s political representation – push for affirmative action as an alternative.

We could also question if the quota system is an effective tool to help realize gender equality; in other words, it is questioning if the women who occupy seats in parliament through affirmative action ‘truly’ represent women’s interests. Again, there are variations among countries adopting the quota system.

In the face of development challenges, Papua New Guinea is struggling to fulfill democratic responsibilities towards equality for all of its citizens, as David Bentham clearly states, “the democratic principle of equality holds that whatever the differences between us, there are certain common needs and capacities which we all share, and on the basis of which we are all entitled to the same” (Bentham, 2005: 15). Women representation, an important dimension of gender equality, continues to present challenges for democratic processes such as the electoral

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system. In fact, women are continually facing not only democratic challenges but also cultural, social and economic ones.

Both theoretical and empirical approaches provide analysis of the challenges facing women’s political participation across time; they also account for the opportunities that allowed few women to win, which may provide avenues to increase the number of women in the political arena. Therefore, analyses of the electoral processes and interaction with other factors are examined to explain why it is difficult for women to be elected in Papua New Guinea. First, historical analysis of the election of women provides an understanding of the continuous difficulty in institutional access and flexibility, attitudes and behaviors of people.
Chapter Two: Historical Background

Historical analysis of the election of women provides an understanding of the continuous difficulty in institutions, attitudes and behaviors of the people. In fact, the historical events for instance, describes the institutions in place not only the government but also cultural implications, and how they had impact and shape people’s behaviors and attitudes over time. In the context of the election of women, historical evaluation of institutions allows us to observe how the choices of voters on the one hand, and preferences of the parties and interests on the other hand, are shaped by the culture at that time. Therefore, the “key to understanding the difference between the logic of culture versus the logic of calculus is the different ways they explain the formation of preferences and identities of actors within institutions and in society as a whole” (Nagy 2004, 31). Hence, the choices people make are shaped by not only institutions but also by their culture over time.

The underrepresentation of women is an important way to look at institutions of democracies, particularly when democracies’ unifying principles are about plurality. Over the years, there were significant changes to improve status of gender equality in PNG, and considerable efforts towards increasing the number of women in parliament were made. In fact, various governments in the recent past have attempted to improve women’s political participation to “actively” and “fully” be involved in the democratic process of the nation, especially political representation. But not much has been achieved so far in terms of women’s representation. Apart from the proposed laws to introduce quota system that failed twice, (first in 1999, then in 2012), the electoral system of the country was changed three times towards improving women’s political participation in PNG. Electoral system is an important democratic mechanism or method used to calculate the number of elected positions in government that individuals and parties are awarded
after elections.\textsuperscript{19} The electoral system acts as a vehicle for all citizens to participate
democratically through voting to choose their elected representatives. Papua New Guinea is one
of the few countries to change its electoral system from Alternate voting (pre-independence 1961-
1972), to First Past the Post (post-independence 1975-2002), and currently Limited Preferential
voting system (2007 - 2012). The changes were aimed to improve democratic stability in the
country; emphasized in the forward address by Carina Perelli, Director, United Nations Electoral
Assistance Division;

Electoral system design must build understanding and trust, not just among
politicians and election administrators, but among civil society organizations,
among commentators, and above all, among the citizens of a country undergoing
democratic reform. Electoral system must be designed not only to work under
current situations but also to accommodate future changes in the attitudes and
behavior as electoral incentive change. They can contribute to the development
of stable democracy or they can be a major stumbling block to it.\textsuperscript{20}

The change of the electoral system was to involve every citizen’s participation including
women’s political representation, especially, to vote and be voted. The associated reasons for the
change of the electoral system were mostly related to culture dimension, particularly the clan-
based politics, reflecting the ethnically diverse society.\textsuperscript{21} As a result of this, the candidates
obtained votes in one electorate only, usually their home that led to biased representation and not
broad representation (Reilly 2006). The First Past the Post voting system was not democratically
viable, resulting in un-proportional representation, and increased violence (National Research
Institute Report, 2007). Violence related incidences occurred because there was high competition

\url{http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/kingch/Electoral_Systems.htm}
\textsuperscript{20} Carina Perelli, forward to the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division, 2005.
\textsuperscript{21} Reiley. (2006).
between contesting candidates to gain more votes under the First Past the Post system. Under this system, the Members of Parliament were elected with a record of less than ten percent of the total votes. The National Research Institute (2010) election studies found that the First Past the Post electoral system became associated with violence, guns, manipulation and burning of the ballot boxes. In many instances, some women did not vote while others did with manipulation, especially in the Highlands region. Moreover, chances of women to be elected became very slim to none, as they competed with the large number of men who had mostly tradition, history and resources on their side. The adoption of the LPV system thus, was aimed to improve these areas.

The changes to the electoral system from the First Past the Post to the Limited Preferential Voting system (LPV) had resulted in a series of unexpected turnout that illustrated the various effects similar electoral systems should experience elsewhere.23 For instance, decreased violence related incidences, and increasing number of voter turnout for instance. In 2002, when LPV system was implemented in the Highlands Region by-elections, little to no violence related incidence was observed, when compared to the 2002 national election where there was more than one death a day (Radio New Zealand International, February 2, 2006). The change of the electoral system and the improvement in some areas illustrates the impact of the new system on the wider population in the way they voted, and at the same time meeting the expectations of the change. A study by the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (2005) suggests that PNG presents itself as one of the few developing countries with an unbroken record of continuous competitive elections and frequent peaceful changes of government; further illustrating the effects apparently similar electoral systems can have. Thus, PNG is among the few countries that “adopted, abandoned and then re-adopted a particular electoral system” (Reilly, in IDEA; 2005).

The Alternative Voting system (AV) was used under the Australian Government before independence from 1964 to 1975. In 1975, the First Past the Post system was proposed and used until 2002; and Limited Preferential Voting system (LPV) was first used in 2007 elections. The change of the electoral system to apply the Limited Preferential Voting System is because the LPV is assumed to be more democratic.

Limited Preferential Voting System

Limited Preferential Voting or LPV is the voting system currently used in Papua New Guinea and is claimed to be more democratic than the two other voting systems24 (the Alternate Voting and the First Past the Post). Expectations of the LPV system included increase in the number of formal voters to at least over eighty-five percent, and a decrease in the informal votes with better understanding of the LPV system (May et al, 2013). It was observed by the National Research Institute that “there was a high level support for the LPV system” (ibid.p.4). The team that observed the 2007 election where LPV was first implemented suggested that there was more cooperation between the candidates and their supporters, and increased popular support for the Members of Parliament to over fifty percent of the total votes. Thus, LPV was described as a ‘user-friendly’ system.25 Outcome included but not limited to the decrease in reported violence,26 increase number of voters, especially women were able to vote more freely in some areas. The positive behavior of women supported the argument that three choices under the LPV system allowed more broad participation, and women especially were able to vote more freely to some degree. Further, this tends to explain the increase in the number of women candidates running as

24 Anere 1997, Sepoe 2002
they have more chances of winning with more voter choices especially from the women voters. The three choices provided the women who ran for election have high chances of winning because all votes on the ballots are important and can contribute to any candidates winning. The voters have more chances to vote and the women have more chances to win through the elimination process. This tends to be a possible reason for the increase in number of women candidates running in the 2012 election; the three choices allowed more women candidates. For instance, voting has been based on clan/ethnic lines, but with the three choices at least allow women to vote more broadly including voting for women candidates as well.

One of the contributing factors to the increase number of voters and especially the number of women turnout (voters and candidates) was the awareness on voter information and education carried out by the Electoral Commission with support from the international organizations such as AusAID’s Electoral Support Program, and collaboration with civil society organizations.27

Though the Limited Preferential Voting system was recently applied in only two elections so far (2007 and 2012), there have been some positive changes. Reports28 on election observations established that there was a decrease in violence especially in the highlands region; and an increase in the number of female voter turnout. In these areas, women felt they could participate in the free and fair elections without as much manipulation and violence compared to when the First Past the Post system was used (ibid). The change of the electoral system also was aimed to encourage more women to run for election, and in turn improve their representation in parliament. In this way, women have more chances to vote for more than one candidate compared to the First Past the Post system, especially for women who are running as candidates.

Despite the increase in the number of women voters and the number of women candidates, there were contributing factors to women candidates not winning, and the hurdles range from money, resources, logistical support, traditions and customs, violence and intimidation (more widespread in past elections). Sarah Garap who contested the Chimbu Regional seat in 2002 elections said that men got into the parliament through excessive use of violence that led to unfair and improper voting. As a result, none of the 36 women candidates who ran in the province won: 28 for the local government, seven for open and two for the regional seat. Margaret Loko, who ran in Port Moresby under the National Alliance Party was aware that women will be contesting with men who will be buying votes, and based on short term promises, when compared to women candidates’ messages were of long term platforms that usually include reduction of poverty by delivery of basic services, transparency and accountability (Radio New Zealand “PNG women election contenders pushing hardship message,” April 30 2012). Money as well as other resources contributed to challenges that women candidates faced. Resources contribute to hindering effective campaigning especially in the rural areas. Daphne Kapao, Tewai-Siassi candidates, stated in an interview that women lack access to money and resources that men have; thus, tends to contribute to their difficulty in competing with men (Radio New Zealand, November 28, 2011; “PNG election hopeful calls for UN to back women candidates”). Further, most of the women candidates had to challenge the customs and traditions of “big man” culture, that also impede on the push for the 22 reserved seats for women in Parliament.

In the 2012, the political parties continued the trend of not willing to endorse women candidates.\textsuperscript{31} As a result, compared to the 2007 election, of the 103 women candidates, 22 out of a total of 34 political parties registered only 39 women candidates; whereas 60 women candidates were endorsed in the 2012 elections out of the of 165 total women candidates. One of the contributing factors to endorsing women in political parties was because of the active participation of women leaders in respective political parties, particularly in candidate selections: Dame Carol Kidu as a Member of Parliament under the Melanesian Alliance Party endorsed four women candidates during 1997 elections, while Janet Sape the deputy president of the Action Party endorsed five women candidates.\textsuperscript{32} Women endorsed by political parties were described as a short term relationship between the parties and the women candidates, mainly because endorsements were slow when strategic activities such as preparation for campaigning were confirmed before party endorsement (Sepoe, in May 2013). According to Sepoe, this illustrates the nature of the political parties, “parties and candidates do not necessarily have long term relationships, a reflection of the weak party system in Papua New Guinea” (Sepoe cited in May, 2013; 143). A large number of the women however, run as independent candidates, and this lessen their chances of winning because they are less supported especially from political parties. The three current women parliamentarians were all endorsed by political parties. The Triumph Heritage Empowerment Party (THE Party) endorsed three women among a total of 73 members, saw two of the women win in the 2012 election. All three women were declared winners by the elimination process, and not by primary votes.

\textsuperscript{31} Email by Alphonse Gelu, Registrar of Political Parties and candidates. April 7, 2014
The LPV system allows a candidate to win based on absolute majority (50 percent plus 1 vote) or through the elimination process.\(^{33}\) Both processes depend on the three choices a voter indicated on a ballot paper. Given the decentralized system of the government, the National, Provincial and Local Level Governments; these determined the number of ballots one has to fill. For instance, coming from the North East electorate in the Nation’s Capital, Port Moresby, I had to fill two ballot papers in the 2012 elections: one for North East Electorate and one for Nations Capital where I had three choices for each ballot paper. The LPV process allows a voter more preferences for candidates; while candidates have more chances of winning. In this way, the three choices of a voter are all important towards a candidate’s win.

The women voters’ number increased indicating more participation of women at the lower levels. The LPV system allowed women to cast more votes for more than one candidate, and this gives chances for women candidates to be marked on the ballot boxes as well.

There are two processes involved in the counting of votes. The first step is when votes are distributed based on voter’s first preference or choice, and then counted. If a candidate receives an absolute majority of 50 percent plus 1 vote (more than half of the formal votes), he or she is declared a winner (Electoral Commission Papua New Guinea 2012). For example, if there were five candidates who contested in an electorate with a total registered population of 5,000 eligible voters, the candidate who reaches the total number of 2,500 and 1 percent or more votes, is declared the winner ahead of all other four candidates. However, if none of the candidate reaches the total of 50 percent plus one of the total votes, then the next step is the elimination round one.

The candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated; and his/her ballot papers of voters’ second choice are distributes to the respective candidate still in the count. So in our example, if we had four candidates remaining, and if after second preferences are distributed to

the four candidates, upon reaching 50 percent plus one percent of the votes by one of them, he or she is declared winner. And if not, the distribution of preferences continues in this manner until one candidate reaches more than half of all the formal votes counted to be declared a winner. In our example, more than 2,500 of the registered number of voters to be declared the winner. In this way, the winner receives votes more broadly. In other words, he gains more than fifty percent to win, in contrast to previous voting system where winner can win with only twenty percent of the votes counted.

Once counts are declared through primary votes or the elimination process, the winner is declared for each electorate. The leader of the party that has the majority of its members win the election usually forms the coalition. He is then formally appointed as the Prime Minister by the Governor General as the Head of State, and representative of the Queen. Major political parties currently forming the coalition include the People’s National Congress Party, the Triumph Heritage Party, the National Alliance, and the People’s Progress Party. Historically, there has never been one party that has won enough seats to occupy the single-chamber parliament. Consequently, cabinet reshuffles and series of vote of no confidence occur frequently; hence, causing political instability.

Papua New Guinea is made up of 22 provinces, 89 Districts, 313 local level governments and 6,131 wards. There are 111 seats in parliament represented by 21 Provincial and the Nation’s Capital Governor, and 89 District Members. The local government and ward representatives are elected for local level governments. This is captured in the 1995 reforms to the Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local Level governments, relating to the decentralization of public administration to the district level in the hope of improving service delivery at the local level.

However, this remains a challenge for policy makers and service delivery,\textsuperscript{36} as the power distribution is ‘top down’ and most resources are not equally distributed. Consequently, demonstrates that there is no effective accountability mechanism between the voters and their leaders.

In the NRI report of March 2010,\textsuperscript{37} electoral participation is an indicator showing the extent of voter participation in the processes and institutions of democracy; also illustrates the legitimacy level of the elected officials to which they belong (performance for that matter). In other words, voter turnout shows the effectiveness of the electoral process. It is the expression of “the percentage of eligible voters who cast a ballot in an election.”\textsuperscript{38} The problems encountered with voter turnout in PNG included, ‘ghost voters’, deliberate disenfranchisement of groups of voters, geographic or other barriers which prevented citizens to freely participate, and voters deliberately boycott elections (ibid.). As a result, initiatives were developed to reduce electoral fraud to ensure free and fair elections. For instance, an entirely new electoral roll was developed in 2006, aimed at reducing the numbers of ‘ghost names’. The new roll was supposed to bring voter participation more in-line with the eligible voting population. However, the 2002 Roll with 5.3 million names was significantly inflated (National Research Institute 2010). This shows that the formal institutional changes do not necessarily address all areas, and women’s political participation, especially their representation remains a challenge for formal institutions. As the next section will show, the electoral process and its implementation have implications in areas relating to gender and equality.

Electoral Process and Implementation

The Electoral process in Papua New Guinea was designed to allow all citizens to have the right to one vote and in one electorate only, despite gender, must be above voting age of 18, be of

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{36} National Research Institute report of March 2010 “Papua New Guinea, Districts and Provincial Data”,
\textsuperscript{37} ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} ibid.
\end{footnotesize}
sound mind and has lived in the electorate for six months or more (Electoral Commission of Papua New Guinea 2012). These requirements enforce the democratic practice of the “one person one vote” principle. Further, the utmost aim of the electoral system is to have a free and fair election, and only upon registering one’s name on the Electoral Roll, is one is able to vote. However, implications of the electoral process tend to impact on women’s political participation. Women’s representation remains one of the lowest in the world since its independence in 1975, at less than three percent at every election. Women voters do not “fully” and “freely” participate in the elections through voting and in running for seats in parliament. Consequently, PNG is rated partly free, at a freedom rating of 3.5 out of 5, civil liberties at 3.5, and political rights at 4 (Freedom House 2013). Countries ranked under partly free category are characterized “by some restrictions on political rights and civil liberties, often in the context of corruption, weak rule of law, ethnic strife, or civil war” (ibid.). In spite of the absence of civil war (except the resolved Bougainville 20 year conflict), corruption and abuse by officials is rampant in PNG involving ministers and elites of the country, to the extent that it is described as “effectively legalized.” PNG was ranked 150 out of 176 by Transparency International’s 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index. Evidently, corrupt practices are reported on a daily basis. Corrupt practices further affect the electoral process as voters and candidates are involved vote buying for instance.

Commonwealth observers for the 2012 National Elections observed that increase vote buying was noted as one of the common problems in the 2012 election. Corrupt practices involve large sums of money, from individuals at rural government offices all the way to private businesses. This is partly because of the demands of capitalism and increased consumerism life, people engage in such practice to meet the changed/increased

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40 Transparency International Papua New Guinea 2012
standard of living; while others tend to maintain their status and strengthen their relationships through such practices. All these tend to come down to wanting more, in other words greed. Observers and commentators in the 2002 general elections argued that “political competition has significantly intensified, partly as a result of declining service capacity but also because of the incentives to gain access to various resources and electorate funds controlled by MP’s” (Ladley and Williams 2007, 10). Consequently, the voters are likely to be denied their constitutional rights and may lead to marginalization by foul play.42

With the establishment of the Task Force Sweep Team (TFST) in 2001, a total of 52 corruption cases have been investigated with a recovery of some $27 million; some of these cases were related to the former Prime Minister, Michael Somare and his wife. According to the TFST report, almost half of the country’s development budget from 2009 through 2011 had been lost to corrupt practices. Given the work of TFST among others, the 2013 freedom ranking out of a scale of 5 by the Freedom House, shows improvements in the civil and political rights mechanisms rated at 3.5, when compared to 2007 rate of 3. Freedom of speech is another area that is generally respected, where the media can provide independent coverage of controversial issues such as alleged police abuse, official corruption, and opposition views (Freedom House 2013). However, the report noted that occasionally critical reporting is limited by the government and politicians through the use of media laws and defamation lawsuits. This shows that despite written laws encouraging freedom of individuals; in practice, there is gender discrimination in accessibility to political mechanisms such as laws; hence it is difficult for women to participate equally.

