Copyright is owned by the Author of this thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

ENLARGING THE FIELD OF CREDIBLE EXPERIENCE:

SUPPORTING YOUNG SOLOMON ISLANDERS AS AGENTS OF POSITIVE CHANGE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Philosophy in Development Studies
at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

Alice Joy Davidson

2012

This thesis is dedicated to:

YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE PACIFIC

who are seeking to be the change they want to see in the world.

You are an inspiration to me.

I hope you will be seen as the strength of the region.
And I pray that you will always have someone who believes in you!

MY MUM AND DAD

who have always believed in me and who have sacrificed greatly for my education.

To Dad, who has spent hundreds of hours proof reading my work and who has discussed and debated with me so many aspects of my university journey.

To Mum, who always knows the right things to say and whose love and support gives me so much strength.

I am truly thankful!

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the idea of young Solomon Islanders as agents of positive change and argues that understandings around youth agency, its expressions, and the factors that support and constrain it, should be a key feature framing youth and development. Young people are generally viewed as those between the ages of 15 and 29, and make up a growing proportion of Pacific populations. Valuing them as solutions for development, rather than as 'problems', is being increasingly promoted throughout the region. Investigations into youth agency, however, are relatively recent and there is still a great deal to be learnt about how they could be used to improve the situation for youth.

This thesis adds to these explorations by investigating the constraints and enablers for transformative youth agency in Solomon Islands, and by examining young people's articulations of agency and how they employ these in order to carve out a place of credibility for themselves in their communities and nation. A 'hopeful' post-development approach, which holds that development should validate previously subjugated practices and should prioritise assets and agency, is taken as the foundation for explorations of youth and development. Agency is then explored using a framework for investigating factors which 'thin' and 'thicken' youth agency. Fieldwork took place over five weeks in Solomon Islands in late 2011. A narrative inquiry methodological framework, guided by principles from Pacific methodologies and an actor-oriented approach, was utilised for this thesis research.

The findings of this study show that young people do face multifaceted constraints on their agency, but that they can work in spite of these when they are socially supported. The socially situated nature of youth agency is therefore highlighted, and the need for young people to be positioned within their social networks discussed. Additionally, the findings contest the negative conceptualisations held to be present around young Solomon Islanders by indicating the many ways in which they are actively contributing to their communities. The main implication of the findings, and the conclusion of the thesis, is that development policy and practice must build on understandings of young people as socially situated contributors, as well as, on the factors that constrain and enable their agency, in order to legitimise and support youth as agents of positive change.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A huge thank you to each person who participated in this research. I am so grateful for your kindness and for your willingness to *stori* with me, it made fieldwork such a rewarding experience. Each one of you is an inspiration to me! *Tagio tumas*!

I would also like to extend my gratitude to Ola Fou, particularly Lloyd Martin and Sereki Korocowiri, for opening up the valuable opportunity to conduct this research. A huge thank you to the Ola Fou Solomons Whanua, you are all such a blessing to be around, and to Elisha Pitanoe and Joseph Ngarisanau for your encouragement and guidance.

Thank you to Victor Totu, from the Guadalcanal Provincial Office, and Denton Enriko, from the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs, for your kind assistance and support. As well as to the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development for approving my Research Permit.

I am very grateful to Susan Larson and Dickson Gray for welcoming me into their communities. Susan, thank you for providing a retreat for me and for your friendship. Dickson, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to meet some amazing people. I shall never forget those Westlife ladies in particular!

A massive thank you to my first supervisor, Dr Maria Borovnik, for your amazing academic guidance and support, as well as for your personal encouragement. I look forward to continuing to work with you in the future! Thank you also to my second supervisor, Professor Glenn Banks who inspired me to focus on 'agency', and to all the other Development Studies staff. It has been a truly empowering two years at Massey. I also want to express appreciation to the Massey University Scholarships Office for the provision of a Massey Masterate Scholarship to fund this research.

To all my fellow development studies students - I am so glad to have met you all! You all inspire me so much and have made the past two years so valuable and memorable. A special thanks to Mel, One, Gloria and Barbara-Anne for your true friendship. I am so grateful to have done this journey with you!

Thank you to my wonderful sisters, Amy and Sarah for your constant support, encouragement, texts and visits - you are amazing! And thanks to my Mum and Dad - I would never have got through this without you! Thank you for cheering me on and for all your visits to Palmy, phone calls, and financial assistance.

Lastly, thank you to my Lord and Saviour for your constant presence, inspiration and guidance. This is all only through you and for you. Thank you that you care!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ..... **i**

Acknowledgements ..... **ii**

Table of contents ..... **iii**

List of Tables, Figures and Boxes ..... **vi**

List of abbreviations ..... **vii**

Advocating for young people to be seen and supported as credible agents of change **1**

1.1 Introduction 1

1.2 Personal positionality and motivation 3

1.3 An overview of Ola Fou Pasifika Youth Development 4

1.4 Research aims and objectives 5

1.5 Layout of thesis 5

Situating youth within development **7**

2.1 Introduction 7

2.2 From a story of criticism to one of creativity: A hopeful post-development practice 7

2.3 Youth and development: Viewing young people as agents of change 11

2.3.1 Defining 'youth' in the developing world *11*

2.3.2 Youth and Development *13*

2.3.3 Young people's agency *17*

2.4 Chapter summary and brief discussion 24

Solomon Islands **26**

3.1 Introduction 26

3.2 People and place 26

3.3 History 28

3.4 *Kastom* and religion 31

3.5 Development and aid 34

3.6 Young people in the Solomon Islands 35

3.7 Chapter summary 45

Methodology **47**

4.1 Introduction 47

4.2 Research methodology 47

4.2.1 Philosophical standpoint *48*

4.2.2 Narrative Inquiry Methodological Framework 48

4.2.3 Planned research methods 54

4.2.4 Ethical issues.....55

4.3 Field work.....58

4.3.1 Entry to the field 58

4.3.2 Participant selection and access 58

4.3.3 Research methods in practice.....62

4.3.4 Fieldwork challenges.....64

4.3.3 Fieldwork closure and feedback procedures 66

4.4 Data processing and reliability.....66

4.4.1 Data analysis procedures.....66

4.4.2 Reliability of the findings.....68

4.5 Chapter summary.....69

The thinning, thickening and articulation of youth agency.....71

5.1 Chapter Introduction.....71

5.2 'Youth' in Solomon Islands 71

5.2.1 Expectations of young people 72

5.2.2 Young people's expectations of adults and leaders.....74

5.2.3 Expectations of the government.....75

5.2.4 Government expectations 75

5.3 Factors that 'thin' youth agency: Departure from the hoped for situation..76

5.3.1 Constraints through youth interactions with adults.....77

5.3.2 Youth and their problematic relationship with government.....82

5.3.3 Factors resulting from attempts to deal with a changing social and cultural environment.....85

5.4 Factors that 'thicken' agency: Creating a transformative environment for young people 88

5.4.1 Thickening factors in relation to adults and leaders.....91

5.4.2 Training and education as factors contributing to a thick agency.....94

5.5 Articulations of young Solomon Islander's agency.....96

5.5.1 Expressions of youth agency 98

5.5.2 Young people as agents of positive change 102

5.6 Chapter conclusion.....104

Enhancing a socially situated youth agency and enlarging the field of credible experience for young people 106

6.1 Introduction 106

6.2 Minimising the presence of 'thinning' factors.....107

6.3 Recognising the socially situated nature of young people's agency.....114
6.4 The importance of conceptualising young people as active contributors117
6.5 Supporting young people as agents of change.....119
6.6 Research limitations and recommendations 122
6.7 Final Conclusions.....123
References.....128
Appendices.....143

LIST OF TABLES, FIGURES AND BOXES

TABLES

Table 2.1 Global youth populations 13
Table 2.2 Examples of young people's articulations of agency in the literature 21
Table 2.3 Examples of 'thinning' and 'thickening' factors for youth agency 23
Table 3.1 Solomon Islands literacy rates 37
Table 3.2 Out-of-school youth population as a percentage of total youth population 38
Table 4.1 Participant demographics 61
Table 4.2 Breakdown of research participation in Honiara 61
Table 4.3 Breakdown of research participation in West Guadalcanal ... 62
Table 5.1 Young Solomon Islanders' articulations of agency 103

FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Theoretical framework for investigating factors that 'thin' and 'thicken' youth agency 24
Figure 3.1 Map of Solomon Islands 27
Figure 3.2 Solomon Islands and Honiara population pyramids 41
Figure 3.3 Youth-related government structures in Solomon Islands 43
Figure 4.1 Narrative Inquiry Methodological Framework: How knowledge is formed 53
Figure 4.2 Narrative Inquiry Methodological Framework: Principles for sharing and forming knowledge 54
Figure 5.1 Thinning factors for young Solomon Islanders' articulations of agency 89
Figure 5.2 Thickening factors for young Solomon Islanders' articulations of agency 95
Figure 5.3 A summary of youth agency in participants' narratives 105

BOXES

Box 5.1 Case Study One: An Ola Fou Youth Leader 90
Box 5.2 Case Study Two: An Ola Fou Young Practitioner 96

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARH	Adolescent Reproductive Health
AUSAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BSIP	British Solomon Islands Protectorate
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFAT	(New Zealand) Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NYC	National Youth Congress
Ola Fou	Ola Fou Pasifika Youth Development
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PICs	Pacific Island Countries
PM	Prime Minister
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
SICA	Solomon Islands Christian Association
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
SIPPA	Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association
SPC	The Secretariat of the Pacific Community
TEAR Fund	The Evangelical Alliance Fund
TFNZ	TEAR Fund New Zealand
TPA	Townsville Peace Agreement
WWII	World War Two
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USA	United States of America
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

ADVOCATING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE SEEN AND SUPPORTED AS CREDIBLE AGENTS OF CHANGE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Over 80% of the world's youth, those between the ages of 15 and 24, reside in developing countries where they constitute between 20 and 40% of country populations (UN, 2004, p. iii). The youth population makes up to one fifth of the population in the Solomon Islands, and over a third of the population in Honiara (the capital of Solomon Islands) (SIG, 2011). Youth are the fastest growing population sector in the Pacific region presenting many challenges for governments in terms of meeting their needs (Curtain & Vakaoti, 2011; UNICEF, 2004; Woo & Corea, 2009). While development policy and practice in the region has been concerned with addressing the 'challenges' for Pacific youth, there has been a recent global shift toward viewing and investing in youth as a resource for development, rather than as a problem for development, as well as, valuing young people as agents capable of altering their own circumstances (Bell & Payne, 2009; Robson, Stephen, & Klocker, 2007; Woo & Corea, 2009). Some studies have recognised that many Pacific youth are aware of the issues they face and report they do have ideas about solutions and a desire to make positive impacts within their communities (Jayaweera & Morioka, 2008). Consequently, there has been increasing interest in youth agency and its potential to bring about positive change for young people and their communities (Bell & Payne, 2009; Klocker, 2007; Robson, et al., 2007).

It has been argued, however, that there is still much to explore concerning how youth agency can be utilised to improve the position of young people in developing countries, and to shape the way in which development policy and practice 'interacts' with youth (Robson, et al., 2007). Additionally, within development, theoretical understandings of youth as 'agents', needs to be informed by empirical considerations around the 'on-the-ground' experiences of young people. Acknowledgement of the paradox of youth as both agents and dependents is important; as is finding a balance between not attributing too much or too little responsibility and power to them (Robson, et al., 2007). Furthermore, exploring the socio-cultural processes and personal factors impacting, constraining and enabling young people's ability or inability to 'act' is central

in understanding the actions they are (un)able to take in order to bring about positive change for themselves and their communities (Bell & Payne, 2009; Robson, et al., 2007). Facilitating investigation into the various factors shaping young people's expressions of agency, and a better understanding of how they can be supported by development policy and practice to become agents of positive change, is the central focus of this thesis.

