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**Entering Unknown Territory:**  
*Exploring the Impact on Indigenous  
Field Researchers when Conducting Gender Based  
Violence and Child Abuse Research in the  
Solomon Islands*

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Philosophy in Social Work

Massey University  
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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Noel and Val Titchener, who provided me with the most wonderful childhood and raised me with a great sense of self-belief.

*“You’re braver than you believe, stronger than you seem and smarter than you think”*

(Christopher Robin to Pooh, from Pooh’s Grand Adventure by A.A Milne)

Approval for this research was obtained from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the reflective experiences of indigenous field researchers who were involved in conducting the first population representative research study on gender-based violence and child abuse in the Solomon Islands. The purpose of this thesis study was to gain an understanding and insight into the field researchers' perceptions of the positive and negative impacts such involvement may have had on their lives. The term 'impact' was applied holistically and focus was given to whether negative impacts were mitigated by the positive benefits that may be present from being involved in such research.

The research study design was exploratory and qualitative in nature, underpinned by a phenomenological approach. The participants were 29 Solomon Island women who had been employed in the role of 'field researcher' for the Solomon Island Family Health and Safety Study. Data collection methods included the use of both in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Eleven interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach. Three focus group discussions were facilitated, with the assistance of an open-ended questionnaire guideline.

The findings identified a number of themes that emerged from the data collected. The themes highlighted primary impacts that included an emotional, physical and life-changing dimension. There was a pattern where different themes were more prevalent, dependent on what phase of the 'research journey' that the researchers' were reflecting on. A significant finding was that although field researchers' primarily reported negative impacts, they all unanimously stated that they would be interested in being involved in conducting research on violence against women and children in the future. These findings not only suggest that the positive benefits from being involved in such research mitigated the many negative impacts as reported by the field researchers, but also suggest that through being involved with such research, they developed an increased commitment within their own communities to assist in reducing violence against women and children.

Conducting research on violence against women and children in a developing post-conflict country brings with it many physical and emotional challenges for indigenous field researchers. It is essential that field researchers are provided with considerable support during all phases of the research study. The application of ethical and safety standards needs to reflect the unique characteristics of the country where the study is being conducted, taking into account the situational and ambient dangers that field researchers may be confronted with during their time in the field.

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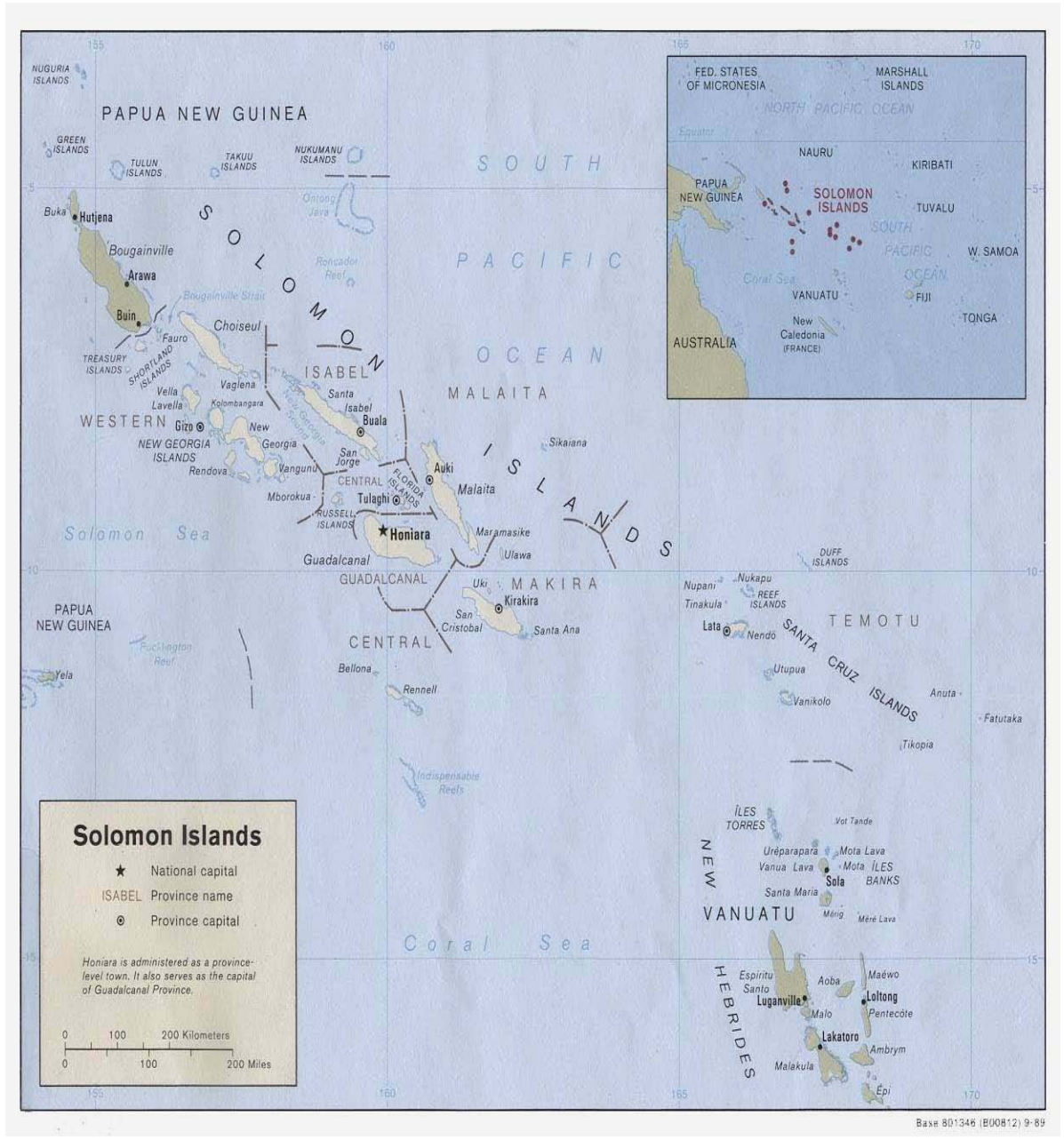
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# Map I: Solomon Islands



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## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

AusAID Development	The Australian Agency for International
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
GBVCA	Gender Based Violence and Child Abuse
GBV	Gender based violence
IPV	Intimate partner violence
MWYC	Ministry of Women, Youth and Children
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PATH	World Health Organisation and Program for Appropriate Technology in Health
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands
SIFHSS	Solomon Island Family Health and Safety Study
VAW	Violence against women
WHO	World Health Organisation

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **Background and Introduction**

Violence against women and children is an issue that is being increasingly researched around the world, with the findings assisting and informing the development of protective frameworks in many countries. For developing countries, such as the Solomon Islands, the issue of violence against women and children is only just beginning to appear on the public radar. It is therefore vitally important that research on this issue is encouraged and supported so that the depth and scale of the problem can be determined and for an understanding to develop about how violence is not only a serious violation of human rights, but is also a public health issue that cannot be ignored. If such research is to be safely conducted in developing countries it is also imperative that we develop an insight into the experiences of indigenous field researchers when they are involved in conducting research on violence against women and children. This thesis is an attempt to examine and explore with Solomon Island indigenous field researchers, their own experiences and perceptions of the impact that being involved with conducting a gender based violence and child abuse research study in the Solomon Islands had on their own self, their personal lives and their relationship with others.

The research study that the field researchers were involved with was titled the “Socio-Cultural Research Project on Gender Based Violence and Child Abuse” (referred herewith as the Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study – SIFHSS). This was the first comprehensive research study to be conducted in the Solomon Islands that gathered data specifically relating to violence against women and children. This Project was jointly funded by AusAID and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and was implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), with the research phase of the Project being conducted during 2008. It is a three year project (starting late 2007) and is based on the methodology of the World Health Organisation Multi-Country Study of Women’s Health and Domestic Violence. This international multi-country study has already been conducted in a number of other countries around the world. However, there were two unique additions to the Solomon Island Study in that the research was designed to also

capture data about violence against children (rate of co-occurrence), and data about the impact of the ethnic tensions on the behaviour of men towards their female partners and wives. The primary objective of the SIFHSS was to determine the prevalence and frequency of intimate partner violence (physical, sexual and emotional) against women aged between 15-49 years. It also sought to document the impact and consequences of violence on women's health (including reproductive health) and on children's behaviour and schooling. Information was gathered about the effect of the ethnic tensions on violence against women, and also on the association between Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and child abuse occurring in the same homes. The study involved both quantitative and qualitative research and was conducted in the nine provinces of the Solomon Islands between April and November 2008.

The quantitative phase of the SIFHSS, involved the selection of 45 female field researchers, all of whom were recruited from the community. The field researchers were trained to use the WHO Research Tool which is a 46 page questionnaire, which they then used to interview women aged 15-49 yrs from a nationally representative population-based sample, in both urban and rural areas. They were also trained to interview women only in complete privacy, and in an effort to ensure the safety of the respondents only the selected respondent from each household were informed that the questionnaire included questions on gender based violence and child abuse. The women, who were employed as field researchers, embarked on a journey that involved 'entering into unknown territory'. Firstly, they were employed to do something that they had never done before (conducting research on violence against women and children). Secondly, they were to gather data about social issues that have never before been comprehensively explored in the Solomon Islands; they asked questions of women that had never been asked before and they heard stories that they had never heard before. Thirdly, these teams of field researchers entered geographical territories that were not only rural, remote and challenging in location, but where visitors/strangers were rarely seen due to the isolation of the villages.

Gathering data on violence against women and children can be fraught with complexities and challenges, and field researchers will undoubtedly be confronted with situations that they may have never experienced before. These challenges may be further compounded by the different variables that are determined by the uniqueness of the country or village where the study is being conducted. It is therefore important to explain at this point, a little about

the country context where the SIFHSS study took place. The Solomon Islands is a country which has experienced significant turmoil and conflict in the past ten years, particularly during the ethnic tensions from 1998-2003. Gender-based violence against women and girls was an element of these tensions, with the majority of this violence going unchecked and unreported due to the general climate of lawlessness and chaos that the country was facing (UNICEF, 2005). A report written by Amnesty International in 2004 suggested that violence against women and children during these years was very high (*Women Confronting Violence: An Amnesty International Report*, 2004). However, this qualitative research was unable to provide valid comparisons or conclusions because qualitative data does not easily allow for comparison over time and as stated above, until the SIFHSS was conducted there had been no comprehensive statistical quantitative data gathered in the Solomon Islands (pre or post tensions) on the issue of violence against women and children,

The Solomon Islands is a particularly interesting country in which to conduct social research due to the variability which exists at both an ethnic level and a social level. The national population is approximately 450,000 and is made up of Melanesian, Micronesian and Polynesian ethnic groups and there are 80 distinct languages. The population includes both patrilineal and matrilineal family systems with a strong Christianity base which is made up of diverse religious groups. Geographically, the Solomon Islands poses logistical problems when conducting research as there are nine provinces spread over an area of 249,000 square nautical miles with many of these areas being accessible only by boat, and with the location of the villages on some of these islands being extremely remote. Solomon Islanders are strongly aligned to the island or province of their ancestors (even if they themselves have never lived there) and it is this lineal link that determines their customs, practices and traditions which ultimately shape their own lives. The extended family (wantok) forms the basis of society and the importance of this wantok system transverses all components of the lives of the Solomon Island people. The Solomon Islands is a developing and post-conflict country where unemployment is very high (75%), and education levels are low. There are no legal or judicial frameworks that protect women and children from violence and the very few services that are available for those affected by violence are centred around the capital of Honiara. To attempt to conduct nationally representative social research (as was the case with the SIFHSS) in such a country was a huge undertaking, particularly when there were no 'blueprints' to follow. Up until 2008 there had never been any previous attempts in the Solomon Islands to conduct sensitive social research on a

population representative scale, therefore there was no existing ‘pool’ of local people who had experience and expertise in the role of field researcher.

Taking into consideration the country and cultural context of the SIFHSS, it would be fair to surmise that the field researchers who were employed to conduct the quantitative research, (that had a population representative sample of 3500 women) had an enormous and onerous task ahead of them. If we consider that the SIFHSS was conducted to ultimately bring about change for the benefit of both women and children, it is imperative to ensure that the women who were involved in conducting the SIFHSS in the role of field researchers are not forgotten in the process. It could almost be said with some certainty, that each individual field researcher involved in the SIFHSS had her own story to tell of her experiences as a researcher on this study. Inter-woven within these stories were different reactions, actions and emotions that the researchers experienced, which may (or may not) have had an impact on their own lives. It is these researchers’ experiences which this thesis explores.

Conducting research such as that of the SIFHSS, has enormous ethical and methodological challenges due to the sensitive nature of the topic being researched. The risk of personal danger for both the respondents and the field researchers cannot be under-estimated, and adds a complexity that is rarely seen in other forms of research (Elcioglu, 2004; Ellsberg & Heise, 2002; Jewkes et al., 2000; WHO, 1999). There is a considerable body of literature which has examined the risks and safety issues when conducting such research however, historically the majority of this focus has been primarily about the respondents and their emotional and physical safety when they are participating in research about violence (Dickson-Swift et al., 2005, Dickson-Swift et al., 2008a; Mauthner et al., 2002; Sieber, 1993). In more recent years there has been an increased awareness of the field researcher’s safety and well-being, which in turn has informed the introduction of more stringent and ethical protocols (Ellsberg et al., 2001; Ellsberg & Heise, 2002; Fontes, 1988; Johnson & Clarke, 2003; Langford, 2000; Parker & Ulrich, 1990). This growing awareness, combined with the changing face of research (on violence against women and children), has seen a move from primarily exploratory, qualitative, anecdotal research to including quantitative population-based multinational studies, which has led to two notable publications; *Putting Women’s Safety First* (WHO, 2001) and *Researching Violence Against Women: A practical guide for researchers and activists* (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005). These manuals have been

introduced to assist in minimizing any anticipated risks or difficulties that may arise when researching violence against women. Despite guidelines being in place to ensure the safety and well-being of both the respondents and members of the research team, it is still impossible to anticipate the impact that being involved in such research may have on the individual field researcher. In a country such as the Solomon Islands, where violence against women and children is often normalized in the context of culture and custom, anticipating the impact that being involved in such research may have on the individual, is probably even more difficult.

There is an international body of research that has examined the dangers and risk (both physical and emotional) that researchers may encounter, with recommendations on how these dangers can be minimized. However, there appears to be very little literature which has attempted to capture field researchers' reflective accounts of the impacts of being involved in conducting research on violence against women and children and whether these impacts (positive and negative) have had short or long term consequences for the individual researchers. This thesis explores these impacts.

The primary aim of the research for this thesis was to explore the experiences of the indigenous field researchers who were involved in conducting the SIFHSS. The following questions guided the research.

1. What is the impact on indigenous field researchers who are involved with conducting gender-based violence and child abuse research in the Solomon Islands?
2. If negative impacts are present, are these mitigated by the positive benefits that may come from being involved in such research?
3. If there is to be future research into violence against women and children in the Solomon Islands, are there particular aspects which need very specific attention to ensure the overall safety and well-being of the field researcher?

For the purpose of this research, 'impact' was viewed from a holistic approach which meant that data was gathered on different aspects of the field researchers' lives such as emotional, physical, cultural, health, relationships, spiritual, family, and financial. It is important to understand what happens for indigenous field researchers who, during the course of their work, hear many stories about the horrors of domestic violence and child abuse happening within their own society. How do these stories change them as people? Does their view of



the world change and are their own beliefs and values challenged? Does their involvement with such a study encourage them to examine their own relationships? How do they reconcile their own cultural beliefs with a role where they are exploring an issue that is usually viewed as private and taboo? Do they experience situations of risk to their personal safety due to the sensitive nature of the work they are involved with and how do they manage emotional impacts and risks?

The WHO Women's Health and Domestic Violence Study is a significant multi-country study that has already been conducted in approximately 20 countries around the world to date. However there is only a small amount of literature that has been published that discusses the direct experiences of the field-researchers who have been involved in this study. (Jewkes et al., 2000; Ellsberg & Heise, 2002; Ellsberg et al., 2001) This thesis was not intended to evaluate the interviewer training programme that field researchers attended prior to going into the field in the Solomon Islands, nor was it intended to evaluate the Guidelines and Recommendations that WHO have developed for the training of interviewers. The primary purpose of this thesis study was to hear from field researchers, their own stories of their personal experiences in the field and how they perceived these experiences may have had an impact on them, in both positive and negative ways. From the stories that were gathered from the field researchers, it was interesting to examine whether the positive experiences mitigated any negative experiences and whether these women would consider being involved in conducting sensitive social research in the Solomon Islands, in the future.

The rationale behind the focus of this thesis was that there is very little contemporary literature that provides an in-depth understanding of the impact of conducting gender-based violence and child abuse research on indigenous field researchers. Although there is a small body of literature that has explored the impact on researchers (Jewkes et al, 2000; and Ellsberg & Heise, 2002) the focus of this literature has been mainly on the ethical and methodological challenges and issues that researchers face, rather than on impact that involvement with such research has on the researcher personally. It is important that information is gathered so that future research into violence against women and children in developing countries, such as the Solomon Islands, can be assisted and informed by the valuable experiences of those who have already spent time in the field gathering data on such sensitive issues.

Although relatively small, qualitative and inductive in nature, it is hoped that the findings from this thesis will not only assist future research teams in other countries who are conducting the WHO Multi-country study, but that it will also provide valuable insight for the planning and preparation of further research on violence against women and children in the Solomon Islands.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

Violence against women and children is a phenomenon that has attracted considerable attention in recent years (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; UNIFEM, 2003; UNICEF 2000; Heise et al 1999; WHO, 1999). Researching this has led to an increased understanding of the prevalence of violence in the lives of women and children, and the impact that this violence may have on their health and well-being. Findings from research studies that have been conducted around the world have not only been instrumental in assisting in the establishment of legal frameworks and protective services for women and children, but in some cases they have also led to the challenging of traditional beliefs, customs and practices where violence has been justified in a cultural context. (UNESCAP, 2007; UNFPA, 2006)

Researching violence against women and children presents many unique methodological and ethical issues and many of these complexities are an inherent part of any research that involves exploring the private lives of others. As more and more research is conducted there is an increased understanding of just how difficult this research can be and how vitally important it is to have clear safety and ethical protocols to ensure that the four primary research principles of non-maleficence, beneficence, respect for individuals, and justice are not compromised as a result of the challenges that research teams are faced with (Ellsberg & Heise, 2002). Field researchers' safety and well-being are also now being considered as an important element of such safety and ethical protocols.

This chapter provides a review of the body of literature which has explored the impact on the field researcher involved with conducting sensitive research. The first part of the chapter discusses the risks inherent when researching violence against women, and the response to these risks which has seen the introduction of more stringent safety and ethical guidelines. This is followed by an examination of the literature which focuses

on the impact on researchers involved with sensitive social research. The main themes drawn from the literature are discussed: the role of emotion, the impact on physical safety and wellbeing of the researcher, and impact on relationships. These themes are applied specifically to researching violence against women, where there has been literature available to allow for this to occur. The chapter concludes with a summary which focuses on the key issues identified in the literature and how these key issues relate to this thesis study.

### **Risks when researching violence against women**

In recent years there has been significant development in the field of researching violence against women, due to an increased recognition of the risks inherently involved with such research. Initially the introduction of ethical and safety guidelines focused on protecting the physical and emotional well-being of the respondents when participating in such research. More recently there has been acknowledgement and recognition that the research teams (particularly the field workers) are also vulnerable to risk and emotional distress (Ellsberg et al., 2001; Ellsberg & Heise, 2002; Jewkes et al., 2000; Jansen et al., 2004).

In response to this recognition that researching violence against women can be dangerous terrain for both respondents and research teams, and drawing on the experiences of researchers who have been conducting research since the early 1990s, the World Health Organization (2001) developed recommendations on safety and ethics for domestic violence research (*Putting Women's Safety First*). These guidelines were developed in order to provide guidance for future research and to assist those countries intending to conduct the WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence. The authors very clearly state that this type of research can have both physical and psychological consequences for both respondents and team members and base their recommendations on the guiding principle that "the safety of the respondents and the research team is paramount and should guide all project decisions" (World Health Organisation, 2001:10).

As research into the issue of violence against women increased, and there were more countries conducting population-based surveys such as the WHO Multi-Country Study

on Women's Health and Domestic Violence, The World Health Organization, in partnership with World Health Organisation and Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH), developed a research guide titled *Researching Violence Against Women: A practical guide for researchers and activists* (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005). Once again the authors acknowledge the importance of recognizing the dangers and risks present for the research team members and recommend strategies, guidelines and techniques which can be used to assist to minimize these risks. What is particularly valuable is that the recommendations are based on the wisdom and collective experiences of research teams and fieldworkers who have conducted research, and within these recommendations there are some personal accounts from field researchers of their own experiences from working in the field. There is some discussion about the possible impact such research may have on the field researcher and the authors highlight the importance of debriefing sessions for all staff due to the emotional and intensely personal nature of the research. Narratives from Nicaraguan interviewers who were involved in gathering data on violence against women in their own country are included. They provide convincing evidence of the emotional journey that the field researchers embark on when researching gender-based violence. However, it is important to note that although current research literature has led to the development of recommendations and guidelines to minimize risk to both respondents and research team members, it is impossible to alleviate all risk factors. Many of these, such as emotional response and impact, may be determined by variables such as age and gender, and the life experiences that the individual researcher will bring with them to the role of field researcher. There is also what Shaffir et al. (2005) refer to as the 'unpredictable' and 'contingent' nature of such research, which prevents the elimination of all risk factors.

### **Impact on researchers when undertaking sensitive research**

Although there is a growing body of literature that examines the impact on field researchers involved with gathering data about people's private lives, only a small amount of this literature relates specifically to researching violence against women. The focus of the larger body of literature is based mainly on qualitative research and brings attention to the risks, threats and dangers that the researcher may encounter during the course of conducting 'sensitive social research'. 'Sensitive social research' has been defined in a number of ways over the years. For example in the early 1960s Farberow

(1963) defined research on taboo topics (which is now what is often regarded as ‘sensitive social research’) as research involving issues that were “emotion laden” or which “inspire feelings of dread or awe” (Lee, 1993:6). Sieber and Stanley (1988) explain that sensitive social research can be defined as research that has consequences or implications for the participants of the research or the group of people whom the participants represent. Lee (1993: 4) goes on to suggest that it is research that “poses a substantial threat to those who are or have been involved”. These varying definitions suggest that it is not possible to define ‘sensitive social research’ generically as variables such as culture, age and gender may determine what topics are or are not sensitive (Dickson-Swift, et al., 2008; Johnson & Clarke, 2003; McCosker et al, 2001).

The topic of researching violence against women would fit into any or all of the above definitions; therefore despite these varying definitions, the body of research that has examined the impact of sensitive research on the field researcher or interviewer, is still useful and important to review. Although the literature on sensitive social research may not be specifically aimed toward researching violence against women, there are common themes that emerge when considering the impact on field workers when they are involved in researching issues which have a human and emotive base.

### **Role of Emotion**

The over-riding theme that appears to emerge from the literature on sensitive social research is the presence of emotional impact that may be experienced by both the participants and the field researchers involved in the research. The emotional impact on the researcher is still a relatively new concept being explored within the literature. There appears to only be a small body of literature written about field researcher’s reflective accounts of their involvement with sensitive research and whether the dangers and risks inherent in such research are mitigated by the positive impacts of being involved with an issue which they believe is important. It is also interesting and important to note that almost all the literature on this subject focuses on sensitive *qualitative* research and there appears to be very little written about the effects and impact on field researchers who are involved in *quantitative* sensitive research.

As outlined above, the role of emotion has gained increased attention in recent years within the field of sensitive social research, with the main focus being on the emotional

impact and well-being of the participants involved in such research (Cannon, 1989; Cowles, 1988; Draucker, 1999). When the role of emotion, in relation to the field researcher is considered, it would appear that this is mainly from the perspective that it may be a 'danger' or a 'risk' to the study. The highlighting of this danger or risk component is not necessarily directly concerned for the emotional safety of the field worker but more from the perspective that the emotions that the field worker experiences may affect the integrity of the study (Hubbard et al 2001; World Vision, 2004). For example, the field worker's own distress or discomfort during the course of the interview, may affect how they record their data (interviewer bias). However, a small body of literature is beginning to emerge which acknowledges that the impact of being involved in sensitive research, may have very real emotional implications for the individual field researcher, particularly when emotive issues such as violence against women and children are being explored. (Campbell, 2002, Hubbard et al, 2001; Johnson & Clarke, 2003) This recognition is noted by Dickson-Swift et al., (2008:77) who state that:

Over the past decade there has been growing awareness among some researchers that research is emotional and that researchers may not emerge largely unharmed and emotionally unaffected by their work.

Obviously this acknowledgement is directly related to the ontological and epistemological foundations of researchers and authors. Feminist researchers are at the forefront of ensuring that the emotions and the self of the researcher are acknowledged as being a part of the research process. They have argued that the researcher should not be viewed as an objective observer and that if field researchers are to successfully explore the private lives of others, they must be willing to give something of themselves to this process (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Liamputtong, 2007). Feminist scholars suggest that the role of the researcher's emotions within the sensitive research process is what helps in shaping the research, and researchers need to openly acknowledge the emotional impact that the work they are involved with may have on them personally (Campbell & Wasco, 2000).