Occurring at the local level and increasingly a national concern, domestic violence and discrimination against women in Papua New Guinea is described as widespread by the Freedom House. Many cases of domestic violence are not reported. Women are frequently barred from voting by their husbands and male relatives, and on occasions they are manipulated in their voting

42 ibid.p.10.
mostly at the local level. Consequently these factors contribute to the underrepresentation of women in government, and in other sectors as well. The 2013 Human Development Report by the UNDP\(^{43}\) shows that PNG’s Gender Inequality Index (GII) is ranked at 134 out of 145 countries in the 2012 index. This refers to the 2.7 percent parliamentary seats held by women; the 6.8 percent adult women who have reached a secondary or higher level of education when compared to 14.1 percent males; and the Health issues, where for instance, for every 100,000 live births, 230 women die from pregnancy related issues. Furthermore, female participation in the Labor force stands at 70.6 percent as compared to 74.1 percent for men. Women have been contributing to the economy of the country in different sectors including agriculture, business, and government; however, inequality is prevalent not only in the political sphere but also in other crucial areas such as education, health and employment. To alleviate women’s status, at least the implementation of the LPV system was partly aimed to improve the political status of women; facilitating equal participation of all citizens to politically participate and vote based on free and fair election. Consequently, women were able to vote freely in many areas, including the implementation of voting booths separated for women voters in some areas; while in other areas occurrence of common challenges such as voter manipulation and vote buying were reported.\(^{44}\)

**Election Voter Turnout, Political Participation**

The implementation of LPV allows voters three choices; thus gives more chances for women representation. In other words, the three choices allow women candidates more chances to win, especially with women voters who can support other women. It is common trend that women do support other women. In the case of Papua New Guinea, common practice of women voters, votes according to their husband’s preferences. With the LPV system, the women voters have more chances of voting their preferred candidates; thus increase the chances of women

\(^{44}\) National Research Institute Report 2013;
candidates to win. The Electoral Commission of Papua New Guinea encourages every eligible voting citizen to participate specified in the Electoral Commission’s website;

Every qualified, adult PNG citizen must register on the electoral roll and cast his or her own vote. You can only enroll in one (1) electorate – which is your current place of residence. It is illegal to enroll more than once, or enroll in other electorates, other than where you currently live. Every eligible citizen has only one (1) vote. To exercise your right to vote, you must cast your own vote. Your vote is private. The secrecy of your vote is protected in law. No one has the right to know who you voted for – or to force you to vote for any candidate. It is illegal to bribe, force or threaten you to enroll in an electorate other than where you are qualified, or to vote for any particular candidate (Electoral Commission of Papua New Guinea 2011).

The 2012 election result showed 76.89 percent voter turnout from the total number of registered voters (4,776,096 registered voter population). A likely explanation for people’s behavior is because voting is not compulsory in PNG. People tend to think it is not so important if they do not vote. As a result, many prospective voters are not keen to know the facts about the candidates or the parties running, that lead to not all eligible voters casting their vote. Further, around 80 percent of the population live in the rural areas, and most of their lifestyles are structured around cultural norms and expectations that portray cultural importance of supporting the candidate they know, or who is related to them, most likely someone from their own electorate. A study by Korare (2002) argues that there seem to be a tendency for people to vote along tribal lines, where the winner represents the most populous tribe in the region. For instance, the bigman culture embedded in most of the society where men are seen as leaders in the

46 Bigman concept refers to someone who has a lot of wealth in terms of money, land, pigs and even wives. This notion is common in the Highlands region but is slowly incorporated in other region’s way of life. According to the Commonwealth Report, “the ‘big man’ culture by which certain male figures are seen as the center of power and influence for a community or tribe, extends into national politics” (Commonwealth
community; when a bigman intends to run for office, the people support him as a show of respect because of his status in the society. On the other hand, they are likely to request his help if they need assistance. The people and the bigman relations show a reciprocity relation that does not substantiate on the part of the people as a community, but sometimes benefit certain individuals in the community especially those related to the bigman. As a result, some receive contribution from the Member of Parliament for events such as bride price and compensation settlements. The bigman mentality reflects the patriarchal norms embedded in the society, and is practiced even today when one is running for any political office. This situation was observed as common when the “First-Past the Post” system was used (National Research Institute 2009). This practice has disadvantage women, as only men are perceived as leaders or big men among the society.

In addition, research shows material exchange for vote is common in these areas, especially vote buying. This is problematic as there is no effective control mechanism, and no active tool to disseminate information for voters to know the candidates, the political parties running, and the process of voting, except through media and limited awareness, which is not accessible by everyone. Sepoe describes the behavior of the voters as “market place activity’ selling and buying votes from candidates and their parties, where the vested interest will conspire to get the best deal out of this political market activity” (Sepoe 2002). She warned that the state will continue to operate as the market place unless this behavior is made to stop. Money politics still makes a significant component of gaining votes in PNG today. The following table (table 2) shows voter turnout increased every election year and under different electoral systems, it also demonstrates how effective each system is at that given time. The voter turnout details from the year 1964 to 1997 was extracted from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2011), while the data on the elections after the year 2002 was taken from Inter-

Parliamentary Union Report (2013), where some recent information was not available. Thus, the analysis was based on the provided information. The table indicates an increase in the number of voters in each election indicating either improvement in the electoral system or the change of people’s behaviors and perceptions towards the electoral system. For instance, despite some literature indicating an increase in the number of women voters after the change of the electoral system from the First Past the Post to the LPV voting system, women still lack full participation in the political arena. But again there are other explanations and challenges that result in not all eligible voters casting their vote as citizens of the nation, as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Total Number of voters for each election year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Voting age population</th>
<th>Registratio n</th>
<th>Voter Turn- out %</th>
<th>VAP Turnout %</th>
<th>Total vote</th>
<th>Electoral system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>6,310,129</td>
<td>3,160,695</td>
<td>4,776,096</td>
<td>76.89</td>
<td>3,672,251</td>
<td>LPV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>5,795,887</td>
<td>3,160,695</td>
<td>3,938,839</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LPV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>5,049,055</td>
<td>2,765,931</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>FPTP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>4,250,935</td>
<td>2,272,626</td>
<td>3,414,072</td>
<td>65.74</td>
<td>98.76</td>
<td>2,244,531</td>
<td>FPTP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>3,847,000</td>
<td>2,272,626</td>
<td>1,987,994</td>
<td>81.20</td>
<td>71.03</td>
<td>1,614,251</td>
<td>FPTP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>3,482,000</td>
<td>1,775,820</td>
<td>1,843,128</td>
<td>73.54</td>
<td>76.33</td>
<td>1,355,477</td>
<td>FPTP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982*</td>
<td>3,094,000</td>
<td>1,577,940</td>
<td>2,309,621</td>
<td>51.70</td>
<td>75.68</td>
<td>1,194,114</td>
<td>FPTP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>2,808,000</td>
<td>1,460,160</td>
<td>1,607,635</td>
<td>60.35</td>
<td>66.44</td>
<td>970,172</td>
<td>FPTP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>2,580,000</td>
<td>1,341,600</td>
<td>1,386,845</td>
<td>59.85</td>
<td>61.86</td>
<td>829,963</td>
<td>AV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>2,310,000</td>
<td>1,201,200</td>
<td>1,515,119</td>
<td>48.45</td>
<td>61.12</td>
<td>734,118</td>
<td>AV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>2,101,000</td>
<td>1,113,530</td>
<td>1,028,339</td>
<td>72.30</td>
<td>66.77</td>
<td>743,489</td>
<td>AV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: every election was not compulsory voting.
*invalid votes at 1.80%


47 The total population.
48 The voting age population (VAP) includes all citizens above the legal age of voting.
49 Number of registered votes. The number of names on the voters’ register at the time that the registration processes closes.
50 The voter turnout (of the only or final round) as defined as the % of registered voters who actually voted.
51 The voter turnout as defined as the percentage of the voting age population that actually voted.
52 The total number of votes cast in the relevant election. Total vote includes valid and invalid votes.
Women’s population is as important as the men’s when considering the number of women elected in PNG’s political history. Despite the slight difference between men and women’s population in each province, there is a lack of direct political participation by the women. This is evident that there is political inequality between men and women, as men tend to dominate the national, provincial and local levels of government. In turn, women are not directly represented with less than three percent of the seats in parliament occupied by women today. The distribution of population by gender indicated by the statistics of 2000 by region in table 2 shows the women voters’ number compared to men, provide by Anere (2009). Thus, the direct representation through the number of women elected does not reflect the female population.

Table 2: Population by gender in provincial electorates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province/Regional Electorate</th>
<th>Women’s population</th>
<th>Men’s population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East New Britain Province</td>
<td>104 429</td>
<td>115 704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West New Britain Province</td>
<td>85 493</td>
<td>99 015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milne Bay</td>
<td>100 744</td>
<td>109 668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCD Regional</td>
<td>115 185</td>
<td>138 9674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Sepik Province</td>
<td>171 169</td>
<td>172 012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madang Province</td>
<td>174 784</td>
<td>190 322</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data adopted from Anere 2009.

Studies show that the participation of women at each election has improved in recent years, when compared to previous years. According to the NRI Report based on the 2007 National General election observation, “observers around the country noted that female voter turnout has increased, especially in the Highlands Provinces” (National Research Institute Report 2007, 3). Many women were able to cast their votes at the general elections, though not all.53 In rural places mostly, there were instances of manipulation of voters (both male and female),

53 Studies based on recent election mentioned an increase in voters (National Research Institute: Centre for Democratic Institute for instance), but were not able to provide figures of voters by gender. Regular contact with the Electoral Commission of Papua New Guinea could not provide the data on the same because they do not have e-copies.
including intimidation, bribery, and coercion based upon the husband’s preference. Many women (and men) lack the knowledge of the party’s platform and the candidates’ background. Urban places, such as cities, were quite different. Voters were comprised of people from different ethnic groups, educational background, and age group. These differences have an impact on the way women voted. Over time, these factors impact the way a person vote, and consequently power dynamics between politics and culture create a complex situation that impact on women’s political participation.

People are caught in certain situations during election. First, the fact that election are competitive, presents the people a competitive situation. People’s votes tend to be shaped by their clans’ ties, especially in the rural areas. In fact, at the local level, there is ‘mixed’ support among men especially when it comes to women candidates and when asked about the proposed 22 served seats for women in parliament; the main reason tend to be traditions and customs.54 According to the Radio New Zealand in an interview conducted on the July 3 2013, an unemployed father of two says that men are against the bill for their own sake, as women are seen as second class and as a threat to men. Other men, like Toni, young man of mid-twenties believes that women’s rights are not recognized and that makes them legally entitled to contest the elections (ibid.).

According to Orovu Sepoe’s observation in the 2007 elections, women’s choices during election were mostly predetermined despite the ideology of free choice, while other places experienced intimidation of women voters mostly by their husband and male relatives (May et al, 2013). This demonstrates the difficulty in changing the social and cultural environment that reflects in the way the voters vote. Hence, the change of the LPV system seem to have little or no have impact on the perception of the women voters, especially where Sepoe was observing in

54 Radio New Zealand. July 3, 2012; “Push for more females in PNG parliament held back by traditional attitudes.”
Kerema, women tend to prefer male leadership.  

Women voter’s attitude towards women candidates described by Sepoe as insignificance (cited in May et al, 2013), and this showed in their non-popularity in the electorate, lack of awareness on ‘women’s rights and ‘gender equality’, rural women’s challenging the candidates and particularly views that challenge the candidates (both women and men) based on experience on the ground. The women’s choices therefore, mostly reflected their husbands or male relatives’ influences, in line with the cultural norms where men are accepted as leaders and not women. But Sepoe also observed in Kerema 2007 election that there were evidences of changing perceptions of women as well as men were supportive of women candidates, in recognizing some poor qualities of male candidates (ibid.) The observation in Kerema in the 2007 elections could be similar to other rural areas especially women voters’ choices influenced by male relatives, but also a changing perception generally.

Political Parties in the Electoral Process

Political parties, the election of members to parliament, and the political party’s functions are important components of the electoral process. The electoral process remains a crucial formal institution to ensure democracy rule, however can “either make or break a nation depending on who is elected through what process” (Varey 2012, 2). Thus, political parties are important democratic mechanisms in linking the citizens to their government through the electoral system. In other words, political parties are vehicles that are supposed to positively influence the electoral process towards a free and fair election, or as the Electoral Commission termed “free, fair and safe election”. But the 2012 election, though safe; democratically it was not totally free and fair (ibid. p.8). The recent election (2012) had the highest number of 46 parties

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56 This theme was chosen by the Electoral Commission, and supported by other organizations like the Transparency International (PNG). [http://www.pngec.gov.pg/](http://www.pngec.gov.pg/)
contested. Out of total number of women candidates, 44 percent were endorsed by political parties (60 women out of the 135 women candidates), while 65 ran as independents candidates. Among the main political parties, Prime Minister’s O’Neil’s party, People’s National Congress party endorsed one woman and 88 male candidates; Former PM Michael Somare’s National Alliance Party endorsed two females among 74 candidates. Opposition leader, Belden Namah’s PNG Party did not endorse any woman, and neither did former Prime Minster Julius Chan’s People’s Progress Party who had 40 male candidates.\textsuperscript{57} In contrast, Triumph Heritage Party (THE party) led by Don Polye, endorsed 3 women out of 73 candidates, and set the record of two of the three candidates elected- Delilah Gore and Julie Soso; while Loujaya Toni was under the Indigenous People’s Party. This demonstrates that only certain parties endorse women candidates, showing little interest that they generally have in endorsing women.\textsuperscript{58} The likely reason for this is because the party system tends to be more individual focused than based on policies and labels; and the endorsement of candidates were mostly based on party preferences. For instance, political parties have a tendency to endorse the candidates they know will win the election, such as those with resources, because the parties do not need to fund them.\textsuperscript{59} On the other hand, a great number of candidates run as independents, and only align themselves with parties after they are elected,\textsuperscript{60} described as the ‘numbers game’ in PNG politics. Number's game or “yo-yo politics" characterizes the constant shifting of MP’s between parties.\textsuperscript{61} Political parties in PNG are thus, 

\textsuperscript{57}Centre for Democratic Institutions. (20 March 2013). Changing face of Parliament? Three women elected in PNG. \url{http://www.cdi.anu.edu.au/_png/2012-13/2012_10_PRO_PNG_WCT_FP.html}
\textsuperscript{58}ibid.
defined concisely by Ben Reilly in his paper on ‘Electoral Incentives for Inter-Ethnic Accommodation,’

PNG has a very fluid party system, based on individuals rather than ideologies, and all governments so far have been weak coalitions, which have changed on the floor of parliament as well as at elections. The single-member system of representation has resulted in high levels of turnover of politicians from one election to the next and in a strong sense of accountability on the part of most local members to their electorate. However, under the AV system this sense of accountability tended to be spread across a number of groups, whereas under FPT P a member’s clan base is sometimes his or her sole focus (Reilly 2006).

Partly based on the sentiments raised by Reilly, political parties continue to be described as weak and fragmented. Consequently, political parties seldom tend to have well-defined positions on issues, which further describe their loose organization and lack of structure. This argument tend to suggest the difficulty that women face to secure party endorsement, despite the financial incentive for political parties endorsing women specified in the Organic Law on Integrity of Political Parties and Candidate (OLIPPAC). Nevertheless, the women candidates trend shows slight increase in the number of women endorsed by political parties since independence, and the highest in the recent election was 60 out of the 135 total number of women candidates. The current three women parliamentarians were endorsed and supported by political parties. The following table shows the number of women candidates endorsed in each election year. Despite the electoral process functions to facilitate free and fair election in theory, the

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62 Anere 2007, Sepoe 2002
64 Sepoe (2002); the Centre for Democratic Institution (2013); Haley and Anere (2009).
reality is that women in PNG continue to face inequality in representation. The data in table three (3) demonstrates an increase in the number of women candidates in every election; however, the number of women elected remains stagnant between one and three, and this is disturbing.

Table 3: Party allegiance of women candidates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Elections</th>
<th>Number of women candidates</th>
<th>Party Affiliations</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Number of women won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The information for the year 1972 was gathered from other literature.

Source: Data adapted from Sepoe (2002).

Thus, chapter three expounds on this concern, that forms the crux of the thesis in analyzing the trend of women elected in drawing out the challenges that hinder women to not only run but especially to win office. The historical evaluation therefore, has demonstrated the complex relationship of power dynamics between politics and other factors of inequality overtime especially culture, which continue to hinder the women population to equally participate politically. Hence, in the study conducted by Andrew Ladley and Jessie Williams (2007), in terms of voter’s and candidates’ opinions about the electoral system in PNG and the representative government, Alphonse Gelu’s argument is precise in describing that, “liberal democratic political culture never took root”, further added by Bill Standish that “authoritarian styles of non-liberal politics better reflect indigenous political customs” in PNG. The women population makes up approximately half of the total population and deserves to be given equal opportunity to be

politically ‘active’ in participation, and to be ‘truly’ represented.

Women’s participation at the national level started in 1961 with the appointment of two women representatives, Alice Wedega and Roma Isabelle Bates,\(^{66}\) to the House of Assembly under the colonial administration. The 1972 election saw for the first time one woman out of the four women candidates elected into parliament. She was Josephine Abaijah from Milne Bay Province. The first three elections (1964, 1968, and 1972) were significant in the process of decolonization, because they were part of the political learning process and also show the transfer of decision making power from Australia to Papua New Guinea (Safu 1996). The political process of pre-independence was significant in shaping women’s participation as well. Since independence (1975), a total of seven women served in the parliament over a period of almost forty years. The total number of women elected demonstrates women’s low performances in the political arena especially as representatives at the national level politics. Table four (4) shows the number of women appointed to the Legislative Office from 1961 under Australian colonial administration, and elected after that.