The 'role' of development, for this thesis, is taken from recent writing on 'hopeful post-development' which holds that development should prioritise and build on local assets and agency and should recognise and learn from alternative ways of bringing about change (Agostino, 2007; McGregor, 2007). For a hopeful post-development practice, the kinds of development that are being brought into existence tend to be those previously regarded as invalid (Gibson-Graham, 2005a). Youth in the Pacific, and globally, have not historically been seen as valid and powerful agents for bringing about positive change in their communities (Jayaweera & Morioka, 2008; Jeffrey, 2011). This thesis, thus, fits within the framework of a hopeful post-development practice by seeking to explore how young Solomon Islanders are agents of change and what affects their agency. The intention behind this being to enhance the credibility of, and open up space for, young change agents within development; and to better comprehend how young Solomon Islanders' can be supported as agents of positive change. A narrative inquiry methodology, discussed more fully in Chapter Four, was employed to guide investigation towards these research objectives. Such an approach allows participants to share their story, and the meanings behind the story (Chase, 2005; Riley & Hawe, 2005). The use of narrative inquiry, for this thesis, was influenced by Pacific methodologies, make the methods relevant to the specific cultural context, and by an actor-oriented approach, 78uin order to centralise experiences of agency.

Within the social sciences it is recognised that research is rarely just an academic exercise, motivated purely by an objective observation of a 'gap' in the literature, but can also be personal and subjective, with the researcher impacting on the nature of the research (Chase, 2005; O'Leary, 2009; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). In this regard, it is important to acknowledge personal positionality, within the research process, and detail my motivation for choosing the current topic in order to ensure the research process is as authentic as possible (O'Leary, 2009).

1.2 PERSONAL POSITIONALITY AND MOTIVATION

My involvement with youth links with long standing personal commitments. I am a 28 year old, Caucasian, female who grew up in a middle-class, Christian, third generation white Zimbabwean family, and immigrated to New Zealand when I was 20. As a teenager I worked as a youth member of Youth For Christ Zimbabwe, and spent time visiting and working with various development and church-based projects within Zimbabwe. I have an undergraduate degree in Psychology and Education from The University of Auckland and worked as a research assistant in the department of Developmental Psychology at this university for two years. Following completion of an Honours in Development Studies in 2010 from Massey University, I accepted an internship, with TEAR (The Evangelical Alliance Relief) Fund New Zealand (TFNZ), focused on preparing and facilitating Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) workshops with Pacific youth and community practitioners in Fiji, Tonga and Solomon Islands through TFNZ's partner, Ola Fou Pasifika Youth Development (Ola Fou), a New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFAT) funded programme.

I have both lived and worked in developing countries, and have had previous engagement with young people in the Pacific, whom I hold in high regard in terms of their initiative, knowledge, and desire to see positive change in their communities. My personal experience of working as a young person in my own communities' in Zimbabwe and New Zealand, coupled with my observation of young people making a difference in their Pacific communities, led me to question the common conception of young people as a 'time bomb' and 'a problem', and to instead believe in their ability to bring about positive change. This has motivated me, personally, do conduct this thesis research, and to view young people as a potential solution, rather than a problem in their communities.

Based on my awareness of the work of Ola Fou, and their network of Youth and Community Practitioners, many of whom are young themselves, I approached the Ola Fou leadership team in mid-2011 and asked whether they would be happy and interested for me to do my thesis research with some of their students. Reasons for choosing the Solomon Islands as the target study area were both academic and personal. The academic motivation behind the study was due to there being very little published about Solomon Islands' youth, and, therefore, this was a field of study in which meaningful contributions could be made (Scales, 2003). The personal and practical reasons were that I had friends from the Solomon Islands in New Zealand, as well as colleagues who had researched in the Solomon Islands, who could provide

both cultural and research advice prior to fieldwork. The Ola Fou leadership agreed to the proposed research, subsequently facilitating the valuable opportunity to undertake the current study. Youth and youth workers involved with the Ola Fou programme became the starting point for the research and formed a key sub-group of participants who were able to reflect on their experiences of being agents of change.

1.3 An overview of Ola Fou Pasifika Youth Development

Ola Fou Pasifika Youth Development offers training and support for youth and community workers within the Pacific, and works to empower young people within the region to identify needs in their own community and become active in responding to these (Praxis Pacific, 2012b). Ola Fou, which means 'new life' in Samoan, officially began in 2006 and offers an 18 month Certificate in Pasifika Youth Development and an 18 month Diploma in Youth and Community Work (Curtain & Vakaoti, 2011). Both qualifications are recognised by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and are offered over a series of block courses to practitioners from Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, PNG, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, and Tuvalu (Curtain & Vakaoti, 2011; Elliot, 2008). The main aim of Ola Fou is to improve the well-being of Pacific youth and to strengthen Pacific communities (Praxis Pacific, 2012a). This is achieved through promoting participatory, developmental and indigenous approaches to working with youth, raising the credibility and worth of youth work, and engaging young people in bringing about positive change (Elliot, 2008; Praxis Pacific, 2012a). As part of the Ola Fou course, students, together with young people in their communities, conduct research around challenges in their community and then develop a practical response to these needs (Curtain & Vakaoti, 2011; Praxis Pacific, 2011). To date, over 60 community projects have been undertaken in various Pacific communities by Ola Fou past and present students (Praxis Pacific, 2012a). Ola Fou was recognised in the 2011 State of Pacific Youth Report to be a creative model for working with youth and for supporting young people to contribute to their own and their communities' development (Curtain & Vakaoti, 2011; Praxis Pacific, 2012a). Therefore, when investigating youth agency, the experiences of those within Ola Fou offer valuable insights into meeting the research aim and objectives, as outlined below.

1.4 Research aims and objectives

Based on the above discussions around youth agency and young people's contribution to their own development, the central aim of this study is summed up as:

To better understand how support for young Solomon Islanders as agents of positive change can be conceptualised and delivered.

Under this aim, three specific research objectives were pursued:

Objective 1: To understand the constraints affecting young Solomon Islander's ability to bring about positive change for themselves, other young people, and their communities.

Objective 2: To understand the enablers affecting young Solomon Islander's ability to bring about positive change for themselves, other young people, and their communities.

Objective 3: To explore how young people articulate their agency and work to be acknowledged as credible change agents in their communities.

In meeting these objectives, the thesis draws on theoretical and methodological frameworks to guide the research. These are discussed within the first part of the thesis, the layout of which is summarised as follows.

1.5 Layout of thesis

The thesis is made up of six chapters:

Chapter 1: has introduced the study, briefly outlining its theoretical justification and context, as well as the researcher positionality and motivation behind it. Additionally, this section introduced the Ola Fou Pasifika Youth Development programme, stated the research aim and objectives, and outlined the layout of the thesis.

CHAPTER 2: situates the investigation of youth agency into a hopeful post-development practice and, subsequently, discusses current theorising around youth and development. The chapter then presents discussions around youth agency and proposes a framework for exploring constraints and opportunities for expressions of this agency.

CHAPTER 3: provides contextual information for the study. The chapter covers the historical and cultural backgrounds of Solomon Islands, and outlines the situation for young Solomon Islanders, with a specific focus on youth in and around Honiara.

CHAPTER 4: focuses on the methodological issues pertinent to the study, comprising the philosophical standpoint, narrative inquiry framework and ethical considerations. Fieldwork experiences are covered, including the access and selection of participants, and research methods in practice. Finally, data processing techniques and the reliability of the research findings are discussed.

CHAPTER 5: presents the findings for the study. The chapter explores the expectations around young people, and the factors that constrain and enable their expressions of agency. The chapter then looks at some examples of the articulations of young Solomon Islanders' agency.

CHAPTER 6: discusses the findings, arguing for a socially situated understanding of youth agency and for the need to conceptualise youth as active contributors. Detailing how these understandings can be used to support young people as agents of positive change is then discussed. This chapter concludes the thesis, detailing its main contributions, some limitations and suggestions for future research, as well as, by reflecting on the adopted theoretical and methodological frameworks for the thesis.

SITUATING YOUTH WITHIN DEVELOPMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews and discusses literature related to the theoretical background for the study, thereby setting the stage for investigation of the research objectives by outlining the key concepts around youth and agency within development. Section 2.2 of the chapter introduces the concept of 'hopeful post-development' which is the understanding of 'development' informing this thesis. The recent post-development themes of: working to 'enlarge the field of credible experience', and prioritising assets and agency, are taken as a foundation for exploring youth and development. Section 2.3 then focuses specifically on youth *and* development, and on youth agency, the primary focus of the thesis. Firstly, who 'youth' *are* is explored by examining debates around the definition of young people as a social category. Secondly, the various imperatives and motivators behind the increasing focus on young people within development is detailed. The shift towards seeing young people as having agency, and being agents in the development process, is then investigated. Lastly, a theoretical framework for the investigation of factors that 'thin' and 'thicken' youth agency, as well as for exploring the articulations of this agency, is presented. This thesis argues that understandings around young people's agency should be a central feature informing the ways in which 'development' works with youth.

2.2 FROM A STORY OF CRITICISM TO ONE OF CREATIVITY: A HOPEFUL POST-DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE

Much debate around 'development' has had ongoing concerns with its apparent failure. Rising gaps, globally and nationally, between the rich and poor, the seemingly inevitable co-option of development as domination and control by the West, and the limited positive change resulting from development initiatives have left many despondent about the nature and fate of development (Sachs, 2010). Some of the more radical writings, based on this despondency, have been termed 'post-development', which has been loosely defined as a:

> "Term given to a diverse school of thought whose adherents engage, to differing degrees, in far-reaching questioning of the processes and end

> goals of development. Much post development work involves analysing and critiquing the knowledges, languages and meanings within development industries, particularly focusing on how they may serve to shape or perpetuate power relations. As 'alternatives to development', post-development thinkers promote social movements, grassroots, locally driven, approaches to social organisation" (Beban-France & Brooks, 2008).

While post-development is indeed a diverse school of thought, there are two broad 'camps' within the post-development discourse: the early writings, signified by their pessimistic, anti-development stance; and more recent writings, which state that the problems inherent in development do not need to equal its rejection (McGregor, 2009). The school of early post-development thinking held that development is "not medicine but rather disease" (Matthews, 2007, p. 131), and is an insidious self-fulfilling prophecy entrenching the ideals, control and domination of the West (Van Ausdal, 2001). The reasons behind such a pessimistic conclusion centre around the Westernising nature of development, which is seen as a form of neo-colonialism that continues to (re)define 'developing' countries as inferior and invalidate local knowledge, subsequently justifying the West's intervention (Esteva, 1992; Sachs, 2010; Sardar, 1997).

Most authors agree that the early post-development critique has some valid arguments, however, increasingly concerns and criticisms are being made around its claims. One of the critiques is that the critical post-development writing "overstates the case" and is essentialising in nature (Curry, 2003; Sidaway, 2008, p. 17; Ziai, 2004). This homogenising of development results in the gains that *have* been made being disregarded (McGregor, 2007, 2009; Van Ausdal, 2001). Secondly, this essentialising of development has lead to the creation of *new* binaries of an "evil West and a noble South" (Kiely, 1999, p. 38). The uncritical praise of the 'local' is argued to lead to a romanticising and homogenising of communities in the South, while the early post-developments' critique paradoxically implies a vision of the local and the South as passive (Kiely, 1999; McGregor, 2009; Nustad, 2007). The bias critical post-development writing falls into is giving preferential treatment to "structure over agency - on the discourses that shape our becoming subjects, rather than how subjects might shape the discourses" (McKinnon, 2008, p. 287). Lastly, a final critique of critical post-development is that it offers no alternatives and is thus not seen as a constructive critique (Matthews, 2004; Pieterse, 2000). Increasingly a call is being heard to look beyond these critiques to (re)imagine new possibilities for bringing about change

(Gibson-Graham, 2005a; McGregor, 2007; Santos, 2004a). This has resulted in a more recent group of post-development writing which mark the second camp of post-development theorising.

Since the early 2000s a new, more hopeful and practical post-development discourse has emerged, with the invitation to pursue a praxis of post-development and, "imagine how the development industry may still be a conduit for social change" (McKinnon, 2007, p. 773). Proponents of this approach draw on a wide range of indigenous and grassroots theorising to illustrate how the development ideologies of the West have *not* been all pervasive and that there are examples of, and possibilities for, positive and locally meaningful change (Gibson-Graham, 2005a; McGregor, 2009). Hopeful post-development proponents acknowledge that the work of development is messy and uncertain, and never neutral, but they are unwilling to wash their hands of development and are expectant that positive social change is possible (De Vries, 2007; Gibson-Graham, 2005a; McKinnon, 2007). This is eloquently summed up by Gibson-Graham (2005a, p. 6):

> "The challenge of post-development is not to give up on development nor to see all development practice - past present and future in wealthy and poor countries as tainted, failed, retrograde; as though there were something necessarily problematic and destructive about deliberate attempts to increase social wellbeing through economic interventions; as though there were a space of purity beyond or outside development that we could access through renunciation. The challenge is to imagine and practice development differently".