The small but growing body of literature which examines the emotional impact on researchers of sensitive issues, suggests that the impact of such experiences may carry

with it an element of risk for many field workers, which highlights the importance of having clear strategies and guidelines in place to minimize and manage such risks. These risks are highlighted when issues such as violence against women are the topic of research. Although there is now a considerable body of literature which reports an awareness and understanding in the academic world, about the insidious effects of violence on victims, an understanding about the effects this violence may have on ‘secondary victims’ has only recently been explored. ‘Secondary victims’ are referred to as anyone who is exposed to the stories and accounts of violence, in a secondary manner. These may be friends, family members, counsellors, therapists, social workers, researchers and other people who support and help the victims of violence (Aherns and Campbell, 2000). To understand how secondary traumatisation can occur, some authors discuss the “emotional responses” of those who work closely with victims of trauma, for example, feelings of helplessness, guilt, anger, horror and feelings of vulnerability (Campbell, 2002; Clemans, 2004; Dickson-Swift et al., 2008; Goldenburg, 2002). These feelings are captured by Ellsberg et al (2001:11) with a quote from a Nicaragua Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) interviewer who was interviewing women about violence. The interviewer reported that “when I heard stories about women being beaten and tied up, I would leave them feeling desperate..... I would be a wreck ...”

Research has found that people who work closely with victims of violence and trauma (for example counsellors, therapists and social workers) may suffer emotional and psychological effects as a direct result of listening to the victim speak of their own personal experiences and from observing the pain and distress that the victim displays (Clemans, 2004). These effects may manifest as conditions such as compassion fatigue, vicarious traumatisation and secondary traumatic stress syndrome (Figley 1995, 2002; Follette, Polusny and Millbeck 1994; Stamm, 1999). Studies have shown that there is a strong association between people working directly with trauma victims and an increased probability that these people may suffer from secondary traumatisation (Meyers and Cornille, 2002; McCann & Pearlman, 1990; Schauben & Fraizier, 1995). However, there has been very little research to establish whether field researchers who are gathering data from victims of trauma, and often hearing stories which are as equally as disturbing and distressing as what a therapist or counsellor may hear, will suffer from similar psychological conditions.



A review of the literature on these conditions would suggest that despite field researchers often being secondarily traumatized and/or emotionally affected by the stories they listen to, the data they gather, and the participant distress they may witness, they will not necessarily suffer a psychological response such as vicarious traumatization or secondary post traumatic stress disorder (Goldenberg, 2002). It is suggested by Goldenberg (2002) who conducted research into the impact on interviewers who interviewed Holocaust survivors, that one of the reasons that field researchers may not be affected in this manner may be due to the different role that the field researcher has, compared to someone in a therapist role. She goes on to explain that the therapist will enter a relationship with the 'victim' or 'survivor client' with the role of assisting this individual to 'resolve' and make sense of their trauma, whereas the field-researcher does not carry this burden of trying to "help" the victim or solve their problems. Their relationship is based purely on eliciting information. Another obvious difference is the motivation that lies behind each role – the therapist is motivated to assist and help the victim or survivor client, whereas the motivation for the field researcher is to gather data for research purposes. However, despite the fact that there does not appear to be a body of research that provides evidence that there may be an association between interviewers of sensitive social research and conditions such as vicarious traumatization, authors such as Goldenberg (2002) do not minimize the profound emotional impact that being involved in such work may have on the individual field worker.

There are other authors who would suggest that although there is no significant body of literature to support the argument, it is highly probable that field researchers interviewing victims of trauma may suffer varying degrees of certain elements of vicarious traumatization. For example Sexton (1999) and Dane (2000) argue that when researchers experience feelings such as guilt, anxiety and exhaustion, these are all symptoms of vicarious traumatization (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008).

Emotional impact on researchers is recognised by others who bring attention to the concern for the emotional well-being of the individual researcher after the researchers have listened to difficult stories day after day and been exposed to graphic accounts of painful and emotionally charged issues such as murder and domestic violence (Cowles, 1988; Ellsberg & Heise, 2002; McCann & Pearlman, 1991; Parker & Ulrich, 1990).

When researching violence against women, Ellsberg & Heise (2002:1601) state:

the most common risk for field workers, ... is the emotional toll of listening to repeated stories of women's despair, physical pain and degradation. It is hard to over-estimate the emotional effect that research on violence might have on field workers and field researchers.

Ellsberg & Heise (2002) discuss in their paper, just how important it is to ensure that ethical and safety guidelines are applied when researching violence against women. They have found from their own work, and from speaking to researchers who have been in the field, that the stories that field interviewers hear and the suffering that they are exposed to during the course of gathering data, can be both overwhelming and exhausting. These findings are supported by Dickson-Swift et al. (2008:81) who found that many of the researchers they interviewed "reported that they became emotionally overwhelmed during the research". Ellsberg et al (2001) reported, from three studies on violence against women conducted in Nicaragua, that the field interviewers from all three studies said that they had experienced feelings of distress and frustration when listening to women's stories of violence and abuse. The importance of understanding the emotional impact on the interviewer, and ensuring that interviewers receive adequate training and support is highlighted by Ellsberg & Heise (2002:11) who found that "several women reported being so deeply disturbed by respondent's stories of violence that they would be distracted for hours or even days after the interviews took place".

Ellsberg & Heise (2002) also discuss how field interviewers spoke of the level of concern for the respondent that they would experience after leaving the home, knowing that their visit may have created a situation where the respondent would be at further risk. Of particular interest is that Ellsberg & Heise (2002) noted that despite some of the interviewers stating how difficult it was to listen to the stories, the interviewers also acknowledged that their participation in the study was a very significant event in their life. This finding may suggest that the negative impacts (such as emotional distress and exhaustion) were mitigated by the positive impacts for this particular group of researchers.

A significant paper by Jewkes et al (2000) considers the collective experiences of researchers involved with four gender-based violence surveys which were conducted in Southern Africa. Factors such as safety of both the respondent and the interviewer, risk of traumatisation, impact on interviewer's own relationships and under-reporting are all discussed within this paper. The issue of field worker 'burn-out' was an element of risk that was discussed prior to the commencement of the research studies; however, it was found that there was only one field researcher from within all four studies who began the fieldwork but found it too difficult to continue with, and subsequently was assigned different duties. It was interesting to note that in one of the studies; the supervisor's needs were less recognized (and therefore less supported) than the field researchers, which resulted in the supervisors displaying more signs of distress. In this paper, Jewkes et al (2000) also raise the issue of emotional vulnerability of the field researcher, through the process of them being secondarily affected by their exposure to repeated accounts of violence, which were both graphic and distressing in content. After examining these four gender-based studies in Southern Africa, Jewkes and her colleagues conclude that researching violence against women has particular risks and challenges which highlight the need to ensure that the highest ethical standards are maintained throughout the duration of the research, for the protection and safety of both the respondent and interviewer. They also place particular emphasis on the importance of the recruitment and training of field interviewers due to the confronting, and sometimes dangerous, nature of such research, at both an emotional and physical level.

### **Impact on Physical Safety and Wellbeing**

In addition to emotional impact experienced by researchers involved in sensitive social research such as violence against women, the literature also raises the issue of the danger and risks involved for the physical safety of the field researcher (Ellsberg & Heise, 2002; Jewkes et al, 2000; Lee-Treweek & Linkogle, 2000; McCosker, 2001). The reality is that researching violence against women brings with it a very real risk that field researchers could be physically harmed during their work in the field. There is a small body of research (discussed below) which has examined these risk factors and some of these studies have informed the introduction of the ethical and safety guidelines that are recommended when carrying out such risky research.

Jewkes et al (2000) draw attention to the risk of retaliatory violence towards the field researcher from abusers when they object to the researcher interviewing their partner or wife. This risk is highlighted by an incident cited by Jewkes et al (2000) where in one of the studies in South Africa, a man returned home from a bar whilst the field researcher was interviewing his wife. He pulled a gun on the researcher and demanded to view the questionnaire. Jewkes et al (2000) also discuss the possibility of field researchers being exposed to sexual harassment and verbal abuse. The issue of sexual harassment is only mentioned briefly by Jewkes and her colleagues; however, more research is required to understand this danger for researchers, particularly in post-conflict countries where rape and sexual assault against women and children were an element of this past conflict. McCosker (2001) suggests that the dangers that exist in domestic violence and child abuse research are often present due to an expectation that the field researcher will often enter into the abuser's own space, to conduct their interview. McCosker explains this further by citing Patterson et al (1999) who state that by entering into the abuser's space (home), the researcher has placed themselves in a position where there is an imbalance of power, which ultimately has the potential to cause harm to the researcher.

Ellsberg & Heise (2002) recognize and discuss some of the other reasons why the physical safety of the researcher may be at risk when conducting research on violence against women. Often researchers may have to enter neighbourhoods which are regarded as dangerous, and may even have to travel or conduct interviews at night. They discuss the potential for field researchers to be confronted with abusive people who do not agree with the study which may place them at risk of both physical and verbal abuse. A number of different strategies are discussed by Ellsberg & Heise (2002) on how these physical risks can be minimized for the field researcher which they expand on in their Guide to Researching Violence Against Women (WHO, 2005).

From reviewing the literature on the possible physical impact or risks that may exist for the field researcher, there does not appear to be any significant body of research which has focused on the impact that being involved with sensitive research may have on the physical health of the researcher, other than conditions related to emotional responses. In developing countries which are resource poor and have third world infrastructures, conducting a population-based survey is an enormous undertaking. Being involved in

research in such countries may place the field researcher's physical well-being at risk due to the geography of the country, the mode of transport they travel by and the increased exposure to diseases such as malaria and pneumonia. Some studies have found that there are other health factors such as psychosomatic symptoms which may result from being involved in research which explores issues that are disturbing and distressing. Examples of these symptoms may be ailments such as headaches, anxiety and gastrointestinal disturbances (Cowles 1988; Dickson-Swift et al., 2008).

### **Impact on relationships**

Participating in research on violence against women may also have implications for the field researchers with regard to their own relationship with others (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; Jewkes et al, 2000; McCosker et al, 2001). Increased awareness and knowledge about the effects of violence on women, may not only challenge field researchers own cultural values and beliefs, but it may also lead them to examine their own relationship with their husbands or partners. Jewkes et al (2000) reported that from the research studies that they were involved with in Southern Africa, very few of their researchers felt that they had 'perfect relationships'. This insight into their own relationships stemmed from their own tolerance levels for violence being reduced and them questioning the actions of their spouses. In their Guide for researching violence against women, Ellsberg & Heise (2005) warn that during the course of conducting research, it is not unusual for team members to begin to experience relationship difficulties in their own lives. They go on to explain that these difficulties usually stem from either the researcher recognizing that their own relationship is abusive, or the researcher transferring the anger they feel towards perpetrators of violence, to all males in general. Ellsberg & Heise (2005) suggest that it is important for team members to be briefed in their training, so that they understand that it is common for researchers to scrutinize their own relationships during the course of the research, and that it is for reasons such as this that emotional support for field researchers is essential throughout the duration of the study.

In summary, a review of the literature has revealed that in recent years there has been an increased focus on the impact on field researchers who are involved with conducting sensitive social research. The majority of this literature examines researchers involved with qualitative research and there would appear to be very little literature which

explores the reflective accounts of field researchers in relation to impacts. There is a smaller body of literature emerging which examines the impact on researchers involved specifically with research on violence against women. The three main themes drawn out from the literature is that emotional impact, physical and personal safety and the impact on relationships are all consequences that field researchers may be confronted with when involved in research where a sensitive issue, such as violence against women, is being explored. However, with the focus often being on reducing risk to the participants and respondents of such studies, there appears to be very little in the literature which examines whether negative impacts on field researchers are mitigated by positive impacts. As Dickson-Swift et al (2008:10) so aptly state:

Researchers have become particularly adept at assessing and mitigating any threats or harms to the participants that may be inherent in the research however, doing the same for the researchers is yet to be fully developed and accepted by the research community.

There also appears to be very little in the literature available which considers whether aspects such as the impact on the emotional well-being and physical safety of field researchers is a determinant on whether the researchers are willing to be involved in other sensitive research studies in the future. The main themes identified in the literature and the issue of positive impacts mitigating negative impacts, are a focus in this thesis study.

Researching violence against women is a growing field of research in both developing and developed countries and such research cannot be conducted without the assistance of field researchers, who are usually women. The review of the literature highlights that it is essential that as studies are conducted around the world, an understanding develops about the impact that involvement in such research may have on the workers who are at the “front-line”, gathering the stories and data. For this understanding to develop it is important for the field researchers ‘voices’ to be heard, particularly when these ‘voices’ are those of indigenous researchers. There is a gap in the literature on understanding the impact of such research on indigenous researchers therefore allowing their ‘voices’ to be heard (such is the purpose of this thesis) will hopefully offer knowledge and experiences that are unique and invaluable in informing the evolving body of ethical and safety recommendations and guidelines. In developing and post-conflict countries

such as the Solomon Islands, where research on violence against women and children is a new phenomena, it is vitally important that the past experiences of researchers are valued and recognised as having significant importance in informing the planning and implementation of future research, particularly in relation to minimising risks and negative impacts on the field researchers.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **Methodology**

Good research is a thinking person's game. It is a creative and strategic process that involves constantly assessing, reassessing and making decisions about the best possible means for obtaining trustworthy information, carrying out appropriate analysis, and drawing credible conclusions.  
(O'Leary, 2004: 1)

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding about what impact there may be on indigenous researchers who have been involved in research on gender based violence and child abuse. This chapter discusses the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of the study, acknowledging the Pacific context in which the study took place. The methodology and research design are outlined, and issues of soundness, credibility and ethics are also discussed.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the intention of this research was *not* to evaluate the recruitment, training or supervision guidelines that the WHO has developed to assist in the conducting of the Multi-country study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence. Nor was it to examine or scrutinize how closely the WHO recommended Ethical and Safety Guidelines were adhered to by the research team in the Solomon Islands. The primary purpose of this research was to hear from the field researchers their own stories and experiences of their time in the field and their own reflective perceptions of what the impact from being involved in such research, may have had on their lives. These stories will provide an insight and understanding to guide future research on domestic violence and child abuse, particularly in developing countries where social research can be challenging due to factors such as low education rates, geographical constraints and being resource poor.



## **Research Perspective**

Before I embarked on the process of designing and conducting my research, I needed to consider the theoretical and philosophical framework underpinning my study, as this would provide the analytical framework for both the fieldwork and for the interpretation of results. To be able to design a research study, one needs to carefully examine a number of ontological and epistemological questions. These questions include examining whether one believes that there is a single objective reality and one's belief on the nature of knowledge and how it is obtained (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005a).

Over the years, philosophers, researchers and authors have offered a number of different ways of categorizing theoretical perspectives that guide qualitative enquiry. For example Guba & Lincoln (2000) proposed there are five major epistemological theories within the social sciences that can be used to describe and explain the nature of knowledge. These theories include positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, constructivism and participatory (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008). Researchers use their different theories to not only understand the different meanings of what reality is, but also to understand how we come to know that reality (Broom & Willis, 2007).

Although my theoretical framework is primarily based on a constructivist theory, the reasons for which I will explain later, I also draw from the critical theorist's ontology to inform the design and implementation of my research. The underpinning philosophy of the critical theorist is 'historical realism', and they advocate that there is no single objective reality as it is through values such as economic, political, social, cultural and gender that reality is interpreted (Dickson-Swift, et al. 2008). The central theme to conducting research within this theoretical perspective is acknowledging how the values of both the researcher and the participant shape their individual world views.

Constructivists build on the critical theorist's notion of there being no single objective reality and argue that reality is socially constructed (through social factors such as class, race, culture and gender) which results in multiple realities (Guba & Lincoln 1994, 2005; Grbich, 2007). By adopting a constructivist theoretical perspective to inform my research design, my guiding principle is based on the belief that I respect and value the unique experience of every human individual and acknowledge that the process of

research is subjective due to my own involvement, in both the design and implementation of the study. Grbich (2007:8) explains very well, the central theme to why researchers such as myself, choose to work within the constructivist paradigm. She states that the constructivist approach is an:

exploration of the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences in the worlds in which they live, and how the contexts of events and situations and the placement of these within wider social environments have impacted on constructed understanding.

As part of the planning process and considering both ontological and epistemological questions, I needed to take into account the fact that the research was to be conducted in the Solomon Islands. There has been some discussion around the issue of 'Pacific thought' and whether it exists or not (Huffer & Qalo, 2004; Sanga, 2004). Although it has been acknowledged that there are differences amongst the societies that make up the Pacific, some academics such as Huffer & Qalo (2004) claim that there may be enough similarities, which if viewed as a body of knowledge, could be referred to as 'Pacific thought'. Ontologically, it has been suggested that Pacific people have multiple realities and how they interpret reality is dependent on specific contexts and values such as spiritual, cultural, social and gender. Sanga (2004:44) explains Pacific people's interpretation of reality "is what people 'make of it'. It changes. It includes other realities. It embraces change, introductions and trends and makes these its own".

By adopting a constructivist theoretical framework, I believe I took into consideration the culture of the Solomon people and designed my research study to be as ethically sound as possible from a cross-culture perspective. Again, I refer to Sanga's (2004) work in the Pacific when considering the design from an epistemological perspective, where he suggests that Pacific research has shown that people in the Pacific construct their understanding of knowledge through the context of situations and events and the placement of these situations/events within society as a whole. Knowledge cannot be separated from these contexts or from the people. Sanga (2004:45) explains that the construction of knowledge and understanding is derived from "using constructs, frames and metaphors that are intelligible to that knowledge". The use of a constructivist framework sits comfortably with this suggested 'Pacific thought' on the construction of knowledge.

Being grounded in a constructivist paradigm, I am seeking to capture and understand the field researcher's different perspectives and world views from their experiences out in the field, and in doing so, I am not seeking the 'right' or more 'true' answer but recognize that all the field researcher's stories are meaningful and have value, and they provide rich diversity and multiple perspectives to the research questions. By taking this standpoint, I am attempting to honour every individual researcher's story in my quest to understand the impact on the indigenous field researchers who have been involved in conducting research on gender based violence research and child abuse.

Due to these stories being the catalyst for this research study, I recognized early in the planning stages, that my research design needed to be explorative and inductive in nature, underpinned by a phenomenological approach, as my intention was to gain an understanding through the lived experiences of others. Adopting and accepting the value of phenomenology, I not only believe that the understanding of certain phenomena can emerge from the experiences of others within context-specific settings, but also that my own experiences and perspectives as a researcher, are valuable and meaningful to the study (Patton, 1980; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Patton (1980:37) provides a succinct explanation on the reason for adopting a phenomenological approach in that it allows the researcher to "inductively and holistically understand human experience in context-specific settings".

Traditionally, pure phenomenological research aims to 'describe' rather than 'explain', and Edmund Husserl who is often referred to as the 'father' or 'fountainhead' of phenomenology, argued that researchers adopting a phenomenological approach needed to start from a perspective that was not only free from hypotheses or preconceptions, but where the researcher ignored anything that was outside their immediate experience. (Husserl, 1970) Husserl's theory involved the concept of 'bracketing', which meant that the researcher needed to be able to bracket or set aside preconceived notions or beliefs, as he maintained that this is the only way that a researcher can objectively describe the phenomena that is being studied. Husserl's concept of bracketing assumed that people are able to separate what they know (their personal knowledge) from their own life experiences (Bryne, 2001).

In contrast to Husserl's theory, Heidegger (1962) was more concerned with 'being in the world', therefore he offered an alternative view of Husserl's theory of 'bracketing' as he believed that the presence of presuppositions were a legitimate part of the process of understanding the questions of enquiry. More simply explained, Heidegger believed that the meaning we give to certain things is influenced by factors, such as being born human, our backgrounds, our own collective life experiences and the world in which we live. Bryne (2001:2) explains Heidegger's approach as one where "he did not believe it was possible to bracket our assumptions of the world, but rather that through authentic reflection, we might become aware of many of our assumptions".

The phenomenological approach which underpinned my research study, does not necessarily embrace one perspective, at the exclusion of the other. I believe a combination of both Husserl and Heidegger's theories provides a strong phenomenological framework. I found that Max Van Manen's (1990) phenomenological approach to research fitted well with my own philosophy and thoughts. He proposes that a combination of phenomenological concepts can be used in research, for example recognizing the value of 'bracketing' as well as the value of understanding the lived experience of the researcher. Van Manen (1990:30-31) proposes that there are 6-steps which can be used to understand a phenomenological approach, which I found, provided an excellent foundation for my own research. These 6 steps are:

1. Turning to a phenomenon that seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. Investigating experience as we live it, rather than as we conceptualise it;
3. Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
4. Describing the phenomena through the art of writing and rewriting;
5. Maintaining a strong and orientated relation to the phenomena;
6. Balancing the research context by considering the parts and the whole.

Finally, the other contributing factor to my theoretical framework was the influence of my world view, which is from a feminist perspective. Taking this feminist perspective into consideration, I prefer to identify myself as a 'feminist conducting research' rather than identifying with 'conducting research using feminist research methods'. As a feminist, my knowledge and beliefs are based on the premise that the experiences of *all*

people are true and valid and such experiences should be part of our understanding of the world that we live in (Reinharz, 1992). Although it is over 20 years since Spender (1985:5) made the following statement, it succinctly explains the essence of my feminist thoughts. She stated that “at the core of feminist ideas is the crucial insight that there is no one truth, no one authority, and no one objective method which leads to the production of pure knowledge”.

I believe that much of women’s oppression stems from the fact that their experiences are so often excluded from making sense of the world we live in, which results in the greater knowledge base being formed through patriarchal thoughts. This process of “patriarchal knowledge” allows for the continued perpetuation of the oppression of women in many sectors of society. I am deeply concerned about issues which affect women, such as domestic violence, and believe that women’s oppression will continue unless the voices of women and their lived experiences are heard. These beliefs are guided by an empowerment approach to women’s development. This approach primarily recognizes that within the third world, the women’s movement not only has its own ‘independent history’, but that the experiences of oppression by women will vary according to factors such as class and colonial history (Macbride-Stewart, 1996). The empowerment of women is viewed as needing to occur in a manner where women’s consciousness is raised so that they begin to not only question and challenge the inequalities that exist between men and women in their own society but that they begin to become politically active in ensuring that the voices of women are heard.

All the participants who took part in my study had just spent many months, hearing first-hand from their ‘sisters’, stories of possibly the worst form of oppression and gender inequality. By approaching my research from a feminist perspective, I was not only valuing the women who were to be my participants, but also valuing all those women who provided data and told their stories to the field researchers during the SIFHSS last year. My focus of my research, from a feminist standpoint, was to explore a specific group of women’s own lived experiences, and provide validation that these women’s experiences, ideas, thoughts and beliefs are immeasurably valuable in building knowledge about the unique methodological and ethical challenges when researching gender based violence and child abuse.

In summary, I am a feminist whose research study has been guided by the underpinnings of a phenomenological approach, informed by a constructivist theoretical perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; and Schwandt, 1998). The focus of my phenomenological enquiry was that I wanted to know what experiences the field researchers had and how individual researchers interpreted or made sense of these experiences (Patton, 2000). My research design was based on the belief that there is no single objective reality and that reality is socially constructed. Underpinning all of this was my belief that within the experiences of the different field researchers, there would be some elements that would be common to that specific group, due to their lived experiences. Patton (2002:106) explains this dimension of a phenomenological approach as the “assumption that there is essence or essences to shared experience”. Finally, I recognize the importance and value of my own knowledge and experiences and how these add a meaningful dimension to the study.

### **Qualitative Methodology**

When I first started to plan my research study, I recognized that due to my feminist world view, constructivist framework and phenomenological approach, a qualitative methodology was necessary in order to answer the research questions. The ontological and epistemological grounding of qualitative research, is within an interpretive paradigm, therefore as a researcher, I did not intend to search for the ‘truth’ and nor was I intent on searching for one ‘reality’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b). My intention was to research the lived experiences of the field researchers from their own perspectives, seeking multiple truths and multiple realities. One of the fundamental aspects of qualitative research is that it aims for information richness and seeks an understanding of social processes (Kuzel, 1992). From a feminist perspective, I place considerable emphasis on the importance of direct testimonies from women, where their own experiences, beliefs and values are exposed in order for knowledge to be built in reference to a particular phenomenon. I needed to employ research methods where the participants had the opportunity to tell their own stories in their own words. Being grounded in an interpretive paradigm, I recognize that, as the researcher I am involved in a process of subjective interpretation which meant that for me to fully understand the experiences of the field researchers; I needed to be able to experience the phenomenon as closely as possible. Methods such as in-depth interviews and focus group

discussions allow for this process to occur. Data collection methods are discussed in more depth, later in this chapter.