\(^{66}\) See Appendix D for all women leader’s biography both appointed and elected.
Table 4: Number of women serving at the National level politics (1961-2012).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislative council</th>
<th>Number of men</th>
<th>Number of women candidate</th>
<th>Number of women Elected</th>
<th>Names of women</th>
<th>Number of men elected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951-61</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-1963</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Alice Wedega, Roma Bates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Parliament</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964 (1st general election)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>64 (10 appointed officials)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>94 (10 appointed officials)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Josephine Abaijah</td>
<td>106 (4 appointed officials and 3 appointed community representatives)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977 *</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Josephine Abaijah, Nahau Rooney, Waliyato Clowes</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nahau Rooney</td>
<td>108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Josephine Abaijah, Carol Kidu</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Carol Kidu</td>
<td>108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Carol Kidu</td>
<td>108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 *</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Julie Soso, Loujaya Toni, Delilah Gore</td>
<td>108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* highest number of women elected in PNG (3 women)

Source: Data adapted from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2011).
Brief History of Women in Politics

With the establishment of the House of Assembly in 1951, Alice Wedega and Roma Isabelle Bates were appointed by the Colonial administration in 1961. Before their appointments, they were mostly involved with women’s issues particularly, that tend to contribute to them being the first of many things, especially for Alice Wedega. Alice Wedega, from Milne Bay Province was heavily influenced by the London Missionary Society (LMS). She became an educator and was actively engaged in church and community roles, to becoming the first principle of the school built by Kwato Missionaries. She also initiated community programs to help women and girls in her community, where she taught home economics (Sepoe, cited in Saffu 2006). These activities led her to be involved in government work, becoming the first Papuan woman to be appointed in 1952 to represent PNG at the Pan-Pacific Women’s Conference in New Zealand, the first indigenous woman appointed to serve in the House of Assembly from 1961 to 1963, and the first national woman to receive the Member of British Empire Award (MBE) recognizing her as a Dame. She was also the first PNG woman to publish her autobiography titled Listen My Country (1981). Dame Alice died December 3 1987, in Ahioma, Milne Bay Province. Her exposure through her work from community to overseas travels expanded her boundaries for a national woman at that time. First, she was appointed as the first indigenous woman to become a member in the largely expatriated and male dominated Legislative Council (1961 to 1964); and second, she was able to represent PNG women in not only leadership positions but also overseas conferences.

Appointed at the Provincial level, Roma Isabelle Bates was also nominated by the Australian Administration as the Member of the Legislative Council in Madang province from 1961 to 1963. Before her nomination to become a member at the Provincial level, she worked for

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67 See appendix D for her brief political biography
the Provincial administration in Rabaul, and was known for her proficiency as a stenographer. 68 While in Rabaul, she was mostly interested in community affairs 69 and founded the Women’s club in West New Britain Province and other community organizations. She also held office in several important organizations (Scouts, Guides, Women’s groups and amateur activities). She was described as someone who was passionate about PNG affairs “right to the end, Roma maintained a love for and a keen interest in PNG affairs.” 70 She died August 30th 2010, at the age of 100. 71 The appointment of the two women marked the first time women were able to represent other women at the national level.

The first general election conducted in 1964 drew three women candidates, Ana Frank (a national), Shirley Ann Mckellar and Kay Aschcroft-Smith (both expatriates). None of the women candidates were elected in 1964. According to Hughes and van der Veur’s (1965:129) assessment on the failure of the women at that time, he concluded that the results were “not surprising, considering that even in the Native Local Level Government field, only three of 4,473 councilors were women- two in Mekeo and one in Rigo,” and thus, “it may well be a very long time before the House of Assembly seats its first elected woman member” (cited in Sepoe: Saffu 1996, 108). The election of 1968 saw no woman won. In fact, there was only one woman candidate, Mrs. J. Wilkinson (wife of an expatriate planter trader) who vied for the Esa-ala Open seat; however, she did not win. A general observation of the 1968 election turnout, (also can be applied to the first general election results) tend to reflect the traditional culture of the PNG patriarchal society where, “very few people indeed, including women, were very sympathetic to the idea of a female representative in the House of Assembly …. It not only went against the grain of traditional culture for a woman to stand and talk as an equal in the councils of men but it was almost

68 Vale, PNGAA (December 2010) http://www.pngaa.net/Vale/vale_dec10.htm
69 ibid.
70 Pat and Ross Johnson cited in Vale, PNGAA (December 2010).
71 See Appendix D for her brief political biography
unthinkable that she would be able to achieve anything that a man could not (Epstein et. al 1971: 103; cited Saffu 1996: 109). Thus, the results tend to reflect the patriarchal notion that women cannot be accepted in the decision making arena applied for women candidates at that time.

The election of 1972 set the path for women in politics as Josephine Abaijah became the first woman to be elected among the four women candidates. Josephine Abaijah from the Milne Bay Province founded the political movement called the Papua Besena, where she lobbied for the unsuccessful separation of the Papua/Southern region to be alienated from the rest of Papua New Guinea. She entered politics and stood for the Central Regional seat, because the people of Central wanted her to represent them. Her success was significant for women’s political participation, breaking the cycle of male dominance in parliament. However, in terms of decision making for women’s progress, her presence was insignificant in influencing decision-making in this area (Sepoe, cited in Saffu, 1996). The reason being that apart from the fact that she was the only woman out of the 108 men in the Parliament; especially her political movement, the Papua Besena, was her priority because it was the main driver for her success (ibid).

The 1977 post-independence national election was the first time three women out of the ten women candidates were elected into parliament. The three women’s win set the record as the first time not only three women were elected, but the highest number of women elected in PNG’s history. These women were Josephine Abaijah, Nahau Rooney, and Waliyato Clowes, the two latter were first timers in parliament. They won due to various factors, considering the time and

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72 According to Ralph R Premdas (1977), Papua Besena’s declaration of a separation was more symbolic than political significance. Josephine Abaijah’s ceremonies were mostly peaceful including producing replicas of the gifts of the Australian government (i.e. hunting knife, two sticks of tobacco, three ship’s biscuits and an axe). Further, on one occasion, she lowered an Australian flag and replaced it with the Papua Besena’s flag, as the Papuan Crowd clapped their hands and sang their national anthem. Ralph R. Premdas.1977, in Secession and Political Change: the case for Papua Besena. in Oceania. Vol 47. No 4 pp. 284-299.

place they were running.\textsuperscript{74} At the national level, the political environment at that time was significant towards their win, assessed by Orovu Sepoe as;

The system was fresh and fluid. It was relatively free of entrenched interest, whether economic, social intellectual or political. PNG has just gained independence two years earlier. The economic factor has not yet entered. Politics as an avenue to rapid wealth has not become so obvious then” (cited in Saffu 1996: 115).

Thus, challenges such money, a critical factor for campaigning was an equal measure for both women and men who ran for elections. This suggests that money was not as significant at that time as it is compared to today. At the individual level, despite education system not supportive of women at that time, the few women who did achieve a higher education allowed them exposure to the political arena. Further, aided by other significant factors, including the support from their family, and career path led them to mostly be involved in work that engaged with the people at the local level. All these factors have contributed to their success.

The following election (1982) however, only one of the returning female candidates won - Nahau Rooney. During her time in office, she held various important positions: Minster for Correctional Services, Minister for Justice, Minister for Decentralization, and later became Minister for Culture and tourism (1985-1987). After that, the number of women elected has been stagnant between one and three women elected every election year thereafter. This raises the concern especially among the women for more women to be involved in the political arena.

In the period from 1996 to 1997, the crucial theme became “getting women into Parliament” (Sepoe 2002). This message became dominant in women activities: workshops and forums attended by women leaders from provincial and local levels throughout PNG, and

\textsuperscript{74} See Appendix D for women leaders’ biographies, both appointed and elected into Parliament.
facilitated by women’s organizations, mainly the National Council of Women (NCW) and later Women in Politics (WIP). Consequently, 55 women ran in the 1997 election that saw only two women elected: Carol Kidu and Josephine Abaijah.

After pressure from the women’s groups, in the latter half of the 1990’s, two significant reform platforms under the Morauta Government were established. They were partly aimed at providing more opportunity for women to be represented (National Research Institute 2009). These were the Organic Law on Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates (OLIPPC), and the amendment to the Organic Law on National and Local Level Government Elections (OLPLLG) with the change of the electoral system from the First Past the Post to the Limited Preferential Voting (LPV) system. Specified by May (2011);

In an effort to address the massive underrepresentation of women as electoral candidates in the National Parliament, the OLPPC provided that where a party-endorsed female candidate received at least 10 per cent of the votes cast in her electorate, the Central Fund would reimburse up to 75 percent of the campaign expenses out laid on her by the party.75

The changes likely contributed to the 60 women endorsed by registered political parties in the 2012 election, while 75 stood as independent candidates. The three women elected (Soso, Gore and Toni) arrived under 2 different political parties, the Triumph Heritage Party (Gore and Soso), and People's Indigenous Party (Toni). Their win was a surprise to many, given the political environment, all three were first timers in parliament, and especially the previous government had only one woman- Carol Kidu - (1997-2012) who had served as the only woman in parliament for two consecutive terms (2002-2012).

The election of Carol Kidu in 1997 was the first time an expatriate woman was

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elected in PNG. An Australian by birth, she was married to the first Chief Justice of Papua New Guinea, Sir Buri Kidu in 1969, and lived with his people since. She entered politics after her husband’s death, and stood for what her husband believed in: social justice, human rights, and marginalized groups’ concerns. She represented the women actively from the time she entered politics in 1997 until her retirement in 2012. During her term in office (for 3 consecutive terms), she introduced the Equality and Participation Bill 2009, requiring the 22 reserved seats for women. But the Bill did not get enough votes to be passed in parliament. The Bill came into effect from the 2009 Lae National Leaders Summit. This was supported by the then Somare –Temu Cabinet, and formalized in the NEC Decision 154/2009. There was also widespread support from the international donor partners including the United Nations and the UNIFEM. Because the Bill required constitutional amendment, it needed to go through three readings, debated and two votes for it to be passed as law. February 2012 marked the final time out of three attempts the Bill was presented in parliament, but failed to obtain the absolute majority required to be passed. The Bill was voted 58-1 votes out of 80 members present, which was below the absolute majority of 73 votes needed to pass the bill. During this time, nine Members walked out including the then Public Service Minister, former Lae MP Bart Philemon, who had been against the Bill since its introduction in 2009 (Pacific Island Report 2012). Despite the failed attempt to pass the Bill, Carol Kidu and women activists were hopeful that the new government will reconsider passing the Bill into law.

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76 Refer to Appendix D for information on the leader.
79 ibid.
The failed attempts gave rise to momentous women activities aimed to increase their number in parliament, including the conduct of various workshops and trainings that prepared women candidates in the 2012 elections. These activities assisted women to strategize on campaigning for instance. Two out of the three women who won in the 2012 election also participated in the Practice Parliament for women conducted by the United Nation Development Programme and the Centre for Democratic Institution. The three women’s win in the 2012 election was described as “a major political step for women in PNG”. In fact, their win created the atmosphere that there is a chance for more women to be elected in the coming elections.

One explanation for this reflects the change and other times continuity in the political environment over time. The increase tendency of social movement for instance, contributed to the change of the electoral system to address the widespread underrepresentation of women in the political history of Papua New Guinea. Despite the increased activities of women in recent years, women and politics in PNG remains a ‘man’s game’ as the number of women elected remain stagnant, the highest number of women elected so far been three at any one terms. This further questions the effectiveness of the institutions. Given PNG’s political development, it seems the status of women in politics goes further than the institutions to include other factors as well. Chapter three analyses the trend of the election of women, establishing both the challenges and the opportunities that women face when running for elections. By observing the trend, one is

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able to see the continuity of the trends of challenges that presents the argument that 
women’s underrepresentation goes further than the institutions.
Chapter Three: Analysis of Election Trend

Chapter three describes and analyzes empirical data of elections and their outcomes (1975-2012), showing the trend of women elected in Papua New Guinea. Discussion here include common patterns among the women elected to the parliament and those who did not succeed based on their experiences, election outcome, party politics and people’s views generally. This chapter analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data as to why these women ran for elections, why people voted for them, and who supported them. Hence, the chapter is divided into two parts: first, analysis is drawn from common pattern of challenges that hinder women to run for office, and especially to win in the elections. The second part, in contrast, draws common pattern of opportunities that provided avenues for the few women to win in the past elections. In conclusion, considering the fact that the number of women elected has so far been stagnant, the conclusion will evaluate the two earlier parts to establish why the number of women elected has not increased since independence.

One of the important factors to understand is the background of the winning candidates, as this also contributes to them winning their elections. Patterns of commonalities that present challenges and opportunities for the women who were elected into parliament are drawn from analyzing political biographies of women leaders, media reports, publications and previous literature on Women and Polities in PNG. In the complex web of relationship between politics and culture, each woman’s win has been contributed by several factors from family, community support, experience with people through personal, work or social organizations, number of times they stood in previous election/s, and their education. These variables vary in degree depending on the time and place, and their meaning may have changed overtime. The trend of elected women illustrates an interesting pattern that explains not only why it is difficult for women to be

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82 See Appendix D for a brief political biography of the women candidates who have won over the years.
elected, but also why the number of women elected each election has been stagnant for the last forty years. This is a concern that cannot be overlooked, and implores explanation.

Elected Women Trend (1964-2012)

The women who were appointed representatives to the House of Assembly (colonial period) and especially elected into parliament since independence (post-colonial period) shows some interesting trends. These trends show that democracy in PNG overlaps other areas of inequality that demonstrates the continuity in some areas, but change in other areas. Continuity in this context refers to two things: the trend of the number of women elected that remained stagnant between one and three, and the trend of the variables that determine/cause this continuity historically, the patriarchal embedded norms for instance. Change of trend refers to the measures and the mechanisms implemented to improve the women’s political participation, particularly representation and the degree of positive change with the variables: women’s movement for instance.

The following graphs illustrate the trends of the women representatives who served in the parliament. Figure 2a and b shows the number of women candidates in comparison to the number of women elected in each election year since 1964 in bar and line graph respectively showing the difference clearly in the charts. Figure 3 shows candidates’ trend by gender 1977-2012, and figure 4 shows members in parliament by gender from the year 1977 to 2012. Generally, the graphs shows non-proportional results in number of women elected and women candidates compared to men.
Figure 2: Number of women candidates versus number elected (1964 - 2012).
Figure 3: Candidates trend by gender (1977 - 2012).

Figure 4: Members of Parliament by gender (1977 - 2012).

From the graphs, a curious observation is drawn when the number of women candidates has increased over time, but not the number of the women elected, which remains stagnant at
between one and three women. Observing the trend of the number of women elected at the interval of ten years (2 election periods) since 1972- out of the 4 women candidates who ran, only one won; in 1982, 17 women candidates ran for the election but still only 1 won; 1992- 16 women candidates ran, none won; 2002- 60 women candidates ran, 1 won; and in 2012- 135 women candidates ran, but only 3 women won. What can be drawn from this trend? As the number of female candidates increased every election year, the number of women elected remained between zero and three. PNG had on average only one woman in parliament; sometimes there was none - on two consecutive terms (1987 - 1992). The three women elected in the recent election is not an indication of increase in the number of women in the parliament, but the number of women elected was instead restored. The election of 1977 saw three women elected for the first time, which indicated “a horizontal rather than a vertical gain for PNG” (ibid.). In other words, since independence that saw a total of eight elections so far, the seven women elected illustrate a very low performance of women representation. This is in sharp contrast to the increased number of women candidates every election year. The candidate’s chart by gender, figure 3, shows the increased number of the women candidates running every election year; however, in comparison to the total number of candidates, the rate of women candidates has been no more than 5 percent of the total number of candidates. This is illustrated in chart 3.

The trends tend to show that gender inequality in representation exists both within and outside the legislative office. Hence, women are able to run for elections but are not able to win, resulting in the low number of women in parliament since independence, as shown in Chart 4. As a result women have occupied below three percent of parliamentary seats every election year (Inter Parliamentary Union 2013). The graphs further illustrate that despite the increased number of the women candidates, there is a wide gender gap between the men and the women, both in the

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84 (ibid.)
number of candidates running for elections as well as the numbers elected. The men exceed women’s numbers in both areas of the electoral process. Put another way, men dominate all levels of representation. A likely explanation for this relate to the traditional expected roles of men, “the tradition of male representation of women’s interests prevails at every level of government… as the lack of skills in public speaking and debating excluded women from village politics in the past, so the pattern continues whereby men are expected to be representatives of their clans or local groups” (Brouwer et al 1998, 27-28). Thus, the people’s perception of the male leadership tends to be a continuous challenge for women in politics.

Observing the trend on the graphs raises the question of why have there been very few women elected to the parliament in the past elections, when compared to the increasing number of the female candidates every election year? And further, why is the number of women elected in every election stagnant between one and three women? Drawing from the literature, the media and the internet, there are various explanations for why it is difficult for women to be elected in PNG. The explanations range from the ideological to the material explanation, the state institutions and various aspects of culture. A look at these factors in the following section shows the different challenges the women face varies in time, location and are different for the women.

Why is it Difficult for Women to be Elected?