Explorations around what a post-development practice might look like are still in their infancy and remain experimental (McGregor, 2009). These explorations often take the form of "a case study approach looking for possibilities within existing development approaches in particular locations" (McGregor, 2009, p. 1697). In so doing, hopeful post-development theorists acknowledge that alternative ways of bringing about change have long been happening, and that they do not need to be created, just recognised and learnt from (Agostino, 2007). Examining the literature for some of the key lessons that have emerged in the recent post-development literature, this thesis draws on two 'themes': seeing development as enlarging the field of credible experience, and the need to prioritise assets and agency.

2.2.1 Enlarging the field of credible experience

There has increasingly been a call for the advancement of "epistemologies of the South" that would open up present and future imaginings for transformative change (Santos, 2004a, p. 236). Santos' (2004a, p. 238) proposed that post-development practice should embody an inquiry into what has been "actively produced as non-existent". The aim of this is to then provide the opportunity for it to become visible and be taken seriously in order to form the foundation of current development practice (Agostino, 2007; McGregor, 2007; Santos, 2004a). The validation of alternative imaginings for transformation is important as it not only widens current possibilities for change but also increases the likelihood for proposals of alternatives for social change in the future (Santos, 2004a). This thesis uses this understanding to argue in Chapter Six that young people's contributions and ways of brining about change have often been invisible and need to be validated within development practice and policy.

2.2.2 Prioritising assets and agency

In focusing on 'making credible', a further common theme of recent post-development writing is the prioritising of assets and agency (McGregor, 2009). With regards to assets, this builds on alternative, grassroots and indigenous based writing's appreciation of what is already present and happening within communities, and states that we need to resist the temptation to look 'outside' the community for possible intervention strategies and rather our focus should be on assets 'within' (Gibson-Graham, 2005a; McGregor, 2009). The strategies employed in this regard should explicitly focus on assets and strengths and investigate what already exists in the community that can be activated to achieve the communities' development goals in a way that builds on local skills and resources (Gibson-Graham, 2005a, p. 14; Gibson, Cahill, & McKay, 2010).

An illustration of this is the recent consideration and application of, what has been termed, 'positive deviance' (Pascale, Sternin, & Sternin, 2010). Positive deviance involves looking for people who are outliers, 'positive deviants', within a community who are already successfully addressing the issue in question, and then providing space for these ‘positive deviants’ to share their solutions with other community members (Pascale, et al., 2010). Positive deviance strategies hold that solutions can be found from the 'inside', and have been successfully used to bring about positive change in a range of development 'issues', such as infant malnutrition, female genital mutilation, and reintegration of child soldiers (Pascale, et al., 2010). The notion of positive

deviance is used for this thesis within the methodology, outlined in Chapter Four, by including a 'positive deviance' sub-group of actively contributing Ola Fou practitioners in the research. Both explicitly recognising assets and looking for positive deviants are processes of recognising and building on what is already present in communities.

Side by side with valuing assets is seeing people as having agency - the ability to act in their world. A key critique posed at early post-development theorists was based on their apparent favouring of "discursive determinism" over notions of agency (Delcore, 2004, p. 33; Nustad, 2001). Mathews (2004, p. 282) proposes that agency be seen as the "building blocks" from which to conceive new alternatives for social change. A focus on agency, forms the central point around which this thesis is formed, as well as how people are enabled and/or restricted in exercising agency. This is discussed in more depth, and in relation to young people, in the following section.

I would like to suggest, in conclusion to this section on hopeful post-development, that a helpful way to look at post-development practice, is as a practice which is, on the one hand, highlighting and critiquing the 'closed' nature, discourses and meanings of development, past and present, while on the other hand, looking for ways to 'open' the nature, discourses and meanings of development by highlighting previously invisible voices, knowledge, experience and practice in order to imagine and make valid different ways of doing and being (Gibson-Graham, 2005a; Santos, 2004a). The current study fits in the 'opening up' framework of a hopeful post-development practice, seeking to explore how young Solomon Islanders can be supported as agents of change in their communities and nation. This will help with informing beneficial ways in which development can interact with and support youth.

2.3 Youth and development: Viewing young people as agents of change

2.3.1 Defining 'youth' in the developing world

It is important to acknowledge from the onset that the word 'youth', just like the term 'development', cannot be used unproblematically: “to call someone youth is to position him or her in terms of a variety of social attributes, including not only age but also independence-dependence, authority, rights, abilities, knowledge, [and] responsibilities” (Durham, 2004, p. 498). Additionally, operational, cultural and

community level definitions of youth vary across time and space (Abebe & Kjørholt, 2011; DANIDA, 2007; UN, 2004). As a concept, 'youth' has most commonly been used to categorise people based on their age, with the United Nations official definition of youth being those people between the ages of 15 and 24 (Curtain, 2001; Nguyen, 2006; UN, 2004). While this definition is important for statistical and operational purposes, it is recognised that, in some instances, this definition is too narrow and is potentially constrictive for young people and those working with them, for example, in some cultures there is a clear rite of passage from childhood to adulthood (Abebe & Kjørholt, 2011; UN, 2004). There is also risk of homogenising youth by assuming that age is the underlying characterising factor, and that, as a social category, young people have more similarities than differences (Cornwall, 2008). The influence of institutions, culture, point in history and economic and political conditions can have on what it means to be young for any one person should not be ignored (Cornwall, 2008, p. 4). There has thus been increasing acknowledgement that 'youth' is a contested concept and should be viewed as being a social and cultural construct that is heterogeneous in nature (Abebe & Kjørholt, 2011; Cornwall, 2008; Del Felice & Solheim, 2011; Nguyen, 2006).

Nevertheless, official definitions of 'youth' continue to be used, as this population category is increasingly seen as requiring urgent and direct development intervention (World Bank, 2007). The main reason for this concern is that the youth population is at an all time high. Based on the pressures being placed on the countries in which young people reside, many youth issues are argued to be partially rooted in these demographics (UN, 2004; World Bank, 2007). Young people, aged 15 to 24, currently make up 19% of the population in Less Developed Countries, and 20% in Least Developed Countries (see Table 2.1) (UN, 2009, p. vii). These countries also have a high proportion of under 15 year olds; 30% and 40% in Less and Least Developed Countries, respectively (UN, 2009, p. vii). This means that the proportion of youth has yet to peak, indeed projections state that it will probably continue to rise for a few decades (UN, 2009).

Additionally, a decrease in fertility rates is already being seen in the developing world, resulting in an increasingly large proportion of youth in population structures of many developing countries (World Bank, 2007). This has resulted in the term 'youth bulge' emerging in development and population literature to describe an abnormally large proportion of youth, relative to the adult population, especially in urban areas (Hart, Atkins, Markey, & Youniss, 2004; Urdal, 2004). The presence of a youth bulge has been one of the imperatives behind the specific attention to youth by development

practice (Urdal, 2004; World Bank, 2007). Further motivators behind the focus on young people are described in the following section.

Table 2.1. Global youth populations

	Developed Countries	Less Developed Countries	Least Developed Countries
% of total population <15	17	30	40
% of total population between 15-24	13	19	20

Source: UN (2009, p. vii).

2.3.2 YOUTH *AND* DEVELOPMENT

There is currently no comprehensive framework within development literature for theorising youth *and* development, rather, work with youth tends to be guided by a number of themes. This section seeks to provide a brief picture of the factors that could be seen to contribute to a theorising of youth and development. These include the demographic imperative, earlier mentioned, as well as the UNCRC, the increasing focus on participatory development and development sustainability and effectiveness, and lastly, the increasing prominence of positive youth development.

The 'youth bulge' presents a "demographic imperative" for the focus on youth within development (DFID-CSO, 2010, p. 6; Thomas, 2001). The majority of literature on the 'youth bulge' link it to human security issues and see it as a threat to the developing nations in which it occurs. This threat is based on the three interrelated 'problems' of: civil unrest, youth unemployment and rapid urbanisation; all of which have been linked to the presence of an unusually high proportion of young people in the population (Thomas, 2001; Urdal, 2004; Ware, 2004). Urdal's (2004) study, which investigated instances of national armed conflict over half a century (from 1950-2000), established a relationship between the presence of a youth bulge and increased risk of armed conflict. Explanations for this relationship centre around the anger and frustration that could result when young people feel that they have no meaningful purpose, particularly in relation to experiencing joblessness (Curtain, 2001; Lowe, 2001). High levels of youth unemployment is, in part, related to a growing number of

young people who each year are looking for employment and a source of income, not to mention service provision, housing and education (Thomas, 2001). This may place stress on already struggling country systems, potentially leading to dissatisfaction amongst young people who are unable to achieve their educational and employment-related aspirations (Thomas, 2001). This is often intensified in the urban areas young people flock to in the hope of finding work, and accessing education and services, and is further discussed in relation to Solomon Islands in Chapter Three (Walker & Dorrit, 2001). The concentration of youth in urban areas and rising unemployment have been argued to amplify the risk of violent civil unrest (Ware, 2004). Thus, the demographic imperative becomes a central motivator for the focus on young people within development (Scales, 2003).

While these pressures are very real and demand urgent response, they may also result in youth being overly conceptualised as a 'problem' (Abebe & Kjørholt, 2011). The resulting tendency has been to construct youth as the 'other', a "lost generation" (Abebe & Kjørholt, 2011, p. 20), and a "time bomb" (Coxon & Munce, 2008, p. 151), but this only shows half the picture. Research is revealing that, in fact, many opportunities arise in periods where there is a youth bulge. The presence of a youth bulge has been argued to be, "a limited window in which to develop a larger and younger workforce who can drive economic development and play a significant role in the social development of their communities and society" (DFID-CSO, 2010, p. 6). Indeed, evidence shows that a youthful population is conducive to economic growth, as has been seen in East Asian countries, and that youth can be a resource for development and a powerful actor in bringing about positive change (Duncan & Voigt-Graf, 2008; Urdal, 2004; Vainerere, 2001; Woo & Corea, 2009; World Bank, 2007). Youth bulges are also linked to "system-sustaining civil activity" (Hart, et al., 2004, p. 592), for example, the American civil rights movement, and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa both had large groups of young people involved (Jeffrey, 2011). Further, it is essential to bear in mind that the developed world is facing the problems associated with supporting an aging population, with over 60s the fastest growing population group in the developed world (UN, 2004, p. vii; 2009). Thus, it is important not to undervalue the advantages of having a youthful population. The opportunities this provides is also seen as a reason for the development industry to engage with young people, who will be the future generation.

The popular catch phrase that 'children and youth are the future' is a major reason for meeting the needs of young people and is in line with sustainable development and aid effectiveness principles. It is vital to include and build the capacity

of children and youth in order to ensure the sustainability of development efforts and enhance their ability to contribute in the future (Curtain & Vakaoti, 2011; DANIDA, 2007). Globally, many development gains have been made in early and middle childhood. For these gains to be sustained they should be built upon by targeting youth in order to foster successful transitions to adulthood (Curtain & Vakaoti, 2011). In addition, the drive for 'aid effectiveness' has been used to justify a focus on children/youth within development (Mayo, 2001). The inclusion of youth is seen as important for the success of some development initiatives. Reasons for this include the beliefs that aid will be more effective if it is based on priorities young people actually identify; including the assumption that youth participation fosters wider ownership and helps build trust in communities; and that involving youth would be in line with current trends on grassroots 'bottom-up' development and participatory development (Brennan & Barnett, 2009; DFID-CSO, 2010; Mayo, 2001).

The participation of young people was also propagated by participatory development approaches which became popular in the early 1980s. Following critique of the 'top-down' nature of development, participatory approaches called for the focus of development to (re)turn to the 'local', and to intentionally give voice to the very people development sought to assist (Brett, 2003; Chambers, 1983; Mohan, 2008). Participatory development holds that all people, including children and youth, should contribute, participate and lead their own development and be involved in all levels of decision-making affecting them (Brohman, 1996; Desai, 2008; Mayo, 2001). Participation in development is now widely accepted and is cited to justify specific inclusion of children and youth (Mayo, 2001). The real goal of participation is social transformation; a world in which power inequalities are challenged and all groups, especially marginalised groups, such as children and youth, can and do participate in all levels of society; economic, political and social, in order to have their lives and communities changed for the better (Brohman, 1996; Desai, 2008; Friedman, 1992; Melkote & Steeves, 2001).