By applying a qualitative methodology within an interpretive paradigm, I was also acknowledging the exploratory nature of my research where my aim was to understand the lived experiences of a specific group of women about an area that little is known about. I also accept that the relationship between myself (as the researcher) and the participants needs to be transparent and acknowledged as part of the research activity and analysis. Denzin and Lincoln (2005a:10) aptly explain the essence of being a qualitative researcher, is that we “stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape enquiry”.

### **Planning for the fieldwork**

#### **Why did I choose the Solomon Islands as the research site?**

It is important to explain why, as a New Zealander, that I decided to conduct my research study in the Solomon Islands. In October 2006, my husband, myself and our three children moved to the Solomon Islands due to my husband being seconded there by the New Zealand Police Force on a three year posting. In late 2007, I was contracted by UNICEF as a consultant, to provide technical advice to a research team that was due to begin a study on Gender Based Violence and Child Abuse in both the Solomon Islands and Kiribati. As explained earlier, the study was based on the methodology from the WHO Multi-Country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community was tasked with the role of implementing the Research. I was involved with this Research Study until its completion in November 2008, and I am also a co-author of both the final Research Reports.

It was from my involvement with the SIFHSS which provided me with the opportunity to hear stories and comments from field researchers about their experiences in the field. Some of what I heard or overheard, had a profound effect on me, and I began asking myself questions such as, “what sort of impact are these experiences having on the field researchers”; “would the field researchers be prepared to do this sort of research again”? I also became increasingly aware of how important it was for these women to tell their

own stories, as not only had they become ‘experts’ in their own right and therefore had valuable information to share; it also provided the opportunity for them to feel like their experiences were valued.

The SIFHSS could and would not have happened without these women field researchers, and one of the primary motivating reasons for me to choose the topic of study that I did, was to honour this group of amazingly courageous and tenacious women who were determined that they would gather robust and rigorous data on violence against women and children, despite having to enter unknown, and potentially quite dangerous territory. Although I was contracted by UNICEF to provide technical assistance to the Research Teams in both the Solomon Islands and Kiribati, it made sense that I confined my own research to the Solomon Islands for the following reasons: I am currently resident in the Solomon Islands, I have an affiliation to the country through having lived here for the past three years and I have an understanding of the local language (Pijin). It also has become prohibitively expensive to fly to Kiribati from the Solomon Islands. However, in choosing the Solomon Islands as my site of research, I certainly do not intend to minimize the importance of the experiences of the field researchers in Kiribati, who undoubtedly have their own personal stories to tell which would have equal value, importance and significance as that of their Solomon Island counterparts.

### **Ethical Approval and Research Permit Application**

As part of the planning process for the research, ethics approval was sought from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. This approval was required as my study intended using human subjects as participants. Obviously all research needs to be guided by an ethics framework and I found that the Massey University *Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants* (2006) provided an excellent frame of reference. In line with this framework, all participants were provided with an Information Sheet, in their preferred language (English or Pijin) (Appendix 1 & 1a) which not only provided an outline of the study, but also explained the efforts taken to ensure no harm to participants, participants’ right to withdraw from the study at any time, their right to choose not to have the interview recorded and their right to abstain from answering questions that they were not comfortable with. None of the participants chose to withdraw and in fact, many of the participants indicated to me



at the conclusion of their interview or focus group discussion, that talking about their experiences had been very beneficial for them. The Information Sheet also provided details of what would be required from each individual as a participant (for example, a one off interview approximately 1-2 hrs long) and participants were invited to request further information or clarification if this was required. A Consent Form was also provided to all participants. These forms were offered in both English ([Appendix 2](#)) and Pijin ([Appendix 2a](#)) and I verbally gave assurance that any information shared would be confidential and would be non-identifying in the final report.

Although the Solomon Islands do not have an Ethics Committee which I needed to seek approval from, there is a process which involves submitting an application to the Minister of Education, outlining the proposed research study and seeking permission from the Solomon Island Government for approval to conduct research within the Solomon Islands. I recognize the ethical dilemmas and challenges that may arise from permits being granted to ‘outsiders’; therefore I feel very privileged that the Solomon Island Government recognised my study as being worthy of the granting of a Research Permit ([Appendix 3](#)). I also sought the support and approval of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children, as this was the Ministry that had the role of overseeing the SIFHSS in 2008. The Permanent Secretary not only offered her support for my study, but also offered to be a contact person in the event that any of the participants felt that I was failing to conduct the research in a culturally ethical and safe manner.

## **The Fieldwork**

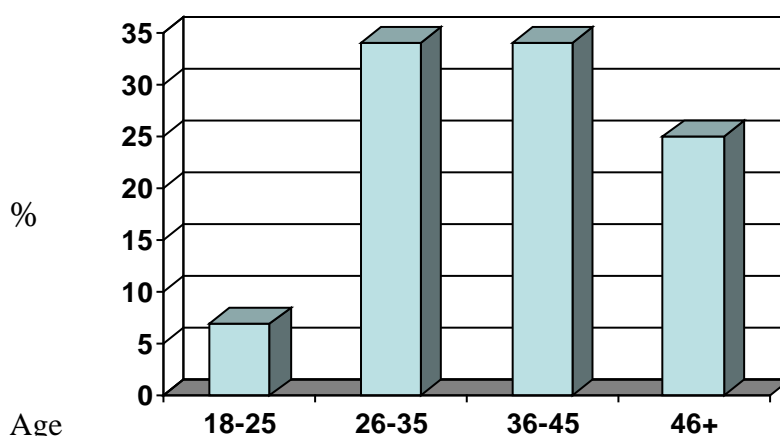
### **Research Participants**

To recruit participants, I used the technique of purposeful sampling which is a non-random method of sampling and is one where ‘information-rich’ cases are selected so that a phenomenon can be studied in-depth. (Patton, 2002) My intention was to study in-depth, what the impacts may be on indigenous field researchers who are researching domestic violence and child abuse. To achieve this, I needed to choose participants who have lived the experience so that they are able to ‘illuminate’ the phenomenon. Patton (2002:230) succinctly defines the focus of purposive sampling in stating that

“purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study”.

The participants for this study were recruited directly from a group of field researchers who had been involved in conducting quantitative research on issues of gender based violence and child abuse in the Solomon Islands, in 2008. The title of the study that these field researchers were involved with was called the *Solomon Island Family Health and Safety Study (SIFHSS)*, and was based on the methodology of the WHO Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence.

For the SIFHSS Research Project, a total of 45 Solomon Island women were employed as field researchers to conduct the first phase of the study, which was a 46 page survey questionnaire. The field researchers were aged between 18-65 yrs of age (see age graph below), were from different provinces and villages throughout the Solomon Islands and were a mixture of single, married separated, divorced and women living in de-facto relationships. The majority of the women had children and all of the women were educated to a level where they were proficient in literacy (written and oral) in both Pijin and English. Of these initial 45 women, three had withdrawn from the WHO study within 2 weeks due to personal reasons and another four were only involved with the study for under one month in duration. All the field researchers began conducting the research in April 2008 and by the end of October 2008 the last team in the field had completed their research and had returned to their homes and their villages.



**Graph I: Age Graph of Participants**

In early November 2008, these women were contacted by a Solomon Islander who had been employed as the Logistics Coordinator for the Socio-cultural Research Project. The purpose for her making contact was to inform the women, independently from myself, about the study that I was proposing to undertake and to determine their interest in taking part as participants. The primary reason for using an independent person to make this initial contact was that I was concerned that being from another culture, and having held a position of expertise on the SIFHSS (I was the technical advisor for the child abuse component of this study) that the women may have felt compelled to agree to take part and may have found it difficult to say 'no' to me directly. A total of 97% of the women were able to be contacted and 100% agreed to be participants for the study. The reason that 3% were unable to be contacted was due to geographical and telecommunication constraints. These women had returned to their home villages in rural regions where there is no phone contact and one had left to study overseas.

After this contact had been made with the women, by the independent person, I then either made direct contact with the women, or they made contact with me. The purpose of making contact at this stage was to thank them personally for their willingness to participate in my research study and to explain in more depth what their participation would require, emphasizing that they could withdraw from the study at any point. I explained the methods of data collection and asked them if they had a preference to be part of a Focus Group Discussion or an individual in-depth interview (discussed further below). There was a small number of women I did not make direct contact with due to them being inaccessible (i.e. no telephone and lived outside of Honiara). However this small group had already indicated that they would prefer to take part in a Focus Group Discussion and an arrangement was made that a message could be sent via a relative about the day and time that the Focus Group was organized to take place and they would ensure they would be there to participate.

All the participants were provided with an Information Sheet that outlined the aims and objectives of the study. Prior to the commencement of the Focus Group Discussions and the in-depth interviews, all participants were asked to sign a consent form, with a clear understanding that even if they signed this form, they still could withdraw from the study at any time. Focus group participants were also asked to sign a Confidentiality Agreement. (Appendix 4 & 4a)

## **The Setting**

The focus group discussions and interviews were conducted in two geographical sites – Honiara and Gizo. The rationale for this decision is that these are the two main centres where the majority of the field researchers reside and I wanted to ensure that the sites chosen would enable as many of the field researchers who wished to, to volunteer to participate in this study. Gizo lies due to West of Honiara and is approximately a two hour plane journey or a 12-24 hour trip by boat. This distance would have been prohibitive for all those women who live in the West if I had chosen only to conduct the research in Honiara. The focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were conducted in neutral places, with all but one interview being recorded via a digital voice recorder with the permission of the participants.

## **Data Collection Methods**

Prior to submitting my research proposal to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, I had intended only to conduct in-depth interviews as my means of data collection. However, during a conversation with one of the field researchers about my proposed research, she forewarned me that she believed that the majority, if not all the women who had been employed as field researchers, would be willing to participate in the research study that I was proposing to conduct. Because I strongly believed that every single individual field researcher would have their own unique story to tell, I wanted to ensure, that as far as practicable, that all those who wished to participate could do so. To try and conduct in-depth interviews with such a large group of probable participants was likely to be impossible, due to time and resources available.

In consultation with Dr Janet Fanslow (Auckland University School of Population and Health), who was involved in conducting a review of the SIFHSS early in 2008 and was a member of the Technical Advisory Group for the SIFHSS, she suggested that I consider conducting two or three focus group discussions, if my participant numbers warranted this. There were two primary reasons in making the final decision to use two methods to collect data, in that not only did it ensure that I could cope with participant numbers if they were high but it also allowed for a process whereby data could be collected through a multi-method approach. This approach is commonly referred to as ‘data triangulation’ and is a process whereby data is collected from different sources and with different methods which can encourage a richness and depth to the data that

one may not gain from a single method approach. By using two different methods of data collection, I was able to ‘test for consistency’ as well as accepting that any inconsistencies provided a deeper understanding to the research questions (Patton, 2000).

The decision to use the method of focus group discussions was not only influenced by the fact that I wanted to ensure that I would have the time and resources available to enable all the field researchers from the SIFHS Study to participate, if they chose to do so. I was also aware that many of these women had been travelling, working and living with each other as ‘research teams’ and that close relationships and friendships had been forged between many of these individual women. I recognised that the focus group interview had value in providing a supportive and empowering environment for the participants in order for them to share their own experiences. Feminist researcher Esther Madriz (2000:835) suggests that “focus groups allow access to research participants who may find one-on-one, face-to-face interaction ‘scary’ or ‘intimidating’”. Madriz (2003) expands on this by explaining that a strength for using focus group discussions is that it is a collectivistic research method, rather than an individualistic method (as is the case for in-depth interviews), allowing for an interactive process to occur and be observed by the facilitator of the group. It also has been argued that the richness of the data that often can come out of the focus group discussion process is due to the fact that this environment is more like a natural environment than an in-depth interview, as participants are both involved in being influenced and influencing others, which reflects what happens for them in real life. (Krueger, 1994).

Three focus groups were conducted, with two taking place in Honiara and one in Gizo. An interview question guide was used ([Appendix 5](#)) to ensure that not only were the same questions asked at the different focus group discussions, but to also ensure that the aspects of the group dynamics stayed focused. The first focus group was very large (12 women), which was difficult at times to manage due to the enthusiasm of those taking part and all wishing to tell their stories. However, with excellent recording systems and strong and clear facilitation, copious data was obtained from this group. The following two focus groups that were conducted were considerably smaller, with both groups only having three participants. However, regardless of the group size, what struck me from bringing these groups of women together, was the sense of camaraderie that existed

between them, and there was a strong feeling of ‘togetherness’ which I can only assume was due to the experiences they had during their time in the field.

The second method I employed was semi-structured in-depth interviews which I conducted with 11 women. An in-depth interview can be described as an open-ended, discovery orientated method with the goal of exploring with the participants, their own experiences, feelings, views and perspectives. According to Reinharz (1992), the use of individual semi-structured interviews has been a primary means by feminist researchers to seek the active involvement of women in the construction of data about their lives. I used an interview guide ([Appendix 6](#)), to ensure that the same questions were asked of each participant; however these questions were open-ended and careful probing was used to elicit deeper meaning and understanding to the responses offered. All interviews took place in a neutral environment and participants were provided the option of having a ‘translator’ present if they wished. Of all the eleven women who were interviewed, only one did not consent to having their interview audio-recorded and two requested the presence of a translator.

The two data collection methods that I chose to employ were focus-group discussions and in-depth interviews. One of the main reasons underlying my decision to select these two methods is that ‘story telling’ is a very strong component of the Solomon Island culture. In fact, the Pijin word for when one enters dialogue with another person is to ‘story’ with that person. Both the focus group discussion method and in-depth interview structure allowed for participants to “story” their own lived experiences, in their own words and in their own ways. I also considered the possible therapeutic value that using these interview methods may have for the women, as it has been found that taking part in qualitative research interviews may provide a therapeutic and cathartic environment for participants (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008 ; Gilbert, 2001; Hutchinson et al., 1994 ; Parris et al., 2005). As Dickson-Swift et al., (2008:46) explain; “the cathartic effects of research have been well documented in the literature with many authors commenting on the perceived benefits of participating in research interviews”.

## **Data Analysis**

There are a number of different ways that qualitative data can be analysed, just as there are many different ways to collect the data (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005). The analysis of data is guided by the theoretical underpinnings of the research, providing a framework which can be used as a point of reference throughout the analysis phase. However, regardless of the framework being used, generally all analysis of data involves a process whereby the data is organized in specific ways, reduced so that the mass of data is more manageable, displayed in a manner which can assist in the analysis process and then finally the data is interpreted by the researcher (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005).

Taking into account the iterative approach I adopted in my inquiry, whereby I was seeking meaning of a phenomenon through the lived experiences of others, (captured through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions), I needed a process where not only could I make sense and interpret the meaning of the written text, but one that also allowed for the truest reflection of the essence of the experience (Grbich, 2007). To allow for this to happen, I decided that some ‘bracketing’ was required to ensure that the findings told the story of the participants, rather than my own story. As explained earlier in this Chapter, ‘bracketing’ is a concept introduced by Husserl, who believed that a researcher who adopts a phenomenological approach, needs to be able to ‘bracket’ or set aside their own preconceived notions and beliefs if they are to objectively describe the phenomena being studied. I take a slightly more liberal view of ‘bracketing’ as I do not necessarily view it as an effort to be unbiased and objective (as many may claim it to be), but rather a process whereby I am demonstrating that I am open to seeing the world differently (Finlay, 2008). I believe that Dalberg et al. (2001:97) describe my desire and aim for openness very eloquently by stating that “openness is the mark of a true willingness to listen, see and understand. It involves respect and certain humility toward the phenomenon, as well as sensitivity and flexibility”.

As stated earlier, I have found that Max Van Manen’s phenomenological approach sits comfortably with my own philosophy; therefore, I not only recognize the value in ‘bracketing’, but also the value of my own lived experience. Personally, I found that the writing of comprehensive and timely field notes was the first step toward data analysis as it not only gave me the opportunity to constantly and consistently record and

'bracket' out my own thoughts and experiences, but also provided me with the opportunity to clarify the interview settings. I also agree with Wertz (2005) who suggests that the main feature that phenomenology researchers seek from their data, is 'concreteness'. Keeping this in mind during the data collection phase was important to ensure that the questions I asked were encouraging the participants to describe their experiences concretely rather than in an abstract manner.

Once all the data had been gathered and transcribed, I adopted a framework that had four main steps in the analysis process: data immersion, data coding, data reduction and interpretation/conclusion (Grbich, 2007). Thematic analysis was the central component of this process. Thematic analysis occurs when data is analysed by themes through an inductive process. This means that themes emerge from the data rather than the researcher imposing the themes onto the data. Van Manen (2002:1) explains it well by stating that:

“analyzing” thematic meanings of a phenomenon (a lived experience) is a complex and creative process of insightful invention, discovery and disclosure. Grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of “seeing” meaning.

The first step was 'data immersion' whereby I systematically read and re-read the transcripts of the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions whilst considering the phenomenon through empathetic immersion, contemplation and reflection. I began identifying emerging themes and narratives that illuminated the researched phenomenon and also began highlighting responses that may have been different to the greater body of data. I was also conscious of noting possible relationships amongst identified themes. Leininger (1985:60) explains that themes are identified as “bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone”. Reading each transcript a number of times allowed for the discovery and revelation of different layers of interpretation which of course was influenced by my own life experiences. This is where some 'bracketing' was applied to ensure that the essence of the phenomenon was captured in its truest form.

The next step I followed was to conduct 'data coding' which is an integral part of data analysis. This involves going through the data and categorizing it, which then assists in



separating information into the emerging themes and patterns. Codes were used to attach to different responses which were associated with different issues. There are computer programmes (for example, NUDIST, HyperQual) available to assist in the process of coding qualitative data; however, I chose to use a more 'hands-on' approach as much of the transcribing had been handwritten rather than entered into a computer. Very simply, the process which I followed was that each transcript was photocopied and then was cut up into individual responses and comments, following the question guideline that was used in the interviews. These were then all pasted on separate sheets of large pieces of paper so that I could see quite easily what the different responses were from 11 individual participants and from the three focus group discussions. Coding could then take place as a result of the themes that were identified in the first step of the analysis, using highlighter pens as a coding tool.

Data reduction followed as the next step in my thematic analysis. This was a process which involved combining and cataloguing related patterns into sub-themes and meaningful groupings. The main purpose of data reduction is to look at the bigger picture that the data has produced and then start examining what the primary and secondary themes are (Shrader and Sagot, 2000). Ellsberg and Heise (2005:209) explain data reduction by stating that "it is the process of abstracting back out from the particular to the conceptual". I used a combination of both 'block and file' approach and 'conceptual mapping' during my data reduction process. The 'block and file' approach is one whereby specific blocks of data can be identified through the use of underlining, colour coding or italicizing (I used colour coding). This data is then placed (filed) into a Table of columns with headings which are used to categorise and clarify the data in each column. 'Conceptual mapping' is a more simplified approach in reducing data as it enables the researcher to reduce large volumes of text into a visual map which allows for the identification of themes and patterns (Daley, 2004; Grbich, 2007). Conceptual mapping can also aid the researcher in understanding the interconnections between concepts as it can assist in cross-group analysis. Daley (2004:1) succinctly explains that "the maps allow the researcher to see participant's meaning, as well as, the connections that participants discuss across concepts or bodies of knowledge". My reasoning behind choosing to use both approaches was that I was conscious that the block and file approach can result in a vast amount of columns of data. I also did not just want to apply only conceptual mapping approach as there is a

danger that the data can be too brief and the context can be lost due to the data being oversimplified (Grbich, 2007).

Throughout the analytical process, I constantly returned to the transcripts to interrogate and question the data. I used a process of reflective analysis and rewriting as my aim was to ensure that my descriptions illuminated the essence of the experiences that the researchers had shared with me. Of course, ultimately, in the final presentation of the data, I have aimed to capture the complexity and ambiguity of the lived experiences of the participants, which allows for not only the reader to be drawn in as close as possible to the essence being displayed, but also to be able to see the world of others in new and different ways (Grbich, 2007; Finlay, 2008). I believe by achieving this, I am truly honouring the participants' experiences and stories.

To add a richness and depth to the presentation of the data and to illuminate the impacts identified by the participants, I have included raw data in the form of using verbatim quotations from participants' responses (indented and written in *italic*). By using quotes, I have aimed to amplify the voices of the participants and bring the research to life. I also believe that direct quotations provide an opportunity for the reader to critique the soundness of my analysis and interpretations. For some of the responses offered by participants where the content was descriptive and poetic in its content, I have written these responses in poetry form as I believe that this provides a creative synthesis to the report which makes it more interesting for the reader, whilst still remaining true to the data collected.

### **Trustworthiness**

How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self)  
that the findings of the inquiry are worth paying attention to,  
worth taking account of ...  
(Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 209)

When conducting qualitative research, issues such as generalizability, reliability and objectivity are not applicable (Higgs, 2001). However it was important as a qualitative researcher, that I ensured that the research was credible, sound and ethical so that it would be of value, and would be noted by others. Ensuring the trustworthiness of the study was the most significant way that I could honour the experiences that the

participants shared with me. Researchers use different criteria to ensure the trustworthiness of their research studies. For example, Guba and Lincoln (1985) suggest there are four criteria to test for trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. In a study on Adolescent Female Sexuality, Morrissey and Higgs (2006) used three criteria to ensure the trustworthiness of their research study; soundness, credibility, and ethical conduct. I have adopted these three same criteria.

### **Soundness**

When I first began planning this study, I made a commitment to myself that this would be a study that was not only conducted with rigour, but it would also have resonance within the Solomon Island Research sector. I was acutely aware that for the findings of this study to be credible, I needed to take a number of steps to ensure it was sound and dependable.

Through the process of ‘triangulation’ in the data collection phase, I sought to ensure the soundness of the research data. Patton (2002:556) refers to the triangulation of sources of data as “checking out the consistency of different data sources within the same method”. Although I was interested to note what consistencies were present, I also was not overly concerned where there were inconsistencies and sought to explain the reasons on why these may have occurred. I do not believe that inconsistencies occurring between two different sources of data gathering make a study less sound. In fact, I believe it can add a certain depth and richness to the study that may not have been identified if two sources had not been used.

Another mechanism to qualify the soundness of my study is through ensuring that the research planning, process and methods are clearly identified. (Koch, 1994) I believe I have done this by using strong research questions to guide my study, which has been informed by a well thought-out theoretical framework. The rationale behind using a qualitative methodology is also clearly explained.

Obviously the quality of the data collected is directly related to the soundness of the research tools used. I developed question guides for both the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussions. An experienced researcher, who was resident in the

Solomon Islands, critiqued these questions to ensure that the data elicited would in turn provide answers to the research questions. These question guidelines were also forwarded to my two cultural advisors for their comment and input.

Finally, I believe that the soundness of any research study relies, in part, on the integrity and honesty of the researcher. I have conducted this research with a sincere interest in the well-being of the participants and a genuine desire to ensure that their stories and experiences in the field are recognised for the immense value that they offer for future research. I have been committed in capturing the accuracy of these experiences and the findings have been reported with the integrity and honesty that they deserve.

### **Credibility**

Koch (1994) claims that a study is credible when it presents descriptions that are true and faithful to the data collected. To ensure credibility in my research, I made every effort to remain faithful to the descriptions of the experiences that the participants shared with me. For example I kept a journal throughout the data collection phase, for the purpose of both reflection and bracketing. Crotty (1996:19) explains that bracketing allows for the researcher to suspend their own beliefs to ensure that the participants are able to “construct and given meaning to their own reality”. Notes were taken during the interviews and focus group discussions, in addition to audio recording the interviews.

It was particularly important to ensure that during the transcribing process, the meaning or intent of comments made were not lost or misinterpreted, particularly as I was researching from a cross-cultural perspective. One of the fundamental issues that are inherent in cross-cultural research is the issue of language, and the danger that can emerge when the true essence of the data is lost through the process of translation. The majority of the interviews that I conducted were in English, however I was very mindful that even though the participants all had a very good command of the English language, it was still their second language. Although a transcriber was used for the interviews that were conducted in Pijin, I still went through these interviews myself to check that the transcription appeared to be an accurate account of what had been recorded. I also had the transcriber transcribe other interviews which were conducted in English so that I could compare my own transcripts with hers. Obviously confidentiality of the data was paramount so the transcriber was asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. It was not

possible to have all participants check written transcripts due to geographical and communication constraints, however “spot checks” were done where I provided some of the participants with transcripts to check that the content was a true and accurate account of their interview and then asked them to sign a form to this effect. (Appendix 8 & 8a).

### **Ethical Issues**

As in any research, the issue of ethics is significant when considering the trustworthiness of the study. Ethics in cross-cultural research is extremely important when considering the credibility and dependability of the study. Of particular importance is the consideration of what Tuhiwai Smith (1999) refers to as the issue of ‘insider/outsider’.

Before I set out on my ‘research journey’, I thought long and hard about the appropriateness of myself as a New Zealander, conducting research in the Solomon Islands. To guide me through this early stage of deciding whether to embark on cross-cultural research, I considered five important questions that Tuhiwai Smith (1992:8) proposes are useful to answer before making a decision about the appropriateness of conducting such research. Tuhiwai Smith developed these questions in relation to research on Maori in New Zealand. However, I believe they provide a useful framework and are applicable in any circumstances where cross cultural research is being considered;

1. Who has helped define the research problem?
2. For whom is this study worth and relevant? Who says so?
3. Which cultural group will gain new knowledge from this study?
4. To whom is the researcher accountable?
5. Who will gain the most from this study?