The women candidates face special challenges upon their decision to run for office, given the trend of gender inequality in representation from the moment they decide to run, during their election campaigns, and even after the elections. There are numerous variations of the challenges they face, as they compete with the men and sometimes even the other women, considering the changes in the environment including the demands of capitalism, democracy, and shifts in the traditional settings. Further, include factors that differ from ideologies to material things that impact the women’s political representation. Overtime, the historical accounts serve as markers to observe the major changes that have impact on the many generations that came after.
Colonization have impact much of the way of life of the people in a country like Papua New Guinea that experienced three different colonial administrations (Germany, Britain, and then Australia). Particularly, colonialism impact gender roles, in turn, influence people’s political choices.

Colonization and the Electoral Politics

Generally, colonization impact on electoral politics. As a result, political choices vary between the men and the women. The literature on elections suggest that there were lessons learnt under the colonial period, especially causing PNG politics to mostly reflect patronage, whether in employment, money or projects. The argument here is that the political citizenship in PNG is more concerned with the personal identity such as the membership of clans for instance; and not so much concerned with policy issues, national government effectiveness or even the political parties. Development policies such as education are geared to improve citizens’ lives; to liberate women, giving them more freedom and autonomy to make their own decision and elevate their status in the community. However, related issues also have altered gender relations within these power dynamics. It is viewed that colonization has also contributed to the decline of women’s status. One impact of colonization is religion and missionaries; particularly the emphasis on the Christian family model where women’s primary role is viewed as a wife and mother. In this case, the women were excluded from the public sphere especially in the political arena. This tends to complement the mostly patriarchal societal norms and structures, where men are expected and accepted in the public sphere. According to the National Census of year 2000, 96 percent of the population identified themselves as Christians; while many combine with traditional belief and

86 ibid. p.11.
practices. The practice of sorcery for instance, is a widespread belief that has consequences on gender roles, and 150 cases of violence and killing were recorded as occurred in one year in only the highland province of Simbu, and the majority has been the women.

Despite the Christian family model, Church activities have created the social network (women and men) of the same belief system. The church network tends to contribute to the support base for the women who won in the recent elections. From this, one can see the impact of colonization overtime in different dimensions, especially on gender roles. This shows that politics interact with other factors like religion to impact the consciousness, behavior and attitudes of people. Abu Zayd’s study demonstrate that, culture is also seen as the main reason for many nations with religious foundation especially Islam, ranked at the bottom in terms of women in parliament (Abu-Zayd, 1998). For instance, almost all the women who have won in the elections have a Christian background. The three women who won in the 2012 elections recognized the support from their churches. Religion as part of the culture can contribute to impede women who want to run for elections, but it can also provide the support system and one way is by establishing alliance within such network.

Their success could be explained in the context of not only religion, but other factors also contributed towards their win. One can only think about the impact that Christianity has on the majority of the people, especially upon those who live in the rural areas. It seems that colonization is positively correlated with patriarchal notion of most societies, which divides gender roles in the society. Hence, further impact the choices people make during elections.

Implications of Traditions and Customs on the Electoral Politics

Apart from embracing modernization, PNG also held onto its culture and beliefs that very much form the basis of the society today. Therefore, it was restated by former Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare;

Upholding our culture and beliefs is about our roots, our identity as true Papua New Guineans, from a traditional society that was handed down by our forefathers. Our village lifestyle must never be forgotten as we move into the new millennium. Our cultures and traditions must go side by side with the education we have gained so that we can unite them (Somare; cited in Ottley 2002; 1).

Traditional customs play an important role when it comes to elections, and tend to impact on the election of women since independence. In fact, traditions and customs have been a common factor discussed in most of the literature on elections.91 Study by Inglehart et al, suggests that, “traditional cultural attitudes have long been suspected to function as a major barrier to women’s representation in elected office” (Inglehart et al 2004; 3). In other words, traditions and customs play a significant role in women’s representation in the past, present and most likely into the future. This is mainly because the way of life of each society is determined by the norms of that culture. Given PNG is a patriarchal society; these norms are embedded in the structures, institutions and even language of the society, which constraint women not to participate ‘fully’ in the political arena.

Considering the 850 or so different language groups and the diverse culture, it is not the same everywhere in Papua New Guinea. There are vastly different cultural beliefs and practices. Cultural factors are established as one of the most common explanations for women not

recognized as equals. This is because most societies in PNG are culturally embedded in traditions and customs of patriarchy, which regards men as head of the family and women as subordinate to men. Men are thought to be “bread winner” of the family while women are expected to do household duties, such as caring. Thus, many Papua New Guineans believe that only men can be leaders and can make decision, while women cannot. These general perceptions affect the way both men and women perceive women’s roles in the public sphere.

The recent trend of increased number of women in other field of business, academia and corporate sector, have come in conflict with the traditional expectations for women’s roles. Sepoe (2002) describes this as “culture and perceptions about women’s access to power” (p.28).

As a result, many criticisms are directed at the women who intend to enter the parliament. This mentality and attitude serve as one of the fundamental roadblocks to the election of women in PNG. The seven women political leaders faced traditional challenges from their villages, or the electorate they ran as candidate for. Nahau Rooney who comes from one of the few matrilineal societies, was not allowed to use betel-nut for her campaign (1977, 1982), because only male leaders can use this to distribute; distribution of betel-nut during ceremonies tend to be seen as a means to recognition of power, or to maintain power.

93 Sepoe O. (2002). To make a difference: Realities of women’s participation in Papua New Guinea politics.
95 Scientifically called areca nut, is chewed by many people in Papua New Guinea, and is a symbolic material distributed during ceremonies or gatherings such as marriage, compensations and campaign alike, to show status.
The Highlands region is known as a strongly embedded patriarchal society, famous for the *bigman*\(^ {97}\) culture. The win of Julie Soso in the 2012 election, marked the first for a woman to win in this region, beating long time naturalized citizen businessman Malcolm Kela Smith. She also became the first woman to hold a regional seat in Papua New Guinea.\(^ {98}\) The same could be said for MP Loujaya Kouzo, who became the first woman parliamentarian for Lae Open; while MP Delilah Gore became Northern Province’s first elected MP also. Their election within the strongly held patriarchy societies can be embraced as a positive change; but at a very low scale. This is because there are variations in factors that allowed them to win. For instance, cultural norms can be slightly different for all these women. Delilah Gore is said to come from a more egalitarian society that contributed to her blocking all votes from her area.\(^ {99}\)

However, politics remains a man’s game in PNG’s society as statistics show the three women occupy only 2.9 percent of the seats in parliament today. Thus shows the complex relationship between the political and the cultural systems of power that further disadvantage women to politically participate and to run from office.

*Power Politics*

In the struggle for power, not only women’s voices but also their roles are suppressed. This tends to result in women putting more effort to challenge their male counterpart during elections; because the men tend to have money, history and tradition on their part. But the women were mostly seen to be struggling for power on the equal basis to that of men (Sepoe 2002). In other words, this perception suggests that women want the same power as men, on equal basis to men. This perception makes it difficult for women to win election, as power dynamic are

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\(^ {97}\) Bigman notion refers to the description of a person usually men who has wealth in terms of mostly material things, that elevate his status in the community when he is elected member of parliament.


\(^ {99}\) ibid.
involved. However, Sepoe describes women’s struggle for power as “not geared towards possessive or extractive power, but rather power to empower” (Sepoe 2002; 28). She further elaborated that this form of power is reflective of the gender roles of women, such that their decisions are made within the context of household and families, along the lines of connecting the private with the public sphere. This reflects women's roles as mostly caregivers and nurturers mostly. Hence, the increased women's political activities geared towards improving number of women in parliament overtime, illustrates their bargaining and negotiating for access to power, with the hope of bringing about improvements in the lives of their families and in the society as a whole (ibid.). This depicts the power dynamics in the women’s approach in line with the private domain that clearly distinguishes women’s roles from men.

On a flip side, this view can be problematic as men continue to perceive women according to these roles; in a way that confines women to domestic roles and restricted boundaries of the private domain, the household. Therefore, power dynamics are at work, not only in the public but private sphere as well. Once a woman decides to run for office, she has to put in more effort into strategies for instance. Power dynamics seems to be everywhere, and goes beyond gender relations. For instance, women had to come up with strategies that were different to men to be able to win. For instance, Josephine Abaijah attracted many supporters including many men during her campaigns, partly because “there weren’t too many politicians at that time preaching that message the menfolk wanted to hear” (Peeks, 2013). It was tough for her as she was the first and only female to be elected out of four female candidates in 1972 election to the House of Assembly. Nahau Rooney on the other hand, was involved in politics already while she was studying at the University of Papua New Guinea. Her involvement with student

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100 Refer to the theory of repression by Foucault (1991)
politics showed she was capable of a leadership position coupled with her extensive work experience under the then Prime Minister in waiting- Michael Somare, and other government officers after that. All women leaders’ win were based on power politics, involving both the private and the public sphere that saw many other women candidates who did not win.

Party Politics

Lacking discipline and popular membership,\textsuperscript{102} political parties are mostly described as fluid and fragmented.\textsuperscript{103} This is because parties tend to be more interested in power games than in promoting democratic governance (Sepoe 2002). One area is parties’ endorsement of women has been low in the past elections. Consequently, parties are continuously urged to endorse women.\textsuperscript{104} In the last election, out of the 60 women endorsed, three who won were all under two different parties. Julie Soso and Delilah Gore were backed by Triumph Heritage Empowerment Party (THE Party), while Tony was supported by the First Heritage Party. Out of the 46 political parties registered in the 2012 elections, THE Party was the only party that had two of its female candidates declared. THE party was newly formed under the leadership of MP Don Polye, and supported women candidates, in contrast to previous elections where women do not usually get sufficient support from parties. Former women parliamentarian, Dame Carol Kidu, was clear about the importance of party backing for women, stating that the election of the two women under THE Party, “showed what party backing can do…. In the past parties don’t back women cause (sic) they think, we want someone who can win and women can’t win”.\textsuperscript{105} Women’s chances to win will most likely increase when they have the backing of political parties.

According to Orovu Sepoe (2002), parties are more interested in power games more than

\textsuperscript{102} Sepoe (2002).
\textsuperscript{103} Okole (2003), Anere (1997), and Sepoe (2002)
\textsuperscript{104} Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Amendment to encourage more women.
promoting democratic governance, and they can best be described as “fragmented, fluid, and lack discipline” (p.404). For instance, once they get into the parliament, there is no accountability to the people, thus, accountability between the people and the government is lacking. This implicates the attempt to support women candidates, resulting in a few or no women endorsed in many of these parties. Consequently, analysts\textsuperscript{106} observed that most parties have existed as parliamentary factions, operating primarily as vehicles for formation of government in parliament and showing no commitment to gender equality. In spite of this, 2007 had 40 out of 104 women candidates endorsed, and 60 out of 135 endorsed in the 2012 elections. There are various explanations for the increase including the above mentioned factors as opportunities, recent changes in related legislations; increased women’s movement and international support have all contributed to the slight increase in the number of women endorsed by parties recently. However, the endorsement based on incentive is not strong enough, and will continue the status of underrepresentation of the women. Sepoe’s (2002), bases her argument on rights-based approach suggests that, there needs to be quota system for the endorsement of women by political parties; only then women can exercise their political rights and freedom as equal citizens.

\textit{Money Politics}

Money plays an important part in elections for every country. Parties and candidates need funding for organization, campaigns and other logistics. How the money is obtained, used and accounted for are determined by laws and regulations and varies for different countries. In PNG, political parties’ financial standing determines their support for the candidates;\textsuperscript{107} while their lack of finance tends to be one of the main factors that contribute to candidates losing. Further, the lack of finance by the parties contributed to the low level of commitment by the winning candidates towards their political parties. This especially affects women candidates in their effort

\textsuperscript{107} Reference Gelu’s presentation to women’s meeting on candidates and election
to win seat, where the few women endorsed get little support from their parties. Highlighted by the Registrar of Political Parties and Candidates in a women’s election workshop in Port Moresby, Alphonse Gelu stated that, “a common characteristic of political parties is their financial standing, has contributed immensely to their poor performance and their inability to support candidates that they endorse during the elections” (Belden 2012).

Money politics tend to be more about individual candidates and not so much as political parties, because it is the candidate and not the party who spends money to buy votes, make feasts and dish out money. Given this ongoing practice, parties associate themselves with such “big spending men” (Gelu; cited in Beldon 2012), seeing them as a means to winning, where the party does not need to spend money. Moreover, in most cases, it is usually not the parties that fund its activities, but their parliamentary leaders as Members.108 Given the election candidates trend, over 95 percent of candidates running are men, and most use their own resource even if they are affiliated to political parties as they spend thousands and even millions to compete against other candidates including women. In the 2007 elections for instance, huge amount of money was used, mainly offering material incentives to voters. In the highlands, there were rumors that several candidates spent up to K2 million on their campaigns (National Research Institute 2009). Despite this, not all candidates were engaged in ‘money politics,’ included Fr. John Garia (Governor elected at that time), Noah Kool, and John Kerenga Gugl, who arrived first, second and third in the Chimbu Provincial electorate (ibid.).

Money politics thus, also influence people to act and behave in certain ways that are common in elections; for example, engaging in bribery is a common problem.109 Money politics disadvantage women because they tend to not engage in such practices. This is one of the practices that are much criticized by many, including women candidates. Dame Josephine

108 ibid.
Abaijah expressed money politics as a critical factor that contributes to the stagnant number of women elected over the years;

I maintain that I will not give money to somebody to vote me. So I think that is one big reason. The men can get money, the men can bribe. We are finding it difficult for women to go around bribing people. I think this is where the country is going nowhere .... bribes, corruption, something that women don’t want in this country.110

Corrupt practices are seen as a prevailing norm that many Papua New Guineans tend to tolerate. This is mainly due to the structure of social norms in the society relating to such practice as forgiveness, described by Joe Kanekane “as an integral social norm” (Kanekane cited in in Ayius and May 2007, 23).111 Corrupt practices go further than social norms to reflect the country’s history, political context, geography and economic situation. For instance, the prevalence of traditional practices and resource wealth tend to be common drivers of corrupt practices,112 relating to the big men mentality and the wantok system,113 are common traditional practice. With the recent election toughening the laws in this area; intending candidates caught dishing out money will be prosecuted. This includes voter influence by bribery (asking for or offering money), treating (paying for material things like food or lodging for a voter) and undue influence (force or restraint is used on a voter to vote or not to vote) are illegal offences under the PNG’s criminal code; the penalty for all three is a fine not exceeding 400 (Kina), around US$163

112 Transparency International (date unknown) UF Expert Answer: Overview of Corruption And Anti-Corruption
113 “Mutual assistance to kin” definition by Transparency International (Date unknown) UF Expert Answer: Overview of Corruption And Anti-Corruption : National
US or an imprisonment of no more than one year.\textsuperscript{114} Further, 2003 Organic Law on Integrity of Political Parties and candidates requires parties and candidates to report all donations to the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission. There are limits on contributions to political parties from citizens, corporations and organizations (non-citizens), while international organizations are banned. Limit of donation must not exceed 500,000 (PGK), approximately US$204,000. According to International Foundation for Electoral Systems (2012), public funding is not available to the political parties, but they receive support on regular basis distributed from the central fund (state funds). It seems that income of the political parties is fairly regulated; however expenditure is where the problem and challenge is. This is mainly due to the lack of regulation on spending limits for the parties and the candidates, and also there is no clear definition of what constitutes campaign expenditure.\textsuperscript{115} Hence, it is one thing for the political parties to raise enough money to support the intending candidates, and another for individuals to use money for their own campaigns.

On the other hand, people are caught between cultural expectations and the consumerism life tend to look upon those who have wealth in terms of money especially, because they will go to them for help, guidance, and leadership, usually overlooking other qualification such as ethical standards (Korare 2002). Again, the patriarchy structure of the society’s expectation of male leadership roles and wealth play a significant part in the way people vote for certain other people.

At the end of the election, it is not individuals but the party which has most number of members that form the government. Presumably, this is one area that people lack understanding to distinguish parties and individuals, while the candidates take advantage of the situation to gain


more votes. Consequently, PNG has rampant reports of corruption involving candidates buying votes.\textsuperscript{116} As a way to address the lack of funds for political parties, development funds have been committed to help political parties for the period between 2013 to 2017 by the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission.

Money politics play a significant role in PNG elections that will continue to have negative consequences on women as voters, prospective candidates and even as Members; unless effectively addressed. In other words, mechanisms to combat the practice must be efficient and effective that goes beyond formal institutions.

\textit{Stereotype versus Intersectionality}

The women parliamentarians’ performance is sometimes generalized to women candidates. The voters usually expect that women elected will be like the previous women leaders. This perception of the prospective candidates, consequently lean towards the way voters vote. Often times, women who were elected, not only at the parliamentary level, but also in other levels of government, are expected to represent all women; and when they do not, women especially, are disappointed and do not vote them again. Stereotypes make it difficult to get women (and men) to support other women.

Gender intersects many social and cultural issues and one group’s interest may not necessarily be the same as other groups’ interests, such as class, ethnicity, age and, increasingly, economic status. As a result, having very few women in the legislative body does not mean the different interests of women can be represented concurrently. One of the likely reasons for this perception is because of the shortage of women in political leadership, there is a common perception that “the female population is a homogenous group” (Okole et al, 2003, 67). However, this is not the situation, it goes further to imply that the women tend to make less effort to further

\textsuperscript{116} Liam Fox, ‘Corruption concerns in PNG elections’ \textit{ABC News}, July 11, 2011. Accessed March 22, 2014. \url{http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2012/s3543833.htm}
their own causes, while their social differences or identities such as ethnicity, language, and geography tend to override their role as ‘women’ (ibid.). This contributes to the perception that the few women in the parliament do not represent a variety of differences. On the other hand, the women themselves lack the effort to unite to support women as a group for the purpose of increasing their numbers. Again differences and stereotype overrides common perceptions of women’s role in politics. In three term member Carol Kidu’s words, “I don’t pretend to understand the complexities here. The men were warriors, but remember the women were the peacemakers.” Thus, the assumption that different women interest has uniform beliefs overlooks their differences. So having one or two women in parliament does not necessarily represent women in general. Hence, stereotyping is problematic when there are other intersecting issues also. Stereotyping presents the few women in parliament specific challenges because there are many issues and one or two women in parliament can only address some issue and not others; hence, they are seen as not performing. Among other reasons, the stereotype of women could be one reason none of the women have won in two consecutive elections (1987 and 1992).