A further motivator, proposed in the literature, for why development needs to focus on young people is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Since its ratification in 1990, the UNCRC has played a significant role in challenging the place of children and young people in society today (DANIDA, 2007; Mayo, 2001). The Convention defines children as those under the age of 18 and covers various rights of the child, such as; the right to protection, including protection against discrimination and of identity, and the right to education, health care, leisure and special assistance (Mayo, 2001; United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,"

1989). Additionally, the Convention states that, "children are capable of forming their own views" and have the right to express these views and influence decisions affecting them ("United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child," 1989, p. 4). Mayo (2001) points out that the UNCRC did not occur in a vacuum, but emerged out of a history of activism and the promotion of the rights of children and youth, including the focus on positive youth development, as detailed in the following paragraph. This historical movement, along with the UNCRC, together have influenced the focus on children and youth within development, both in terms of addressing the needs and rights of this population group, and in focusing on participation through seeking and listening to the voice of children and youth (DANIDA, 2007; Mayo, 2001).

Lastly, the increasing focus on (positive) youth development in social sciences literature underlies, in part, the focus on young people within development policy and practice. Youth development involves working with young people in a systematic and strengths based manner in order to support them to develop in an holistic way and help them contribute positively to their societies (Hamena, 2008; Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster, 1998). The focus is both with the individual young person and with the socialising influences on young people, such as, peers, family, school, and community (Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard, & Arthur, 2002; McLaren, 2002; Roth, et al., 1998; STARR, 2011). The school of thought and practice known as 'Youth Development', generally, draws on the fields of Youth Studies, Developmental Psychology, and Positive and Community Psychology (Hamena, 2008; Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005). Work with young people tends to be, almost automatically, referred to as 'youth development'. It is important, however, to point out that Youth Development is a distinct field, and a subset of the influence and work of development with young people. Nevertheless, due to the specific developmental stage and needs of young people it is important that Youth Development principles continue to guide development policy and practice targeted at youth.

Increasingly, the contributions of young people to their own, and their communities, development are being acknowledged and encouraged (Freeburg, 2004). While young people are sometimes portrayed in negative ways and feared for their potential volatility and multitude of issues, there have, simultaneously, been instances where young people have been seen as activists, leaders in development and enthusiastic volunteers and have been extolled and upheld as the hope for the future (Abebe & Kjørholt, 2011; Argenti, 2002; Beauvy, 2006; Freeburg, 2004; UNPY, 2008). Consequently, there has been a shift from viewing youth as passive and dependent recipients of development, to recognising and fostering various aspects of youth

agency and exploring ways in which young people can potentially become invested and involved, in diverse ways, in the development of their communities (Beauvy, 2006; Bell & Payne, 2009; Curtain, 2001; DANIDA, 2007; Porcaro & Teng, 2008; Wyn & White, 1997). More specifically, this moves beyond wider debates around aid effectiveness, sustainability, child and youth participation, and rights and inclusion, and sees and portrays young people as potential agents of positive change, with value, and ability to contribute in their own right (Abebe & Kjørholt, 2011; Bell & Payne, 2009; White & Wyn, 1998). Development policy and practice has, therefore, been increasingly concerned with child and youth agency and how to support young people in being and becoming active agents of change in regards their own, and their communities', development (Bell & Payne, 2009).

2.3.3 YOUNG PEOPLE'S AGENCY

Youth agency, and its potential contribution to bringing about positive change for young people and their communities, remains a relatively unexplored area (Robson, et al., 2007). While there has been a push toward viewing young people as capable agents and including them in processes of development and change, little is known about the 'on-the-ground' experiences of such young agents (Robson, et al., 2007). This section explores the notion of young people as agents of positive change by firstly, presenting the various ways in which agency has been conceptualised. It then examines the reproductive and transformative elements of human agency, and the specific complexities around youth agency. Examples of young people exercising agency in the development literature are explored. Lastly, a framework for understanding youth agency is then presented, which involves exploring instances of 'thin' and 'thick' agency. This section locates the current study in the knowledge gap of understanding what constrains and enables youth agency and how youth agency can be supported through development policy and practice.

'Agency' has been defined, conceptualised, and studied in a variety of ways (Robson, et al., 2007; White & Wyn, 1998). At its most basic, agency is simply the ability to act, or, "the exercise of will and conscious action on the part of human subjects" (White & Wyn, 1998, p. 315). Agency has most commonly been conceptualised in relation to 'structure'; with the relationship between agency-structure, freewill-determinism, action-constraint, individual-society, and nature-nurture, being of central interest in the social sciences (White & Wyn, 1998). Early approaches to structure and agency emphasised societal structure and its authority to prescribe

individual behaviour; this view was influenced by theorists such as Durkeim and Marx, and drew on theories of structuralism and functionalism (Stones, 2007). In contrast to this view, a second paradigm of thought, based on the theoretical schools of phenomenology and ethno-methodology, stressed the importance of people's individual agency and capacity in (re)constructing their life-worlds (Stones, 2007). In the 1980s Pierre Bourdieu, among others, pioneered attempts to reconcile and bring balance to the relationship between structure and agency, arguing that they were mutually constitutive of each other (Stones, 2007). More recently, research looking at agency has taken a post-structuralist stance, holding that, "agency is inextricably linked to power, whereby, the exercise of power is dependent on agency. Without agency, there is no exercise of power" (Robson, et al., 2007, p. 148). A post-structuralist view of agency holds that expressions of agency vary across time and space, and that even in the most restrictive structural settings evidence of individual consciousness and action can be found (Bell & Payne, 2009; Jeffrey, 2011; Robson, et al., 2007).

The mutually constitutive nature of 'agency' and 'structure' is now widely acknowledged with the understanding that, "people make structures at the same time as structures make people" (Hays, 1994, p. 62). Structures are also often seen as both, "enabling (allowing people to see, feel, imagine, understand some things) and constraining (disabling people from seeing, feeling, imagining, and understanding other things)" (Ortner, 2006, p. 14). Additionally, while agency can be seen as heterogeneous in nature, an important distinction between two main elements of agency can be drawn. That is, every day actions and choices that *reproduce* the current structures, and actions and choices that *transform* the current structures in a beneficial way for the actor (Bajaj, 2009; Hays, 1994). Some theorists, such as Bourdieu, have argued that agency constitutes social structures through its *reproduction* of these structures (Stones, 2007). In this regard, agency is seen as the reproduction of social structures, in that, cultural and societal habits and norms are held to reinforce and reproduce these structures which, "exist and are maintained only through the interactional activities of individuals" (Hays, 1994, p. 62). However, this reproductive process is not held to be all-encompassing, and the actions and choices agents make can also be seen to have a transformative effect on the structures themselves (Hays, 1994). The other element of agency, therefore, is its *transformative* capacity; the ability of agents to reshape the social world and break down and alter traditional and social structures towards positive change (Bajaj, 2009; Hays, 1994). Thus, as Hays (1994, p. 62) states, "agency explains the creation, recreation, and transformation of social structures", it is "limited within the bounds of structural constraint" but it is also "made possible by the enabling features of social structures",

which are also vulnerable to being transformed by actors. Consequently, research has become interested in how agency is articulated and in understanding the factors that affect the capacity of agents to impact social structures (Hays, 1994; Robson, et al., 2007).

Investigations of agency for this thesis are particularly interested in issues related to youth agency. Young people's agency is often understood in terms of "'tactics' - immediate responses to the vagaries of fluid events" (Jeffrey, 2011, p. 4), although instances of more strategic, long-term engagements are also evident depending on the circumstance, especially who they are with (Bell & Payne, 2009). It is argued that young people's (in)ability to act is related to their (real or perceived) social position and location in various relationships. Thus, "depending on both the people young people spend time with and where these social interactions take place, there are shifts in the balance of power during young people's day-to-day lives and during the life course" (Robson, et al., 2007, p. 21). Youth agency is increasingly seen as being socially situated. Bosman (2004, p. 46) argues that agency is, "embodied in social relations and can only be effective through them". The way young people 'negotiate' their social situation and embeddedness, is, therefore, of importance for enlarging the scope for their agency. Wierenga (2009, p. 91) notes that:

> "What is most clearly differentiated is the individuals' power to negotiate from within the context of their relationships to the social world. For this reason, young people's strategies, and for that matter, young people's agency, should not be seen as simply an individual phenomena but also anchored, via their social and historical relationships, to their context. Agency cannot be reduced simply to self-concept or self-esteem, personal efficacy, resilience or even individual and group consciousness-raising and empowerment. It is about knowledge and understandings, but also about the capacity to activate resources"

Further to the capacity to activate resources, youth agency varies not only in different spaces and in response to various people and social situations, but also according to their real or perceived capabilities (Robson, et al., 2007). The "feelings, emotions and state of mind" of a young person, when considering their ability to act, is important as it is argued that the "success of agency would appear to be related to an individual's perceived sense of being able, and to his or her confidence" (Robson, et al., 2007, p. 142). The temporality of youth agency, together with its interdependent

nature and the need for young people to perceive themselves as able, all feed into the multifaceted nature of youth agency.

Examples of young people's articulations of agency are increasingly being reported on within development literature. The 'resourcefulness' of young people, linked to self-employment and finding a way to support themselves and to simply survive, is taken as evidence of youth agency in the literature (Jeffrey, 2011). An example of resourcefulness was highlighted by Thieme's (2010) research in Nairobi where young Kenyans became involved in community garbage-collection in order to earn money and critique the city's urban planning. Related to resourcefulness, mobility, particularly moving to urban areas for education, employment or trade purposes, has increasingly been acknowledged to be an expression of agency (Jeffrey, 2011). Swanson (2009) highlighted migration to Ecuador's cities to beg and gain money for schooling as a response by Andean young people to poor rural economic opportunities. Punch (2007) commented on seasonal work migration of youth in Bolivia as a form of agency. This youth migration could be an act of conforming or resistance to expectations and often leads to increased access to money, which allows enhanced opportunity to exercise agency (Robson, et al., 2007).

Another form of youth agency that has been identified in the literature is the conforming to or resisting adult expectations, in order to achieve a desired goal (Robson, et al., 2007). For example, young Ugandans carrying out out-of-home chores required by adults in order to secretly meet with boy/girlfriends (Bell, 2007). The creation of safe spaces in which, often marginalised, young people have a sense of solidarity and more liberty to 'act' has also been highlighted (Bell, 2007; Robson, et al., 2007) Lastly, community and civic involvement have been seen as evidence of young people's expression of agency. Research shows that young people gain confidence by being involved in their community, even just through cleaning up a playground or clearing rubbish (Jeffrey, 2011). Additionally, young people are becoming involved globally in various forms of political, social, and economic action (Jeffrey, 2011). Table 2.2 summarises the above outlined articulations of agency and their resulting positive consequences for young people.

Of course, it is still acknowledged that there are constraints to young people's ability to 'act'; "young people negotiate their own lives, futures and meanings, but they do so in the context of specific social, political and economic circumstances and processes" (White & Wyn, 1998, p. 314). Indeed, once there is acknowledgement of young people as agents it is important to consider the opportunities and constraints for

young people's expressions of agency (Robson, et al., 2007). Historically, investigating opportunities and constraints on agency has followed the structure/agency dualism, however, more recently there have been calls for a more nuanced understanding, particularly around young people's expressions of agency, which are held to be particularly complex due to its temporality and social dependence and embeddedness (Bell & Payne, 2009; Jeffrey, 2011; Robson, et al., 2007).

Table 2.2 Examples of young people's articulations of agency in the literature

ARTICULATION OF AGENCY	POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES
Resourcefulness →	Income; Survival
Mobility →	Income; Increased access to services; Freedom from strict adult influences
Conforming/resisting adult expectations →	Ability to achieve a desired goal
Creation of safe places →	Solidarity; Liberty to 'act'
Community and civic involvement →	Increased confidence and connectedness

Source: Author, drawing on Bell and Payne (2009), Jeffrey (2011), Robson et al. (2007) and Thieme (2010).

This thesis draws on the work of Klocker (2007) to frame a nuanced investigation into the opportunities and constraints for youth agency. Rather than creating lists of factors that constrain and enable young people's expression of agency, Klocker (2007) proposes exploring factors that can 'thin' or 'thicken' agency in any given context. In light of the post-structural view that people navigate multiple, interconnected webs of power and influence on their ability to be and act, 'thin' or 'thick' "convey a sense of the layering of the multiple factors" that impact on young people's expression of agency (Bell & Payne, 2009, p. 1029; Jeffrey, 2011; Robson, et al., 2007). Thin agency refers to decisions and actions "carried out within highly restrictive contexts, characterized by few alternatives", while thick agency refers to decisions and actions carried out within the liberty of a broad range of alternatives (Klocker, 2007, p. 85). In this way, any young person's agency is 'thinned' or 'thickened' "over time and space, and across variations of relationships" (Klocker, 2007, p. 85). Thin and thick agency are, therefore, not presented as two sides of a coin but as different poles on a continuum on which all people are positioned as actors; and this positioning is dependent upon a wide range of factors at any one time (Bell & Payne, 2009; Klocker, 2007).