I was conscious of my own inexperience in the field of cross-cultural research as although I had been previously involved in research in the Solomon Islands, through my capacity as a consultant for the SIFHSS, I did not have experience in conducting cross-cultural research as the lead researcher. Prior to making my decision, I reviewed literature on the potential risks and positive aspects of studying a culture other than my

own, and came to the conclusion that cross-cultural research was not only possible, but could also be valuable, providing that extra care and measures were taken to ensure that the study was both ethically safe and ethically sound.

The measures I took included ensuring that there was active acknowledgement throughout every phase of my research, that I viewed myself as an 'outsider', from a cultural perspective. However, this acknowledgement was not intended to focus on the negative aspects or dangers of 'cross-cultural' research, but more about introducing a framework which allows recognition that there is value to such research taking place, providing there is clear acknowledgment of 'insider-outsider' issues.

Despite being an 'outsider' from a cultural perspective, it was not difficult to 'find my place' with the participants due to there being other aspects which gave us a common ground. These commonalities included the fact that we are all women, we had all been involved in research on gender issues, many of us are mothers and all of us have heard stories first hand from women, about the violence they have endured.

I was very conscious that I would be conducting a study relying only on 'distant' supervision via internet. Taking into consideration the possible 'isolation' that this may have created for me, as well as recognising the importance of cultural safety, I sought 'in-country' support from individuals who were able to provide me with advice and guidance. Although I was not able to have direct face-to-face contact with my Massey University Supervisor, I was extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to engage the support of an Australian woman who has lived in the Solomon Islands for the past five years, and who formerly was the Head of the School of Social Work at the Melbourne University. We met regularly during the planning phase of my research so that she could provide advice and support on issues such as research questions, interview guidelines, and ethics. This support was invaluable, particularly in the early days of planning and conducting the first interviews. I also sought the support of two Solomon Islanders who agreed to provide me with cultural advice as required. Both these people have experience in the social services and are actively involved in measures to reduce violence against women and children in the Solomon Islands. Again the support that these two individuals offered was of considerable importance due to the cross-cultural nature of my research study. For example, when I was designing the Questionnaire

Guidelines, I needed to be sure that the questions, and the way I was framing the questions, was culturally appropriate and that they were not ambiguous. The presentation of the findings was also an important phase from a cultural perspective as I recognize that my status as an ‘outsider’ is even more pronounced as I am attempting to present an analysis of my findings about a cultural group which I do not belong to.

Finally, I endeavoured at all times to ensure that process and procedures in conducting the research were ethical and were culturally appropriate. The Massey University ‘Code of Ethical Conduct’ provided an excellent frame of reference for issues such as minimization of risk of harm, and I took considerable care to ensure that cultural procedures such as prayers and the blessing of food were part of the interviewing process. Although I initially had some feelings of doubt about whether it was appropriate for myself as a non-Solomon Islander, to be conducting this research, I now believe that cross-cultural research is possible, and this belief was confirmed by the amazing response I had from the participants’ willingness to engage with this study. From an anthropological perspective, a significant degree of my confidence in deciding to pursue this research study resulted from having lived ‘in-country’ for over two years and having an understanding of the culture and language. From an ethical perspective, I believe it is essential for any researcher who is embarking on cross-cultural research not only to explore the issues of ‘insider-outsider’ but also to acknowledge these issues throughout the research process.

### **Limitations of this Research Study**

Although I believe there is value in conducting cross-cultural research, I also recognize that with such research may come with limitations. I believe that the primary limitation is one of power relations. As Tuhiwai Smith, 2004:6 explains: “research is a set of very human activities that reproduces particular social relations of power”. I am a New Zealander, researching a group (of women) in a developing country, who through cultural values and customs, is already disempowered within their own society. It is also a country where past conflict and tensions amongst their own people have only receded due to the aid and assistance from other countries, primarily Australia and New Zealand and with this aid came an increase in research being conducted within the country. Tuhiwai Smith (2004:5) explains that “Pacific peoples are also used to being

studied, or 'helped', by outsiders who have become the academic authorities of and on the Pacific". Because of the strong presence of RAMSI, AusAID, NZAid and a number of International Non- Government Organisations (NGO's) in the Solomon Islands, I was acutely aware of 'power relations' (perceived or otherwise) between myself and the participants, and how this may pose as a limitation to the study.

Another limitation of this research is that some of the findings may have been very country specific; therefore care needs to be taken when applying the findings to other countries. For example, the isolation that researchers were confronted with was primarily due to the fact that the Solomon Islands is a geographically vast developing country with a third world infrastructure, which means that transport and communication methods are extremely limited in many of the areas. The degree of sexual harassment that the researchers faced may be closely connected to the past conflicts where sexual crimes were an element of these ethnic tensions. However, by acknowledging these limitations, the intention is not to detract from the greater part of the study which may have significance and relevance at a global level.

Finally the third limitation was that it would have been helpful to have collected more data about the association and relationship between the age and life experience of the researcher and the impact that being involved with the SIFHSS had on them. Because data was not gathered which specifically focused on the relationship between maturity/life experiences and impact, it is not possible to draw any significant conclusions.

### **Commentary for Chapters Four, Five and Six**

Chapter Three has provided an overview of the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of the study, as well as an explanation of the methodology and research design. The data analysis process was also discussed. Chapters Four, Five and Six present the results and findings from the research study, with the chapters titled as "The Beginning", "The Middle", and "The End". The findings have been displayed in this manner as it became apparent as I collected data from the participants, that their time on the SIFHSS Research Team as field researchers had been a 'journey' for them all. It also became evident during the data analysis phase that the different "impacts" that the



participants experienced were often directly related to what stage of the journey they were at. Journeys of course, always have a starting point, middle and an ending so I therefore felt it was appropriate to present the data in these three different phases. Each of these chapters begin with an introduction and then moves on to discuss the findings relative to that phase of the journey. Within each chapter there are sub headings which reflect the main themes that emerged from the data, and the discussion is built around these themes. The process of including the discussion about the findings and the implications of these findings at the end of each chapter has been deliberate. To structure it in this manner provided a clear way in which to capture the implications of the data in the context of the thesis, which focuses on the research process and learning's from this process. The final and concluding chapter of this thesis revisits the key points that are discussed at the conclusion of Chapters Four, Five and Six.

I believe it is important at this stage to revisit the research questions which guided the study, as these fundamentally provide the foundations for the following chapters. The research study was designed to explore how involvement in conducting research on violence against women and children impacted on the indigenous field researchers responsible for the research field work. This study was an attempt to understand if any negative impacts are mitigated by the positive benefits and experiences that may come from being involved in such research. It is important to consider what lessons we can learn from these field researchers which may assist in informing and guiding future research on violence against women and children in the Solomon Islands and other Third World countries.

As I move through and present the findings it will appear to the reader that the participants from both the focus group discussions and the in-depth interviews had a tendency to emphasize many of the negative factors that impacted on them during their time as field researchers. Despite the semi-structured questionnaire guidelines that I used, which asked questions that were neutral and could be responded to in the negative or positive, a clear pattern started to emerge after the first few interviews were conducted. All of the participants appeared to want to talk about situations that surprised, shocked, frightened and disappointed them and the feelings and emotions that were connected to these situations. I can only hypothesize that the reason for this pattern was that the participants felt 'safe' during the interview session and that the

questions generated conversation and discussions that enabled the participants to share their stories in an open and honest way.

When I set out to do this research, in conjunction with gathering sound data, I wanted to ensure that the participants also benefited from taking part in my research. It is now well documented within the literature about the cathartic and therapeutic effects that participating in research may have for participants (Campbell, 2002; Hess, 2006; Hutchinson et al., 1994; Sque, 2000). These principles are consistent with an empowerment approach. The pattern of the data gathered suggests that the participants found that it was useful on a personal level to share their negative experiences and impacts within this research environment. Many of the participants thanked me for giving them the opportunity to share their stories and they felt considerably better for having done so. One participant was in tears at the end of the interview process and she made the following most heartfelt statement that left me feeling extremely humbled:

*Thank you  
I feel light  
I feel free  
My burden has been lifted  
Thank you*

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **“The Beginning”**

#### **Introduction**

This phase ‘sets the scene’ in that it invites the reader to get to know the participants a little. It explores the reasons for the participants wanting to be field researchers on the SIFHS Study, their previous experience in conducting research, and the impact that the three weeks of training had on them, prior to going into the field.

#### **Recruitment**

The positions for field researchers for the SIFHSS were advertised in the local daily Solomon Island Newspaper, which is how the majority of the field researchers were recruited. During the three Focus Group Discussions which involved a total of 18 participants, two prevalent reasons emerged for the participants’ motivation in wanting to be employed as field researchers on the SIFHSS. Approximately 50% of the participants, who took part in the Focus Group Discussions, indicated that they themselves were, or had been, victims of violence and that their own personal situations made them want to help women and children who were in a similar situation. The other main reason given by the participants for being drawn to applying for the role of field researcher was that they had witnessed situations in their own communities where women and children had been subjected to violence and wanted to do something to try and change this:

*I have experienced abuse by my husband. I don’t want our future girls to go through or grow up with the same thing. We (women) need to stop this.*

Data from the in-depth interviews supported the findings from the focus group discussions in that many of the participants said that their motivation to apply for the role of field researcher was as a result of wanting to help women and children who were living in violent situations. Almost half of these participants also indicated that they had been a victim of violence at some point in their lifetime. In addition to the two

main reasons offered by the Focus Group participants, other reasons offered by participants who were interviewed individually, included needing a job, being interested in learning more about women's rights, and wanting to learn about issues affecting women in the Solomon Islands.

Only a very small percentage of the participants from both the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews had any previous research experience. For those participants who had experience, most of them had worked on the Demographic Health Survey (DHS) in 2006 and/or the People's Survey conducted by RAMSI in 2005. Only two of the participants interviewed indicated that they had experience in conducting research on violence against women. This meant that a total of 92% of the participants had no previous experience in conducting research on violence against women and children, and both the research training and the fieldwork were new experiences for them.

As part of the recruitment process, the participants who worked on the SIFHS Study were expected to attend a comprehensive three week training session, prior to entering the field. This workshop covered training on the issues of gender violence and child abuse and very specific training on the use of the primary research tool which was a 46 page questionnaire survey. I explored with both the focus group participants and in-depth interviewees the memories they had of the training workshop and how they felt this training may have impacted on them, both positively and negatively. The findings from both the focus group discussions and the in-depth interviews indicated that the training had a significant impact on all the participants in one way or another.

## **Impact of Training Workshop**

### **Challenging beliefs**

For the majority of participants, the information that was provided in the training on the issues of gender violence and child abuse was information that was new for them, and they were also enlightened by the realization that women and children have rights. Some of the participants spoke about the role of women in their culture. They explained that there is an expectation that the women will work in the kitchen and the gardens and care for the children. Two of the participants from the in-depth interviews explained

how the knowledge they gained from the training made them question their own cultural beliefs and values:

*The training was useful because we got to know the responsibility for the roles that women play in society. Most women in the Solomon Islands, they think that culturally women are just for the kitchen. But when we came to the training, it's something that really opens up the mind to see that this does not have to be the way...*

*I was interested because of the culture side. It is expected (here in the Solomon Islands) that women always be in the kitchen and do the gardening and men are suppose to be the boss.*

One of the participants stated that she did not know that women had rights:

*I never knew that we women should be treated equally.*

Those participants who spoke about how the training provided them with information that challenged these beliefs said that they viewed some of their relationships with others differently. For some participants, this had an impact on the way they now treat their children and also an impact on what they now hope for, for the future of their daughters:

*After the training I told them (my daughters) about how families are affected by violence and told them that no one have the right to hit them. I realise that I am educating my girls by telling them these things.*

### **Increased confidence**

The main theme that emerged from the focus group discussions was that the 'new knowledge' they gained from the training, gave them a sense of confidence that they felt that they did not possess prior to the training. This confidence was connected to a number of areas in their lives: in their own parenting, the confidence to intervene in their communities when they witnessed children and/or women being abused, and the confidence to ask difficult and sensitive questions in their pending roles as field researchers. One participant explained that the knowledge that she gained from being part of the training workshop, has not only changed her beliefs about how children

should be treated, but it also has given her the confidence to educate and bring about change in her own community:

*At first, if I saw a father whipping his kids, I say it is ok. After the workshop, I realized that it was wrong, it's abuse. Now I try to help in the village to make families and the community aware of the right methods.*

Another focus group participant spoke openly and honestly about how the training had provided her with the knowledge and confidence to change the way she parented her own children:

*As a mother, I was a mother of hell in abusing my children. If I was angry, I couldn't hold back so I had to take a stick or use my hand to whip them. Today when I am angry, I think back to the training and remember that discipline does not have to be about abusing a child.*

These findings were supported by data from the in-depth interviews where the word 'confidence' was often used by the participants to describe the positive impact that being involved with the training had had on them.

Some of the participants spoke of some of the negative aspects and impacts of the training workshop. These aspects included the venue, the financial difficulties (participants were only given bus fares to attend the training), the recruitment process which was occurring during the training, (only a certain number of attendees at the training would be selected to become field researchers), and the expectations of the statistics test for those with limited education.

### **Entering the private lives of others**

A component of the three weeks training was that in the final week the participants were expected to enter the field (locally) to conduct field tests. Participants in one of the focus group discussions spent some time reflecting on the impact that this first experience of conducting field research on domestic violence and child abuse had had on them personally. Feelings such as being 'afraid' and 'excited' were shared by some participants with two participants offering stories where they felt their own personal safety was compromised due to the difficulties that they encountered during this week.

One participant described a situation where an incident of domestic violence took place outside the home of the respondent they were interviewing, where the man was armed with a bush knife that he was waving around. The participant explained that after this incident occurred, she considered withdrawing from the role as field researcher, but she decided to continue as she felt committed to wanting to help women in situations such as that which she had witnessed during the field test. Other participants spoke about being anxious about using the questionnaire for the first time in the field test and making sure that they were 'getting it right', as they still felt very unfamiliar with many of the questions.

Some of the participants said that the field test was a significant time for them as it was the first time that they had ever entered the homes of people that they did not know, to ask questions of such a sensitive nature. They reported that, culturally, asking such questions was extremely difficult and some of them even said that when they were carrying out the field test they put some of the questions into their own words to make it easier for them to ask, particularly the questions about the respondent's sexual relationship with her partner.

### **Increased Commitment**

The information and knowledge that the participants were exposed to during the three week training workshop made many of them more committed to wanting to be involved with the study. Even though some of the information about violence against women and children was disturbing and upsetting, the participants said they came to understand the importance of collecting data on this issue. They said that they realized this information was needed if there was ever going to be any progress in protecting women and children in the Solomon Islands:

*During the workshop, I realized that the Government should make a law for violence. At the moment we don't have a specific law for violence...we need to help women to have a law of their own so that they can be more protected.*

## **Discussion**

A number of guiding questions were asked of the participants that generated discussion around their experiences in the first weeks of being involved with the SIFHS Research Study. Their motivation to be involved with the study was explored, as well as the impact that the preparation and training had on them, and their experiences during days they were conducting the field test.

The findings from this research study indicated that 52% of the participants identified themselves as victims of violence and it was these experiences that had motivated many of them into wanting to be involved with the SIFHSS. Taking into account the findings from the SIFHSS (2009) which found that two out three women aged between 15-49 years in the Solomon Islands have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lifetime, it would be fair to surmise that the figure of 52% could be a conservative percentage. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, the Solomon Islands currently does not have any legal or judicial framework that effectively protects women and children from violence, and there are very few services (for example, counselling) available to help and support victims of violence. Therefore, again it would be fair to assume that the majority of those participants who have experienced violence in their lifetime or who were in a current violent relationship have probably never had access to any therapeutic services or assistance to address their own issues of safety and vulnerability. It is widely acknowledged in the literature that due to the prevalence of IPV worldwide, that the training of researchers needs to recognize that many of the trainee researchers may have been affected by violence in some way (Jewkes et al 2000; WHO, 2001; Jansen et al, 2004; Ellsberg & Heise, 2005).

If we take into consideration the percentage of participants who were victims of violence and the fact that violence against women remains largely a secretive and private affair within the Solomon Island culture, it is not surprising that many of the participants spoke of the profound effect the training had on them. For some of the participants who had personal experiences of violence, the training workshop may have been the first time that they came to realize that they were not to blame for the violence that they had been subjected to, and that women have the right to be treated equally and with respect. Such a realization brings with it the challenging of their own beliefs and



values about women's position in society. A poem by Jully Sipolo (1986:8), who is a well-renowned Solomon Island poet, captures what some of the participants shared about the way that they had viewed women's role in their culture, prior to attending the training:

### **Mi Mere**

I am a woman, born in a village  
Destined to spend my life  
In a never ending vicious circle  
Gardening, child-bearing, house-keeping  
Seen and not heard.....

Coming to understand and realise that women and children have rights can be extremely empowering. The fact that many of the participants spoke of an increase in confidence in different areas of their lives, after they attended the training, is highly likely to be linked to this empowering process. Through the process of participants questioning their own beliefs and values, some of the participants spoke of the different relationship they started having with their children and partners after the training. This process of scrutinizing of relationships by field researchers is supported by the literature which discusses the WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence (Jewkes et al, 2000; Ellsberg & Heise, 2005).

There is recognition within the literature that field researchers who have personally experienced domestic violence, and who are involved with researching violence against women, may have an increased emotional vulnerability (King & Ryan, 1989). The training workshop for the Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence which has been designed by WHO, takes into account the issue of impact on the field interviewers. Jansen et al (2004) and Jewkes et al (2000) recommend that time is given during the training for trainee interviewers to explore and confront their own fears and biases about violence against women, as well as the opportunity to discuss their own experiences of violence. Jewkes et al (2000) found that it was not only important for field workers to have time during the training to discuss in pairs their own experiences of violence, but they were also encouraged to continue to discuss and share with their team members whilst they were in the field.

The field test brought with it a whole new range of challenges for the participants. Entering the private lives and homes of others, and asking questions of respondents about their private relationships with their partners or husbands, was very new and unfamiliar territory for most of the participants. Not only were some of these questions particularly sensitive and personal, but the secrecy of the interviews also placed participants in an unfamiliar position. In cultures such as the Solomon Islands, where society is predominantly patriarchal, men are seen as the decision-makers and women are generally viewed as having lower status than men. Gathering data that may challenge these structures can raise issues for the researchers due to their own cultural belief systems (UNICEF, 2005). For example one of the participants explained that custom prevented her from entering the home and conducting an interview, without first gaining permission and approval from the male head of the house.

Being present at the training brought about an increased commitment for many of the participants in wanting to be involved in the study. The knowledge and information that they had gained led to a greater understanding about why data needed to be gathered about violence against women and children. This finding is consistent with Jansen and her colleagues (2004) who found that involvement in the training and survey of the WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence, led to a greater participation by field researchers in the anti violence movement.

In summary, the findings from this first phase of the researcher's journey suggest that when researchers are recruited from the community, who are not only inexperienced at research but also have very little knowledge about the issues of gender-based violence and child abuse, it is likely that the training and preparation that they are exposed to prior to entering the field, will have a significant impact on them. For recruited researchers in countries such as the Solomon Islands, where women are often regarded as having lower status than men, and where the issue of violence against women and children is only just gaining some traction in the public arena, the impact of this phase should not be underestimated. Acquiring new knowledge that challenges values, beliefs customs and traditions, can be both empowering and frightening and highlights just how critical it is to ensure that field researchers are supported during this phase of their 'research journey' so that they are able to enter the field as well-prepared as is possible and where impacts and effects are minimized as much as is practicable.

# **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **“The Middle”**

### **Introduction**

The findings for the “Middle Phase” refer to the time that the participants spent in the field as field researchers. More specifically, this chapter is presenting the findings about the impact on the participants during the time they were conducting the research. This time period involved a process of the participants travelling from village to village, interviewing women respondents who were selected through a process of statistical household listing. This chapter begins with findings from participants’ experiences in the field during the first few weeks and then moves on to discuss the main themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data. The main themes discussed are emotional impact, physical impact, and risks and problems. Coping mechanisms that were employed by participants are also discussed.

The participants had a varied amount of time in the field working as field researchers, with the least amount of time being spent being one month and the longest time was six months. Overall, the average time that the 29 participants spent in the field was 3.6 months.

### **First weeks in the Field**

To try and gain an insight and understanding of what it was like for the participants when they first entered the field as researchers, questions were asked in both the Focus Groups and the in-depth interviews, about these early days in the field. It was interesting to explore with the participants about whether the time spent in the field conducting research on domestic violence and child abuse, became easier or more difficult for them as the study progressed.

The findings from the data showed that the focus group participants almost unanimously said that the first weeks were ‘hard’, ‘difficult’ and ‘very difficult’. These findings were supported by the data from the in-depth interviews where the participants also

stated that the first weeks were ‘hard’, difficult and ‘stressful’. In both the focus group discussions and the in-depth interviews there was a range of reasons why participants used these words to describe the first weeks in the field; however, the most prevalent reason given was due to team dynamics. These team dynamics were mainly about learning to live and work together when they did not know each other except from the time they had spent together in the three week training workshop. Quotes from participants illustrate the difficulties that many faced in the early days in the field as they came together as a team:

*It was very difficult as we did not know each other before the training but then we had to live together and work together.*

*The first week in the field was difficult as the team were not accepting of me as a supervisor. I say to them, we must work as a team, live as a team, talk as a team.*

*I found the first week very difficult as the supervisor would makes us cry at night. Our feelings would be hurt and we were homesick.*

The other main finding from the data about the impact on the researchers during these first days and weeks in the field was the difficulty they had with the questionnaire. Not only were there sensitive questions within the questionnaire that some of them found difficult, from a cultural perspective, to ask, but many of them also said that as they still were not very familiar with using the questionnaire, they were often confused. This confusion meant that the teams worked a lot slower in these first few weeks than they had anticipated. However, some researchers spoke of there also being a sense of excitement in these early days, mixed with feelings of anxiety about the difficulty of the questionnaire:

*I was feeling really excited. When I was doing the first questionnaires it was difficult but exciting, but a little bit slow.*

Some participants’ spoke of how they initially found it difficult to enter the homes of strangers to interview them, and others spoke of feeling inexperienced at responding to women who showed their pain and distress when telling their story. Some participants shared stories of missing their families and children during these early days, with one participant explaining that her strategy for coping with this was to write to her children

each day in a diary about her time away from them. Some of the researchers also said that the difficulties they had with team dynamics and getting used to the questionnaire, were compounded by the fact that they were confronted with bad weather in these first few weeks, which made travelling not only difficult, but also dangerous at times.

Some of the participants felt that the conflict and confusion that they encountered within their team environments during these early days in the field, could have been avoided if there had been a better understanding of team members roles and the manner in which the teams were led and supervised. There was a comment made by a participant in a focus group discussion, that having someone from the Head Office accompanying the teams during this first week would have been invaluable as they could have not only assisted with team dynamics but they would have been able to help clear up confusion with the questionnaire that many participants reported experiencing. Many of the participants present in this Focus Group agreed with this comment.

Although the majority of the participants from both the focus groups and the in-depth interviews indicated that they found these first weeks in the field difficult, some of them also said that there were some positive aspects of entering the field and used the word 'exciting' or being 'excited' when explaining this. These participants explained having a sense of 'excitement' as they had never done this sort of work before and visiting places they had never been to before. One participant explained that she had never been on a plane before or visited her mother's land so said that although the first week in the field was very difficult at times, these difficulties were countered by a sense of excitement of visiting a new place.

### **Emotional Impact**

Being involved with research studies that involve exploring sensitive issues such as domestic violence and child abuse, has an emotional component for many of those on the research team (Campbell, 2002; Hubbard et al, 2001; McCosker et al, 2001). Defining 'emotion' can be difficult, and the part that 'emotions' may play in the role of the field researcher has also been the subject of much discussion and debate over recent years. Gilbert (2001b:9) provides an insight into how researchers may define what "emotions" are to them, when he states that researchers have defined emotions to be:

feelings, *sensations*, drives; the personal; that which is intimate; personally meaningful, possibly overwhelming; being touched at a deeper level; something that comes from somewhere within ourselves; and that which makes us truly human.

Due to the role that emotion can play in research, it was important to try and gain an understanding of the part that ‘emotion’ had to play during the journey of the field researchers. Questions were asked of the participants about what their feelings were when they interviewed their first respondent who disclosed violence. It was interesting to note that although the data indicated a raft of different emotions and feelings that the participants experienced, they all discussed how vividly they could recall this first interview with a victim of violence and how details of this interview had remained imprinted in their minds. Many of them spoke of being able to still picture the house, the place where the interview was conducted, and what the woman physically looked like. The data indicated that although the participants heard many stories of violence during their time as a field researcher on the SIFHSS study, the first interview where violence was disclosed had a significant impact on them. Participants used words such as ‘stressful’, ‘surprised’, ‘sad’ ‘shocked’ and ‘affecting’ to describe how they felt when they heard for the first time, a woman telling her story of being a victim of violence:

*I found it stressful when listening to the story for the first time.  
The very first interview I did was very bad domestic violence  
and child abuse.*

A significant finding from the data indicated that despite the emotional impact of that first interview with a victim, as time went on all of the participants found it easier to listen to these stories. This may have been due to the researchers having more control of their emotions or possibly they became more detached and desensitized as time went on. This is discussed further in the “Discussion” section of this Chapter.