In the complexity of power dynamics, women’s roles today are caught between traditions and international requirements; precisely stated by Henry Okole, “Papua New Guinea women are caught between the international expectations as to the status of women, and traditional, cultural understanding of the role of women” (Okole et al, 2003, 66). As a result, the political status of women is very low, where there was some progress made towards addressing the status of women generally. But there outcome is somewhat “mixed” (ibid.). Generally, women do hold senior positions in government offices for instance, but they still are disproportionally represented compared to men.

These challenges contribute to the stagnation of the number of women representation over the years. This is a worrying trend, as we have seen the number of women in other countries have improved over the years, but not for PNG. In addition, women groups mainly are lobbying for their support to increase their number with collaboration from the civil society, non-governmental organizations and the international organizations. There are men who support the participation of women, but there is still not enough support from men in general. Further, there are governmental efforts to improve the number of women in the parliament, such as the amendments to the laws and policies priority on equality (Millennium Development plan, Medium Term Development Strategy, Vision 2050). This serves as a means to encouraging more women to be involved. But there is little effort by the government to improve the status of women politically. For instance, the Bill on the 22 reserved seats for women was not persistently pursued by the government. One reason for this is likely due to frequent turnover within the government.

On the other hand, civil engagement is not effective at the local level. There is lack of awareness on the process of elections, including laws, regulations, and enforcement as people lack knowledge of their rights (National Research Institute 2009). The mostly unethical behaviors, and perception have been prevalent not only in elections, but also in others areas such as businesses, non-governmental organizations, and government offices that involves all other “politics.” Moreover, most people live in the rural areas where their perceptions are tied to traditions and customs that contribute to the way they behave and believe. The demands of capitalism require people to be consumers throughout their life, consequently the demands that one needs money is pressing. This leads people to repeatedly become involved in corrupt practices; for instance the give and take of money for votes is common.

Mostly the male-oriented, patriarchal culture is embedded in the society; this is difficult to eradicate in a short span of time. Unless more effort is put into addressing gender inequality in representation, especially increasing support from men, this trend will continue. After 10 years
attempting to get the Equality and Participation Bill (2009) passed in Parliament, it is tragic that the Bill failed after its third attempt.

From these challenges, there tends to be little done to improve the situation of women representation. Women as a disadvantaged group need the government’s active support to increase their numbers in parliament, because seven women in total serving in parliament in that last 40 years is contributing to the wider scale of inequality in PNG. Furthermore, this shows that the nation is not effectively democratic. There are calls for further research on how to encourage greater number of women candidates, as these can be seen as enabling mechanisms towards an increase in the number of women in parliament (National Research Institute Election Report 2009). One proposed change is the quota system, but that change is contested by most the men in parliament.

Despite the challenges the women faced, there were few women who served at the national level legislative Office (9 women in total), 2 women appointed during the colonial administration, and 7 women elected since independence in 1975. There are some common trends or patterns that can be drawn from these women’s experiences to demonstrate that there are opportunities that allowed for the women to win, and further identify their differences. These opportunities are derived from an analysis of the women leaders’ experiences before, during and after the elections.

The reasons why the women decided to run also contribute to understanding the narrative behind their wins. Their reasons for entering politics vary for each other considering the time and geographical location, as well as the socio-political changes at that time. Carol Kidu (a three time parliamentarian) decided to run for election in 1997, as a response to her husband’s death; she wanted to keep her husband’s legacy of justice alive.118 During her term in office, she was a

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champion of minority’s rights especially women’s rights. Like Carol Kidu, Josephine Abaijah, also a three time parliamentarian, when receiving the US Secretary of State’s Women of Courage Award in Port Moresby on March 6 2014, in her speech, she reminded those who attended that “the situation warranted only sensitization programmes at that time and my entry into politics was by the wishes of the people.”¹¹⁹ This demonstrates her confidence knowing that the people will support and give her votes, making her the first woman to win in the history of PNG. Delilah Gore, one of the recent women winners out of the three women, entered politics because of her experience in witnessing how male privilege contributes to the lack of development.¹²⁰ Lojaya Kouzo, shared the same sentiments as Delilah Gore, when interviewed about why she was running,

I come from outside Lae and in my village people have to walk for kilometers to get water and there is no electricity. It’s not good enough that I want to change it. I am a family relation of the sitting member, and I am running against him because I feel so strongly about these issues.¹²¹

The reasons for entering politics for women vary in terms of personal choices, career paths and people’s reaction (support). A commonality among the women candidates according to a 2007 election report, showed that the women candidates are generally more concerned with social welfare, family, good governance, and rights issues and policies (ibid). The implication here is that their reasons for entering politics were mostly personal and ideological. Hence, their reasons vary greatly from most men, whose common reasons for entering politics tend to be about material value such as their own status and resources. This may partly explain why women are

elected less often when ethnicity (and increasingly class) tends to be one of the defining characteristics of voters, relating to the respect for *bigmen*. In light of this, the few women who have won in the past elections allow us to assess their opportunities as avenues, which explains why some women win and others do not.

**Why did Few Women win the Elections?**

The trend for electing women has shown that the number of women winning has been between one and three women and remains stagnant for the last 40 years. Challenges previously discussed present a web of complex relations that disadvantage women when running and winning seats in office. However, with the low record of women who have won so far, an assessment of commonalities suggests the context of opportunities for women. For instance, an assessment of recently elected women leaders not only draws a combination of hard work, determination and strategy as contributing factors to their success, but also demonstrates how geography and local character played a part.\(^{122}\) Together with other factors, these women’s success in different elections show how these factors at times were somewhat consistent, but at different degrees depending on time and location, and also occurring at different levels (personal, community, national and even global level), thus indicating change. A significant change has been the support base, which has increased in recent years from narrow family support extended to other social networks, and the wider community.\(^{123}\) The various women’s experiences illustrate a number of factors that explain their win in election. The factors moreover, suggest where some women were able to win while others could not.

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\(^{123}\) See appendix D for the women leaders and how they won.
Matrilineal Society

One of the assumptions that tend to explain the win of the few women is that most of the women elected come from the few matrilineal societies. These are the island Provinces of Milne Bay, New Ireland, Manus and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. In these societies, women usually are landowners and are involved in making decisions. The acceptance of women as decision makers tends to foster confidence in people. Since the time of the legislative Council under the Australian administration, women in these island Provinces were actively involved in political activities, such as Alice Wedega and Josephine Abaijah from Milne Bay Province, and Nahau Rooney from Manus Island.

The women who won the 2012 election defy this assumption; all three women come from strong patrilineal societies, which previously had male leaders. One of the likely explanations for their election may be because they have stood for elections previously and were unsuccessful, for the case of Tony and Soso; come from prominent families and out of respect people voted for the women, Soso and Gore, they and maybe educational level, such as Toni who just completed her degree from one of the top universities in PNG. On the other hand, some people were likely were tired of the same old male leadership and wanted to see if women could initiate change. This demonstrates that there is a shift in the way people voted, where matrilineal society was crucial in an earlier period, but not recently. Consequently, the women candidates from the region consisting of the matrilineal societies (New Guinea Islands), had the least number running (22 women) running in the 2012 election.

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124 Societies defined as such in this context refer to decent defined from the line of the female’s family, usually the mother’s family; for instance, land ownership in PNG is significant in all societies as such the land is inherited by females in the family.


126 ibid.

127 Garamut blog June 20, 2012; See also Appendix C for the table showing number of women candidates in the 2012 election by region
Supporter Base

Jo Chandler (2013) accurately describes that how the supporter base is appealing when a woman candidate has money, status, education and security. It seems the supporter base has tended to shift from the personal in the past, to the more communal recently. Women were supported more by their immediate family in the earlier period, as well as other factors that contributed to their wins. Over the years, many of these women became leaders through their work experiences (Waliyato, Rooney and Soso), and others through their social networks such as Church activities (Soso, Tony and Gore) or both ways. Regardless, they have built their supporter base, and expanded their network of support, to include both women and men. Extended family also provided support for most (if not all) women during their campaigns and also continued during their time in parliament. This can be attributed to the traditional social network system known in PNG as the wantok system. The wantok system acts as a form of support base, a contributing factor towards the women’s win, especially in terms of assistance at the personal level to election related, including votes from wantoks. According to the Commonwealth Secretariat (1999), Nahau Rooney’s win was channeled by the support given by her family, especially the traditional extended family structure known in PNG, that have made it easier for women who entered politics, especially when politics requires long hours and odd meeting times (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999). For instance, extended families assist in reducing domestic duties. The support base, her local level experiences, gave her the confidence to run for office. According to Nahau Rooney’s interview, “through her work she gained not only visibility, but

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129 Wantok system is a traditional system in PNG where you have support from your wantoks (i.e. relatives, people from the same area, or from the same country when you are abroad) when you need help with something or vice versa (PNG Creature blog. Wantok System, PNG time and going overboard (2010).
also the confidence of the people she met.\(^\text{130}\) In the 1977 general elections, she stood and won the Manus open seat in the National Parliament, making her one of the three successful women candidates at that time.

The current Eastern Highlands Province Governor, Julie Soso, won mostly based on creating a supporter base.\(^\text{131}\) Her family name was well known, while being a radio presenter, she recognized women’s rights and church activists,\(^\text{132}\) and her contesting twice previously, strengthened her chances. These factors tend to contribute to people gaining confidence in her ability to lead them. Hence, she demonstrated the courage and persistence of a strong competitor among the men becoming the first female elected MP in the highlands known for its patriarchal “big man”\(^\text{133}\) politics; and further, the first female to hold a regional seat in Papua New Guinea. This support base trend is common for all elected women, and has increased over the years to include career, and other social networks including religion. Further, community support and international support have also encouraged women to run for office,\(^\text{134}\) especially in recent elections.

**Education**

Education is increasingly becoming more important attribute for members of parliament than previous village leadership.\(^\text{135}\) Education has enabled women to compete more equally with

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\(^\text{130}\) ibid.p.101.


\(^\text{133}\) Ibid.


men, as the education system slowly allowed more women to be educated to higher levels like men, in contrast to the traditional perception of women limited to the private sphere. Some people still hold onto traditional gender customs, such as perceiving only men as leaders; hence some of the women candidates were not elected. For instance, Rooney in the 1987 elections illustrates this: “the fact that she was a woman in itself a defiance of tradition, for a lapan (leader) was always a man”. Even her performance was criticized, such as she should not be allowed to hold betelnuts when she spoke at the launching of her campaign, for this was a lapan privilege, a source of lapan’s power. In light of this, her attainment of higher education, a Bachelor’s degree in Social Work, and scholarship to study in Melbourne, Australia; enabled her to be actively involved in politics at school. This set the bases for her interest in politics. Like elsewhere, girls in PNG were taught in an education system designed for boys; education has been gender biased despite continuous attempts to integrate girls into the schools’ curriculum. For instance, the education curriculum described a distinction between masculine and feminine behavior. Overtime, the education system has slowly accommodated for female students. According to the Unicef’s data on education, boys have a net enrollment rate of 66 percent to girls 61 percent; while a gross enrollment rate of 82 percent where girls were at 77 percent; and the completion rate for boys was 59 percent when compared to 45 percent for girls. The data shows that there is still a gender gap in the education system. Education has become a priority of the recent governments captured in their policies to invest in girls’ education, Millennium Development Goals (MDG) or Medium Term Development Strategy (MTDS) for instance. The National Education Plan (2005-2014), aims to provide basic education for students starting from elementary to grade eight with the

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136 ibid. p.570
137 A nut that is socially significant throughout PNG that plays a major role in large events and ceremonies.
138 ibid. pp. 570-71
maximum retention rate of both girls and boys.\textsuperscript{140} The challenge remains on how to use the data available to effectively address gender equity in education. Further, there are certain organizations working towards improving girl’s education in PNG, such as Aid programs\textsuperscript{141} from developed countries including Australia, Japan, the European Union and particularly the United Nations.

Today, we see increasing numbers of well-educated women in professional arenas in such areas as business and academics, contributing to the nation;\textsuperscript{142} the political arena however, remains a man’s game. The election of the three women candidates can also be attributed to education. Loujaya Toni for instance, graduated with a Master’s degree in Sociology at the Papua New Guinea University of Technology.\textsuperscript{143} Despite one’s education, there are other factors that also add up, highlighted above. As a result, even with other educated women contesting in previous elections, they stand less of a chance compared to the men who are regarded as ‘big men’ in their society. Education tends to be a positive variable towards women intending to run for office, as this can lead in the future to more support for women running for office.

\textit{Women’s Movement}

Similar to other countries, the women in PNG collectively participate in politics. They either oppose (against the system) or support (for the system), through their political activities (Sepoe 2002). Over the years, women's activities and movements have increased, mostly supporting the system, especially after the period of 1996 to 1997 was described as the period of “getting more women into parliament” (ibid). The women were mostly engaged through activities

\textsuperscript{142} ibid. p.2
such as voter education led National Council of Women; forming alliance between Transparency International and the Community Coalition against corruption; and conducting various meetings, workshops and training on effective leadership, and the laws around women’s participation such as the Organic Law on Provincial and Local Level Government. There are three main women’s organizations in PNG: Office for the Development of Women (ODW), Department for Community Development Unit, and the National Council of Women (NCW). These main offices, especially the NCW have been instrumental in voicing the women’s agenda, and coordinating the network for women empowerment across different parts of the country. Networking was important as it not only empowered women but also created alliance and support base; further, defining leadership potential among women.

Women networks play an important role in terms of promoting strong, well-coordinated, interrelated and independent networks, with a highly experienced leadership in addressing women’s concerns. Network also plays a fundamental role in providing and promoting a reflective space for re-energizing the women’s movement, leadership capacity, as well as nurturing inter-generational interaction and inter-relation for continuity at all levels.144

Women groups’ network extends further to other social groups such as work and church, which provided significant support for women towards their win. Thus, women’s network and movement were increasingly crucial to the women’s wins. Catherine McKinnon (1991) emphases that consciousness-raising created space for women to share the experiences they faced to become empowered. Social movements including women’s groups, non-governmental organizations, and church groups worked with the civil society, to advocate for women’s rights in recent years. Social movements gained momentum partly because of the support from the international groups especially the United Nations.

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144 United Nations Development Programme, National Consultation-LLG Elections 2013: pp.5
The general trend of social movements has increased overtime, and this allows women to form alliances which increase their support base for representation. In order words, social movements are a response to injustice; hence, they tend to form resistance to the norms. Thus, the women resist the patriarchal norms that are embedded in the society, where men tend to dominate the political arena. In all 3 attempts to get the Bill to be passed as law, the Parliament which is made up of all men, had a good number of politicians going against the Equality and Participation Bill to reserve the 22 seats for women. Women continue to lobby the government to pass the Bill in Parliament; their organized movement continues to challenge institutions and practices that seem to prevent women from fully participating in all aspects of the society, including politics.

Women's involvement in nationalist movements gives them hope to also contribute to the development of the Nation as citizens by participating politically. As seen globally, Papua New Guinea women have been increasing their activities especially in recent years in the hope to improve women's representation, and they have only succeeded within the framework of legislative review. Their participation is challenged by gender relations framed within dynamics of power. Power is argued to be everywhere (Foucault 1991), and is repressive; thus, the dominant groups interests’ overrides others.

Legislation Consideration

Partly, as a response to women's activities, under the government of Prime Minster Mekere Morauta (1999-2002), significant legislations were reviewed to improve the electoral system. These include the change of the First Past the Post (FPTP) to the Limited Preferential

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Voting (LPV) system, and amendments to the Organic law on Integrity of Political Parties and Candidate (OLPPC). The LPV system was aimed partly to address the widespread underrepresentation of women. The review of the legislation of the OLPPC (2002) captures government's affirmative action at the National level by appointing a National Council of Women (NCW) representative to serve on the Central Fund Board that manages electoral funds; and provide incentives for parties who endorse woman candidate who receive 10 percent of her votes from her electorate, then the party will be refunded 75 percent of the spending on the woman candidate (Sepoe 2002). It would seem that parties would favor money in endorsing women, but the results shows otherwise; only 3 women won under 2 different parties, The Triumph Heritage Party (THE Party) and People's Indigenous Party (PIP). Sepoe pointed out the likely explanation as to why the few women were endorsed is that political parties’ only support women they feel will win the elections, as proven in previous elections. Reasons for these range from lack of finance, gender power dynamics, and clan- based allegiance.

Nonetheless, the enactment of the two laws was significant towards providing opportunity for more women to participate and be represented at the local level. How have women fared at these levels today? The Government of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville’s designed three special reserved seats for women.

According to Sepoe (2002), women’s performances have not been effective, as many men are in leadership positions at the levels of both national and local levels, and few women elected are not active. The most likely reason for this is because “power dynamic overrides citizenship democratic rights and respect for democratic norms and principles” (Sepoe 2002; 404). Hence, the women are hindered to politically participate fully in all levels of government. As

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147 ibid.
149 Sepoe (2002).
150 Reilley Benjamin (2008); Ladley and Williams (2007; 20)
evident in the national level where number of women elected have been below 3 percent; and women candidates have been below 5 percent each election year. Therefore, laws as regulating mechanisms are crucial to include women in decision making, but are not effective in implementation.

Power dynamics involves the complex relationship of the many cultures of Papua New Guinea and formal political institutions, where “common-traditional sentiments override the legal-liberal requirements” (Sepoe 2002). In other words, people still hold onto sentiments of the traditional systems over western concepts such as democratic principles. For instance, the ‘bigmen’ system mostly practiced in the Highlands region. A bigman’s election into parliament usually elevates his status, while people give him more respect. The Limited Preferential Voting system (LPV) and the Organic law on Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates (OLIPC) were successful to a certain extent, in recognizing the underrepresentation of women, but were not effective due to the stagnant number of women representatives elected in every election since independence. In other words, the changes were significant but implementation was not effective, again this draws down to the political parties and the candidates.