Klocker (2007) used the concept of thin and thick agency to examine the agency of child domestic workers in Tanzania. Klocker's study found a number of 'thinners' of agency. First, age - based on the hierarchical age structure in Tanzanian society the younger the child the more likely they were to be silenced by a variety of means, although, the author noted that these silencing practices were more prevalent in rural than urban areas, highlighting the multifaceted nature of agency. Second, gender was another thinner of agency for Tanzanian girls, based on the fact that families prioritise sending males to school, girls are socialised into domestic roles, bride-price practices continue, and there are high levels of coercion in the sexual experience of girls and women (Klocker, 2007). Tribal affiliation was a third thinner of agency, with employers preferring female domestic workers from a specific tribe due to their submissiveness. Additionally, poverty was identified as a thinner of agency as it pushed children into more risky work, further away from their families (Klocker, 2007). Lastly, the normalisation of marginalising behaviours, such as the preparing of young girls for domestic employment, was seen as a thinning factor for agency (Klocker, 2007).

Further examples of constraining and enabling factors are found in the literature, for example, regarding social settings and acceptance by wider society, Robson et al. (2007) found that following initiation ceremonies young men have enhanced opportunity to exercise agency due to the respect they subsequently gained. Likewise, in their research on child headed households in Zambia, Bell and Payne (2009) concluded that children who did not complete rites of passage, due to other obligations, were viewed by the community as eternal youth, and this constrained the scope for their agency. Bell and Payne (2009) also noted how employment and income-earning gave young people decision-making power, respect and enhanced opportunities for exercising agency. This 'power', provided by being an income-earner, appeared to transcend constraints on agency based on traditional familial and household relations (Bell & Payne, 2009). Further, constraints on youth agency come from parents and elders, and interactions and negotiations with their control, as well as from personal factors and circumstances, such as age, gender, skills and poverty (Bell & Payne, 2009). These thinning/constraining and thickening/enabling factors and their consequences are summarised in Table 2.3, and a similar format is used to present the study findings in Chapter Five.

It is important to emphasise the fact that a young person's experiences of agency alter depending on their perceived (in)ability to act, who they are, who they are with, what they are doing, and where they are (Robson, et al., 2007, p. 144). Their

experience of agency could vary greatly depending on the thinners and thickeners present at any one time and place, and their perceived (in)ability to 'act' in that time and place. In this way, economic and social structures, as well as, contexts and personal factors all impact on young people's expressions of agency (Bell & Payne, 2009). Understanding the circumstances in which young people can 'act' is, therefore, important, as is understanding the processes by which they can act to bring about positive change for themselves and their communities.

Table 2.3. Examples of thinning and thickening factors for youth agency

'THINNING' FACTORS	HOW THIS FACTOR AFFECTS AGENCY
Younger age →	Silencing practices
Gender →	Females not prioritised for schooling = lower education and more chance of sexual coercion
Tribal affliation →	Preference of some tribes over others by employers
Poverty →	Pushed into risky work
Normalisation of marginalising behaviours →	Fewer alternatives for youth
Strict control by parents or elders →	Limited choices and opportunities to act
'THICKENING' FACTORS	**HOW THIS FACTOR AFFECTS AGENCY**
Rites of passage →	Respect; Acceptance
Employment opportunities →	Income; Respect; Decision-making power

Source: Author, drawing on Bell and Payne (2009), Jeffrey (2011), Klocker (2007), Robson et al. (2007) and Thieme (2010).

This thesis research examines the actions young people are (un)able to take in order to bring about positive change for their, and their communities future, in other words, their (in)ability to be agents of positive change. It employs Klocker's (2007) framework to allow for examination of the varying and interacting influences on agency: factors that thin and thicken young people's agency. The research also explores the articulation of young people's agency. In examining 'thinners' and 'thickeners', as well as examples of agency, Figure 2.1 summarises the literature around agency drawn on for this thesis, and is the framework used when investigating the agency of young Solomon Islanders and in presenting the findings in Chapter Five.

Figure 2.1 Theoretical framework for investigating factors that 'thin' and 'thicken' youth agency

THE AGENCY CONTINUUM

THIN AGENCY	THICK AGENCY
• Decisions and actions carried out in highly restrictive environments with few alternatives • Likely to maintain and reproduce current structures	• Decisions and actions carried out within the liberty of a broad range of alternatives • Possibility to transform current structures in a beneficial way for the actor
THINNING FACTORS	**THICKENING FACTORS**
• are constraining structures • may disable people from seeing, feeling, understanding, imagining and acting to transform • E.g. Normalisation of marginalising behaviours (Klocker, 2007); Strict control by parents or elders (Bell & Payne, 2009)	• are enabling structures • may allow people to see, feel. understand, imagine and act to transform • E.g. Completion of rites of passage (Bell & Payne, 2009); Income earning opportunities (Bell & Payne, 2009)

Source: Author, drawing on Klocker (2007).

2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND BRIEF DISCUSSION

Both 'development' and 'youth' are contested terms. A hopeful post-development approach argues that development should be viewed as a practice which enlarges the field of credible experience and prioritises assets and agency. This view of development underpins investigations into youth and development for this thesis. There is currently no comprehensive 'framework' for theorising 'youth *and* development'; rather, positive youth development models, principles for aid effectiveness and sustainability, participatory development, the UNCRC, and demographic concerns are all used to frame development policy and practice with young people. Increasingly, a focus on young people as agents in their life-worlds and communities is being seen (Beauvy, 2006; Wyn & White, 1997). Agency has been defined in various ways and can be reproductive or transformative of social structures, with youth agency having some particular complexities based on its temporality, social nature and dependence on perceived ability (Bell & Payne, 2009; Hays, 1994; Jeffrey, 2011; Robson, et al.,

2007; Stones, 2007). For the purpose of the current research, Klocker's (2007) framework of 'thin' and 'thick' agency is used to investigate expressions of youth agency. This thesis argues that a focus on youth agency, the manner which it is articulated and the factors that support and constrain it, should be considered as a key part of a framework for working with youth in development, and should, thus, form another strand in the forming of a more comprehensive understanding of youth *and* development.

The definitions of both development and youth, and expressions of agency, are closely linked to context. It is, therefore, important to provide a background understanding of the environment for the young people central to this thesis. As such, the unique socio-cultural circumstances of Solomon Islands is addressed in the following chapter.

SOLOMON ISLANDS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Two the theoretical background for the study was discussed. This chapter provides a background picture of Solomon Islands in order to situate the research findings, detailed later in the thesis, within their specific cultural context. As discussed in Chapter Two, the definition of development and youth, as well as of agency, is contested and varies across time and place, therefore, understanding the specific socio-cultural, economic and political circumstances in which the findings are embedded is necessary to gain deeper understanding into their meaning and implications. This chapter focuses, first, on Solomon Islands as a country, commenting on people and place, followed by an historical account of the group of islands now known as 'Solomon Islands'. The chapter then looks at *kastom* and religion, as well as aid and development. Secondly, the chapter explores literature related to young people in Solomon Islands, with regard to challenges they face and support structures available to them. Additionally comment on youth in and around Honiara is given, as this is the specific area in which this thesis research was conducted.

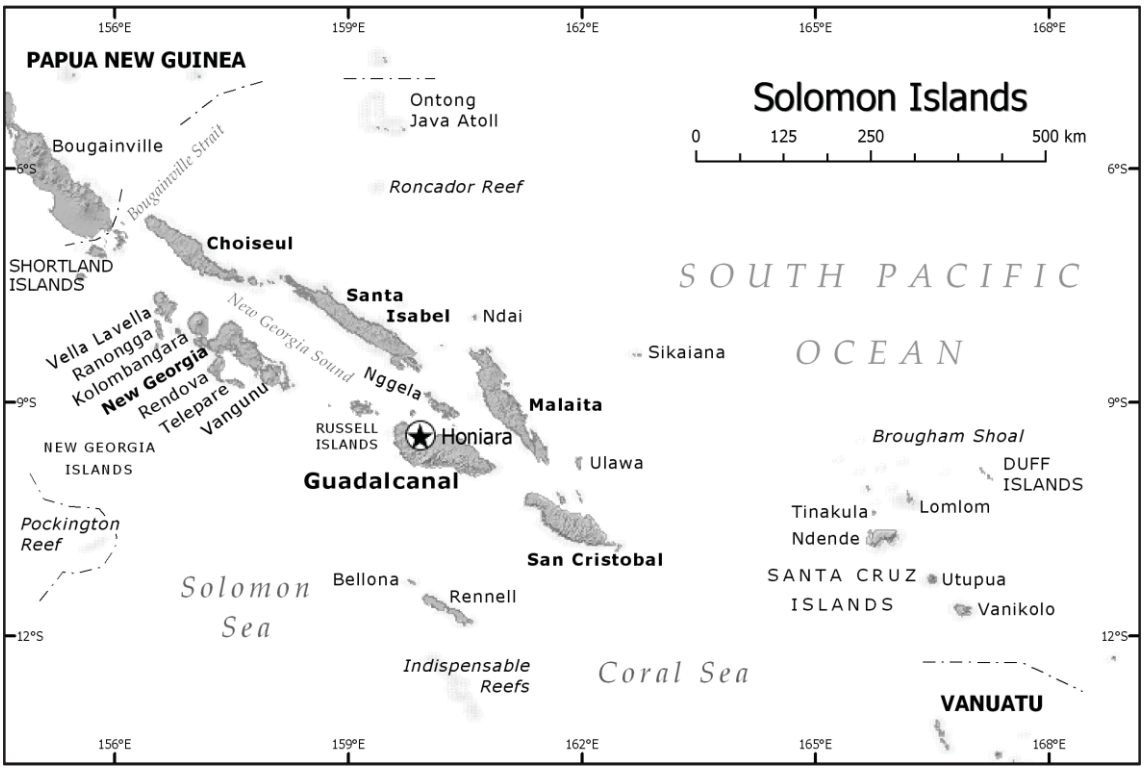
3.2 PEOPLE AND PLACE

Solomon Islands[1] is an island nation in the South Pacific, regionally classified as Melanesia, and located below the equator north of Australia and east of Papua New Guinea (PNG) (Boutilier, 1981). The Solomon Islands archipelago is made up of six major islands (see Fig. 3.1): Choiseul, New Georgia, Santa Isabel, Guadalcanal (the largest island that hosts the capital, Honiara), Malaita and San Cristobal (also called Makira), with hundreds of other smaller islands and atolls (Rohorua, 2004, 2007). At the 2009 census Solomon Islands' total population stood at 515 870 (SIG, 2011, p. 1), with the highest annual population growth rate, at 2.3%, and fertility rate, at 4.7, in the Pacific region (SIG, 2011, p. 1; SPC, 2011). However, Solomon Islands has one of the

[1] In the literature the terms 'Solomon Islands', 'The Solomon Islands', and 'The Solomons' are simultaneously used to describe the country. For the purposes of this study a range of participants, as well as a couple of Solomon Islands colleagues, were asked which of the above was the most appropriate term. While there was some variation on this, use of 'Solomon Islands' was most commonly acknowledged as the most appropriate term as it refers formally to a nation or unit. Therefore, 'Solomon Islands' is used to describe the country in this thesis research, although acknowledgment is made that 'The Solomon Islands' or 'The Solomons' may also be used.

lowest population densities in the region at 17 people per sq. km (SIG, 2011, p. 1). The urban population is just under 20% of the total population, with an urban growth rate of 4.7% (SIG, 2011, p. 1). Additionally, Solomon Islands has one of the youngest populations in the Pacific, with almost 60% of the population below the age of 24, and a national median age of 20 (SIG, 2011, p. 1; SPC, 2011). Around 95% of the population are classified as being Melanesian, the remainder are Polynesian (3%), Micronesian (1%), Hong Kong Chinese, other Pacific Islanders and a very small expatriate community centred around Honiara (ADB, 2010; Boutilier, 1981, p. 171; PIFS, 2008; Rohorua, 2007). English is the official language, but is only spoken by a fraction of the population, with Solomon Islands Pidgin being the main language spoken (Hosking, 2004). Additionally, there are over ninety indigenous languages spoken, the majority of which belong to the Austronesian group (Bennett, 1987; Hosking, 2004; World Bank, 2008).