*When I first hear the bad stories I feel surprised and shocked,  
but by the end I was not surprised or shocked any more.*

*When I first heard the story, it was a little bit affecting me and I  
feel sorry for them (the women) but when I keep asking the  
same questions (of other women) it gets easier.*

*Some of the stories I heard, I get very emotional but then as we  
do more of the interviews it becomes lighter....*

There were a number of sub themes which emerged from the data when analyzing it from an 'emotion' perspective. Feelings of guilt, sadness, anger, concern, were prevalent themes, with many of the researchers also describing feeling emotionally exhausted.

### **Feelings of Guilt**

*I felt guilty...because after interviewing them, they expect us to do something to help them.*

*Bit tough to interview them and leave them like that. It makes me feel guilty...*

The data from the participants from the focus groups showed that many of them had feelings of 'guilt', which stayed with them throughout their time in the field. These feelings of guilt related to the fact that the women respondents were sharing with the researchers, their own personal stories of violence and fear, but the researchers could do so little to help them.

The findings indicated that there were two main reason for the participants having feelings of guilt: (i) they felt guilty leaving women and children in situations where they were at risk of further risk and harm (ii) they felt guilty as they were able to offer so few services to assist these women. One participant described how she would often feel guilty offering the women respondents (who were victims of violence) the small piece of paper which had the services listed on them, as she felt that the size of the paper minimized how serious the problem of violence was:

*For me one part was the guilty part. I feel really sorry after going through the interview and you know that there was this small piece of paper (with list of services on it) which seemed to indicate how small our help will be, but the problem is so big.*

### **Feelings of Sorrow and Sadness**

The data from both the focus groups and the individual interviews showed that the majority of the researchers talked of experiencing feelings of ‘sorry’ and ‘sadness’ when gathering data on violence against women and children. The researchers expressed that their feelings of sadness were for the lives of the women and children they interviewed. They would feel sad seeing families with so little and they would feel sad that they could not do more to help these families:

*I felt sad when hearing their stories. It was emotional and I sometimes would cry.*

The word *sorry* (*sori*) in a Solomon Island context, is often used to describe emotions and is not a literal ‘sorry’ as we know it. The researchers used it often to explain what emotions and feelings they experienced during their time in the field. The findings indicated that the researchers felt *sorry* for the same two main reasons that were found for those expressing feelings of guilt. They said that they felt sorry for the women and children who were living in violent situations, and they also felt sorry that they could do so little to help these women and children. The following quotations illustrate the depth of these feelings:

*I really want to help the women because I feel sorry for them. I feel it is not good to hear their stories and then just leave them there.*

*I feel sorry and feel the pain. Sometimes I do the interview and they cry. Sometimes I try to stop myself from crying but then I cry too.*

*After interviewing, I feel sorry and sad because when reporting the violence that was happening to them, some women would cry.*

### **Feelings of Anger**

Another finding from the data was that some of the participants said that as they interviewed women who were victims of violence, they would experience feelings similar to that of anger for the situation that these women faced. It was interesting to note that these feelings were only expressed by some of the researchers who had already identified that they themselves had been a victim of domestic violence. They spoke of



*feeling mad and sad and feeling cross* that women were being treated in this manner and one also said that she was *angry* these women live in fear with no choice but to continue living with their violent husbands. One of the participants spoke of being *angry* because there was so little she could do to help these women.

### **Feelings of Concern and Worry**

From the data gathered from both the focus groups and in-depth interviews, a theme emerged with regard to the participants having feelings of being concerned and worried whilst they were in the field. The participants talked about these feelings being directly related to their own safety and the safety of their respondents. Undoubtedly there were probably other issues that also caused the participants to have similar feelings; however, when the researchers articulated feeling concerned and worried, it was specifically in the context of the men/husbands/partners (of the respondents) becoming angry toward the researchers or the respondents if they found out (or were suspicious) about the content of the questionnaire. Some of the participants believed that their presence in villages and their task of interviewing women had the potential to compromise the safety of the respondents who were victims of current violence:

*I felt worried for some womens safety after interviewing them as husbands may ask (what the interview was about) and she'd feel she had to tell him and this would result in a beating.*

Participants also talked about being concerned and worried at times for their own safety – the possible risk they may have been at if a husband became angry with their presence in the house or suspicious of what the interview was really about. This is discussed in more detail later in this chapter under the title ‘physical risks’.

### **Feelings of satisfaction**

Although there was a focus by many of the participants on reporting experiencing feelings and emotions that reflected the anxiety, stress and sadness that many of the stories evoked within them, there were some participants who reported that there were times that they felt a sense of satisfaction. These participants explained that they knew what they were doing was not only important from a research perspective, but that it was important for the respondents to have the opportunity to tell their story. A finding from the SIFHSS was that many of the respondents would finish off their interview by

thanking the field researcher for listening to their story. One participant explained that she was *surprised* that she had the ability to encourage women to tell their story and when this did happen, she realized that there were benefits for the respondent and this made her feel good about what she was doing:

*I wasn't thinking that women would talk to me about what their problems are, what they have experienced. wasn't expecting them to be satisfied but afterwards they came back and said 'thank you, you have helped me'.*

### **Physical Impact**

The majority of the researchers commented on how difficult they found the fieldwork at times, due to the physical challenges they encountered. The main themes to emerge from this impact included feeling physically exhausted, stress-related behaviours such as smoking and drinking, and episodes of sickness and poor health during the time they were in the field. A positive physical impact that some researchers commented on was that they became fitter, and some lost some weight due to the amount of walking that they had had to do in the more isolated regions.

### **Physical Exhaustion**

It would appear from the data that physical exhaustion was a major issue for many of the researchers during their time in the field. The majority of them said that due to the often difficult geographical conditions, the days would be long and hard, with them sometimes walking big distances. They would be tired by day's end and their bodies would ache from the exhaustion. The researchers often also had to travel long distances by boat or truck to their next selected area and this would often leave them feeling very tired and weary:

*By the middle of the survey I was very tired... I was thinking of giving up because I was tired and sick... I was tired emotionally, physically and everything...*

The researchers spoke more specifically about the physical exhaustion they experienced when they discussed what it was like leaving the field. This theme is covered in more depth in the following Chapter titled "The End".

### **Stress-related behaviours**

The data also showed that some of the researchers said there were times they felt stressed, which resulted in them partaking in behaviours that they believed were instigated by their stress levels. It was interesting to note that it was only the researchers who fell into the two older age groups who talked about stress-related behaviour. The findings from the data showed that these researchers identified that the stress they experienced from both the emotional and physical challenges they faced, resulted in them engaging in activities that they viewed as stress releasers – one researcher took up both smoking and chewing betelnut again during her time in the field, after not doing so for the last few years. Another researcher also said that she had taken up smoking again and she had also been unwell at one point during her time in the field. She believed that both her return to smoking and her unwellness were directly related to the stress she was experiencing from the work she was doing.

Another researcher said that not only had she become sick from the stress she was under, but she also started drinking (beer) which she said was an attempt to cope with the stress levels that she was experiencing:

*I got sick because of the stress and always being tired but for me the main thing was that I started to drink a lot of beer because of the stress. But now I've cut down on drinking because the study is finished.*

### **Health**

More than half the researchers interviewed indicated that they had experienced some periods of sickness or unwellness during their time in the field. This included being sick with malaria, having colds/flu like symptoms, being sea sick, having tired and aching bodies, experiencing headaches and sometimes feeling generally unwell due to the difficult conditions they sometimes faced in the field. Two of the researchers said that they had lost weight during their time in the field, which one of them believed was due to the unbalanced diet she was eating and the fact that often they were too tired to cook a proper meal when they finished interviewing at the end of the day. Despite there being times when the physical health of some of the researchers was adversely affected during their time in the field, there were some researchers who also acknowledged that

they had become fitter and stronger due to the amount of walking and climbing hills that they had to do on a regular basis.

### **Risks and Difficulties**

Inherent in researching sensitive issues such as domestic violence and child abuse, there are a number of risks that may impact on the both the physical safety and emotional safety of the field researchers. Obviously when such research is conducted, measures are taken to try and minimize the risks to both the researchers and respondents, but the reality is that there will always be situations that arise that are unpredictable and difficult to plan for.

Every one of the researchers, who participated in this thesis research, had a story to tell which reflected the risks and problems that they had encountered during their time in the field. These risks varied in nature and included both physical and emotional risk. It was interesting to explore with the researchers the impact these experiences had on them, both at the time of the incident and post the field work phase.

#### **Physical Risks**

The data gathered displayed a disturbing pattern of a number of the researchers being at the risk of sexual assault during their time in the field. Researchers who were spread across three different teams shared stories of situations where there was the potential for team members to have been sexually assaulted. Two of the situations described by the researchers involved men entering their sleeping quarters at night and trying to remove one of the sleeping team members. On both occasions it was just fortunate that another team member woke up and was able to scare the intruder away.

Researchers from one of the teams described an extremely frightening incident that left them feeling very vulnerable. These researchers explained how a group of men came to the door of their sleeping quarters during the early hours of the morning, demanding to

be let in (luckily for the researchers there was a lock on the door):

*Four men came to the house in the middle of the night with masks on. They tried to gain entry and they were shining their torches through the window trying to find us inside. We were crying. They were drunk and angry. They demanded a sum of money before they would leave us alone. I was sure we were going to be raped.*

Another researcher on the same team said that the men had identified themselves as ‘ex-militants’ and they had threatened to ‘destroy the house’ unless the researchers unlocked the door. This researcher also feared that they were going to be raped, but she was particularly fearful for the safety of the youngest member of the team who was under 20 years of age. It was only through careful negotiation with these men, plus the researchers also agreeing to give the men money to ‘compensate them for their wasted time’, that this situation did not escalate. The researchers reported that none of them could settle back to sleep after this very frightening incident so they spent the remainder of the night talking and praying.

This incident was particularly frightening as the researchers had entered a geographical area that was very affected during the ethnic tensions. The researchers had already been told some very graphic accounts of domestic violence by the respondents who they had interviewed up to this point in time. The researchers said that they were spoken to by women in the village the following morning, and were told that they were not safe there and were subsequently escorted out of the village.

One participant described a situation where the team was based in a particular area for a couple of weeks. The team members would regularly go down to the local river to swim. They realized very quickly that this daily activity was being watched by young men hiding behind trees and these men would be openly masturbating and calling out to the researchers. The participant said that she was shocked by this behaviour and it made her feel unsafe during the time they were staying in this area.

Other researchers described situations where they felt there was the potential for their physical safety to be at risk. These situations included working in an area where there was reportedly a prisoner on the run. He had allegedly raped a woman when she was on

her way home from a health clinic and was believed to be hiding out in the bush. This information made the team feel very unsafe and they were pleased to finish their interviewing and move on from this area.

Another situation where some of the researchers felt their physical safety was at risk, involved an isolated village which had been burnt down during ethnic tensions. This has resulted in the village now being wary and suspicious of visitors. The researchers were met by the villagers who were all armed with bush knives; even the children had knives:

*We went to one village which was burnt down in 2001 – they have ways of getting information so they know that visitors are coming so they arm everyone with knives, including children. They were not welcoming and some of the respondents refused to be interviewed... We were very scared...*

One participant explained that when she was interviewing a respondent in one village, a man was constantly hanging around and he eventually joined a group of other men who continued to watch her. She said that when she met up with the driver of their boat after her interview, he told her that he had been given information that suggested this group of men would be coming to the team's accommodation that night and that it would not be safe for the team to stay there. Due to this information the team decided to leave and travelled back at night by boat to an area that was familiar to them.

For another team, their arrival at one village was greeted with accusations that they were terrorists and the villagers called the researchers the 'women from Babylon' and called them evil spirits. The researchers feared for their safety as they felt that the villagers 'were ready to attack us'. At another village the researchers were met at the entrance of the village by the Chief and village elders who had heard a rumour that the survey was about 'family planning and men's 'parts'! The researcher explained that the Chief stated:

*...we don't need you to talk to our people..... he was telling us to get out. He ordered us out of the village. His expression was angry. We tried to explain the survey, but he was not interested or did not want to listen. For our safety we got into the boat and went back to where we were staying.*

The risk of dog attacks and dog bites was also a very real fear for many of the researchers. One of the researchers was actually bitten on her leg by a dog, and another team was chased by a pack of dogs which were being encouraged to attack the researchers by the local villagers. Wild dogs are an ever present risk in the Solomon Islands and, generally speaking, Solomon Islanders are very fearful of dogs due to the number of untamed and wild dogs that roam the streets and villages scavenging for food.

Other physical risks that the researchers encountered during their time in the field included men becoming angry and suspicious with them when they were trying to gain access to interview the female respondents:

*I went to a house and the husband was in the house. He made everything hard for me. When I was waiting for the woman, her husband was holding a knife. I thought he would cut her but then he left and went out.*

The findings also showed that a prevailing risk factor to the physical safety of the researchers was directly related to the environment. The main mode of transport around islands, for many of the teams of researchers, was by boat. These boats are commonly referred to as 'banana boats' or 'canoes' in the Solomon Islands and are not very big vessels. The boats are only equipped with one small motor and very little safety equipment, except for the lifejackets that all the researchers were issued with prior to entering the field. Many of the researchers referred to the big seas and bad weather that they had encountered during their travels and some of them said that they were very scared at times when travelling by boat, as they thought they were going to capsize and drown due to how rough the seas were.



**Plate I: Photo of a boat like that which the participants used to travel by sea**

Other researchers spoke of the terrain that they had to travel by foot, and how risky this was at times due to the poor tracks that they were following and the steepness of the hills:

*We had to climb a very high mountain and it was scary. If we fell down we would have fallen over the edge and into the sea.*

### **Emotional Risk**

Conducting research on domestic violence and child abuse carries with it the potential for researchers to be exposed to ‘emotional risk’. Although the study project that these researchers were involved with used a survey questionnaire, the data they were capturing still often told a story of the violence that a woman and her children were being subjected to. According to the researchers, the respondents would also often expand on the information being collected, which was their way of telling ‘their story’. Listening to stories about violence against women and children, day after day, for many weeks can obviously have an enormous impact on the emotional well-being of field researchers (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; McCosker et al, 2001; Parker et al, 1990). The



findings from both the focus group discussions and the in-depth interviews suggest that all of the researchers who were interviewed were at some degree of emotional risk at some point during their time in the field.

Many of the researchers spoke of the tears that they shed, either during the interviewing process, or later that day/night:

*Sometimes I do the interview and they cry.  
Sometimes I try to stop myself from crying but then I cry too.*

*I felt sad when hearing their stories, it was emotional and  
sometimes I would cry.*

Some of the reasons offered by the researchers on why they would be reduced to tears included feeling a sense of sadness for the respondents' situation, as noted above, some said they would cry because they felt there was so little they could do to help, and others would cry because of the difficulty of hearing stories of violence over and over again, day after day:

*Hearing those bad stories every day, I found it difficult and  
sometimes I would cry.*

One researcher spoke of the emotional impact that asking the same questions again and again had on her, and gathering data that so frequently was telling a story of violence against women. She said that she started to have dreams about the questionnaire and her sleep patterns became disturbed due to stories she was hearing. Another researcher spoke of getting to a point that she no longer wanted to ask the questions as she was afraid of what the answers may be. This researcher said that when she reached this point she was both physically and emotionally tired and also knew that no matter what she was told, there was only so little she could do to help women who were living with violence:

*I was tired, physically and emotionally affected by the stories  
too. Sometimes I never wanted to ask the questions as I didn't  
want to hear the stories that the women might tell me.*

Some of the researchers spoke about how there were particular women they interviewed and certain stories that they heard that had such an emotional impact on them that, not

only did it affect them whilst in the field, but the stories have remained etched in their minds:

*For the whole day I cannot forget her story...  
I recall her story again and again...  
I cannot forget this woman...  
I found it hard to sleep...  
I still recall her...  
My emotions for her still linger..."*

Another common theme that emerged from the data was that the researchers said that when they heard stories about children being abused or harmed, these stories often had a greater emotional impact on them than the stories that only involved women. One researcher explained this by saying:

*The children depend on the adults. The children are more powerless because in the Solomon Islands it is often the parents who are abusing the children, not different people. When children are abused by their parents – where do they go?*

Another researcher spoke of her deep sense of sorrow and sadness when a respondent told her about how the husband was abusing her children:

*Sometimes whenever he (husband of respondent) was angry with the wife, he takes the children and hangs them up ...just tie their hands up against the tree. She was crying when she was telling me this and I was crying. She asked me to take the little girl (last born) with me when I left the village to save her from this abuse.*

This researcher said that this woman's story had an enormous emotional impact on her at the time and she still thinks about this woman, pictures her in her home and wonders how the little girl is.

Aside from the emotional and physical risks that researchers encounter in the field, there are often other difficulties and problems that arise, which as individuals and as teams they have to learn to manage. The findings from my research showed the main difficulties that researchers faced included the issues of reciprocity (from a cultural perspective), a sense of isolation and a lack of support, which were also connected to challenging team dynamics.

### **Issue of Reciprocity**

One of the many difficulties that is present when conducting social research in developing countries, is finding the balance in ensuring that the research is conducted within clear safety and ethical standards, but is respectful of the cultural framework in which it is being conducted.

The issue of reciprocity was raised by some of the researchers. They explained that within their culture it is expected that if you visit and stay in a village, it is appropriate that you arrive with gifts of usually food, such as rice and taiyo (tuna). The researchers said that they often felt embarrassed that they did not have gifts to offer and felt ashamed that they were asking to take something from the village (data) but they had nothing to offer in return. The issue of reciprocity was also raised by some of the researchers in relation to gathering data from the respondents. Again, the researchers felt that they were asking the respondents to share with them (their stories), but they had nothing to share in return:

*It makes me feel guilty because we take all the information but did not do anything for them.*

Researchers spoke of giving their own personal money to some respondents whose situations were desperate and where there was no food. One researcher said that she would have given the shirt off her back if it was asked for and in fact ended up giving away much of the luggage she was carrying:

*Some of my respondents are really in need. Even if they ask for my shirt, I would give it to them. After seeing an old woman with children who had no clothes, I gave her nearly all my luggage that I was carrying.*

### **Sense of isolation/support**

The pattern that emerged from the findings, where some participants experienced feelings of isolation and a lack of support in the field, was that it was closely connected to the issue of team dynamics. All of the participants interviewed made various comments about the need for greater support from the Headquarters Office whilst they were in the field and how this lack of support had impacted on them at times as individuals and as a team. Those participants, who had received visits from Head

Office staff at some point during their time in the field, said how valuable these visits were as it gave them the opportunity to discuss any difficulties they were having and to check that the data they were gathering was correct.

However, it was notable that the participants who spoke of their teams in a positive manner appeared to have coped better, despite feeling there was a lack of support at times from the Head Office. These participants appeared to have avoided feelings of isolation and self-despair due to the support they were able to offer each other within the team environment. The researchers who spoke critically of their team's functioning and leadership tended to have been impacted far more by this lack of support and they expressed that there were times of feeling isolated and very unhappy.

One researcher very poignantly described a time when she was feeling particularly isolated:

*Feeling very low...*  
*Feeling neglected...*  
*Feeling self pity...*  
*Not feeling appreciated...*  
*Not feeling valued...*  
*Not feeling happy...*

The data quite clearly showed that challenging team dynamics had a significant impact on the researchers' views on how difficult they found the work, particularly in the early stages of entering the field, and the coping strategies they employed to manage their stress and emotional overloads.

The other data that was of significance was that almost all of the researchers from both the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews felt that they did not have enough support in the area of counselling and assistance for women respondents who disclosed they were victims of violence. The researchers explained that prior to entering the field they were advised that on every team there would be a member who had experience in counselling to assist them in situations where respondents requested assistance and support. This was not the case at all and in the majority of the teams it became the supervisor's job to provide this support. A number of the participants expressed anger about this situation as they felt that it left them isolated and unsupported in a situation

that was often extremely challenging and emotional. Many of them reported that they did not believe they had the skills or the training to be able to respond adequately to respondents in need of assistance, and this added to their feelings of guilt at the inadequacy of the services available for these women.



**Plate II: Team of field researchers meeting with staff from Head Office during their time in the field**

### **Coping mechanisms**

As participant after participant reflected on their time in the field and told stories that included considerable challenges and risks for both their emotional and physical well-being, I began to question them about what their main coping mechanisms were which had enabled them to stay in the field for such long periods of time.

One of the participants from the in-depth interviews said that when she had heard a particularly disturbing story of violence, she would offer to pray with the respondent prior to leaving the home. If she was able to attend church on Sunday she would also pray for those she had interviewed during that week. The power of prayer was also

used by another participant when she said that she would pray at night for those that she had interviewed that day:

*At night I would remember those who have the problem and I would pray for them.*

One of the main mechanisms that the participants employed to cope with the challenges and stress of the field work was to come together every evening as a team to ‘debrief’ in a very informal manner. Some of the participants said that this time in the evening would be used to talk about what they had done that day, share the stories that they had heard and pray together:

*At the end of the day, we sit around and each of us tell her story. We would have thoughts and prayers for our respondents because some beaten women are living in fear...*

*At night when I would be thinking about the (respondents) story, I would then share it with the team and do deep breathing*

One participant said that it helped her to ‘story’ with her supervisor as it felt like she was then sharing the ‘burden of sadness’.

One of the main themes that emerged from this data was that the use of prayer as a coping mechanism was very common amongst the participants during their days in the field. The importance of a strong and cohesive team was also very important as it provided a ‘forum’ for debriefing to occur on a regular basis. Members from one particular team (some were participants in the focus group discussions and some were interviewed individually) stated quite categorically that the only reason that they ‘survived’ in the field for so many months, facing such difficult challenges, was the fact that they had an incredible team spirit and were so supportive of each other in their daily work.



**Plate III: 97.5% of Solomon Islanders are Christians. Christianity was an important element reported by participants when discussing coping mechanisms**

## **Discussion**

The process of encouraging the researchers to reflect on the time period from when they entered the field until they were almost due to exit generated an enormous amount of data from both the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussions. As discussed above, there were main themes that emerged during the data analysis phase; emotional impact, physical impact, risks present (both emotional and physical), difficulties encountered such as isolation and reciprocity, and coping mechanisms employed. These themes and the sub-themes provided a deeper understanding of the field researchers' perceptions of the impact that being involved with the study had on them personally. The findings from this part of the 'research journey' illustrate just how complex researching violence against women can be and the significant, and, at times, overwhelming, impact that being involved in such research, may have on the field researcher.

The data suggests that entering the field for many of the researchers was a difficult time for them. The findings discussed in Chapter Four, show that the training workshop just prior to entering the field, appeared to have an impact on them in many different ways. If we consider this impact, as well as the participants own life experiences (where 52% of them identified that they had experienced violence personally), in addition to the fact that 92% of them had no previous experience at researching violence against women and children, it is quite probable that the researchers entered the field with a degree of increased vulnerability. To explain further; some of the researchers had reported that due to the knowledge that they gained through the training workshop, a number of their fundamental cultural beliefs and values had been challenged about women's role in society. Research has also shown that women who are victims of violence and who become involved with researching violence may have an increased vulnerability in the field (King & Ryan, 1989).

The field researchers were also entering into 'unchartered territory'. They were exploring an extremely sensitive social issue (particularly from a cultural perspective) and having to enter the private homes of others to ask difficult and sensitive questions. Jamieson (2000) and Warr (2004) both highlight the physical and emotional vulnerability that researchers may experience when having to enter people's homes to gather the data. In addition to all of this, entering the field also required the researchers to adjust to being part of a team who were not only having to work together, but also having to travel and live together for extended periods of time. Many of the teams were also operating in isolated areas that were a long way away from the Head Office Research Team. Taking into consideration all these factors, it is hardly surprising that all of the participants used words such as "difficult" and "hard" when describing the first weeks in the field.

The challenges that are often an intrinsic part of entering the field have been widely discussed in the literature (Johnson & Clarke, 2003; Leslie & Storey 2003; Patton, 2002; Roberts, 2007; Shaffir & Stebbins, 1991). Challenges such as entering unchartered territory, fear of the unknown, and feelings of anxiety and nervousness, may be a part of the research process, irrespective of whether the topic being researched is sensitive or not. However, Johnson & Clarke (2003) suggest that challenges such as feelings of anxiety may be experienced at a level that is more intense for those who are



involved in research which is of a highly sensitive nature. Cowles (1988) also acknowledges that whilst feelings of anxiety may not be unique only to researchers of sensitive subjects, this anxiety may be 'heightened' when the research involves interviewing and interacting with vulnerable respondents. Johnson & Clarke (2003) discuss in their paper that one of the findings from their study into the impact on researchers who were involved with collecting sensitive data, was that the anxiety for many of them entering the field was due to feeling inexperienced at making contact and interviewing people in-depth in their own homes. These findings are consistent with what the participants from this study reported. One of the reasons they explained their first few days and weeks in the field as being 'difficult' was due to their inexperience – they not only felt inexperienced with the primary research tool (46 page questionnaire), but they also lacked experience in asking questions of such a sensitive nature and felt they lacked experience in responding to disclosures of violence.