“Every country deserves to have the best possible leader and that means that women have to be given a chance to compete. If they’re never allowed to compete in the electoral process then the countries are really robbing themselves of a great deal of talent.” (Madeleine K. Albright, National Democratic Institute Chairman).

International Support

International organizations have recently been involved especially forming alliance/partnership with the local organizations to address gender inequality in PNG. International support tends to be beneficial to women empowerment in politics. For instance, support for the push for the 22 reserved seats for women in parliament. Organizations such as the United Nations, donors and Non-Governmental Organizations were involved one way or another towards measures for gender equality in representation, by conducting studies, producing data, proposing policies; facilitate training and providing workshops for women. One of the approaches they undertook was to provide training for the intending women candidates: United Nations Development Programme conducted Practice Parliament (PP) training; the Center for Democratic Institutions’ (CDI) started PNG Women Candidates Training Strategy (WCT); these helped the women with their electoral prospects, campaign strategies, and knowing the roles of and responsibilities of being a candidate. Donors such as the CDI among their training showed women candidates how to mobilize finances through fundraising and budget management training; furthermore, the workshops included other fundamentals of election campaign: developing and delivering a message, creating campaign team structure, fundraising and budget management, the voting system, the role of a candidate and the role of a member of parliament.152 Their active involvement has been reported as positive, in helping women candidates to prepare.153 Two out of the three women candidate who won in the 2012 election, Governor for Eastern Highlands Julie Soso, Lae Open MP Loujaya Toni, were part of the practice parliament conducted by CDI. In fact, Julie Soso credited the ‘external support’ from the Practice Parliament

training.\textsuperscript{154} The International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES) implemented a training program in 2012 to boost the women’s lobbying skills. The role of the international organization in women representation demonstrates “how donors can make a difference in encouraging increased women’s political participation.”\textsuperscript{155}

**Conclusion**

Where commonalities are drawn, there is the indication of degree of confidence especially for women in office who have displayed leadership qualities. In other words, their performance has given confidence to voters to vote for them again such as Nahau Rooney, and Carol Kidu; thus, a degree of confidence maybe a common factor. This can be associated with how stereotyping is a dangerous trend as women tend to be judged prior to their performance. Figure 5 demonstrates how the degree of confidence (people’s support) decreases with the increased level of government. This shows that as women’s political participation increases with to the level of government, there is a lower degree of confidence by the people and the support of the political party, laws and so on. However, women’s political participation increases at the community level, and this shows an increase in the degree of confidence, proportional to the support for women’s participation. This is in terms of the local level of government as well as women voting at the lower level. I believe if increasing support and confidence at the lower level can also improve their participation at the provincial and national level. Both material and ideological input is critical to change the mindset of the people at the local level especially. Resources and efforts towards education of gender equality matter at the local level and not only at the national level only. Therefore the degree of confidence equals degree of support (Political confidence index by level of government).


\textsuperscript{155} ibid.
Figure 5: Degree of women’s political participation at the different levels of government determined by degree of confidence and support.

Generally, there is an assumption that the interests of women are uniform, thereby there is less attention given to the status of women in the national politics. The category of women is associated to the equality argument to treat the women as “same,” overlooking differences among the women themselves. On the other hand, the differences such as ethnicity, language, culture and tradition overrides their roles as women. So there are two sides to a coin, one that treats women as a homogenous group (sameness), and the other specificity of difference among the women. The limitations of both contribute to the gender inequality in question. Increasingly,

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intersectionality presents a durable argument: differences over sameness.

From the variables, we can draw down to the system of government. In its attempt to promote the principle of equality, systems of culture such as the patriarchal norms are embedded in institutions, processes and procedures that impede on women. Unless Papua New Guinea addresses its core elements of traditional perception of women as inferior to men, nothing will break the cycle of inequality that continues to hinder the progress of democracy (Okole et al, 2003). Formal institutions such as the electoral system are vehicles that provide women the avenue to increase their representation only if effective; again, this depends on the policies and laws surrounding the effectiveness and regulations of these vehicles.

Using the opportunities given, the women will be able to slowly overcome the challenges. However, it will take time given the differences across gender, class, ethnicity, economy, and especially political opinion. With the increase in supporter base as one positive variable, some men tend to slowly embrace women as equal participants in the political arena. But generally, power dimensions between men and women tend to hinder progress to improving women’s representation. Therefore, it is only fair to say that challenges more than opportunities have not really changed over the years in most areas.

Observations of trends suggest that, challenges continue to impede women’s political participation and particularly their representation. Only in recent years, there were slight changes but not enough to improve women’s representation. For instance, what used to be some challenges for women candidates in 1970’s, is now embraced by women to a certain degree; such as education, extension of support base, knowledge and skills of winning elections. Further, women are increasingly supported by international organizations, electoral system changed to improve women’s political participation resulting in improved women’s participation in voting and the number of candidates; however, not with the number elected. One of the main reasons is because of the party politics, as well as the money politics provides challenges for the women. As
a result, the parties do not really represent the interests of the population; instead they pose as symbolic representation of the people. There are aspects that remain as challenges for women and politics in Papua New Guinea apart from formal institutions, and this shows the complex relationship between the political and the cultural systems of power. This further questions the effectiveness of the electoral system. Will changing to another electoral system improve the number of women in parliament? And if so, what type of electoral system? The alternative is considering a quota system whether for political parties, recognized by constitution, or by reserved seats in parliament.157

The last chapter discusses the various theories that explain the case of Papua New Guinea. Before I continue to the last chapter, it is important to note that there are many theories that can explain the situation of women’s underrepresentation. For the most part of the empirical analysis, I have used a comparative approach; while the next chapter will take a feminist approach. I draw the relating theories to try to expound upon the case of Papua New Guinea. Further, women and politics present an avenue to understand the relationship between these two; and how this can be applied to the broader context.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

Theoretical Framework

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework drawing on the theories that explain the case of women and politics in Papua New Guinea; these include democratic theories, feminist theories and women in politics literature, towards an understanding of empowering women as equal citizens. The discussions put forward the situation that not only increasing the number of women is important but also ‘truly’ representing the women matter. From the experiences of women, institutions are one way to explain the situation of women representatives when representation occurs in the institutions.\(^{158}\) Ann Phillips (1995) provides an alternate view to explain the low number of women in representative offices. The ‘politics of presence’ is one approach to understand the importance of increasing the number of women, but also challenges the embedded institutionalized norms that deny women the legitimacy to political office. Politics of presence is the participation and inclusion of those who have been excluded. By this, the low performance of women goes beyond formal institutions, to show that they overlap with other factors, especially cultural norms. Therefore, the underrepresentation of women shows injustice and argues for fair representation.

Equality and Fair Representation

In the last two decades, the politics of difference was widely discussed, especially on the relationship between the individual citizen’s freedom and the rights of minorities (Phillips 1995). This tends to be the case due to differences taken by liberalism as neutral, in particular for the “common good” of all. The notion of “one person one vote” for instance, focuses on individuals reflecting democratic emphasis on differences of individuals taken as heterogeneous. However,

when all groups are regarded as neutral in diversity, certain group’s preferences override others. Consequently, women as a disadvantaged group are not represented when their interests are regarded as homogeneous and inclusive of other groups.

An alternate way to alleviate inequality is to consider group representation. Politics of presence basically step in to emphasize that groups difference do matter also. In this way, we look at women as a disadvantaged group. As a separate group, the women have differences in rights respectively, and they deserve to be recognized as “full” and “unhindered” members of a disadvantaged group.\(^{159}\) It is only fair that diversity in differences be recognized, instead of one group’s domination of representation over others. In an heterogeneous society such as PNG depicting the many different language groups, representation remains a challenge for women, as politics has been defined along cultural importance.

*Participation versus Representation*

The difference between representation and participation is important to distinguish in terms of equality. It is sometimes problematic when representation is taken as just another aspect of participation. In distinguishing between them, political equality is the right to equal political participation, but political representation is another dimension (Philips 1995). Both are important towards gaining equality.

In broad terms, Sidney Verba describes political participation to refer to the “legal activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take” (Verba et al 1978, 46). Participation is as important as the concept of ‘one person one vote’ principle. However, there is uncertainty about the nature of equality. This is because in some circumstances, equality means “differential treatment”, and in other way, “treating people the same” (Phillips 1995, 37). This is one area

\(^{159}\) Argued by Raz, “individual freedom and prosperity depend on full and unimpeded membership in a respectable and flourishing cultural group “(Raz, Multiculturalism, 72; cited in Philips 1995, 17).
where feminists explore the difference between being treated as equals and treated as the same.

Women’s interests were historically assumed as uniformed, and categorized under the group ‘women’. Overtime however, women as a group also have differences that cut across gender issues, class, race and ethnicity for instance. Representation is supposed to reflect voter’s opinions, preference or beliefs, according to the conventional understanding of liberal democracy. However, because of differences, problems of exclusion exist (Phillips 1995). Consequently, this questions the electoral system and people’s access to political participation. This is due to the electoral system reflecting either overrepresentation of some views over others. For instance, when citizens do not fully participate in voting and in representation, only certain groups’ interests are represented and not all; implying that certain groups are more active than others.

On representation, there are varying definitions that presents extensive work on this abstract concept ranging from classical to contemporary literature. Certain political theorists have contested the concept of representation including John Rawls (proportional representation), Marxists (socialist democracy), John Steward Mill (liberty justified the freedom of the individual in opposition to unlimited state control); and recently Irish Young (descriptive vs. symbolic representation), Hannah Pitkin (Mirror or descriptive representation) and Charles Bretz (invocalised political equality). In most recent literature, Hannah Pitkin (1967) is cited as providing one of the precise meanings of representation “to represent is to make present again.” Through representation, citizens’ voices, beliefs and preferences are ‘present’ in policies. In other words, political representation is like political assistance, to act on behalf of others in the political arena. Representation can take many forms; however, they have their limitations also. How it is applied determines its context given the many dimensions, interpretations and meanings.

Hence, the concept of representation is not static but is fluid, allowing for different meanings and interpretation. This allows room for changes overtime to the meaning of representation.

*Symbolic versus Descriptive Representation*

Symbolic representation is argued as maybe an ideal approach to group representation. This is because “the artist” represents his subjects as something or as having certain characteristics when he shows it, he makes allegations about his argument (Hannah Pitkin, 1990). When he represents something by a symbol, that symbol may well be a recognizable object, but it need not be and usually is not a representation of what it symbolizes” (Pitkin, 1967, 94). In other words, symbolic representation is representation that is reflective of something else and not those represented, such as specific party policies. There are many political parties in PNG, where party label and policies are secondary to strengthening the party itself with numbers and candidates that reflect the “clan based” politics. Thus, the representative endorsed by the party or even running as an independent, likely represents something else but not necessarily the people supposedly represented. For instance, there are parties who endorse women candidates, to show their support for equality of representation. However, this is to gain support from a wider populace; the one woman endorsed is seen as a symbolic representation of women in general, but this does not represent the women’s different interests. After independence, the few women in parliament were seen as representing the women population. This reflected their work with the women population; most of these women were involved in women’s issues before or after they were appointed or elected, Alice Wedega (House of Assembly 1961-1963) Josephine Abaijah (1972, 1977 and 1997), and Delilah Gore (2012-current MP). Alice Wedge’s involvement with church, women and the community contribute to her appointment to serve in the House of Assembly from 1961 to 1963 as the first woman to serve at the National level. Josephine Abaijah paved the way for other women, becoming the first woman to be elected into parliament in 1972. She later became an active member in the National Council of Women, and remains active even today.
However, party endorsement was difficult because the parties were male-oriented. The nature of the parties was competitive among the parties and candidates. Representatives elected in all elections were almost/or all men and they represented an electorate more than individual groups within the electorate. Women elected in every election occupy less than 3 percent of the seats in parliament. In fact, there were two elections 1987 and 1992 where none of the women candidates won.

The implication is that an elected representative acts as a symbol for certain electorate/districts inclusive of disadvantaged groups overlook different interests. In other words, reflecting the assumption that a representative ‘acts’ for the population he represent, as a symbol. Hence, there are four main arguments in support for symbolic representation: “the need to tackle those exclusions that are inherent in the party-packaging of political ideas, the need for more rigorous advocacy on behalf of disadvantaged groups, and the importance of a politics of transformation in opening up a full range of policy option” (Phillips 1995, 25). However, Pitkin argues that a more meaningful representation would instead be descriptive representation or mirror representation. According to Hanna Pitkin, “the representative does not act for others, he ‘stands’ for them, by virtue of a correspondence or connection between them, a resemblance or reflection” (Pitkin 1967, 61). This is the idea that the elected representative should represent not only the expressed preferences of the constituencies but also those of their descriptive characteristics that are politically relevant, such as gender. Women’s less political participation is hindered further by individual or certain group’s preference; men especially in the highlands region manipulate their women’s choice of candidates in previous elections. Thus, to better represent women’s interest must include not only acting but also standing up for the women. And this has been lacking as representation have been based on symbolic representation. Differences among the groups are important and descriptive representation seems to be an appropriate type that truly represents the women. Equality in participation remains a challenge in the twenty-first century.
Politics of Ideas versus Politics of Presence

The politics of ideas has been the basis for understanding representation but the concept of politics of presence is also important. In other words, the politics of ideas represent the external views/conceptions of what citizens think they want, and it is translated to the expected output, which is more general and can be problematic sometimes because not all ideas can be translated into output. Therefore, feminists argue for the theory/model of *politics of presence*. The *politics of presence* argues for the participation and inclusion of those who have been excluded (Phillips 1995). In other words, the politics of presence reflects the internal objectification of representation such as from experience, and translates from this experience to impact the very people with the same experience. In other words, for the ideas to be realized there must be someone present, presence of someone from the group. PNG women in politics were largely based on politics of idea to represent the women in general and this tends to reflect women as homogenous. However, politics of presence to be realized was difficult. First, because very few women were elected from one to three women representing half the population was impossible; second, women come from different ethnic groups, education levels, age groups and cultural values and their unique qualities made it difficult in practice.

Differences in opinions and beliefs are highlighted in the politics of ideas, but are problematic to political exclusion. The reason for this is because difference is considered in terms of diversity, so representation does not matter ‘who’ is present. This is based on liberals’ diversity argument:

Diversity of beliefs, opinions, preferences and goals, all of which may stem from the variety of experience, but are considered in principle detached from this. Issues of political presence are largely discounted, from when difference is considered in terms of intellectual diversity, it does not matter much who represents the range of ideas (Phillips 1995, 6).
As a result, there are demands for political presence by social movements. These movements further demonstrate that inequalities do exist. The recent increase of women’s movement in Papua New Guinea is evident that women’s interests not being improved, through the representatives that are supposed to ‘act’ for them.

The politics of presence provides an alternative explanation to the problems relating to groups that demand for equal representation161 “that see themselves as excluded, silenced, or marginalized” (Phillips 1995, 5). Not only in Western countries, have women called for the politics of presence, but also in non-western countries as well. The movements demonstrate a shift from social class argument for workers’ interests that Marxist/socialist are mostly concerned about (elimination of class difference), to disadvantaged/cultural groups. The new political movement of disadvantaged groups cannot be erased. In this case, women cannot change their gender for instance. Therefore, who can seriously claim these disadvantaged groups are truly represented.

In the last decades, authenticity became an important factor when asking the question who can speak for a disadvantage group. Twentieth century democracy’s aim was to “make citizenship more universal” (Phillips 1995, 12) in a way to break down barriers of exclusion. However, theories (let alone practice) are far from resolving this paradox. This is why Philips raises her main concern for the politics of presence, with a particular focus on political mechanisms that relate to fair representation, as well as mechanisms that regard gender, race, or ethnic representation as crucial. Thereby, the assurance of equality in presence is by holding accountable/assessing mechanisms that ensures equality in representation such as the electoral system and the political parties. Despite many political parties registered for election in PNG, the endorsement of women has been as low as one or two women being endorse. Political parties are

161 Demand for equal representation for men and women, or demands between different ethnic groups.
generally described as weak leading to less support for the women candidates. This is because PNG politics focuses on the individual and not the political party labels, or party policies. Put in another way, party allegiance is based on ethnic and tribal lines, while the party labels, and messages cover a range of ideas that assume to reflect the voter’s preferences, infrastructural development for instance.

Mechanisms of Representation

The role of the political party is to provide the voters with labels that help them make their political choices. Political parties are described by Philips as reflecting a degree of the notion of politics of ideas that is dominant in representation. This suggests that loyalties are based on the party policies and not the people. This tends to be true because people’s political loyalties are to some extent shaped by the communities they are brought up in; or people give vote to parties that resonate better with their particular interests. However, PNG party system is quite the opposite when parties are based on individuals and not party policies and labels (Reiley 2006). This tends to reflect group based support on one hand; and that can foster vote buying on the other (Philips 1995). Here, abuse of kinship networks or ethnic solidarities work in place of contested policies and ideas to build power especially around clan lines, but not necessarily excluded groups. Thus, there is a shift away from the politics of ideas that reflects a degree of descriptive representation.

However, choosing candidates according to their beliefs or opinions (and party they represent) questions the perception that people without a lot of money or media accessibility can be re-elected. These people may not necessarily represent minority interests, or encourage consideration of political concerns of the minority citizens (Phillips 1995). Parliamentarians have discretion over media and projects that which they thought is best for the people. In the PNG case, most of the parliamentarians are men and with the discretion over resources and media, tend to discriminate women, both within and outside the office. Hence, because of this lack of access,
women as a group have difficulty to educate other women and men through media for instance.