Figure 3.1 Map of Solomon Islands



Source: Travel Portal (2012).

The major islands are mountainous, largely volcanic in origin, and edged with coral reefs; the rugged terrain, lack of roads and distances between islands render some areas very isolated (Boutilier, 1981). The islands are also vulnerable to earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions and tropical cyclones (Bennett, 1987). As a

tropical nation, Solomon Islands has high temperatures and high rainfall levels, and is covered with tropical rain forest (Bennett, 1987). It is rich in natural resources with high soil fertility in many areas and a rich ocean life. Consequently, extensive subsistence gardening and fishing are common place, and Solomon Islands' communities have historically been self-sufficient (Bennett, 1987). The country is culturally and ethnically diverse with historical and cultural divides between various islands and between "saltwater" people, who live along the coast and make their living from the sea, and "bush" people, who live inland and tend to be agriculturalists (Bennett, 1987, p. 2). Land is generally communally owned, based on ancestry, and the majority of Solomon Islanders still live in small villages, of less than 200 people, which have established social systems and are usually headed by *big-men* (chiefs or elders) (Bennett, 1987; Boutilier, 1981; Mamaloni, 1992). Familial ties remain strong in Solomon Islands with most people identifying themselves firstly by their *wantoks*, the Pidgin word for 'one talk', referring to people from the same language and family group, secondly, by their island, and thirdly as citizens of the Solomon Islands nation (Fraenkel, 2004; Hosking, 2004; PIFS, 2008; Rohorua, 2006, 2007).

3.3 History

3.3.1 The forming of a nation

Historical understandings of this group of islands date its occupation to about 10,000 years ago, with the arrival of Neolithic people around 4000 years ago (Boutilier, 1981). These early inhabitants developed their own customs, governance, and culture, over the generations, before the arrival of European explorers (Rohorua, 2006). Traditional, pre-capitalist production and exchange systems were based on subsistence gardening and fishing, with the household as the production unit (Ipo, 1989). Land was the main economic resource, and had spiritual meaning based on the link it provided between the past and the present (Ipo, 1989). While subsistence production was the basis of society, there is evidence for highly developed trading and exchange networks (Ipo, 1989). The first European visit to these islands was in the mid-1500s by Spaniard Alvaro de Mendana, whose sailors mistakenly thought there was a presence of gold in the islands, leading to inflated reports of these islands being linked to King Solomon of the Old Testament and being a source of untold wealth (Boutilier, 1981). While the mythical wealth may not have been found, European economic interest, and later political concern, grew increasingly during the late nineteenth century (Bennett, 1987; Mamaloni, 1992).

The British Solomon Islands Protectorate (BSIP) was formed in 1893, with the British colonial administration having formal political and administrative authority (Bennett, 1987; Rohorua, 2004). The relationship with the colonial powers shifted during the World War Two (WWII), during which many Solomon Islanders fought alongside the United States of America (USA) (Bennett, 1987; Boutilier, 1981). Major war damage resulted in the economic collapse of the BSIP, and later left it facing politically instability with the rise of nationalist resistance movements (Boutilier, 1981). The main indigenous resistance came from a movement called *Maasina* ('brotherhood' or marching) Rule, which was strong from 1944 to 1950 and concentrated in Malaita (Boutilier, 1981; Laracy, 1981; Rohorua, 2007). As WWII drew to an end the *Maasina* movement called for the resistance to the re-establishment of British rule in the post-war era (Boutilier, 1981; Laracy, 1981). Solomon Islands later achieved independence in 1978 (Boutilier, 1981; Chapman, 1992; Rohorua, 2007).

3.3.2 Post-independence Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands, as a nation; a circumscribed, self-governing entity, can be seen as an, essentially, post-WWII phenomenon (Rohorua, 2007). The perception of this group of islands as a whole has to do with its history, it's single name and it's political entity and, "whether these islands can be said to represent a social entity is a rather different matter" (Rohorua, 2006, p. 4). Indeed the ethnic, cultural and social diversity of Solomon Islands has huge implications and challenges for 'nation-building' in general (PIFS, 2008; Rohorua, 2007). At independence the nation held great optimism for the creation of a prosperous Solomon Islands and in the new post-independence government's ability to build the young nation (Rohorua, 2007). Rohorua (2004, p. 5) cautions, however, that this was fanned more by rhetoric than reality. Five main areas have been identified as being problematic for post-independence governance and nation-building in Solomon Islands. Firstly, in the transition to political independence the hasty departure of the British has been criticised for resulting in inadequate preparation for independence and national leadership (ASPI, 2003; Devesi, 1992; Rohorua, 2007). Secondly, although a provincial system is in place, government remains highly centralised and governance and services in the provinces remains limited (Rohorua, 2007). Thirdly, efforts to involve chiefs and elders in government were not made (Timmer, 2008). Fourthly, politicians tend to contest, and be selected, individually and based on personality and association, rather than party membership or political ideology (Rohorua, 2007).

Additionally, seats are often contested for in areas where *wantok* connections can be exploited or support can be procured (Rohorua, 2007). Allegations of bribery and nepotism have subsequently been directed at the government, and *wantok* groups continue to have a strong influence due to lack of national identity (Hosking, 2004; PIFS, 2008). Lastly, inconsistency of the imposed modern state, and 'nation-building', with custom and culture throughout Solomon Islands has been held as a root-cause of many post-independence difficulties (Rohorua, 2006, 2007). By the late 1980s Solomon Islands had a reputation for unreliable leadership and corruption and faced growing levels of popular dissatisfaction with the government (ASPI, 2003). Post-independence expectations had not been met, the economy was stagnating, and services could not cope with the population growth (ASPI, 2003). These factors impact on young people who rely on government services. All these factors also helped create instability and the circumstances leading to civil conflict toward the end of the twentieth century (Rohorua, 2007).

In the late 1990s escalation of resentment between the Guadalcanalese and Malaitans on Guadalcanal, rooted in unresolved land and social disputes, resulted in civil conflict (Hosking, 2004; Rohorua, 2006). Armed with hand-made weapons and using brutal tactics there were severe casualties on both sides (ASPI, 2003). The tension also resulted in the paralysis of government, ethnic divisions within the police force, wide reaching lawlessness, a breakdown of services and the threat of national bankruptcy (ASPI, 2003; Dinnen, 2008). Many of the people who took control of Honiara during the 1999-2001 ethnic tension were young men between the ages of 17 and 29, and during this time youth gangs started to appear and are still prominent (Jourdan, 2008). Youth, in particular, have reported long lasting effects of the tension including: fear, insecurity, economic recession and stagnation, family breakdown, increased substance abuse, and deterioration on health gains made prior to the tension (Jourdan, 2008; McMurray, 2005a). Guadalcanal young people are unique in their identification of armed and sexual violence and continued trauma as issues they face, indicating residual impact of the tension (Scales, 2003).

In October 2000, Australia and New Zealand brokered the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA), which was only partially successful (Dinnen, 2008). There was still, by and large, an absence of law and order and low level violence and intimidation continued across Guadalcanal, and the Western Province (ASPI, 2003). There was no cabinet in place and government remained powerless. Attempts at reconciliation appeared to be failing, and by 2003 Australia labelled Solomon Islands a failing state (ASPI, 2003). In response to requests for assistance, and justified by the labelling of

Solomon Islands as a failed state, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) was set up in July 2003, and has taken a significant role in the governance of Solomon Islands since (Dinnen, 2008; Fraenkel, 2004). While the horror of the peak of the ethnic tension rendered people grateful for international intervention, criticism has been made of RAMSI based on the increasing dominance of Australians government posts and failure to address the root-causes of the tension (Dinnen, 2008). In April 2006, after the first elections since the presence of RAMSI, widespread rioting and looting broke out when the popular candidate was not elected Prime Minister. This violent response put a further damper on the early optimism generated by RAMSI's initial success (Dinnen, 2008).

The last five years have seen varying levels of stability within Solomon Islands, as the government continues to try shape a national identity. At the end of 2010 and 2011 riots broke out following unpopular political decisions. The riots were centred in Honiara, revealing other aspects, such as rapid urbanisation, population growth, and rising unemployment as possible contributing factors (Palmer, 2010; Solomon Star, 2011). While there has been praiseworthy economic growth, problems remain as the government struggles to tackle the diversity of a nation bound together for colonial convenience in which localism continues to prevail over nationalism, democracy remains unstable, and consideration of custom and culture is still not evident in the governance of the nation (ADB, 2010; Dinnen, 2008; Rohorua, 2007; Timmer, 2008). Rohorua (2006) does offer the reminder that Solomon Islands is still a young nation and is still putting in place institutions and practices for good governance and stability (Rohorua, 2006). State-building will remain a challenge for the nation where, "bonds of kinship, shared language and ties to ancestral land, along with Christianity, were more likely to constitute the basis for individual identities and allegiance than abstract notions of citizenship or membership of the modern state" (Dinnen, 2008, p. 7). In fact, Rohorua (2007, p. 104) states that *kastom* and the church have more powerful influences on society and identity than the state, and that a, "tripartite explication of contemporary Solomon Islands society in terms of *kastom*, church and state/government" must be understood to obtain a full picture of Solomon Islands' society.

3.4 *KASTOM* AND RELIGION

The Pidgin word *kastom* originates from the English word 'custom', and is commonly used, within Solomon Islands, and Melanesia as a whole, to describe the

indigenous basis of contemporary society (Akin, 2004; Rohorua, 2006). The use of *kastom* in the literature tends to be divided along two main lines (Rohorua, 2007). Firstly, *kastom* is commonly used to simply refer to the customs or traditions of a particular people or group (Rohorua, 2007). In this respect, it is implausible that there would be a 'Solomon Islands *kastom*', as *kastom* within Solomon Islands differs along many lines. In this sense, *kastom* is diverse and refers to the values, practices, and culture of any one group, often being linked to one's history and ancestors (Berg, 2000; Rohorua, 2007).

The second conceptualisation of *kastom* is based on a range of anthropological literature, which argues that it can be understood as a political symbol; a form of resistance and political ideology (Akin, 2004; Keesing, 1982). In this sense, Melanesian *kastom,* is seen, not as equalling indigenous values and practices, but rather, as referring to the *evolving* ideologies and activities undertaken with the aim of *empowering* and *protecting* particular indigenous values and practice (Akin, 2004, p. 300). *Kastom* is not simply a given, a set of traditions, past down from previous generations, but is something that people are constantly building on, altering and (re)creating in response and resistance to the changing social, political and economic situations in which they find themselves (Keesing, 1982). In this conceptualisation, rather than being a symbol of diversity, *kastom* becomes a "symbol of unity" through which different people can come together and appeal for protection of, "the Melanesian way" (Keesing, 1982, p. 298). Akin (2005, p. 76) states that, "kastom is, at its core, about social and community ideals and perceived threats to them". This is backed up by his research with the Kwaio of Malaita and the finding that when traditions came into contact with modernity, these indigenous traditions were amplified and exaggerated and then become *kastom* as a form of resistance (Akin, 2004). In this respect, *kastom* represents a "conscious ideology of opposition" (Rohorua, 2007, p. 104) which "contains a powerful anti-capitalist and anti-modernist message, grounded in moralistic themes of protecting communities and indigenous social values" (Akin, 2005, p. 79).

Based on the understanding of *kastom* as a political and resistance ideology, the active part in 'forming' and working out of *kastom* means that it is open to high-jacking and manipulation and can possibly be harnessed by people to their own ends, Akin (2004) gives an example of this in the use of *kastom* to subjugate women. It has been argued that the Solomon Islands government has been largely unsuccessful at exploiting *kastom* for its own benefit (Rohorua, 2007). One reason provided for this is a fear of giving too much power to '*kastom* authorities' (Rohorua, 2007). Another

reason is that the Christian church has stood as an impediment to the inclusion of *kastom*, based on the church's historical critique of 'unchristian' indigenous traditions (Akin, 2005). This highlights however, the power of this third part of the tripartite influence on Solomon Islands society, the church.