The issue of team dynamics, that appeared to be a fundamental issue in the early days in the field for many of the researchers, does not appear to have been widely researched in the literature. Roberts (2007:42) does acknowledge that:

it is generally assumed that relations between researchers are usually without tension. However, within research teams engaged in all types of social investigation, differences will emerge at times, and relationships between individuals will undergo some pressure.

It is interesting to note that in reference to the WHO Multi-country Study, Jewkes et al (2000), acknowledge that researchers who have been victims of violence themselves need to have the opportunity to not only discuss and share these experiences during the training, but they also need to be encouraged to continue to discuss and share with their team members during their time in the field. For this process to occur there would be an expectation that teams enter the field as strong, cohesive and supportive units. This did not appear to be the case for many of the participants of this study, who seemed to spend the first days and weeks in the field grappling with team roles and responsibilities and dynamics which in turn created significant stress and anxiety for many of them. Roberts (2007:41) emphasizes that the success of a research project involving a hierarchical team lies in ensuring that "tasks and roles are clear and that personal relationships have a positive and practical basis".

The findings relating to the coping mechanisms employed by participants is linked closely to the issue of team dynamics. Many of the researchers reported that the primary coping mechanism that they engaged to address the issue of impacts such as emotional and physical exhaustion, emotional stress and potential physical risks, was through regular evening ‘debriefings’ with their teams. This finding suggests that although during the early days in the field the team dynamics were often fraught with difficulties, as time moved on teams began to function in a manner where they became the primary source of support for the researchers.

Conducting population representative research on gender based violence in developing countries such as the Solomon Islands raises unique issues with regard to ‘team-work’. Due to the geographical nature of the country and the limited transport and communication systems, there was an expectation for teams on the SIFHSS to become ‘self-managing’, with many of the teams initially having very little, or only sporadic contact with the Head Office Research Team, and even this contact was often restricted to radio contact only. This raises some important issues for the conducting of future sensitive research in the Solomon Islands. The findings from this study highlight the importance of ensuring that considerable attention is given to team building prior to entering the field, if there is to be an expectation for inexperienced teams of researchers to be self-managing. Researchers need to be equipped with the skills to be able to perform as well-functioning teams to enable them to not only carry out their research duties, but to be able to provide a supportive environment for all team members.

The role of emotion for researchers involved in conducting research on violence against women was clearly highlighted in the findings from this thesis study. The main themes to emerge in relation to ‘emotion’ included emotional impact, emotional risk and emotional exhaustion. These findings are supported by an emerging body of international literature and research which has begun to examine and explore the role of emotion for researchers involved with qualitative social research (Hubbard et al, 2000; Kleinman & Cropp, 1993).

Emotion, as part of the research experience of *quantitative* researchers does not appear to have received attention in the literature. However if we consider how ‘emotional

labour' is defined, and accept that quantitative researchers of sensitive research may engage in emotional labour if they have face-to-face contact with respondents, it seems reasonable to consider findings in relation to the role of emotion for researchers of qualitative research. Hubbard et al (2000:122) define emotional labour very simply as being "the type of work that involves feeling and may be contrasted with physical and task-orientated labour". There were also some fundamental similarities between the quantitative survey that the participants were conducting and that of qualitative research. For example, the researchers of the SIFHSS study were entering private homes, interviewing respondents face-to-face and were actively engaging in building a relationship to facilitate disclosure of violence.

The impact of being exposed to emotional labour during their time in the field resulted in participants experiencing a range of emotional responses. Feelings of sadness and sorrow, anger and guilt and feeling anxious and concerned were the primary sub themes that emerged from the data. These findings are consistent with the literature where researchers of sensitive issues have reported experiencing a myriad of emotions during their time in the field (Cannon, 1989; Cowles, 1988; Ellsberg et al, 2001; Johnson & Clarke, 2003). The participants used powerful language when describing their emotions and they also spoke of their emotional response to some of the stories they heard. In other countries where this same WHO study has been conducted and where there has been some reflective feedback from the researchers, it would appear that these findings are very consistent. A field worker in Nicaragua explains how one woman's story affected her so much that after leaving the house she ended up crying in the street (Ellsberg & Heise, 2002). Another spoke of having to resign from the study as she could not cope with the stress of the questions about violence and was crying openly in the interviews she was conducting (Ellsberg et al, 2001). Other researchers of sensitive issues acknowledge that they have cried openly during interviews with respondents (Cowles, 1988; Burr, 1995, Liamputtong Rice, 2000). Reports in the literature acknowledge that feelings of sadness and sorrow may become overwhelming and distressing for field researchers and may result in an emotional response such as crying during an interview or after the researcher leaves the interview (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008).

Closely connected to the feelings of sadness and sorrow, was the feeling of 'guilt' that many of the participants expressed. These feelings primarily related to not being able to help the women who were victims of violence. A review of the literature shows that feeling 'guilty' is not an uncommon emotion for researchers of sensitive research to experience as they often build up a relationship and rapport with the respondent in order to gather the data. Once they have what they need, they leave that respondent to move on to conduct their next interview. Dickson-Swift et al (2008) quote one of the researchers who they interviewed who stated; "...and we ask them to give up a lot of their time and usually dredge up some really emotional stuff for them and then the best we can do is say 'oh well here's a phone number'". This quote almost mirrors what many of the participants expressed in this study, particularly in relation to the guilt around the small piece of paper that had services (based in Honiara) listed on them but were of little use to those in the rural isolated areas. In developing countries where there are few resources or services available for respondents who are victims of violence, it is quite likely that these feelings of 'guilt' are more intense. This highlights even further the importance of researchers receiving considerable support and supervision during their time in the field, so that they are able to regularly 'off-load' their feelings of guilt about a situation that is so beyond their control, that is, their country being resource-poor.

The threat of risk to both the respondent and the researcher from violent husbands/partners, when researching violence against women, is well documented in the literature. Participants who expressed feeling concerned that their presence in the home may have heightened the risk for those who were victims of violence is a well founded fear (Bergen 1993; Ellsberg et al, 2001; Ellsberg & Heise, 2002; Jewkes et al, 2000). Ellsberg et al (2002) refer to this concern with their own field workers in a study on violence against women conducted in Nicaragua. Their fieldworkers reported leaving several homes knowing that the husbands of the respondents were 'hostile' and 'suspicious' and feeling an increased degree of concern for the future safety of that respondent. The literature also acknowledges the risk to the researchers from violent men who may become angry about the researchers presence in the home, or may become suspicious about the true reason for their wife/partner being interviewed (Bergen, 1993; Ellsberg & Heise, 2002; Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; Jewkes, 2000; Parker & Ulrich, 1990). In a study on violence against women that was conducted in South

Africa, a fieldworker had a gun pulled on her by the respondent's angry partner (Jewkes et al, 2000). In this thesis study there were certainly situations where husbands/partners behaved in an intimidating manner toward some of the researchers which placed them in very frightening situations.

The findings from this research suggest that the first interview that the participants conducted, where a woman disclosed violence, was of emotional significance. The impact of first disclosures does not appear to have been discussed in the literature; however, given the findings from this study it is an issue that may need to be explored further when considering and planning for the well-being of the researchers during their time in the field. It is interesting to note that although this first disclosure of violence had a significant impact on many of the participants in that they can recall their feelings of being surprised, shocked, and affected, and can visually describe the setting and the appearance of the woman, the participants appear to have been able to work through these initial emotions successfully, as they all continued in their roles as researchers.

In close connection to the issue of the impact of the first disclosure of violence, is also the finding that almost all the participants reported that listening to stories of violence became easier, despite often feeling increasingly emotionally and physically exhausted. It could be argued that this pattern may be explained by the researcher becoming desensitized when being exposed over and over again to stories that involve grief, pain and distress (Campbell, 2002; Scott, 1998). However, it is important to note that despite the participants reporting that listening to the stories became easier, they did not report becoming 'detached' emotionally or that their feelings of sadness or concern for victims of violence lessened as they became exposed to an increased number of stories of violence against women.

The findings from this study about how difficult the first weeks in the field proved to be, suggest that the field researchers almost all underwent a process of what could be termed as 'field shock'. Suddenly they were confronted with so many unfamiliar situations such as being part of a team (instead of being with their family), entering private homes, interviewing strangers and asking difficult and sensitive questions. I would suggest that it is highly probable that the first disclosures of violence were part of this 'field shock' which is why the stories may have become easier to listen to, but no

less emotionally affecting for the researchers. The impact of the first weeks on the researchers certainly raise some important points to consider in relation to the level of support, supervision, and skilled debriefing that is made available during this critical time of entry into the field.

The feeling of being physically and emotionally exhausted during their time in the field was shared by a number of the participants, with almost all of them stating that by the time they left the field there was some element of exhaustion. The emotional and physical exhaustion of researchers is well cited in the literature, with Dickson-Swift et al. (2008) suggesting that these levels of exhaustion may stem from not only the nature of the data that the researcher is collecting but also from the researchers response to the data. Cowles (1988) suggests that being exposed to strong emotional responses from the respondent can also be physically and emotionally exhausting for the researcher. Dickson-Swift and her colleagues (2008:51) found with the researchers' they interviewed that exhaustion stemmed from the "sheer number of interviews that they were required to do". Ellsberg & Heise (2002) and Parker & Ulrich (1990) specifically make reference to the potential for researchers to suffer from exhaustion due to listening to repeated stories of violence and abuse against women. These findings highlight the importance of researchers having breaks and rest periods from data collection as well as having mechanisms in place for emotional support and for debriefing to occur at regular intervals. The issue of exhaustion is discussed in more depth in Chapter Six as it was a very prevalent finding reported by all the participants when they reflected on the final phase of their role as researchers.

The impact of such emotional experiences brings with it an element of emotional risk which has been highlighted in the findings. As discussed in the literature review, research has demonstrated that people who work closely with trauma victims (eg. therapists, social workers, counsellors) may be emotionally and psychologically affected in a manner which manifests as conditions such as compassion fatigue, vicarious traumatisation and secondary traumatic stress syndrome (Figley 1995; Figley, 2002; Follette et al, 1994; Stamm, 1999). However, the small body of literature that has examined these conditions in relation to researchers of sensitive topics suggests that although researchers may suffer from secondary traumatisation and even a degree of vicarious traumatisation, (McCann & Pearlman, 1990; Schauben & Frazier, 1995) and

other stress related responses such as insomnia, they do not necessarily suffer from psychological conditions to the same degree as their colleagues who are involved with providing services to trauma victims (Goldenberg, 2002). The findings from this thesis study appear to be similar to what is reported in the literature. This statement is said with some caution as the issue of emotional impact would need to be explored in a far greater depth to be able to gain a significant understanding and insight in relation to the manifestations of psychological conditions from being involved in such research. From the data gathered it would appear that for the majority of the researchers there was a profound emotional impact that came from collecting data on violence against women.

Situations where the researchers' physical safety was in danger left some of them traumatized and there were other situations where it would appear that researchers may have suffered from secondary traumatisation and some degree of vicarious traumatisation. Jewkes et al (2000:96) warn that "fieldworkers can become secondarily affected through repeated exposure to very distressing accounts, particularly when they feel powerless to intervene". Dickson-Swift et al (2008) cite Dane (2000) and Sexton (1999) when they explain that when researchers experience emotions such as guilt and anxiety and feelings of exhaustion, these are symptoms of vicarious traumatisation. However, it would appear that for the majority of the researchers, the emotional effects and impacts that they were exposed to during their time in the field had lessened considerably or disappeared since their return to their homes and villages, which suggests that for the main, the impacts were situational (whilst in the field) and short-term. For the few researchers who reported that at times they still recall and thought about the stories that they had been told, they did not believe these memories were having any adverse affect on their day-to-day functioning, or their lives. The emotional impact on indigenous field researchers who are collecting data on violence against women and children in developing countries needs to be further explored to fully understand the implications and consequences for the researcher during their time in the field and for when they exit the field.

Reports of the physical impact on the researchers' during their time in the field was a significant finding in this thesis study. In addition to the physical impact on their well-being and safety, the major themes to emerge included feelings of physical exhaustion

(as discussed above), stress related behaviours, impact on health and situations where the researchers physical safety was compromised.

Some of the participants reported that the stress that they encountered in the field led to them partaking in behaviour such as drinking too much alcohol, smoking and chewing betelnut. Roberts (2007) discusses similar detrimental effects on health when he highlights the importance of support to counter the pressure of being involved with research. It is becoming increasingly well documented in the literature that involvement with research on issues such as domestic violence can have an impact on researchers' health and well-being. Participants for this thesis reported having difficulties sleeping, having dreams about the questionnaire, suffering from headaches, and having tired and aching bodies. These are similar findings to those which other researchers of sensitive social research have reported (Cowles, 1988; Dickson-Swift, et al., 2008; Leonard 2001; McCosker, 2001; Roberts, 2007; Wray et al 2007).

The findings from this thesis that were particularly disquieting were the reports of the many different dangers that the researchers' were exposed to. Some participants cited environmental dangers such as rough seas, difficult tracks and challenging weather as well as situations such as roaming wild dog packs. Lee (1995), author of *Dangerous Fieldwork*, explains these as being 'ambient dangers', that is, dangers that are present in the setting where the research is taking place. He differentiates these dangers from those that he refers to as 'situational dangers' which are engendered as a result of the researcher's presence. The situational dangers that the participants reported were particularly concerning. These included hostile villages, potential violence from respondents husbands/partners, sexual harassment and risk of sexual assault.

All of these situations placed the researchers involved at a high level of risk; however, the incidents of sexual harassment (which had the potential to lead to sexual assault) had elements that had a significant impact on the researchers' physical safety and emotional safety. There is a small body of literature which reports that there have been other situations where female researchers have been at risk of harassment or sexual assault (Coffey, 1999; Moreno, 1995). However there does not appear to be any significant literature that explores the increased risk for those researchers conducting gender based violence research in a post-conflict, developing country where sexual assault was an



element of the past conflict. From the manner in which the participants shared the information about the incidents of sexual harassment, and the graphic detail that they recalled, these incidences suggest that beyond the obvious physical risk that they faced, there also had been an element where the incidences had impacted on them emotionally.

The issue of reciprocity was raised by a number of the participants and it is an issue that has been explored in some depth in social research literature (Dickson-Swift et al, 2008; Johnson & Clarke, 2003; Scheyvens & Storey, 2003). There were three main reciprocity issues for the participants in this thesis study. The first was having to behave in a manner that was culturally uncomfortable. That is, arriving as a visitor and guest to a village without the usual gifts of food and produce, as is their custom. Added to this was that not only were they visitors to the village but they were wanting the village to give them something (data from women respondents) without offering anything in return. Secondly there was the issue of not being able to give the actual respondents of the study something in return for them giving the researchers their time and energy to be interviewed for the research study. Thirdly, not being able to reciprocate in a manner to be able to actively help the women and children who were living with violence led to feelings of concern and guilt for many of the researchers. The literature considers all these issues; however, the literature presents different understandings of reciprocity and there is also some debate over what place reciprocity has in research (Bleek, 1979; Daly, 1992, Goodrum & Keys, 2007; Stanley & Wise, 1991).

Dickson-Swift et al. (2008) acknowledge that reciprocal relationships may give the researcher a sense that they are giving 'something back', however they also draw attention to the other argument contained within the literature that has shown that such relationships may also 'blur boundaries' and may be difficult to disengage from. Dickson-Swift and her colleagues also acknowledge that from a feminist perspective, emotion is part of the research process and that a reciprocal relationship is viewed as an integral component of the research.

The issue of reciprocity is possibly magnified in a situation as that which occurred in the SIFHSS where the field researchers were indigenous, the country is a developing country and the issue being researched was strongly emotive. When situations arise where research processes challenge cultural practices (such as was the case with the

situation of not being able to present gifts of food at each village), special consideration is needed in preparing the researchers on how they are to deal with this inability in being able to offer reciprocity in the form of gifts during their time in the field. Or alternatively, consideration needs to be given to whether such cultural practices need to be honoured in some way or another so that researchers are not left with the burden of feeling embarrassed and uncomfortable in the course of collecting their data. In developing countries, where judicial and social service frameworks protecting women and children are either fragile or non-existent, the opportunity for researchers to have some form of reciprocal relationship (being able to ‘give something back’) is diminished even further. In such situations, the respondents may provide ‘data’ for the study which suggests they are a victim of violence. However, due to a severe lack of services and resources available, there is little the researcher can offer to the respondent to ensure their future safety. Where unemployment is high and the status of women is low, researchers may also be confronted with situations where the women respondents they interview may literally be in a state of desperation and despair – possessing inadequate clothing and shelter and having no food, but also having no option to leave their situation of violence. Once again the researchers are faced with situations as those raised in this study, where they felt they needed to ‘give’ the respondent something to make her life easier after the respondent had so willingly shared her story of violence.

The findings from this thesis study suggest that the issue of reciprocity needs to be carefully considered, particularly from a cultural context. Research processes cannot be viewed in isolation of other factors such as cultural customs. Indigenous field researchers need to be prepared before they enter the field for the reciprocity issues that may arise for them due not only to culture but also due to the topic of research that they are gathering data for.

A very important finding that has implications for future research in the Solomon Islands is the issue of researchers feeling isolated and unsupported during their time in the field. This issue was in part directly related to the geography of the Solomon Islands and the fact that this study was a population representative study which required researchers to travel great distances from the Head Office. Due to fragile communication services, it was difficult for researchers to feel supported when they were in the field, particularly in situations where they were feeling inexperienced or

vulnerable. The majority of the researchers who raised this issue explained that if one of the team members had been experienced at counselling and debriefing who could not only have been used for respondents but also for supporting the individual team members, they believe that this would have made a significant difference to their sense of isolation. There is literature which suggests that researchers involved with researching sensitive subjects may become isolated, particularly where they do not have the opportunities to reflect and talk through challenging and difficult situations they may have encountered (Campbell, 2002; Moran-Ellis, 1996).

In summary, the findings that have been discussed in this chapter, that cover the fieldwork phase of the researchers' journey, were powerful and thought-provoking. Clearly, the time of entering the field was particularly difficult for the majority of the participants of this thesis study, with factors such as feeling inexperienced in using the survey questionnaire, being emotionally affected with the first disclosure of violence by a respondent, and team dynamics all contributing to this difficult time.

The emotional impact of being involved in conducting research on violence against women was a significant finding, particularly as the role of emotion in research has primarily being linked to qualitative research in the literature. The field researchers reported experiencing a range of emotions which impacted on them in a variety of ways and they also reported emotional responses such as crying when listening to stories of violence. There was an element of emotional risk for many of the researchers where they appeared to suffer from secondary traumatisation or elements of vicarious traumatisation during their time in the field. Of particular significance was the emotional and physical exhaustion that all the field researchers reported, with there appearing to be no obvious relationship between time spent in the field and levels of exhaustion experienced.

The physical risks that many of the researchers were exposed to have implications for future research in the Solomon Islands. The environment and the geography of the country provided its own set of risks, but the particularly alarming and disturbing element of the risks the field researchers encountered was in relation to sexual harassment and potential sexual assault. Future planning of research in the Solomon

Islands needs to recognize these risks and ensure that mechanisms are in place to minimize harm or potential harm for the field researchers.

Other significant findings for this phase of the researchers' journey included the issue of reciprocity, and feelings of isolation. The issue of reciprocity needs to be explored in more depth within a cultural context to fully understand the impact on the researchers. However, the data collected suggests that careful consideration needs to be given when conducting future research using indigenous researchers. Feelings of isolation and feeling unsupported were raised by many of the researchers. The information gathered on this issue should also guide and inform future sensitive social research in the Solomon Islands.

Finally, the coping mechanisms employed by the researchers provided an insight and understanding of the importance of teams being strong and cohesive, and highlighted how religion and faith played an integral part in ensuring that these researchers were able to emotionally survive the challenges that come with the difficult territory of researching violence against women.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **“The End”**

#### **Introduction**

This phase explores what it was like for the participants as they left the field to return to the lives that they had before they became field researchers on the SIFHSS. The literature provides evidence which suggests that this is a phase that is very important in the field researcher’s ‘journey’ and should not be underestimated. Scheyvens & Storey (2003:213) explain that “leaving (the field) is a dynamic, challenging and critically valuable part of any fieldwork experience”. The guideline questions that were asked of the field researchers in the focus group discussions and the individual interviews, explored with them their last week in the field, their own experience of leaving the field, returning to their homes and returning to their relationships with husbands/partners, children and other significant wantok. It was important to explore the field researchers’ emotions and feelings in this phase of their journey, particularly after so many of them spoke of how the field work had impacted on them emotionally. Data was gathered about whether the participants felt that their involvement with the research had been a ‘life changing’ experience for them and whether their world view on issues such as gender based violence and child abuse in a Solomon Island context had changed or been altered during their time on the study. The last question that was asked of all the participants, was about whether they would do this type of research again, and why or why not?

#### **Leaving the Field**

All the researchers who participated in this study left the field when their work was completed. Although they were all in the field for different lengths of time, this was directly related to the geographical areas that they were covering and their time availability, as two of them had taken leave without pay from other jobs to be able to work on the SIFHSS. Even though none of the researchers left the field before their work was completed, there were certainly some researchers who had said that they had

moments in the field when they were so physically and emotionally exhausted that they considered giving up. One researcher stated that:

*In the middle of the survey I was very tired, my brain was filled up with this information. I just want to finish the survey quickly but how can I do that because there is a lot more to do. I was thinking of giving up... I was tired emotionally, physically and everything.*

For those researchers who considered leaving the field early, the main reason they gave for deciding to continue until their job was done was their realization how serious the issue of domestic violence and violence against children was in the Solomon Islands and they were committed to finishing what they had started:

*We were grateful that we are a part of it so even though we are so tired, we had the power and commitment to finish it.*

By the last week of the participants' time in the field, they reported mixed feelings about finishing, although the majority of them said that they were 'happy' to be near the end of the field work and some of them commented that they felt relieved that they had completed the job successfully. All of the participants commented how tired and exhausted they were by this last week in the field. Those participants who had children spoke of the excitement and pleasure of seeing their children again, and others spoke of the changes there had been in some of their relationships when they returned home. Other emotions and reactions that some of the participants expressed included feeling sad about saying goodbye to the team, and a number of them spoke of the sadness they felt for all those women they had interviewed who were still in the same situation, living day by day with fear and violence.

### **Happy/Successful**

There was a very common theme amongst the researchers, who were interviewed individually, when describing their last week in the field. They frequently used the word "happy" when talking about this time, although the reasons for this happiness were varied. Most of them did say that they were happy to be near the end so that they could rest as they were so tired. In relation to tiredness, some also used the word "relief" to describe their feelings in the last week – they were relieved the work was almost completed so that they could have a long rest. Some of them spoke of the sense of

happiness they had about the prospect of seeing their children and family again after being away for so long. Others were happy as they felt that the job that they had been given, they had completed successfully. One participant commented that she felt happy because she was leaving the field with a real sense of achievement as she now felt that she was an ‘expert’ at doing this type of research.

### **Sadness**

Although there was a sense of happiness amongst many of the participants when their time in the field came to an end, the data showed that this feeling of happiness for some of the participants was also tinged with a sense of sadness – this sadness was connected to a number of factors such as feeling sad for all those women they had interviewed who were victims of violence and who were still in the same situation. There was sadness in knowing that as their role as a field researcher came to an end; they were back to being without a job again and having no income. Particularly significant were those who spoke of the sadness they felt at having to say goodbye to their team members. The same field researchers who had earlier shared information about how supportive their team were during their time in the field, were the same field researchers who spoke very poignantly about the sense of loss and sadness they felt when the team finished and went off on their own separate ways. Some of them said that it felt like they were losing their ‘family’, as that is what they felt they had become during the months in the field. One researcher said that saying goodbye was particularly difficult for her, as the team had shown to her what a ‘family’ could be like, and had given her a sense of “belonging” that had been absent from her life during her years of growing up.