Feminists argue that for equal representation and accountability, there must be both the politics of presence as well as the politics of ideas. In order to understand the loophole to bridging equality, the *politics of presence* allows for the historical observation relating to political exclusion. One area is the institutions. In light of these, Phillips made an important point that there must be popular control and political equality as part of the politics of presence, “these two sets the framework for any politics of presence, and analysis lies in the history of existing structures of exclusion and arrangements for representation” (Phillips 1995, 31). Parliament is a historical product and women’s under representation goes back to the history of parliament. In the Athenian democracy, only men were regarded as citizens and other groups including women were excluded. Prior to 1900's, women did not have the right to vote. Since then, women have enjoyed many decades of formal equality, sharing with men the right to vote and to stand for elections. However, the variations were huge between the Nordic countries and the developing countries for instance. The electoral systems are democratic institutions allowing inclusion of all citizens through participation in the election of representatives. However, problems of exclusion rise and such political institutions must be made more legitimate. The change from First Past the Post to Limited Preferential Voting system has seen improvement in the number of participation; however not representation. Thus, this questions the legitimacy of the political institutions in areas such as political parties that remains problematic in regard to the inclusion of women.

*Justice Argument*

Institutional arrangement as a critical democratic process must be considered when striving for justice in the context for equality of differences. Institutions interact with internal as well as external effects impact representative and participatory institutions and instead allow inequality to continue, mainly because these norms are embedded in the institutions.
themselves. Despite the Constitutions, and the Organic Law on Political Parties and Candidates and other Laws’ emphasis on freedom in theory, freedom in practice is still limited.

One main argument is that the institutions are designed for men such as the laws, political parties and their policies. In other words, institutions for instance were masculine driven, where most or all of the decision makers were men at the time of their establishment. The Athenian democracy is a classic example that plays into some or most of the formal institutions today. Thus, the case of Papua New Guinea reflects democracy institutional structures limiting the freedom of individuals, in this case, the right of the women to fully participate as citizens. Feminists further argue that equality based on justice must be considered in term of rights for gender equality, reflecting John Steward Mill's (1975) argument that liberty justifies the freedom of the individual in opposition to the limited state control. However, rights of individuals are specific, while the politics of presence argue for excluded groups to be considered for inclusion.

Institutional Change/Reform

Institutional change can be difficult, however historically, there has been institutional change. Amendments to the laws to include marginalized groups to vote for instance, women’s movement in the early 1900, and the civil rights movement in the 1960-70’s, are evident of historical change. Therefore, institutional change is possible when what is taken as a norm can be changed. Institutionalization suggests the historical consideration of institutions around the question of what and why, are important because they answer how the institutions are made or even modified (Philips 1995). For instance, when a quota system is allowed in some countries, it acts as an alternative mechanism for gender equality. Both in terms of theory and practice, the quota system enables some gender equality be reflected in number of representatives. Thus, reforms allow/enable more women to stand up as candidates to be substantially represented.

through numbers.

Hence, the politics of presence is about playing safe, though it does not guarantee of political equality (Philips 1995). Given the above arguments, the politics of presence illustrate a concrete and applicable model to gender equality. As an alternative to improving women’s underrepresentation, the politics of presence also has limitations.

Limitations of the Politics of Presence

Given that there are different groups that are competing on the one hand, while others are excluded on the other hand, the reality stands that excluded groups cannot be given utmost attention to be recognized. But there should be some form of distribution of power sharing among them, thus having proportionate/or equal representation at the very least (Phillips 1991, 22).

Further, gender representation within elected bodies has been a contested issue for democracies for decades, and the focus on exclusion group entirely might cause further divisions. This argument supports majoritarian representation in line with the concerns for political stability, but this opposes the politics of presence (ibid.). In fact, in all kinds of representation, there are power relations between the groups, while the degrees can be different. As a result, representation continues to be a contested idea. Increasing the number of women does not necessarily mean gender equality, given the many differences amongst women themselves when categorized as a homogenous group. This more has led to essentialists arguing that “all women have identical interests” (Philips 1995, 24). They imply that gender equality represents women as a group, overlooking the importance of differences among them; however, intersectionality of class and ethnicity for instance are overlooked.

Phillips (1995) presents a number of objections to the politics of presence. First, the politics of presence emphasizes more on group differences than the politics of ideas; whereas the politics of ideas encourages citizens to focus their attention on the policy differences that divides them. This may be somewhat not flexible, but at least cuts across some of the intersections of
concerns including gender and ethnicity, in the process alliances across different groups are formed. Identity based politics does exist in this context and cannot be denied. Second, when representation depends on personal or group characteristics, it tends to undermine the basis for accountability. This is because accountability is important when it comes to representation, in terms of policies, programs and ideas. A third objection relates to the deliberative representation that has some recognition of group representation principles, and this refers to those who base their self-interest by generating common interests. For instance, vote gathering to obtain as much support from both men and women.

Given that there are limitations and objections of the politics of presence, it seems the politics of ideas complements. In other words, one theory does not work without the other. The politics of presence therefore presents the quota system as a viable mechanism to address gender inequality in the political arena. Hence, to truly represent women is one thing, but to increase their number turns out to be another thing.

Quota Mechanism

In the complexity of the notion of representation, quotas are enabling devices towards women representation. These are the inclusion of women by law, through political parties or by reserved seats for a specific number of women in parliament. For instance, Nordic countries took the lead, introducing gender quotas for parliamentary candidates from the mid-1970's; South Africa; India implemented quota for caste at the local level; including one third reserve seats for women. Rwanda currently has the highest number of women in parliament through using the quota system. However, quotas are patronizing and self-defeating, considering competition from men who look down on women. Does women representation mean political equality?

Women representation does not mean political equality, basically because even if we increase number of women in parliament through mechanisms such as the quota system, political representation is far from equality given the small percentages. In light of the reality, political
presence can be seen as an analytic tool towards improving both participation but especially political representation towards a viable democracy; “guarantee political equality is not possible, but considering politics of presence is playing safe” (Philips, 1995: 191). Hence, affirmative action in the form of quota is used to explain why the makeup of numbers in parliament is important, including women’s political roles as leaders, and public policies including laws.

Other applicable Theories

Other theories that explain representation of women includes substantive representation. The selection of this theory is because those elected advocate on behalf of certain groups and do not necessarily reflect their background only. The argument that women are caring and nurturing tends to aid them to make decisions different to men, especially issues that affect them. Lacking in the argument of liberal democracy is the link between the private and the public sphere. Democracy encourages and involves equality in participation in the public sphere mostly and not in the private sphere. For example, such activities as civil engagement focus on equality in employment. Power dynamics in the private sphere (such as within homes) overrides the equality agenda that democracy claims. Historically, women have been excluded from participating as well as representing. Scholars such as Thomas Hobbes (1989) has emphasized on an absolute government that excludes women from the public sphere, which secludes them to the domestic sphere. Similarly, Jean Jacque Rousseau’s argument on Emile- portraying how a woman should behave restricts them to homes. But over time, different countries’ suffrage has allowed women to participate and also represent. This had set the pace for women to break the classical narrative of women’s place at home. The private sphere also has a power dynamic at play that further suppresses women, creating gender inequality in private sphere, for instance the division of household chores.

There is another debate of the public private dichotomy, the biology (genetic) versus the social (cultural) argument. Scholars like Charles Darwin (1875) argue that men’s inherent traits
include competition and aggressiveness, drive them to protect, provide shelter and food for the family, making strategic decisions in the family as well as the group. These traits have allowed men to take up leadership positions within the groups as well. Women on the other hand, have been restricted to reproductive roles; very much involved in household roles such as caring for children and the elderly. However, anthropological findings present evidence that women also play crucial roles, not equal but complementary roles to men that were important for society’s survival; these have included gathering food and looking after the young. Accordingly, associated behaviors such as mothering tend to be socially constructed, questioning the private/public dichotomy. In light of this, studies of early societies and primates have shown that women also were strategic members of the society and performed both male and female roles, implying that the different role of men and women were crucial in the development of society. A. C. Roosevelt, clearly state in her research that, “the political and ritual power that women have held through their reproductive and genealogical roles became limited through imposition of patriarchal genealogy incorporated in property and inheritance laws” (Roosevelt, cited in Nelson and Ayalon, 2002, 376). Over time, power systems of patriarchy have become embedded in institutions, and have developed the way of life leading to the variations in underrepresentation of women in the political arena.

Hence, equality does not mean equal number as men, but allowing women to display their qualities that women feel are needed in the public decision making arena is crucial. In this way, women not only represent by the increase in the number of women in parliament, but also “substantially” or “truly” representing women.

Quota System Model at the Provincial Level

Despite the failure to secure sufficient votes to pass the Equality and Participation Bill in Parliament to secure 22 reserved seats for women, there are chances for introducing a quota system at other levels of government. At the provincial level, a quota system is implemented, but
in only one province, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. After twenty years of civil conflict, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, in early 2000 applied the quota system of having reserved seats for women. Three seats are reserved for women according to the province’s division by three big constituencies, North, South and Central. Each voter is required to casts three votes for representatives in the Legislative Assembly, one for their local MP, one for the reserved woman’s seat, and one for the reserved ex-combatant’s seat. Women also held strategic positions in the Autonomous government such as deputy speaker; for example, in 2007, Francisca Semoso was elected the speaker of the Autonomous government. However, the women who occupy the reserve seats have limited rights, from the other elected members. For instance, they do not have budget allocation rights.

There were mixed reactions from the people as well as members of parliament towards the special measure. There was opposition to the proposed Bill to increase the number of women in parliament. Concerns were raised by the Electoral Commissioner Andrew Traven on the move to reserve 22 parliamentary seats for women in the 2012 election, and these included financial and legal implications. In the interview with the National Newspaper, the Commissioner mentioned that “the Commission would need to advertise, recruit and formally appoint a returning office for each of the 22 electorates, create and maintain electoral rolls for each of them and recruit additional staff at the headquarters in Port Moresby to administer the electorates. For the election itself, we would need to print some four million ballot papers for the women’s seats, print some 50,000 candidates posters for use in all polling places, for public awareness and for the candidates themselves to use for campaigning purposes and procure some 9,000 additional

164 MP Pehei of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville in an interview by EMTV during the Women’s Forum conducted in Port Moresby, March 6-8 2014, Holiday Inn
boxes.” The same sentiment was raised by Mr. Philemon as the deputy opposition leader in 2010. Further, a study conducted by the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties and Candidates in the 2012 election, observed political parties at the 2012 elections were not willing to endorse women. For instance, out of the total of 69 total candidates contesting the 2012 elections in Bougainville were four women, three of these women represented the People’s Party, Rachael Konaka and Francisca Semoso vying for the North Bougainville seat, while Theresa Jaintong for the Central Bougainville, who is also the paramount chief of five clans. Magdalene Toroansi contested the Bougainville regional seat as the only women, but also as an independent candidate. This figure is significant because compared to the 2005 elections, there were no women candidates running in Bougainville. One of the reasons contributing to no women running for constituencies is because of the quota system that allowed 25 women contesting the three reserved seats in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ibid). Further, the quota system might contribute to less support from political parties to endorse women, as expressed by the Electoral Commissioner Andrew Traven, “parties might opt to remove all women candidates from their nominations for all open seats, putting instead all their women forward for the special or reserved seats only” (Arek 2009).

Newly elected member for Lae Open, Loujaya Kouzo (formerly Toni) when interviewed does not support reserved seats for women proposals; and see women’s issues as different to those handled by men, emphasized that women are more specialized to make decisions about

165 Madeleine Arek, “Reserving 22 reserve seats for women is a costly business,” The National, August 10, 2009
167 Email from Registrar of Political Parties and Candidates Office, dated April 7, 2014.
women’s issues such as home economics and human resource development. For her, she tends to see women as capable as men to be able to compete for the parliamentary seats. The debate for reserved seats for women in parliament continues to be part of the women’s movement since then.

Since women are assigned reserved seats at the lower levels, Autonomous region of Bougainville (ARB), provides the avenue to create confidence in the people gradually that women are also capable of leadership roles at the national level. ARB can be a model for the rest of the provinces, and the country as a whole. However, women occupying seats at the local level currently are not active in political representation. Hence, reserved seats for women can be questioned if it is an appropriate measure to improve women participation and representation.

In order to utilize this avenue to advance women’s interest at the national level, women need to work together in solidarity at the provincial and local level, to unify support for the women appointed to these provincial levels. In addition, to have checks and balances of the performance of these women at the different levels of government, if there were commitment and engagement of women’s issues and activities at the lower level. In light of this, women need to continue to push for the 22 reserved seats for women in Parliament under the Equality and Participation Bill (2009).

Despite some of the setbacks, quota system provides a way forward for the country. In fact, for every policy there are both advantages and disadvantages, while a model will show us the viability of the policy or project. The Autonomous Region of Bougainville’s implementation of quota system has proved successful since the establishment of the Autonomous Government; thus provides us with the alternate model of increasing number of women in the parliament, and one way is through the allocation of provincial seats. Therefore, the quota system provides a practical mechanism to address the underrepresentation of women by not only increasing their

\[170\] ibid.
numbers in parliament, but also addressing the question of ‘substantial’ representation of the women populace.

Conclusion

The politics of presence is a viable mechanism, because it offers a concrete approach towards addressing the central question of how to address the problem of fewer women in parliament or women’s underrepresentation. Further, it provides explanation for the important to increase the number of women in this area, with the alternative mechanism of the quota system that has proven to be successful in some other countries. However, the politics of presence is limited in some ways. It is Eurocentric as it is centered in Western context, given that the case studies taken, and argue for by Ann Philips (1991, 1997) are within the Western context of excluded groups. However, universally, women as a disadvantaged group continue to be marginalized through historical democratic structures of exclusions over time.

Further, the politics of presence’s particular emphasis on individualism as a limitation of democracy is a central concept in the West; while the case study of Papua New Guinea is more group based in the context of cultural relevance along kinship groups for instance. Therefore, the politics of presence arguments are limited to formal institutions, while PNG’s case goes further than the formal institutions to recognize that there are other areas of inequality that overlaps in the dynamics of power relations. This presents challenges for the women and one main reason is due to the cultural traditions that tie the groups of people together do not necessarily reflect democratic principles, but are based on traditional patriarchal ideals.

In contemporary Papua New Guinea society, the political trends indicate a slight change of differences along ethnicity towards class difference, as people increasingly align with material and ideologies that give them status. This can be seen mostly in the urban areas, whereas, people in the rural areas still prioritize along traditional ethnic lines. This in turn demonstrates that representation is fluid and will depend on how and what is important to the people represented.
Women’s underrepresentation of less than 3 percent of women serving in parliament at any one term, increasingly present the case for assessment of democratic mechanisms, and other factors that interact with them to produce inequality both within and beyond the legislative office. Hence, electoral mechanisms such as the electoral system and political parties remain a challenge for democratic countries. Otherwise, there are alternative options on campaigns, activities and contacts, and also pressure groups that present avenues for further participation to promote representation. In the complex web of power structures, to increase women’s number in parliament is one thing, and to ‘truly’ represent them is another thing; hence, two different but overlapping ideas that require integration of both the politics of presence and the politics of ideas. With the alternative option of quota system, its application is possible but not an easy method as there are other power dimensions overlapping; in that, structures of the institutions favor men over women, especially when majority of the members of parliament are men, as is the case for PNG.

Theories of participation, representation, and feminist theories presented demonstrate gender imbalance existing beyond legislative office that presents challenges for women beyond democratic principles and practices. The challenge remains that even if we increase number of women in parliament, this does not necessarily mean women’s equality because there are many other differences among the women themselves. Women representation is just one important dimension of gender equality, and taken one step at a time. The mechanism of quota system presents an appropriate solution to increasing the number of women in Parliament, but also substantially representing the women themselves. Therefore, Bougainville quota can be used as a model for other provinces.
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http://www.thenational.com.pg/?q=node/36757
## Appendix A: Number of women candidates and number of women elected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislative council</th>
<th>Number of men</th>
<th>Number of women candidate</th>
<th>Number of women elected</th>
<th>Names of women</th>
<th>Number of men elected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951-61</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-1963</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Alice Wedega, Roma Bates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Parliament</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964 (1st general election)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>64 (included 10 appointed officials)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>94 (included 10 appointed officials)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Josephine Abaijah</td>
<td>106 (included 4 appointed officials and 3 appointed community representatives)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977 *</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Josephine Abaijah, Nahau Rooney, Waliyato Clowes</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nahau Rooney</td>
<td>108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Josephine Abaijah, Carol Kidu</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Carol Kidu</td>
<td>108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Carol Kidu</td>
<td>108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 *</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Julie Soso, Loujaya Toni, Delilah Gore</td>
<td>108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* highest number of women elected in PNG (3 women)

Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)
Appendix B: Party standing in the 2012 General Election

2012 General Election Party Standing

IND (14.41%) - 15
PNC (24.32%) - 27
THEP (10.81%) - 12
UP (0.00%) - 1
ODP (0.00%) - 1
PANGU (0.00%) - 1
IPP (0.00%) - 1
PCDP (0.00%) - 1
SAP (0.00%) - 1
PCP (0.00%) - 1
PDMP (1.80%) - 2
MLP (1.80%) - 2
PMCP (1.80%) - 2
CFRP (1.80%) - 2
NGP (1.80%) - 2
PIAP (1.80%) - 2
SDP (2.70%) - 3
PPP (5.41%) - 6
NAP (6.31%) - 7
URP (5.31%) - 7
PNGP (7.21%) - 8

Appendix C: 2012 Election: Women Candidates by Region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of women candidates</th>
<th>Number of women declared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Southern Region</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Momase</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>New Guinea Islands</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from the garamut blog (2012).
Appendix D: Political biography of women leaders.