Religion is reported to have long been an important, if not central, part of Melanesian life and culture (Joseph & Browne-Beu, 2008). Christian churches play a strong role in the Solomon Islands society and are seen to have largely supplanted earlier, traditional religious beliefs which are thought to have been centred on the belief of spiritual beings and forces and rituals and practices to appease, communicate with and manipulate these beings and forces (Bennett, 1987; Boseto, 1992). By the late 1800s, religious practices started to change in Solomon Islands with many islanders converting to Christianity (Boutilier, 1981; Joseph & Browne-Beu, 2008). Missionaries established and provided the majority of educational and medical services prior to WWII, they also encouraged people to relocate from the bush to the coast (Boutilier, 1981). During the 1960s the missions, governed by outside control, evolved into locally governed, established churches (Fugui, 1989).

Prior to the arrival of Christianity, traditional priests possessed much *mana* (power) in communities and often collaborated and led alongside *big-men* (Joseph & Browne-Beu, 2008). As churches came to dominate, this loyalty was often transferred from traditional priests to Christian priests, who became a source of *mana* and continue to be trusted and respected leaders, often above chiefs and government officials (Joseph & Browne-Beu, 2008). Joseph and Browne-Beu (2008, p. 1) state that, "it could be argued that in the Solomon Islands the only national institutions that command a loyalty and respect that transcend provincial and tribal boundaries are the churches". Additionally, many communities associate by church-denomination boundaries, rather than government boundaries (Scales, 2003). The Christian church has also taken a lead in many aspects of development, such as, providing some medical and educational services (Boseto, 1992; Joseph & Browne-Beu, 2008). Many churches have invested in youth through youth groups; building their capacity and providing opportunities to be involved in leadership (Boseto, 1992). Currently, almost 95% of Solomon Islanders profess to be Christians, although some argument has been made around the nominal character of Christianity and the continual merging of introduced religious knowledge with older traditional beliefs (Bennett, 1987; Rohorua, 2007, p. 97). The remainder of the population are made up of those maintaining traditional religious beliefs and of those following the Bahá'í Faith (Bennett, 1987;

Hassall, 2006). Together with the strong social role of the church, civil society and international aid and development have had an increasing role in Solomon Islands.

3.5 DEVELOPMENT AND AID

With regards to aid and development, even as the BSIP the islands were highly dependent on external funding and foreign aid, and the economic development of the Protectorate was inadequate (Rohorua, 2007). Rohorua (2007) critiques these past development activities as being deficit based and not taking into consideration the beliefs and *kastom* of local people; resulting in uneven development that is not modified or influenced by population realities. In reaction to Britain's negligence, post-independence development approaches took on an anti-colonial stance, however, they continue to be driven more by principles associated with nation-building and economic development, with little focus on social and cultural facets (Rohorua, 2007).

In recent years a couple of Solomon Islands academics have researched indigenous notions of development, putting forward alternative conceptualisations of development with the hope that these will be taken into consideration in development efforts within Solomon Islands (Gegeo, 1998; Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2002; Rohorua, 2007). Rohorua (2007, p. 193), investigating the concept of development on Ulawa Island, states that *mwa'ora(nga)* is an indigenous understanding of development and means the 'healthy growth of crops', and, "the place where supplies (cut off or dried up) are replenished". Rohorua (2007, p. 195) argues that development in Ulawa "refers simply to sustaining life". Gegeo (1998, p. 298) investigated the concept of development for the Kawara'ae of Malaita and argued that for the Kwara'ae the goal of development is *gwaumauri'anga*, translated as the 'good life'. Development, as the 'good life', is embedded in a range of Kwara'ae cultural values and endorses an holistic approach encompassing the spiritual and psychological, as well as, the physical (Gegeo, 1998). Key to Kwara'ae understanding of development is its distinction from business. Business is seen as dead, individualistic, the pursuit of material things, and resulting in powerlessness in decision making. While development is seen as rooted in local knowledge and is sustainable and beneficial to the entire community (Gegeo, 1998, p. 305). These theorists hold that, unless indigenous understandings of 'development' are realised, meaningful development in Solomon Islands will not eventuate (Rohorua, 2007). This is a similar argument to that of the more recent post-development writing discussed in Chapter Two, that calls for validation of previously subjugated knowledges and meanings (Santos, 2004a)

Currently there is a strong donor and development agency presence in Solomon Islands (ASPI, 2003; IMF, 2011). Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organisations are also present and active as well as various church-linked development arms and local Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) (Willetts, Asker, Carrard, & Winterford, 2011). Public debt peaked at 60% of GDP in 2005, but following the Honiara Club Agreement, focus was placed on putting government debt on a sustainable trajectory (IMF, 2011, p. 2). Since then, public debt was reduced to 28% of GDP by the end of 2010 (IMF, 2011, p. 2). In Solomon Islands 22.7% of the population are currently living below the national poverty line (ADB, 2010, p. 1). The country has a Human Development Index (HDI), calculated based on life expectancy, education access and income, of 0.510, which is below the Pacific region average of 0.671, and gives Solomon Islands a country rank of 142 out of 187 countries with published HDIs (UNDP, 2011, p. 83). These statistics may particularly impact on the growing number of young Solomon Islanders with regards to education and employment opportunities, two main concerns for youth, as discussed in the following section.

3.6 Young people in the Solomon Islands

It was discussed in Chapter Two that 'youth' should be acknowledge as being a social construct, with its definition dependent on the specific cultural, economic, political and historical conditions (Cornwall, 2008). The Solomon Islands National Youth Policy defines young people as those between the ages of 14 and 29, a slightly broader definition than that of the UN (MWYCA, 2010). At the 2009 census, the youth population, using this definition, was 26.9% of the total population (SIG, 2011, p. 1). 'Youth' has traditionally been defined socially rather than chronologically in Solomon Islands and 'official' definitions are argued to differ from community ones which tend to see 'youth' as a category between 'student' and 'adult', with becoming an adult involving: marriage, establishing a household, and participating in various customary activities (Jourdan, 2008; Scales, 2003). Scales (2003, p.9) notes that distinction is often made between "young youth", generally aged between 11 and 20 and most likely to still be students, and "old youth", those making the transition into adulthood. However, an extended period of 'youth' is entirely unrecognised in a few rural communities where there is a clear rite of passage from childhood to adulthood (Scales, 2003).

3.6.1 The challenges facing young Solomon Islanders

The most comprehensive and accessible study on Solomon Islands youth is a participatory study of issues, needs and priorities of young Solomon Islanders conducted by AUSAID in 2003 (Scales, 2003). The most widespread *issues* identified by young people in this review included substance abuse, violence, teenage pregnancy and a lack of meaningful activity (Scales, 2003). Conversely the *needs* most widely identified by the review were for income generating activities, more youth programmes, and improved leadership and vocational training (Scales, 2003). Younger youth tended to be more concerned with lack of participation opportunities, lack of support by elders, and a lack of sports activities. In terms of gender, young women more frequently reported gender inequality, literacy, reproductive health, and leadership opportunities as concerns; while young men tended to highlight income generating opportunities, vocational training and marginalisation more often (Scales, 2003).

Apart from the above study, some statistical information is available around the situation for young Solomon Islanders, particularly around education and (un)employment. Adult literacy rates in Solomon Islands sit at 84.1% (SIG, 2011, p. 2), which is only a few percentages below regional and world rates (UN, 2011). Youth literacy rates are around 90%, and are higher in urban areas and for males, see Table 3.1 (SIG, 2011, p. 2). However, the Melanesian region, comprising of PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, consistently fall below regional and world enrolment rates (ADB, 2008; UN, 2011). Within Solomon Islands, primary enrolment rates sit at 75.1% (2005 rate), and secondary enrolment rates sit at 30.2% (2007 rate) (UN, 2011, p. 173). While Solomon Islands is on target to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of universal primary education, there is only space for about half of those who complete primary to go on to secondary school, and gender inequality in education increases with higher school levels (Noble, Pereira, & Saune, 2011). Upper primary level is noted as being the average school attainment in Solomon Islands (Scales, 2003). One report claims that over half of secondary school students are "pushed out", due to lack of school places, or drop-out after Form Three, and only a small minority complete secondary school (Chevalier, 2001, p. 38). Reasons for students dropping out of school, as reported by youth in discussion groups for the State of Pacific Youth 2011 Report, include family related issues, such as the presence of domestic violence and insecurity at home, and financial reasons, such as a lack of funds to purchase books and other school supplies (Curtain & Vakaoti, 2011). Additionally, one of the underlying issues is that the provision of schools has not kept up with increasing enrolment rates (Chevalier, 2001). There is the existence of non-formal educational, in the form

vocational education, such as Rural Training Centre's (RTCs) teaching trade and agricultural skills, and community education, such as life skills, short-term literacy and health, although there is no formal policy and accreditation around these (Scales, 2003). It has been identified that within the Pacific region there is a bias of education facilities toward preparing students for 'white-collar' employment and that technical/vocational training, when provided, is often seen as a second, less valid choice (McMurray, 2005b; Woo & Corea, 2009).

Table 3.1 Solomon Islands literacy rates

	Solomon Islands	Urban	Rural	Honiara
Literacy rate, 15+ (%)	84.1	93.6	81.4	94.5
Male	88.9	96.3	86.7	96.9
Female	79.2	90.7	76.2	91.8
Literacy rate, 15-24 (%)	89.5	95.6	87.6	96.1
Male	90.5	96.4	88.7	96.9
Female	88.4	94.9	86.4	95.3

Source: SIG (2011, p.2).

The most recent report of the number of young people out of school was from 2003 and stated that youth out of school made up close to 25% of the total population with at least 85% of these in rural areas (Scales, 2003, p. 11). Almost half of all 15-19 year olds were not in school, and close to 80% of all youth, defined as those ages between 15-29 were not in school, see Table 3.2 (Scales, 2003, p. 11). In both instances, there were more females than males out of school. This high proportion of youth out of school is related to youth unemployment levels. The young people who do not have access to tertiary level training, or do not complete secondary school, such as Form Three leavers, may have narrow employment opportunities (Chevalier, 2001). Solomon Islands has the second highest share of youth unemployment in the Pacific region at 42.2%, with reports stating that only one is six school leavers find employment (Duncan & Voigt-Graf, 2008; Noble, et al., 2011, p. 100). More specifically, reports from 2006 state that the unemployment rate for 15-19 year olds 75% and for 20-24 year olds is 49% (Jourdan, 2008, pp. 9, 33). It was mentioned in Chapter Two that one possible advantage of a young population is the economic opportunity it can create, as seen in the East Asian countries. It is argued that this trend is unlikely to be seen in the Pacific however, where there tends to be lower levels of investment and job

creation, further limiting employment opportunities (Duncan & Voigt-Graf, 2008; Woo & Corea, 2009).

Table 3.2 Out-of-school youth population as a percentage of total youth population

	15-19 year olds	20-24 year olds	25-29 year olds	15-29 years inclusive
Male	44.5	83.7	96.5	72.3
Female	54.3	92.0	98.4	80.0
Both sexes	49.4	87.8	97.5	76.1

Source: Scales (2003, p.11).

In rural areas, lack of cash is an issue for some young people who do not have funds for activities and have limited opportunities for making money (Scales, 2003). If young rural people do get involved in income generating projects, such as piggeries, lack of transport and marketing support may limit the benefits gained from this (Scales, 2003). A World Bank study of youth in 100 rural villages in Solomon Islands found that only 4-6% are engaged in government or private sector work, 8% are self-employed, and the majority were not 'officially' employed but contributed to various household livelihoods (World Bank, 2008, p. 6). Involvement in subsistence activities thus continues for many young people, who also supply considerable labour in rural areas in terms of copra production, logging, and use of sea resources (ILO, 2001; Scales, 2003).

In the case that young people do not finish school, and/or fail to find employment, research shows that they may become vulnerable to marginalisation within their communities (Woo & Corea, 2009). The risk of marginalisation is further impacted on by exclusion, at a community and national level, from decision making structures. A World Bank report, 'Giving South Pacific Youth a Voice', concluded that many youth in the region are bound by a "culture of silence", under which they may be expected to abide by those in authority without question, and may have limited opportunity to share their ideas with elders (Jayaweera & Morioka, 2008, p. 11). A lack of participation may reinforce the status quo, potentially maintaining an environment where some youth may be vulnerable to social exclusion. Many young Solomon Islanders report that opportunities to participate are limited, and that they need high levels of self-confidence and assertiveness in order to speak up when opportunities are provided (Scales, 2003). One proposal that has been forthcoming is around the need

for intergenerational interventions that build communication between adults and youth and may lessen young people's perceived or real marginalisation (Scales, 2003). The need for an inter-generational framework to be taken seriously for youth and development is further discussed in Chapter Six.