### **Physical and Emotional Exhaustion**

The majority of the participants in the focus group discussions stated that they found the last week in the field particularly hard due to feeling physically and emotionally tired and exhausted. For some of the researchers, this last week was physically the most challenging during their time in the field, as they were in an area that geographically meant that the last village was inaccessible by road. This resulted in the team having to walk through bush for a couple of days to reach the last selected village where they were to conduct interviews. The researchers who were in this team commented that this was a very difficult time for them all as by now they had been in the field for almost six

months. To be faced with such a physically challenging experience in the last week really pushed them to their limits both physically and emotionally:

*The last week was the hardest time – we went into the bush and had to walk for a full day and night. Up and down the tracks with our baskets and I just wanted to cry.*

Emotional exhaustion also appeared to be a significant issue for the majority of the participants during the last week and when they exited the field. The participants used different ways to describe this emotional tiredness; for example one said that she had ‘tired brains’ after asking the same questions every day for so many weeks and listening to so many stories of violence against women. Participants also spoke of the emotional exhaustion that came from the memories of specific stories that they had heard and had not been able to forget:

*Listening to her story...  
Still think about it today ...  
Feel the pain...  
I am part of the pain...  
The pain has become a part of me...*

It would appear from the findings, that although the participants felt that the emotional ‘burden’ of hearing disturbing stories of violence against women contributed to their sense of emotional exhaustion, the ‘burden’ has remained with some of the participants at some level, even after the exhaustion has gone:

*For myself, when interviewing women and  
I come across violence,  
Until today, I cannot forget.  
I still recall everything.  
Sometimes while I sit down, I still can recall  
what some women told me.  
I cannot forget these things...*





**Plate 4: Photo showing an example of the challenging terrain that many of the researchers faced**

## **Returning Home**

### **Relationships**

For those researchers who had children, the data gathered suggested that their return home at the end of the research appeared to have been a very special time for many of them. A number of them spoke of how much their children had missed them and how excited their children were to have them home again. There was a particular finding that emerged which showed that the researchers' absence for such long periods of time had a significant impact on many of the children, in that they were still 'checking in' with their mothers for some weeks after the research finished, making sure that they were not going to leave them again. The researchers explained that although they may have been separated from their children on other occasions, they had never been away for such long periods of time. Some of the researchers said that they felt that they had missed out on what was happening for their own children during their time in the field, in areas such as school progress and sickness and they wanted to make up for this lost time when they returned home;

*After the research finished I came home and spent time with my kids. My kids were really happy. I think they missed me a lot and I missed them too. I didn't realize it until I came home. After the survey finished I just don't want to do anything but spend time at home looking after them (my kids)".*

Two of the participants spoke of the different relationship they had with their partners and husbands when they returned from the field. One researcher said that her husband had really missed her and this had surprised her but made her feel more valued in the relationship than she had ever felt before. Another of the researchers explained that on her return from the field, she had a discussion with her husband and told him that he needed to stop drinking and stop using violence against her. She warned him that if he did continue, with everyone knowing that she had been working in the area of violence, they would laugh and shame him.

One participant explained that her return home allowed her to be available to be able to protect her children again – she had explained that whilst she was in the field, one of her children had been hit across the face by her stepmother. This participant had spoken about a phone call with her daughter whilst she was in the field about this incident and feeling so helpless in that she could do nothing to help her daughter.

### **Returning to daily tasks**

Many of the participants spoke of the return to routine for them after leaving the field. This included spending time at home with children and doing chores such as housework. A number of them explained that they went back into their gardens as soon as they returned as there had been no one to care for the garden in their absence, so they had to start all over again to ensure that their gardens were a food source for their families. Financially, having to plant their gardens out again on their return put some of the participants under financial pressure as their gardens are one of their main sources of food and income.

**Plate V:  
Gardens are an  
important food  
source for many  
families in  
the Solomon  
Islands and  
generally the  
women work in  
the gardens.**



## **Life Changing Experience**

During the three weeks training that the field researchers attended prior to entering the field, there was a comment made by one of the trainers that this thesis revisited with the researchers. The trainer stated that for those that entered the field to carry out this research on violence against women and children, it would almost undoubtedly be a life changing experience for them. It was particularly interesting to explore with the researchers whether they had found that this had been the case for them and in what way. The findings that came from questions that were asked around this subject were both powerful and significant. All the researchers from both the focus groups and the individual interviews agreed that the trainer had been correct, and that the time that they had spent as field researchers had been a life changing experience for all of them.

A prevailing theme that emerged was that so many of them said that the knowledge that they now had about violence against women and children, has had a significant impact on their personal lives and has led to them challenging their own cultural values and beliefs. A number of the researchers spoke of how their relationships with their own husbands had changed and how they now were questioning their own culture which had traditionally led them to believe that women had very few rights:

*I think I have changed in how I see myself. I now understand it (violence against women) clearly. I even explained it to my husband that the things he did to me was violence. I use to think we just were fighting and I did not know this was domestic violence. Now I understand it personally.*

*I understand it now. Like when a husband likes to have sex and the wife doesn't like to give in, but he makes her still have sex, it is ok in our culture... but now we know this is rape.*

Those researchers with children made statements which provided an insight into how much their work in the field had affected the way they now treat their children and what they now want for their children in the future:

*Yeah ...before I did this (work), I didn't know what this was all about so when I disciplined my children I didn't know that I was actually abusing them. But when I work with interviewing these women, I notice that I am also an abuser. It really changed me a lot...*

*It was life changing to me as a parent. I have now told my children that no one has the right to hit them and I realize now that I am able to educate my daughters about their rights.*

Another common theme displayed by the data was that researchers also stated that the experience had changed them in a way which meant that they were now more confident in general, had the confidence to speak out about violence against women and children and they had a stronger commitment in working towards protecting women and children from violence:

*This job really made me confident.... I feel confident to now (to) talk with men like elders, chiefs, and pastors and it made me get use to speaking out against violence.*

*I think I am even more committed now because I have been involved in this (research)...*

There also appeared to be an increase of feelings of self-worth by a number of the researchers as they made comments about how they now felt that they were 'experts' in this area of work, and that they had shown to themselves and others that they could do the job, and therefore would feel confident in being involved in such work again in the future:

*We are now experts...*

*I can do the job. I know that I have confidence also and any other survey coming up, I know I could do it.*

All of the researchers stated that despite some of their experiences in the field being challenging and difficult which impacted on them adversely, they would still want to be involved in future research on violence against women and children. Many of the participants did say that they would want additional training in counselling skills if they were expected to conduct research again on violence against women and children, as they felt they did not have the training or skills to respond to women adequately when they disclosed violence. This desire to be involved again stemmed from a commitment to wanting to bring about change in their communities so that Solomon Islands women and children can live a life free of violence. Participants from one of the focus group

discussions made the following statements when asked if they would want to be involved in the future with similar research:

*Yeah, we would do it again because we need to change these attitudes.*

*Yes we need to be (involved) ...it is for the good of our country...for our women and children.*

### **Impact on World View**

The majority of the field researchers said that they had no idea how serious the issue of violence against women and children was in their country until they had been involved in conducting the SIFHSS research. Many of them used the words ‘shocked’ and ‘surprised’ to describe how they felt when they started to gather the data from the respondents, which made them realise that not only was violence against women prevalent in the Solomon Islands, but many of them were shocked at the graphic accounts that some respondents gave them of the high level of violence that they and their children were being subjected to. A few of the researchers who stated that they were not surprised about the prevalence of violence were those researchers who had already identified that they had been victims of violence themselves. All of the researchers said that they now realize that violence against women and children in the Solomon Islands is an issue which requires and deserves urgent attention.

### **Discussion**

The literature has shown that leaving the field is a very significant phase in a researcher’s journey and can often be a particularly difficult time for those who are involved with researching sensitive subjects (Snow, 1980; Cannon, 1989, Warren, 2002, Dickson-Swift et al, 2008). The issues that are connected with leaving the field have been well researched and it has been found that researchers of sensitive issues may find that they are confronted with a range of emotions as they go through the process of disengaging from the field (Cannon, 1989; Gallmeier, 1991; Scheyvens & Storey, 2003; Snow, 1980). This is highlighted by Scheyvens & Storey (2003:202) who refer to Gallmeier (1991) when they state; “that there are many feelings, emotions and psychological difficulties associated with the process of disengaging and leaving”.

The findings from this thesis research are consistent with the literature and suggest that the participants experienced a number of different emotions as they prepared to leave the field. Many of the participants spoke of having feelings of happiness, and a sense of achievement and relief as they finished up their work in the field. Hammersley & Atkinson (1995) acknowledge that leaving the field may bring about a range of emotions, with a sense of relief being just one of these emotions. Scheyvens & Storey (2003) also discuss emotions such as feelings of a sense of accomplishment, satisfaction and relief in their book, *Development Fieldwork*. Although Scheyven and Storey's work focuses primarily on providing a guide for those who wish to conduct research in developing countries (therefore often entering as 'outsiders'), it was interesting to note that in their discussion on leaving the field, the emotions they highlight have a number of similarities to those experienced by the indigenous researchers who participated in this study.

There were also a number of participants who reported experiencing emotions such as sadness and concern. For some, these emotions were for those women respondents who were still living a life of violence and that the participants felt that they had done so little for. Dickson-Swift et al (2008:62) explain that "the ending of a research interview does not always signify the ending of thoughts about the research participants". This situation appeared to be very true for many of the participants when they talked about leaving the field, and how they still have thoughts and memories of some of the women that they had interviewed who were living in particularly difficult situations. These findings are similar to what researchers reported from being involved in a study in Nicaragua on violence against women. One field researcher in that project stated that *the image of these stories affects you, to see how these women suffer, and especially the feeling that no one supports them, these are experiences that you never forget.....*" (Ellsberg & Heise, 2002:1601).

For some participants, they also spoke of the sadness in relation to their own situation of having to say goodbye to their fellow team members. When reflecting back on how she felt when leaving the field, one participant said:

*the only reason I cried at the end was losing being part of a team.*

Other participants referred to their team as being like a ‘family’ by the time they came to leave the field and one participant said that *as time goes on we knew each other like sisters*. These statements illustrate how the function and role of the team was so much more than just about travelling together and collecting data. For many of the participants, they ended up living and working with their team colleagues for weeks on end, often in very isolated and difficult situations. If we consider the role of emotion in field work and the process of debriefing with team members at the end of each day, it is not surprising that such deep and meaningful relationships were built between different members of the teams. Experiences such as those that were described by some participants where the safety of the team or members of the team were threatened also had the potential to enhance strong bonding between team members. These findings highlight the importance of recognizing the impact on the field researcher as they prepare to leave the field. Recognition needs to be given to the emotional ‘disengagement’ that researchers go through as they not only finish in their role as field researchers, but where they also need to go through a process of disengaging from their teams. The findings also give rise to the uniqueness of indigenous researchers conducting research in a country whereby teams can be very isolated and ‘on their own’ for so much of their time in the field. Due to the isolation and the difficulties that may confront researchers in developing countries, the importance of what the team as a unit may come to represent for individual researchers should not be underestimated.

Emotional and physical exhaustion were a significant issue for many of the participants in the last days in the field and when they returned home. There is a considerable body of literature that discusses emotional and physical exhaustion of researchers of sensitive issues, however almost all this literature focuses on qualitative research (Cowles, 1988; McCosker, 2001; Parker and Ulrich 1990). Although the participants in this research had been involved in conducting a quantitative research study, it was interesting to note that their feelings of emotional exhaustion at the end of the study were very similar to that what is reported in the literature for qualitative researchers. It could be argued that the similarities stem from the fact that despite the research tool being a 46 page questionnaire survey, the participants were often exposed to women telling their stories of violence voluntarily, after identifying through the questionnaire that they were a victim. “Story telling” is a very significant and important aspect of Solomon Island culture, whereas conversing through a 46 page questionnaire would have been a very

unfamiliar relationship for many of the respondents. I can only surmise that it is for this reason that many of the respondents felt more comfortable “storying” about their situation, rather than just answering questions that were being asked of them by the researchers, often resulting in an interview situation which was very similar to a qualitative in-depth interview.

There were two main reasons that the participants gave for why they believed they were so emotionally exhausted. The first related to the number of interviews they had conducted over a number of weeks or months, with the second reason being that they felt exhausted from listening to repeated stories about violence against women. One participant stated:

*I was feeling exhausted during the last weeks of the survey, after 5 or 6 months of listening to stories from women.*

These findings are consistent with what Dickson-Swift and her colleagues (2008) found in their study on researchers undertaking research on sensitive topics. They also found that the researchers spoke of feelings of exhaustion from either the sheer number of interviews that they had conducted and/or from the content of the data they collected. Literature has shown that conducting face-to-face interviews, that occur at frequent intervals, with little time in between, can result in emotional exhaustion for the researcher (Maslach, 1998; Dickson-Swift, 2008).

Cowles (1988) reports that in her study, which involved interviewing relatives of adult murder victims, she was at one point conducting up to five interviews a week. She goes on to explain that she found this to be emotionally overwhelming due to the nature of the topic she was exploring and not having sufficient time between interviews to debrief. To alleviate these feelings of stress and emotional exhaustion, Cowles reported that she cut down to only doing a maximum of two interviews per week. McCosker (1995) reported that in a study of women and abuse, to protect against emotional distress and exhaustion, the researcher only conducted one interview per week. Taking into consideration the literature on the risk of emotional exhaustion when involved with conducting sensitive social research, and then bearing in mind the participants’ situation where there was an expectation that they would conduct three interviews a day, (with some interviews taking over 2 hours to conduct) for at least 5 days a week (they often



worked 6 days), it is not surprising that so many of them used the word 'exhausted' to describe this end phase of their research journey.

Emotional exhaustion is recognised as a risk by many of the researchers who have been involved with the WHO Multi-country study (Jewkes et al, 2000; Ellsberg et al 2001; Ellsberg & Heise 2002; Jansen et al 2004). Ellsberg & Heise (2002:1601) state;

it is hard to overestimate the emotional effect that research on violence might have on field-workers and researchers... a study on violence against women often becomes an intensely personal and emotional experience that many researchers may find difficult and exhausting.

In light of the findings from this thesis research study, it is important that emotional exhaustion is recognised as a risk both *during* the field work phase and also at the time of *disengagement* from the field. The importance of differentiating between these two different phases lies in the approach to addressing the exhaustion. For example, debriefing is recognised as an important part of the 'leaving the field' process; however, researchers suffering from emotional exhaustion may be incapable of fully utilizing the debriefing sessions until their sense of exhaustion has reduced. Therefore, timing of debriefing may need to be carefully considered when researchers are leaving the field.

As discussed in the previous chapter, despite the exhaustion that all of the participants reported when discussing the final week in the field and their return home, and the emotional component of this exhaustion, there was no evidence to suggest that this exhaustion had resulted in long term emotional consequences which had continued to impact on their lives of the researchers after they had left the field.

Physical exhaustion was another common theme to emerge from the data when participants were describing how they felt as they left the field. Although the participants related feelings of physical exhaustion to the very challenging terrain that they were often confronted with and being on the road for such a long time moving from village to village, it is also possible that their feelings of emotional exhaustion had contributed to feelings of physical tiredness (Dickson-Swift et al, 2008). Physical exhaustion may be magnified in developing countries such as the Solomon Islands, where there was an expectation on researchers to visit villages that were only accessible

on foot. Highlighted in this thesis is that the sheer geographical distances travelled, and the mode of transport (in small boats, on the back of trucks or walking), created a situation where physical exhaustion for many of the participants was a significant issue. This gives rise to how important it is that country variables are considered when planning for research in developing countries.

The impact that being involved with sensitive research, may have on the researchers own relationships and on the way they see the world has been explored in the literature (Dickson-Swift, 2008; McCosker et al, 2001; Ellsberg & Heise, 2005). The findings from this thesis showed that after being involved in the SIFHS Study, some of the participants reported that they had examined their own relationships. One of the participants actually spoke of challenging her violent husband on her return from the field, stating to him that the violence had to stop. Another participant spoke tearfully about being in the process of rebuilding her relationship with her adult daughter who she has been estranged from for some years. She said that her time in the field made her realize that the way she treated her daughter when her daughter became pregnant as a teenager was not right and she wanted to repair their relationship.

A change in the way we view relationships is intricately linked with changes in how we view the world and the society in which we live. It would appear from the findings that coming to realize that women and children have rights had a profound effect on many of the participants. Added to this realization was the knowledge they acquired about the prevalence of violence within their own culture and the effects of such violence, which led some of them to examine their own relationships. Jewkes and her colleagues (2000) found in their study that after field researchers scrutinized their own relationships as a result of being involved in conducting gender based research, there were very few of their researchers who believed that they had the ideal relationship.

Being involved in research that requires researchers to enter the private lives of others and explore sensitive issues, has the potential to be a life changing experience (Cannon, 1992; Dickson-Swift, 2008; Jansen et al, 2004; Rosenblatt, 2001). This was certainly the situation for all the participants in this thesis who unanimously agreed that their involvement with the SIFHSS had had a significant impact on their lives and they felt that their lives had been changed due to their time and experiences in the field:

*It changed my feelings ....it made me see that every woman, no matter they don't work, or they may be poor, have the right to stop violence.*

*For me it changed me in many ways, but I don't know how to express it. One of the ways it changed me is that now I feel confident to convince my father why the Government needs to make an Act that protects women and children from violence.*

Jansen et al (2004), in their study examining the procedures used and lessons learned for the selection and training of interviewers for the WHO Multi-Country Study, found a common theme that emerged from research staff in five countries where the study had been conducted, was that their involvement in the study had had a significant impact on their lives in a variety of ways. One field worker provided some insight into the significant impact that such research may have on the researchers themselves when she stated: "After having lived an experience like this study, we will never be the same, not only because of what we heard but also for what we learned, for being recipients of so many life stories..." (Jansen et al, 2004:842). Dickson-Swift et al (2008) suggest that due to the nature of sensitive research which involves entering the private lives of others, researchers are left vulnerable to change because of how much they give of themselves to the research process and how the emotions they experience may impact on their lives. Although it is in reference to qualitative research, the statement that Dickson-Swift and her colleagues (2008) make regarding the impact of being involved in sensitive social research is very pertinent and relevant to the findings from this thesis study. They state that "undertaking qualitative research can be a life-changing experience for some researchers, providing them with opportunities to assess certain aspects of their lives" (2008:50). Cannon (1992:180) openly admits that being involved in sensitive qualitative research had a 'lasting effect' and explains that her involvement "taught me a number of extra-curricular lessons about life and death, pain and endurance and human relationships". It would appear from the literature and from the findings from this thesis that the potential for the involvement in sensitive research to be a life changing experience for field researchers needs considerable acknowledgment, from the training phase right through to the final phase of leaving the field.

*Leaving* the field for the researchers who were involved in the SIFHSS ultimately meant *returning* home to their villages, families and lives that they had prior to their

employment as field researchers. If we consider all that has been discussed above, and the acknowledgement by the participants in this study that their involvement with the SIFSS had been life changing for them, their return home must have been a significant time for them in relation to the changes that they had undergone during their time in the field. It is quite possible that many returned home with different beliefs and values from what they had when they departed to enter the field work. Although some spoke of changes in their confidence, how they view the world, women's rights and relationships, there would be merit in exploring these changes in more depth, with particular reference to how they grappled with these changes when they returned home. When planning research in countries such as the Solomon Islands, where beliefs and values are based on traditional customs and practices, careful consideration needs to be given to the impact on indigenous researchers who may leave the research study with values and beliefs that are no longer in harmony with those of their families, wantok, church and villages.

It needs to be noted that a debriefing session was provided at the conclusion of the last team finishing in the field. This debriefing session provided for both group and individual debriefing. It is not known what value this debriefing session may have had for the researchers as this was not explored and no information was voluntarily offered by the participants of this thesis study. Due to there being only one debriefing session organized, which did not take place until the conclusion of the data collection phase, some researchers had already exited the field some 4-5 months previously. Given the findings about the emotional and physical impacts on the field researchers and the difficulties that many had at disengaging from the field, careful consideration needs to be given to timing of such debriefings to ensure maximum benefit is achieved for all the researchers.

In summary, this chapter has focused on the impact on the field researchers as they entered their last week/s in the field, and as they exited and returned home to their villages and families. Clearly this was a difficult time for many of the researchers, with the prevalent issue being the emotional and physical exhaustion they experienced. This finding is important for the future planning and preparation of sensitive social research in the Solomon Islands, particularly when it is a population representative study which requires researchers to spend many weeks in the field.

The leaving from the field raised a myriad of emotions for the researchers. It would appear that it was an emotional time for many of them as they went through the process of disengaging from both the field and then from their teams. This finding is summed up very well by a statement by Hammesley & Atkinson (1995) - “here we are reminded that field researchers do not always leave the field physically and emotionally unscathed and they rarely leave unaffected by the experience of the research”. A significant finding when exploring this phase of the study with the researchers was the impact that their involvement with the study had had on their world view, values and beliefs. All of the researchers reported that their involvement in conducting a study on violence against women and children had been a ‘life changing’ experience for them. They also all stated that despite the many adverse impacts that they experienced during their time in the role of ‘field researcher’, they are very interested and willing to be involved in future violence against women and children research in the Solomon Islands. These findings suggest that the positive benefits of being involved in such research mitigated many of the negative impacts that the researchers experienced during their time in the field.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Researching violence against women and children is challenging and complex. There are many unique methodological and ethical issues present when research involves collecting data about private lives. Up until recently, the focus of the literature when highlighting the methodological and ethical issues has been on the safety and well-being of the respondents of such research. However, there is a growing awareness of the need to examine and explore the impact and effects on the field researcher, and hear from field researchers their own accounts of what it was like for them to be involved in such research. This thesis research study set out to explore the impact on indigenous field researchers who were involved with conducting a population representative study on gender based violence and child abuse in the Solomon Islands. Very simply, it was an attempt to gain some insight and understanding, through listening to the personal stories of the field researchers, of what they perceived the impact had been on them from being involved in the Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study.

The findings documented and discussed in Chapters Four, Five and Six suggest that there were a number of impacts that the field researchers reported. The key factors drawn from the discussions include the role of emotion, the physical challenges and risks, the impact on relationships, the impact on world views, cultural values and beliefs and an increased sense of confidence and self worth for the researchers. This concluding chapter focuses on the implications, from these preceding discussions, for research on sensitive issues with specific reference to implications for such research being conducted in the Solomon Islands.

There were many situations that the field researchers found to be challenging and confronting and these situations presented right from the point of the researchers entering the training workshop until they had returned home from the field at the completion of their role as researchers. The stories that the field researchers recounted highlighted significant impacts on both their emotional and physical safety and well-

being. Many of the researchers were also confronted with the situation of having to challenge their own cultural values and beliefs as a result of being exposed to new knowledge and experiences. The personal experiences that the researchers shared through the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions provided an insight and understanding about what it was like for them to be involved with conducting research on violence against women and children in the Solomon Islands. These experiences provide valuable information for future research, and will hopefully lead to building the capacity of a pool of experienced indigenous field researchers for sensitive research in the Solomon Islands.

The recommendations that have grown out of this thesis study are particularly relevant to the Solomon Islands as the site of study; however they may also be of some value for future research in other developing countries. The majority of these recommendations are covered in some manner by Ellsberg & Heise (2005) in their guidelines for 'Researching Violence Against Women'. However, the experiences of the field researchers in the Solomon Islands have provided some additional information which provides an added depth and insight to a component of Ellsberg & Heise's (2005) recommendations.

The phase of 'entering the field' was highlighted through the findings, as being a significant time for the researchers. Factors which are present when researchers enter 'unknown territory' were magnified during this initial stage of the research study.

**1. Recommendation: There needs to be significant levels of support tailored and targeted for teams of researchers as they enter the field and begin the task of interviewing selected respondents. To minimize impact of 'field shock' on inexperienced researchers, it would be advantageous for the team to be accompanied for the first week by someone who has expertise in conducting research on violence against women and children as well as being skilled at debriefing and counselling, to assist field researchers as they become familiar with their roles and tasks.**

The findings for all the different phases of the researchers' journey highlighted the importance for teams to be well-functioning, supportive and cohesive units. This is particularly important in countries where teams are required to operate for long periods

of time in a self-managing manner, due to issues of distance and isolation from the Head Office Research Team.

**2. Recommendation: As part of training workshops, teams need to be identified as early as possible, including the role of the supervisor. Prior to entering the field, team building exercises should be encouraged, with roles of various team members being identified. It is important that by the time the teams enter the field they are unified and have the ability to self manage and offer support to individual team members.**

The field researchers shared many stories of the significant emotional component of being involved in research on violence against women and children. The findings suggest that many of the field researchers were secondarily affected by the stories they heard, and for some of them they may have suffered elements of vicarious traumatisation. However it would appear that these impacts were confined to their time in the field or the immediate time after exiting the field, and there was no evidence to suggest that the field researchers are still experiencing symptoms of secondary or vicarious traumatisation. It is important to note however, that this finding does not minimize the profound affect that many of the stories of violence had on the field researchers, many of whom still have strong memories and emotions for particular women they recall who are living with violence. The emotional component identified by the researchers highlights the need for skilled and experienced debriefing to be available for researchers during their time in the field and when they exit the field.

**3. Recommendation: The role of emotion in researching violence against women and children has been clearly established in the findings from this thesis study. The level of support required to counter such emotional impact should not be underestimated. In situations where teams are needing to enter rural and isolated areas, with little contact with the Head Office research team, it is imperative that teams are equipped with people who are skilled in debriefing and who are able to provide counselling and support to team members as required.**

The prevailing emotion that many of the field researchers reported experiencing related to feelings of 'guilt' at being unable to offer assistance and help for those respondents who reported being victims of violence. This guilt included not being able to refer women and children to protective services or agencies – the few services that do exist in



the Solomon Islands are located in Honiara which was of little use to those respondents living in isolated rural areas. There was also guilt at not having the training and skills to respond appropriately to women in distress. Ellsberg & Heise (2005) have recognised the importance of support for respondents in their Guide for researchers and activists. However, the significant finding from this thesis study highlights that a lack of support for respondents has significant adverse impacts on the researchers involved in conducting the interviews.