Alice Wedega (Legislative Council 1961-1963)

Alice Wedega was the first woman to be appointed to the Legislative Council in 1961. She was born on August 20, 1905 at the Alo Alo village and raised in Kwato, Milne Bay. Her father, Wedega Gamahari, was a London Missionary Society (LMS) pastor. She was largely influenced by the LMS education as early as the age of 16 years, starting a career with the Kwato missionaries. According to Eric Johns (2012), after 1930’s, her involvement with the Kwato Extension Association (KEA) led by Charles Abel, influenced her to vowed along with other women, to not marry and dedicated her life to Christian work. Then on she was actively involved in government roles: she became a member of the recognized 1935 patrol (Cloudy Bay area), became the first principle of the school built by KEA, appointed PNG representative at the Pan Pacific Women’s Conference at Christchurch, New Zealand (1952), followed by several other international conferences, first National Girl Guide’s District Commissioner for Kwamo-Amau District (1955-1959), appointed Welfare officer with the Department of Native Affairs, and conducted science classes for women across Ailotau, as well as assisted to establish and run the Ahioma Training Centre for girls (1960).

In a largely expatriated and male dominated Legislative Council, she became the first nominated indigenous woman to become a member from 1961 to 1964. After that, she continued to work for the government among the women on the conflict island of Bougainville (1970-1971). In 1964 she was appointed MBE (Member of the British Empire), further recognized (elevated) by the PNG government to DBE (DME) in 1982. She retired from government work in 1971 but remained heavily involved in Moral Rearmament activities. She was the first PNG women to publish her autobiography titled *Listen My Country* (1981). Dame Alice died December 3 1987, in Ahioma, Milne Bay Province.

Roma Isabelle Bates (Legislative Council 1961-1963)

Roma Bates involvement with the nation goes back to her family when her grandfather was a carpenter building the wireless station on Woodlark Island in 1914. Later her father, Leo Kensington Bryant, in the mid-1920s, applied and was appointed Chauffeur to General Wisdom, the Administrator of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea at that time. Roma, her mother and sister moved to Rabaul August 1927, where she was trained as a stenographer, she was proficient in shorthand, and worked for the administration, mainly doing court reporting; she later worked for Burns Philip for ten years. In 1932, she met her husband Charlie, and got married in July 1934 in Rabaul. Because her husband was banished to the Highlands for disobeying protocol in marrying her, she had to be taught Morse code by Ted Biston, so she could communicate with her

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171 Vale, PNGAA (December 2010), accessed January 9, 2014.  
[http://www.pngaa.net/Vale/vale_dec10.htm](http://www.pngaa.net/Vale/vale_dec10.htm)
husband. Her husband served also as a Coastwatcher during WWII, later, District Commissioner in charge of the post-war rehabilitation of Rabaul in 1946, and as District Commissioner for Madang in 1949. He died in 1954 at the age of 45. Only 8 years was Roma together with her husband out of the 20 year marriage. She had three children. Following her husband’s death, she was employed as the Secretary of the Madang Native Hospital, and worked there until 1965, she moved to Sydney, Australia. She travelled many places including Antarctica, her favorite place.

She was interested in community affairs; she suggested the Frangipani Ball in 1937, after the volcano eruption in Rabaul, later became an institution. After WWII, 1946, she started the idea of village choir competitions in Rabaul. She was founder and life member of the New Britain Women’s club and other community organizations where she held office. These organizations included Scouts, Guides, CWA, P&C, Bowls, women’s groups and amateur activities (ibid). In 1961, she was nominated Member of the PNG Legislative Council in Madang. She worked with Alice Wedega whom she greatly admired. She was also part of a small group who set up the Retired Officers Association of Papua New Guinea – now PNGAA- while she was on leave in Australia in the 1950’s, where she was a long term Committee member and Co- Patron in 2001. She contributed articles to the PNGAA Journal Una Voce, including her account of the opening of the Coastwatcher’s Memorial Lighthouse in Madang, Rabaul before 1995 eruption; “Right to the end, Roma maintained a love for and a keen interest in PNG affairs.”

She was an accomplished musician, she played organ for Sunday services and weddings, and played music for all her live afterwards. She died August 30th 2010, at the age of 100.


Born in 1944, on the Island of Misima, Papua New Guinea, Josephine Abaijah is one of the few women who served successfully for more than one parliamentary term in Papua New Guinea apart from Dame Carol Kidu.

Josephine Abaijah owned a news agency in Port Moresby in the early 1970’s at street level; however she was not always at her shop. She was out on campaigns. She founded Papua Besena movement in 1972, which advocated for the unsuccessful separation of Papua from New Guinea to become independent on its own. Even before independence, she was vocal in settlements and villages around Port Moresby promoting the separatist movement. She stood for Port Moresby seat and attracted large number of supporters including many men in the hundreds, at some instance. Her forums attracted many supporters including a lot of male support at the time

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172 ibid.
175 ibid.
176 ibid.
when women had little or no status. This is partly because “there weren’t too many politicians at
that time preaching that message the menfolk wanted to hear” (Peeks, May 20, 2013). That
support she drew contributed to her being the only and first female to be elected in the 1972
elections to the Papua New Guinea House of Assembly out of four female candidates. She was
re-elected again in 1977-1982. She became the President of the Council of Women from 1995 to
1996. She stood for elections again in 1997, and became the first female Provincial Governor
(Milne Bay Province).

In her interview with the Pacific Journalism review (1995), when asked why there were no
women in Parliament, she replied, “I maintain that I will not give money to somebody to vote me.
So I think that is one big reason. The men can get money, the men can bribe. We are finding it
difficult for women to go around bribing people. I think this is where the country is going
nowhere …. bribes, corruption, something that women don’t want in this country”. She was
knighted a Dame in 1991, by the British Empire; same year published her autobiography A
Thousand Colored Dreams.


Born in 1945 in Lahan village on the south coast of Manus Province, Nahau Rooney, was one
four siblings, she started school late at the age of ten. This indicated the time education was
limited to girls, and very few girls received any education at all. Her lower primary was
attended at a boarding school in Lorengau, and traveled to Lae Morobe district to enroll in Busu
High School because it was the only school in the country to that gave opportunity to women,
prepare young women for places in the colonial administration. This system was set up in the
1960’s.

She took up training as a teacher at the Port Moresby Teacher’s Collage, and went on to win a
scholarship to study home economics in Fiji. She later won a Winston Churchill Fellowship for a
year’s study at Melbourne Teacher’s college in Australia. After that she took up social work at
the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) graduating with a Bachelor’s degree in social work.
She began involving in Politics at the UPNG- provided an avenue for students to engage in active
political activity such as debates; topics included self-government and independence, citizenship,
constitution. She was elected president of the Student Representative Council (Year), marking her
first leadership position.

She first stood as a candidate of the Pangu Party in 1973, for the National Capital District City
Council, won, and served for a term as a City Councilor. Before PNG’s independence, she
worked for Michael Somare, the Chief Minister and “Prime Minister in Waiting”
(Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999, 101) at that time. As a Research Officer, her tasks involved

decision making and representation, which shaped her towards deciding that she would contribute towards the political arena.

She later worked as a Special Projects Officer within the local level government council of Manus Province. In 1976, she assisted in the preparation of the new constitution for the new Manus Province, where she was appointed executive officer to the planning commission on the constitution, requiring her to travel extensively within the area to get people’s views on the form of government they preferred. According to her interview, “through her work she gained not only visibility, but also the confidence of the people she met”\textsuperscript{179}. In the 1977 general elections, she stood and won the Manus open seat in the National Parliament, making her one of the three successful women candidates.

Nahau Rooney became one of the three women elected to the Parliament on the Country’s first post-independence election in 1977, and appointed as the Minister for Correctional Services and Liquor Licensing, 1979 Minister for Justice, 1980 Minister for Decentralization. She was re-elected in 1982, the only female parliamentarian for that term. She was a member of the Pangu Party under the Prime Minister Michael Somare, and broke away with other 14 member to form People’s Democratic Movement Party (PDM) in 1985, led by Pius Wingti. She became Minister for Culture and Tourism from 1985 to 1987. She represented Manus Province and was an active politician in the 1990’s; however, was unsuccessful to return in the 1997 elections. She was nominated for the post of Governor General in 2005, but was not successful to get enough support from the Members of Parliament. According to the Commonwealth Secretariat (1999), Nahau Rooney’s win is channeled by the support given by her family, especially the traditional extended family structure known in PNG, that have made it easier for women who entered politics, especially politics required long hours and odd times meetings (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999). For instance, extended families assisted in domestic duties. Further, apart from her local level experiences and gaining visibility, she was not afraid to play the games of male politicians.

\textit{Waliyato Clowes (1977-1982)}

Honorable Waliyato Clowes\textsuperscript{180} was one of the three women who served in the Parliament from 1977 to 1982. Born in 1951 at Aweba village, Western Province, the only women who formed her own political party known as Panel (Papua Alliances). She was a supporter of women’s rights. She was quoted as saying “A lot of men think we are rubbish and take no notice of us” (cited in Winduo, Windows, 2012).

\textsuperscript{179} ibid. p.101.
\textsuperscript{180} There was very little available information on Waliyato Clowes’ background.
Carol Kidu (1997-2012)

Born as Carol Millwater in Shorncliffe, Queensland, Australia on October 10th 1948, Carol Kidu spent the first twenty years of her life there, raised in a lower middle class Australian family, where she described her family as “not poor, but we were not rich, they struggled to get us educated.” She developed social conscious growing up because her parents created an environment towards having compassion for others and would emphasise that everyone was equal.

Carol was sixteen and in grade 11 when she met and fell in love with Buri Kidu, a Papua New Guinea in 1969, at Tallebudgera Camp School on the Gold Coast. Buri Kidu was a school boy on a scholarship from the government of Papua New Guinea attending the Toowoomba Grammar School. During this time, cross-cultural and interracial relationship was not accepted, because white Australians were not ready to accept interracial relationships especially between white and black.

Despite much oppositional reactions, Carol and Buri were married in 1969 when she was twenty years old, and she chose to live with Buri Kidu and his people in Pari village, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. It was hard as she struggles mentally, and physically through pains and perseverance, she slowly was able to adapt in a different culture which she would make her home for many years.

Carol Kidu became a school teacher for 20 years and taught in Port Moresby and also wrote school text books while her husband became a lawyer. Her husband rose to become the first Chief Justice of Papua New Guinea, and was knighted on his appointment in 1980 by the Queen, and was bestowed with the title Sir and she was also recognized as Lady. She travelled with him and met important dignitaries from all over the world including the Pope, the Queen and Prince Charles. She was widowed when her husband died of heart attack in 1994. Her reaction was anger towards the government at that time, because her husband was sacked unsympathetic to his championing of judicial independence. Despite, she did not go back to Australia, but decided to live among his people and visited settlements and spoke to people, both men and women. This humility and loyalty to the people won their support for her when she entered politics in 2007, mainly driven by her husband’s death.

Carol Kidu entered politics because she felt the nation had been denied an outstanding person and what he stood for must not die, but her husband’s legacy to live on. Moreover, being idealistic, she believed in making a difference and stood for what her husband believed in, social justice,

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human rights, marginalized groups and related. When she entered politics, people especially the elite group thought she will not win because she is white, but she was confident she will win. The reason is because she was deeply entrenched in her husband’s society and being a widow of such a highly respectable man, Carol won easily as an independent candidate representing her family’s constituency, Moresby South, and became the first white woman ever to sit in the Parliament. From this experience, relationships has formed an important part of every election she stood, 2002 and again in 2007. Her husband has been the key person who had inspired her towards politics, and she still speaks of him today that his death has contributed towards her entering politics. On the other hand, her in-laws were supportive towards her intention to stand for election and they have always been every election.

Despite her win in each election, she faced challenges during election. For instance, her election initially in 2007, is to a certain extent viewed differently for the people that voted her, despite her in-laws support; according to the interview with Johnson, she mentioned that old men from the village, same tribe as her husband said, “because she’s a European she understands these things, but we’ll never vote for our own women.” She explained that, that was an excuse of seeing her as a European superior than as a woman. She decided to let that not trouble her but represented her people and women well in the parliament. Also, facing gender challenge, she has threaded a fine line in relation to her predominantly male colleagues whilst in the process, ensuring that she exercises her ‘moral authority in ways that do not allow her to be moved by the temptation of money and the corrupt politics that are obviously committed in the halls of power. Through the challenges, she is also mindful of the fact that she is a 'white woman' who may be accused of misrepresenting certain sections of the Papua New Guinea community, in that she recognizes the socio-cultural diversity of Papua New Guinea and of the representation role she plays as a political leader.

She served three terms consecutively in Parliament from 1997, 2002, and 2007-2012, and resigned from politics in the 2012 elections. She is one of the longest serving female MP in Papua New Guinea Parliament, whilst there she championed campaigns for the minority/disadvantaged groups in PNG, especially the women, children and the disabled. She was first Minister for Social Welfare and Development, then Minister for Community Development. She became the only one out of 109 members of parliament in 2011 to cross the floor of parliament to the opposition, since both sides argued that they were in the rightful government, was therefore named the leader of the opposition (February- July 2012). Her autobiography titled Remarkable Journey was published in 2002. She was knighted in 2005 as Dame by the

British Empire. She retired from politics in 2012, but continues to be involved in underprivileged groups’ projects.

Loujaya Tony (2012)

Born in 1967, Loujaya Tony became the sixth female Member of Parliament and the first female Member for Lae Open Electorate, Morobe Province. She was born and raised in Lae City, she now represents. In 1978, while still attending school in Port Moresby, she was nominated by the University of Papua New Guinea as PNG’S youngest poet; and the Education Department afterwards published her collection of poem, *A Sense of Interest*. She is also a known singer/songwriter in PNG following the launching her string of solo gospel music album in 1985. She recently graduated in April 2012 under the Department of Communication Development Studies with a master’s degree in Communication Development Studies, at the University of Technology in Lae, where she is also a part-time tutor. She is also a journalist, teacher and practices naturopath.

As a strategy, she had set her ground work among the people, by supporting her family in the garden outside Lae city where increasing number of moving rural families live and go to work in town. These rural places lack water and electricity. She polled votes from not only her clan people, but also people in settlements around the city where there seem to be growing frustration about the lack of opportunity, and the gap between the have and the have-nots.

Before winning the 2012 elections she contested the national elections in 2007 coming fifth out of twenty-five contestants, and also contested the Local level Government elections in 2008. She polled 7,364 votes going past the majority vote of 6,000 plus, ahead of businessman Fred Waka with 5,842 votes and her grandfather, sitting MP Bart Philemon at 4,680 votes inclusive of other 30 male candidates in the 2012 elections. She was contesting under the Indigenous People’s party, and her campaign message was under the banner of “Make a difference: vote for a woman.” However, she was careful to campaign not only as a candidate for women but also for the men. In her opinion, she does not support reserved seats for women proposals, and see women’s issues as different to those handled by men; and emphasized that women are more specialized to make decisions about women’s issues such as home economics and human resource development.

188 ibid. accessed 12.02.13
190 Bart Philemon has been in the seat since 1992.
192 ibid.
193 ibid.
Delilah Gore (2012)

Member for Sohe District, Northern Province, a candidate under the Triumph Heritage Empowerment Party, Delilah Gore became the first elected women in the ninth Parliament. She is a public servant and interestingly beat her former boss- Anthony Nene to become member of Sohe District.

Delilah Gore was born in Northern Province in a culture where democratic attitude was embedded. Her father was a paramount chief of Sasembata village, and had a lot of impact on his daughters’ upbringing; Delilah was the first of 4 daughters. Instead of the normal arranged marriage to another chief’s son, he wanted his daughters to be educated and chose their own husbands; he would talk to them about politics, and Josephine’s Abaijah’s success story of becoming the first elected female politician (1972) was one; Delilah however, did not have a political vocation. After graduating from Popondetta High School and secretarial college in Port Moresby, she got a job in the public service. She got married and had children while she worked in the treasury office in her home province. Her husband passed away in 1998, and raising two children alone aged eight and ten.

She was concerned as a public servant over the year on how things might be done better, seeing things began to fall and deteriorate such as infrastructure- water, electricity, education. Through her work, she did a lot of public relations having a wide network through church and work. When she contested the elections in 2012 using her father prominent name, people recognized her; while her six months campaign leading up to the election had a strong focus on women empowerment, and concerned for the lack of response to infrastructural damage by Cyclone Guba in 2007. Since she was the only candidate in her village, she blocked all the votes from the village, and politely asked for other candidates’ villagers’ votes as preferences. These factors including her determination to see change, earned her people’s vote for a woman, first time to represent Sohe District. According to Tokunai, who was running analysis of election results on his blog, argued that gender was not an obstacle in Sohe because it is a fairly egalitarian society, where “people cast their votes freely as they were supposed to;” consequently, and women could win. She polled in more than 6000 votes to be declared the winner and became the sixth female to be elected to parliament since independence.

195 ibid.pp 6. accessed 12.05.13
196 ibid. pp. 8. accessed 12.05.13
Julie Soso (2012)

Governor for Eastern Highlands Province a member of the Triumph Heritage Empowerment Party, beat long time, long time naturalized citizen and businessman Malcolm Kela-Smith. Soso’s win was a surprise as she is the first female elected MP in the highlands known for its patriarchal “big man” politics; and further, the first female to hold a regional seat in Papua New Guinea. Soso becomes the seventh elected women to PNG Parliament since its independence. Before winning this election, she has previously contested for the past three elections unsuccessfully. Apart from successfully investing in real estate, Soso and her husband had expended large coffee plantation owned by Soso’s father. While being a radio presenter, she recognized women’s rights and church activists, though she saw herself as not being a feminist. Just like Toni, she was able to win on second and third preference votes.

She acknowledges her husband Akeke for his support, as well as her family; and also acknowledges God. Her win showed that people were somewhat accepting women to be a leader in a strongly held patriarchy society. Soso and Tony were among 60 women who were considering to run for 2012 national elections, attended the first ever practice parliament for women conducted by the United Nation Development Program end of April 2012.