**4. Recommendation: In countries which are resource poor, and where the majority of the population live in rural areas (as is the case in the Solomon Islands), it is important that when research on violence against women and children is being conducted, that measures are in place for respondents to receive the support and assistance they may require. Obviously this is a necessary safety measure for the respondents, but it will also potentially minimize the impact of feelings of guilt for the researchers.**

The physical safety of the researchers during their time in the field was of particular significance. There were not only the environmental challenges that placed many of them in some element of danger, but there were situations where some of the researchers had experiences where they were at extreme risk of sexual assault. This is a very concerning finding given the isolation of many of the teams during their time in the field which resulted in their inability to access skilled debriefing sessions after these traumatic episodes. This finding also raises a number of issues for future research in the Solomon Islands where female teams of researchers are entering isolated rural areas particularly those areas that were affected during the years of the ethnic tensions.

**5. Recommendation: In post conflict countries where sexual assaults have been an element of these past tensions and where women's status in society is low, careful measures need to be taken to minimize the risk against sexual harassment and assault for researchers entering the field. Training workshops need to ensure that this risk is highlighted and covered in some depth, with strategies and mechanisms discussed with trainee researchers on how they can maximize their safety during their time in the field.**

Emotional and physical exhaustion was a significant finding and one which suggests that considerable attention needs to be given to minimizing this issue in countries where there are unique geographical and environmental challenges and where teams are required to spend long periods of time in the field. The exhaustion that all of the researchers reported on leaving the field also provided valuable information for the planning of debriefing sessions post fieldwork.

**6. Recommendation: Skilled debriefing needs to occur at regular intervals with team members during their time in the field so that symptoms of emotional and physical exhaustion can be identified in its early stages. In a country as geographically challenging as the Solomon Islands, it is imperative that the timing of rest breaks takes into consideration the terrain, as well as other factors such as high response rate and disclosure of violence, and team dynamics. Timing of debriefing as field researchers exit the field needs to also be considered in light of the physical and emotional exhaustion they may be experiencing.**

The issue of reciprocity was a finding that emerged from this thesis research which has implications for future research in the Solomon Islands. Researchers reported feeling uncomfortable and embarrassed about arriving at villages ‘empty handed’ without the usual gifts of food and produce is as their custom.

**7. Recommendation: When indigenous field researchers are expected to enter villages as visitors (and as strangers) to gather data, consideration needs to be given to how this can be done in a manner that is not incongruent with their culture and custom.**

The finding that was of particular significance was that although these field researchers were involved in collecting data through a quantitative research approach (survey questionnaire), the impacts that they reported had strong similarities to those reported in the literature for qualitative researchers of sensitive topics. As has been explained in previous chapters, the similar impacts may be explained by the fact that despite the survey style questionnaire that was used by these field researchers, they still were required to enter the private homes of others, interview in a confidential and private manner and ask personal and sensitive questions of the respondents. These findings have implications for the future planning and training of researchers of sensitive research which has a quantitative methodology.

**8. Recommendation: In the planning and preparation of population representative studies on violence against women and children, it needs to be recognised that the possible impacts on the field researchers during their time in the field may be similar to those of researchers who are involved in qualitative research. Although the research tool may be a survey questionnaire, it is highly likely that the interview process will have an emotional component for both the respondent and the researcher. Taking these factors into consideration helps to ensure good decision making occurs around factors such as the number of interviews to be conducted in one day and the level of support that is required during the researcher's time in the field.**

In summary, the findings from this thesis highlight the complexities and challenges that are present when conducting research on violence against women and children. This study has added to the body of emerging literature which is beginning to acknowledge and recognize that field researchers involved with researching gender based violence, will not only be exposed to situations and experiences that will impact on them in some way, but their involvement is also likely to be a life changing experience for them.

The researchers from the SIFHSS who participated in this study provided explicit and powerful data which reflected their own personal stories of their time as field researchers. All of the researchers interviewed focused primarily on the negative impacts that came from being involved with the SIFHSS such as the emotional and physical risks and exhaustion that they confronted. However there were positive impacts reported by researchers, such as increased knowledge and understanding on the rights of women and children, and feeling confident and empowered to challenge and question the actions of others when these rights are not being recognised. Although the negative impacts on many of the researchers were significant, and at times extremely traumatic and distressing, all of the researchers stated that they were glad that they had been given the opportunity to be involved with the SIFHSS and that they would be interested in conducting future research on violence against women and children in their country. These findings suggest that the negative impacts were indeed mitigated by the positive benefits of being involved in such important research. This is a significant finding and one that once again highlights the unique nature of sensitive research. This finding also offers important insight into the overall impact on indigenous researchers

where cultural beliefs and practices have previously prevented them from examining the rights and safety of women and children. This finding suggests that, borne from being involved in such research leads to a newly found desire and commitment to assist in protecting women and children from violence, regardless of the negative impacts that the researchers may encounter during their field experiences. The experiences shared by the researchers provide an extremely valuable source of information which will hopefully add to the already existing recommendations and guidelines for researching violence against women, particularly in developing countries such as the Solomon Islands.

## Appendix 1



**Massey University**  
ALBANY

### **“Entering Unknown Territory: *Exploring the Impact on Indigenous Field Researchers when Conducting Gender-Based Violence and Child Abuse Research In the Solomon Islands*”**

## **INFORMATION SHEET**

Please read this sheet carefully and keep it throughout the period of research.

#### **Introduction:**

This research is being independently undertaken by Sharyn Titchener towards her Master of Philosophy (Social Work) degree at the School of Social & Cultural Studies, Massey University, New Zealand. Ms Titchener is a resident in the Solomon Islands and can be contacted by email on [titch.ted@xtra.co.nz](mailto:titch.ted@xtra.co.nz) or by telephone 22234 (Honiara), 98723 (cellphone). For the initial phase of the study, Ms Titchener will be supervised by Associate Professor Mike O’Brien. He can be contacted on 0064 9 4418164 ext 9161.

#### **Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding about what the impacts (both positive and negative) may be on indigenous field researchers who are conducting gender-based violence and child abuse research.

#### **Participant Recruitment**

Attempts have been made to contact all Field Researchers involved in the Gender Based Violence and Child Abuse Study. Participants will be required for both Focus Group Discussions and In-depth Interviews. In the event that more participants volunteer than what are required, a selection process will take place where all the names will be grouped into the teams that existed for the Socio-Cultural Study, and then names will be drawn equally (from a hat) from each team. It should be noted that participation will not bring any direct benefits such as payment, although transport costs will be covered for participants to travel to and from venues where the research will take place. Participation or refusal to participate will not impair any existing relationship between the participants and any other institutions or people involved.

#### **Project Procedures**

Your participation in this research and the information you provide is for the purpose of Sharyn Titchener’s thesis and may be used in subsequent publications such as reports and journal articles. The information you provide is confidential and real names of participants will not be publicly used. Audio recordings will be made available upon request. Data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet or stored electronically which will only be able to be accessed with a private password. If participants withdraw during the course of the study, their data will be immediately destroyed. All participants will be contacted when the final report is completed and a summary will be sent to them of the project findings if this is requested.

#### **Participant Involvement**

Participants will be invited to take part in a focus group in either Honiara or Gizo with a total number of 12 participants in each groups, or to participate in in-depth interviews, with approximately 3 being conducted in Gizo and the remaining 7 interviews being conducted in Honiara. Time required for participation will be approximately 1-2 hours.

### **Participant's Rights**

Your participation is voluntary and you are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- Decline to answer any particular question;
- Withdraw from the study at any time.
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- Ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during the interview

### **Support Processes**

Due to the nature of this research, participants may find that they experience some feelings of discomfort or emotional distress if they are discussing negative impacts that their role as a field researcher may have had on their lives. There will be availability for participants to access counselling and support if this is required during or after their participation in this research. For women who volunteered to participate but then were not selected, they will also be offered counselling and support services if required.

### **Questions and Concerns**

If you have any questions or concerns about any part of this research please feel free to contact Sharyn Titchener on 98723 or [titch.ted@xtra.co.nz](mailto:titch.ted@xtra.co.nz). Alternatively, you may contact Ethel Sigamanu (Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Women, Youth and Children on 23546 or Associate Professor Mike O'Brien (Supervisor) on 0064 9 4418164 ext 9161.

This project has been review and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application 08/062. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Denise Wilson, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone 094140800 x 9070, email [humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz).

## **Appendix 1a**



### ***“Enterem teritori wea iu no save: eksplorem efekt long olketa local fil risecha taem oloketa kondaktim na genda based vaelens an pikinini abius long Solomon Aelan”***

#### **INFOMEISON PEPA**

Plis ridim an kipim gud na disfala pepa long taem blong stadi ia.

##### **Introdakson**

Sharyn titchener seleva na duim disfala stadi ia fo Masters blong hem long philosophy (sosol waka) degree long skul blong sosol and cultural stadi long Massey University, New Zealand.

Distaem Mrs. Titchener hem stap lo Solomon Aelan an iu save kontaktim hem long disfala email adres [titch.ted@xtra.co.nz](mailto:titch.ted@xtra.co.nz) o long telefon namba 22234 ( Honiara) 98723 (Mobile). Long taem blong stadi ia Mrs titchener bae garem olketa bos lo fil an nem blong tufala na ..... an .....

Kontakt blong tufala bos lo fil ia na diswan .....

Distaem Mrs. Titchener hem waka olsem wanfala konsaltant blong UNICEF (pasifik) an hem provaedim na teknicol advaes fo wanfala stadi long genda based vaelens and pikinini abius long Solomon Aelan an Kiribati.

##### **Pepes blong stadi ia**

Mein aedia blong stadi ia na fo faendim aot wat na hemi rili hapen long olketa fil risecha wea olketa kondaktim na genda based vaelens an pikinini abius stadi ia. Stadi ia hemi laek for faendim aot na olketa gud an nogud samting wea hapen lo olketa local fil risecha taem olketa gohet fo duim na difala stadi blong genda based vaelens an pikinini abius.

##### **Hao bae olketa chiusim hu fo tek pat long stadi i**

Bae olketa traem fo kontaktim na olketa 48 fil risecha wea bin waka fo disfala “sosol culture stadi long Genda based vaelens an pikinini abius” an bae askem olketa fo tek pat.

Stadi ia bae nidim na 20-30 fala mere fo fokas grup diskason an nara 10 fala moa fo indepth intaviu.

Sapos garem eni situeison wea staka mere tumas na laek fo tek pat, den bae duim random selekson, wea bae evri nems na olketa putim insaed lo hat den nems olketa pikim nomoa bae tek pat lo disfala stadi ia.

Tek nout dat sapos iu tek pat bae iu no tekem eni seleni o development long resources. Bat bae olketa mitim nomoa kost blong transpot from ples iu stap an go long ples wea olketa kondaktim fokas grup diskason an indepth intaviu ia

Bae disfala stadi no spoelem eni releisonsip bitwin olketa man wea tek part o no tek pat lo stadi ia wetem olketa wea kondaktim stadi ia.

##### **Project procedure**

Olketa infomeison wea bae iu provaedim taem iu tek pat ia hem fo thesis blong Sharyn Titchener’s an bae olketa save iusim fo eni ripot o journal aticol.

Olketa infomeison iu provaedim ia bae hem sikret an bae nem blong mere wea tek pat ia bae olketa no talem aot.

Teip rekoda bae iusim nomoa sapos eniwan laekem. Olketa infomeison ia bae kipim insaed long wanfala filing cabinet wea hem lok. O sapos nomoa bae kipim insaed lo komputa an bae iu save lukim wetem wanfala praevet password.

If eniwan less fo stori go moa long taem blong stadi ia den bae olketa infomeison hem provaedim bae olketa no iusim na.

Evriwan wea tek pat lo stadi ia bae olketa kontaktim olketa taem ripot hemi finis an bae olketa tekem na samari blong stadi ia if olketa laekem.

### **Involvement blong man tek pat**

Disfala stadi ia garem tufala pat ia. Long fest pat ia bae olketa invaetim 12 fala pipol for tek pat long fokus grup diskason long Honiara and Gizo .12 fala pipol long wanfala grup.

Den lo sekond pat blong stadi ia, bae intaviuim 10 fala fil risecha. Bae invaetim 3 fala from Gizo an 7 fala lo Honiara nomoa.

Tufala pat blong stadi ia bae tekem abaot 1-2 aoa.

### **Raet blong pipol tek pat**

Fo tek pat hem saed blong iu an bae no eniwan na focim iu fo tek pat. Bat if iu laek fo tek pat den iu garem raet fo

- No ansa eni kwesten ,sapos iu les
- Enitaem iu les fo kontiniu fo tek pat long stadi ia den bae iu save aot
- Askem eni kwestem abaotim stadi ia long taem iu tek pat
- Provaedim gud infomeison an no fraet bikos bae no iusim nem blong iu unless iu givim pemison long man duim stadi ia.
- Bae iu garem access long samari blong stadi ia taem hem finis
- Ask fo olketa offim teip rekoda ia long enitaem insaed long intaviu ia.

### **Sapot gaedlaen**

Bikos long kaen taep stadi ia, olketa wea tek pat save garem gud o nogud filing o fil stress if olketa diskasim olketa nogud efekt long role blong olketa olsem wanfala fil risecha hem garem long laef blong olketa.

kaonseling an sapot bae olketa provaedim long olketa man tek pat long taem blong stadi ia o bihaen .Bat disfala kounseling an sapot sevis ia bae offered tu long olketa mere wea laek fo tek pat bat olketa no chusim olketa ia.

### **Kwesten and koncen**

If iu garem eni kwesten o tingting abaotem eni pat blong stadi ia den plis tumas fil fri fo kontaktim Sharyn Titchener long namba ia 98723 o long email adres ia [titch.ted@xtra.co.nz](mailto:titch.ted@xtra.co.nz) o Linda Tupe( advaesor) long .....o bos lo fil..... (Supavaesa)

Massey university Human ethics committee northern, aplicaton.na bin reviewim an apruvim na disfala project ia.if iu garem eni koncen abaotem na hao olketa kondaktim stadi ia den plis kontaktim na Dr Denise Wilson ,chair, Massey University human ethics committee, northern long telefon namba ia 094140800 \*9070, o email adres [humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz)



**Appendix 2**



***“Entering Unknown Territory: Exploring the Impact on Indigenous Field Researchers when Conducting Gender-Based Violence and Child Abuse Research in the Solomon Islands”***

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years.**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio-taped.

I agree to participate to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Full Name – Printed:** \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 2(a)



***“Enterem Unknown Territory: Explorem olketa Impact Long Indigenous Field Researchers Taem Koductim Gender-Based Violence an Pikinini Abuse Research long Solomon Islands”***

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**(Disfala Consent Fom babae holem fo kasem faev (5) fala iia)**

Mi bin redim Information Sheet an agrem olketa details long stadi wea hem explenim long mi. Question blong mi hem bin ansa long satisfaction, an mi save dat mi save askem olketa questions moa long eni taem.

Mi agri/no agri long interview wea hem long audio-taped.

Mi agri fo tekpat long disfala stadi anda long olketa kodison wea hem set aot long Information Sheet.

Saen ..... Dei.....

Printim Ful Nem .....

## Appendix 3

FORM - R.B

### THE RESEARCH ACT 1982 (No. 9 of 1982)

#### RESEARCH PERMIT

Permission is hereby given to:

1. Name: *Sharyn Titchener - Van Dillen*
2. Country: *Solomon Islands*
3. To undertake research in (subjects): *Child Abuse*
4. Ward(s): *Honiara, Munda, Gizo*
5. Province(s): *Western*
6. Conditions:
  - a. To undertake research only in the subject areas specified in 3 above.
  - b. To undertake research only in the ward(s) and Province(s) specified in 4 and 5 above.
  - c. To observe with respect at all times local customs and the way of life of people in the area in which the research work is carried out.
  - d. You must not, at any time, take part in any political or missionary activities or local disputes.
  - e. You must leave 4 copies of your final research report in English with the Solomon Islands Government Ministry responsible for research at your own expense.
  - f. A research fee of *SBD300.00* and deposit sum of *SBD200.00* must be paid in full or the Research Permit will be cancelled. (See sec. 3 Subject. 7 of the Research Act).
  - g. This permit is valid until *31/12/09* provided all conditions are adhered to.
  - h. No live species of plants and animals may be taken out of the country without approval from relevant authorities.
  - i. A failure to observe the above conditions will result in automatic cancellation of this permit and the forfeit of your deposit.

Signed:  .....

Minister for Education and Human Resources Development



Date: 10/3/09

Appendix 4



***“Entering Unknown Territory: Exploring the Impact on Indigenous Field Researchers when Conducting Gender-Based Violence and Child Abuse Research in the Solomon Islands”***

**CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR**  
**FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS**

I ..... (full name – printed)

Agree to keep confidential all information concerning the research;

*“Entering Unknown Territory: Exploring the Impact on Indigenous Field Researchers when Conducting Gender-Based Violence and Child Abuse Research in the Solomon Islands”.*

*I will not retain or copy any information involving the research.*

**Signature:** .....

**Date:** .....

Appendix 4a



***“Enterem Unknown Territory: Explorem olketa Impact Long Indigenous Field Researchers Taem Koductim Gender-Based Violence an Pikinini Abuse Research long Solomon Islands”***

**KONFIDENTIALITY AGRIMEN FO FOCUS  
GRUP PARTICIPANTS**

Mi .....(Printim Ful Nem)

agri for kipim sekret evri information abaotim research ia;  
*“Enterem Unknown Territory: Explorem Olketa Impact Long Indigenous Field Researchers Taem Konductim Gender-Based Violence an Pikinini Abuse Research long Solomon Islands”.*

Mi bae no kipim o kopem eni information involvem research ia.

**Saen:** .....

**Dei:**.....

## Appendix 5

### FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Identification Code for Tape: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: H/G

Number of Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Age Range of Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Introduction

- Welcome and thank you for agreeing to participate
- Check everyone has read the Information Sheet – ask if anyone wants to ask any questions.
- Check everyone has signed the Participant Consent Form and the Focus Group Confidentiality Agreement.
- Go over Group Rules which include confidentiality.
- Set time limit
- Overview of topic

#### Warm Up

Could you please tell a little about yourself, your family and what you like doing.

#### Setting the Scene

On February 25<sup>th</sup> 2008, a group of Solomon Island women came together to attend training for a period of three weeks. They were being trained so that they could become Field Researchers/Interviewers for a study on Gender-Based Violence and Child Abuse. On March 25<sup>th</sup> 2008 the first team of Field Researchers headed off into the field to begin the task of collecting data from 3500 women throughout the Solomon Islands. On the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 the last team returned from the field and the data collection for the quantitative phase of the research had been completed.

#### Questions

1. What was it that made you to apply for the role of a field researcher/interviewer for this study?
2. What did you find the most helpful in the Training Workshop that you attended?
3. What are your memories of that Training Workshop?
4. What did you feel like in that first month in the field (as an individual and as a team)?
5. How were you feeling as a field researcher by the middle of the study (individual and team)?
6. In the last weeks of the study, how were you feeling?
7. If you left before the end of the study, what were your reasons for leaving?

8. What effect has been involved in this study had on you emotionally, financially, physically, culturally?
9. What was a difficult situation that you faced? Was there a situation that made you frightened or scared?. Can you explain what sort of impact this situation had on you?
10. What issues may there be when indigenous field researchers are involved in research which may involve their own wantok? Did this have an impact on any of your work?.
11. Was there positive situations that you came across during your time in the field. What impact did these situations have on you?
12. Would you be interested in doing similar research work again? Why/why not?
13. Have your feelings about gender-based violence and child abuse in the Solomon Islands changed - if so, how?
14. Do you think that your involvement in this study has been a life-changing experience? Explain.
15. Would you be interested in doing this sort of research again? Why or why not?

## **Appendix 6**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE GUIDELINE FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS**

**Identification Code for Tape:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Interview:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Introduction**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I am interested in hearing about your experiences as a Field Researcher and how these experiences may have impacted on you.

Your story will provide valuable information for other researchers who are seeking to conduct gender-based violence and child abuse research in the Solomon Islands and in other countries around the world.

Before we begin, do you wish for me to provide further explanation on any of the contents of the Information Sheet? All the information that you provide is voluntary and will be kept strictly secret. Please remember you can stop the interview at any point or choose not to answer any of the questions I ask. Your name will not be written down for the purpose of this interview, and it will not be used in any future documentation.

1. Can you please tell me a little about yourself?  
What province are you from and where do you live now?  
Did you go to school?  
Are you aged between 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46 +  
Do you have children  
How would you normally spend your days?
2. What made you apply for the role as a Field Researcher/Interviewer for the Solomon Island Gender Based Violence and Child Abuse Research Study?  
Have you ever been involved in conducting research prior to this experience?  
What are your memories of the Training Workshop?  
What parts of the training did you find particularly useful when you were out in the field?  
How did the training influence you when making decisions in the field.  
Was there any aspects that would have been useful to have training on which were not covered?
3. How long were did you work as a Field Researcher for this study?  
Was most of this time spent in the field and in what provinces?  
What was the longest time you spent out in the field with your team before having to return to a main centre for supplies, or to make contact with Head Office.  
What were your reasons for finishing when you did? Was this prior to the research being completed.  
Can you describe your feelings during your first month in the field.  
How were you feeling by the middle of the time you were in the field?
4. Can you describe what sort of situations you faced in the field which you found difficult physically.  
Can you describe situations you faced which you found had an emotional impact on you.  
Can you describe whether you felt your health (emotional and physical) were affected in any way (positive or negative) from being involved as a Field Researcher on this study.  
Was there any other impact that you can think of (either negative or positive) that affected you personally.  
Can you describe any situation where you were concerned for your (or your teams) personal safety?  
Were you surprised at some of the stories you were told and how did these affect you?  
Did it become more difficult or easier to interview women? Why?



5. Were there situations where you were interviewing women from your own wantok? If yes, can you tell me if you think this made a difference to the way you responded to them, recorded their information etc?  
In what ways do you think that the respondent may have been affected in the way they answered due to this wantok connection?  
What were your feelings when your role as a Field Researcher came to an end?
6. Was your experience as a Field Researcher easier or more difficult than what you expected? Why?  
Can you tell me ways that thing could include training, preparation, support etc) could be done to help Field Researchers to the best job they can while they are in the field?  
How do you feel now about the issues of gender-based violence and child abuse in the Solomon Islands now that you have been involved collecting data on these issues?  
What are your feelings about being involved in future research as a Field Researcher after these experiences.  
Was your experience as a Field Researcher in any way a life-changing experience? Why  
Would you be interested in being involved in research like this again. Why or Why not

Appendix 7



***“Entering Unknown Territory: Exploring the Impact on Indigenous Field Researchers when Conducting Gender-Based Violence and Child Abuse Research in the Solomon Islands”***

**TRANSCRIBER/TRANSLATOR  
CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

I .....(full name – printed)

Agree to transcribe/translate tapes or interviews.

I agree to keep confidential all information that is provided to me.

I will not make copies of any notes taken and will ensure all notes are given to the Researcher at the conclusion of the focus group discussion and/or in-depth interview.

**Signature:** .....

**Date:** .....

Appendix 7a



**“Enterem Unknown Territory: *Explorem olketa Impact Long Indigenous Field Researchers Taem Koductim Gender-Based Violence an Pikinini Abuse Research long Solomon Islands*”**

**KONFIDENTIALITY AGRIMEN FO  
TRANSCRIBERS/TRANSLATORS**

Mi .....(Printim Ful Nem)

Agri fo transcribem/transletem tapes or meetims.

Mi agri for kipim secret evri information wea iufala providem long mi.

Mi bae no mekem kopis long olketa transcripts o kipim eni rekod long olketa, olsem wea olketa nidim long project ia.

**Saen:** .....

**Dei:**.....

**Appendix 8**



*“Entering Unknown Territory: Exploring the Impact on Indigenous Field Researchers when Conducting Gender-Based Violence and Child Abuse Research In the Solomon Islands”*

**AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS**  
**(This form will be held for a period of five (5) years)**

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview/s conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used by the researcher (Sharyn Titchener) in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature ..... Date .....

Full Name – printed .....

**Appendix 8a**



*“Enterem Unknown Territory: Explorem olketa Impact long  
Indigenous Field Researchers Taem Kodukim  
Gender-Based Violence an Pikinini Abuse Research  
long Solomon Islands”*

**AUTHORITY FO RELISIM OLKETA TRANSCRIPTS  
(Disfala fom bae holem fo faev (5) fala iia)**

Mi Konfemim dat mi garem olketa opportunity fo redim an amedim transcript long alketa interview/s wea kodukted wetem mi.

Mi agri dat long edited transcript an extracts nao bae disfala researcher (Sharyn Titchener) bae hem usim long olketa repot an publications wea bae hem kam aot long research.

Saen ..... Dei .....

Printim Ful Nem .....

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