Another related factor to young people's marginalisation is engagement in at-risk activities. These activities are often related to well-being and include substance abuse, crime and violence, and risky sexual practices. The abuse of substances and alcohol is of serious concern, and is widely identified by young Solomon Islanders as a challenge they face (Curtain & Vakaoti, 2011; Lowe, 2001; Woo & Corea, 2009). The main substances include alcohol, particularly the local beer Solbrew and *kwaso* (home brew), betel nut, tobacco, and marijuana (Jourdan, 2008; Noble, et al., 2011). *Kwaso* and marijuana are sometimes produced by young unemployed youth as a source of income (Jourdan, 2008). A review found that there was little formal surveillance of drug use and limited information available to young people on the dangers of drugs and alcohol and on interventions available to users (Devaney, Reid, Baldwin, Crofts, & Power, 2006).

Pick-pocketing, theft, and drunk and disorderly behaviour are other risky behaviours, particularly seen in urban areas where young males are the most common offenders (Noble, et al., 2011). Risk-factors for engagement in crime go back to a lack of education and employment opportunities and are also linked to a lack of meaningful activity and limited participation in decision making (Curtain & Vakaoti, 2011). Involvement of young people in civil unrest is also of concern in Solomon Islands (McMurray, 2005b). One unique impact is the ethnic tension of 1998-2000, which is in living memory of some young people, many of whom were involved as victims or perpetrators. There is fear that, while the height of the tension has dissipated, the essential conditions for civil conflict, such as the presence of a youth bulge, high unemployment and rapid urbanisations, have not (Scales, 2003). Ware (2004, p. 1) states that, "instability will continue to threaten Melanesia for as long as economic growth fails to significantly outstrip population growth and thus to provide employment opportunities for a younger generation no longer satisfied with subsistence farming and fishing".

Finally, gender related violence is of concern, with levels of violence against women in Solomon Islands that are amongst the highest in the world (Forster, 2011). Two out of three women aged between 15 and 29 reported having experienced some form of abuse (SPC, 2009, p. iii). Solomon Islands also experiences a high incidence of

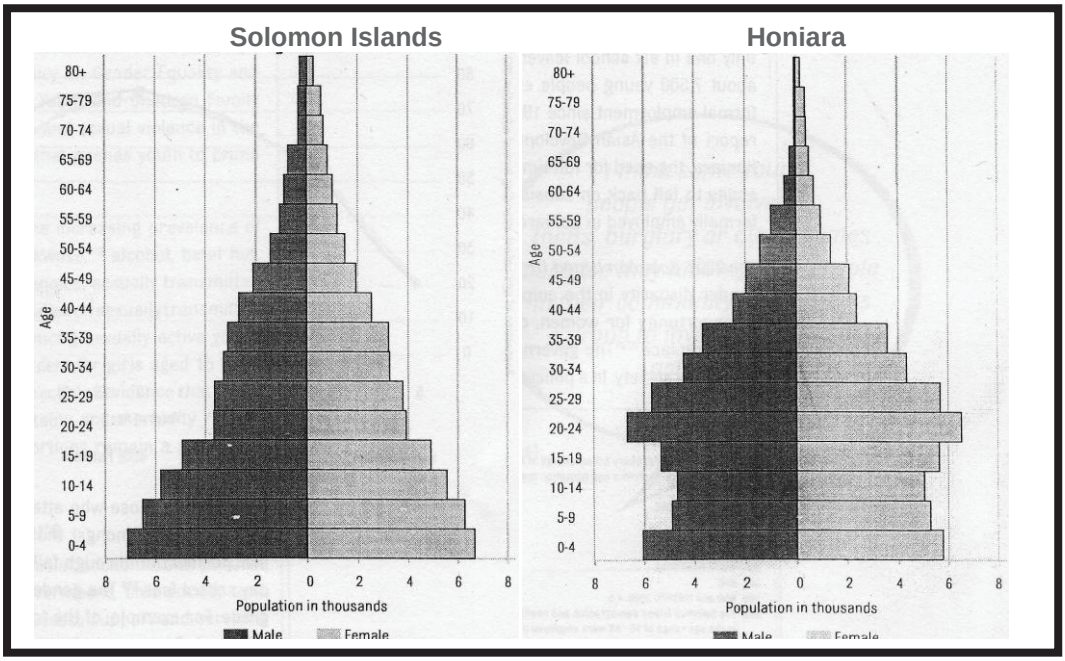
Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), with low levels of condom use (UNICEF, n.d.). Additionally, the pregnancy rate for girls aged 15-19 is 12% (Noble, et al., 2011, p. 101). However, there is a low HIV/AIDS prevalence with up to 75% of young people reporting having attended an HIV awareness programme (UNICEF, n.d., p. 7). The Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association (SIPPA), and Adolescent Reproductive Health (ARH) are both widely known and respected for their work in reproductive health and awareness raising around safe sexual practices (McMurray, 2005a).

Engagement in at-risk behaviours, such as substance abuse and violence, is often more prevalent in urban areas (Abebe & Kjørholt, 2011). Thus, rapid urbanisation and population growth of urban areas has been of increasing concern in recent years, with the challenges young people face often being amplified in urban areas (Alasia, 1989). The main focus of the current thesis research is in and around Honiara City. Honiara is located on the North-West coast of Guadalcanal and was established as the capital of the BSIP following WWII (Boutilier, 1981). Honiara is governed by the Honiara City Council and is a magnet to young people around Solomon Islands, due to employment, entertainment and education opportunities (Bennett, 1987; Noble, et al., 2011). There are unique issues facing young people in Honiara, and these are discussed below.

3.6.2 Youth in Honiara

Young people make up one third, 35.5%, of the Honiara population and this proportion is projected to increase until 2025 based on the fact that over 40% of the population are currently under 15 (MWYCA, 2010; Noble, et al., 2011; SIG, 2011, p. 1). Figure 3.2 shows population pyramids for Solomon Islands and Honiara, revealing the prominent youth bulge in Honiara in particular. The presence of a youth bulge, as discussed in Chapter Two, is often perceived as a threat to countries in which is occurs (Ware, 2004). Honiara has grown considerably since end of WWII, resulting in services and infrastructure struggling to keep up with the population growth, and in the growth of 'settlements' (Jourdan, 2008). Settlements are informal squatter areas within urban centres, usually classified by poor quality housing built outside of formal regulatory processes, and by high population density.

Fig 3.2 Solomon Islands and Honiara population pyramids



Source: Noble, et, al. (2011, p. 99).

Squatter settlements are not only occupied by the poor, but some middle class residents are forced to reside in these settlements due to the unavailability or high cost of other residential options (Alasia, 1989; Chand & Yala, 2008; Kuschel, Takiika, & Angiki, 2005; Storey, 2006). The squatter settlement population of Honiara is about 35% of the total Honiara population, and the annual settlement growth rate is almost 26% (Chand & Yala, 2008, p. 88).

The hardships young people face tend to be exaggerated in Honiara where 1 in 3 people classified as living below the poverty line, as opposed to 1 in 5 over the whole country (Noble, et al., 2011, p. 100). While statistics are showing a decline in family size in Honiara, the town has historically drawn young people from other provinces and islands who arrive to stay with relatives (Jourdan, 2008). This can, however, place pressure on urban families, and for some young people overcrowding can be disadvantageous as they struggle to have place to study, peace, privacy, and enough food (Jourdan, 2008). Similarly, there are better medical and educational facilities in Honiara than elsewhere in the country, but there is growing pressure on these (McMurray, 2005a). Some young people who migrated to Honiara with hopes for a better life express concern that they are just being idle and that there is not much for them to do (Jourdan, 2008). Increasingly, therefore, the argument is being made that moving to Honiara may not be beneficial for all young people, rather, ways for

them to stay in provinces should be investigated (McMurray, 2005a). It has been reported that young people in Honiara, "find themselves at a crossroad between worlds" (Jourdan, 2008, p. 35) and experience, "a sense of community dislocation" (Noble, et al., 2011, p. 101). As a result, urban youth are often pushed to the margins, especially if they are not seen as contributing members (Jourdan, 2008).

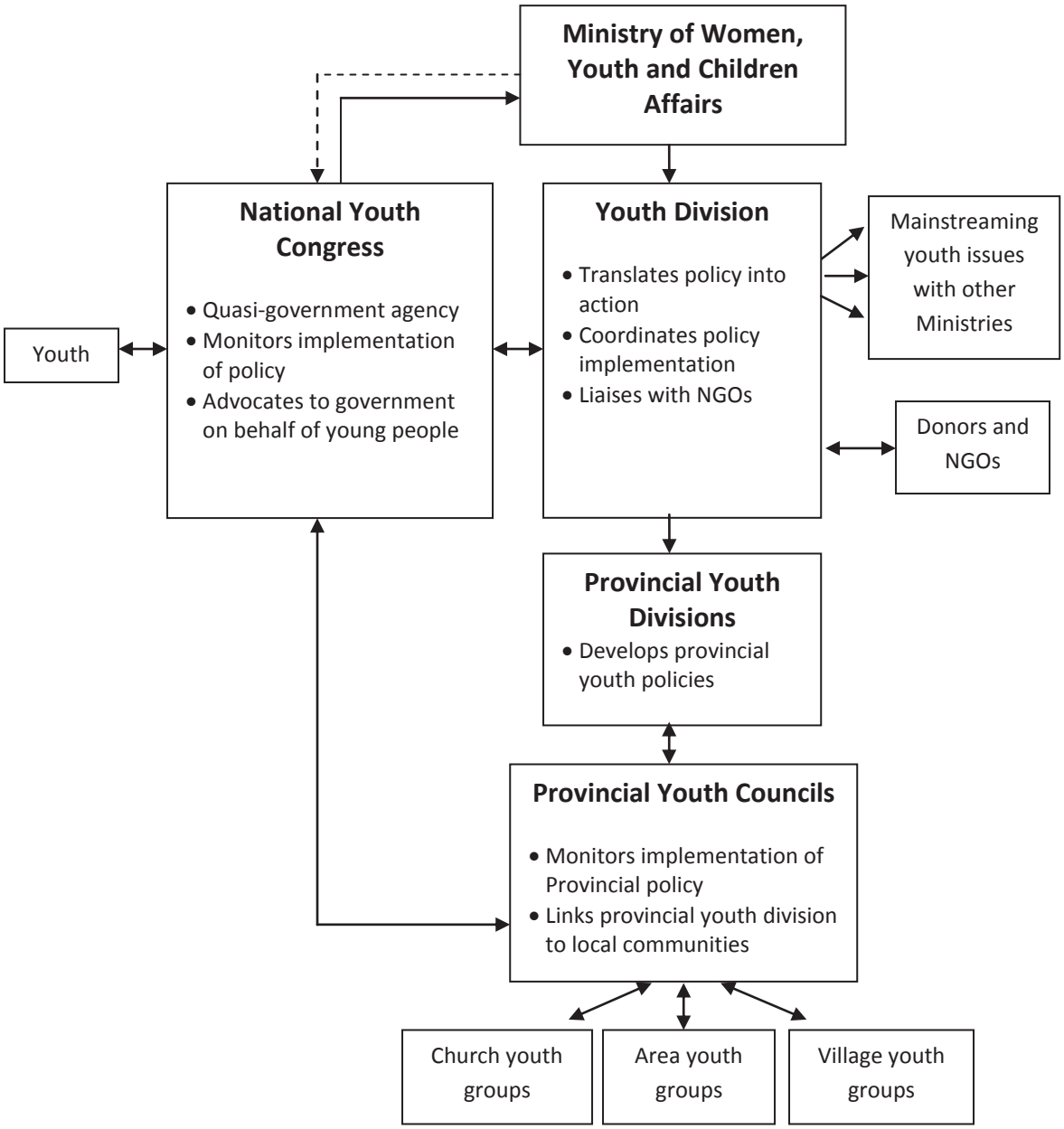
3.6.3 Structures and initiatives for young people in Solomon Islands

A number of government and community stakeholders play a role in addressing the needs of young Solomon Islanders (SIG, 2004). Figure 3.3 provides diagrammatic illustration of youth-related government structures. The first quasi-governmental youth agency, the National Youth Congress (NYC), was established in 1980 to represent young people, coordinate various youth activities, and provide a platform for youth to be heard at a government level (see Fig. 3.3) (Scales, 2003; SIG, 2004). The NYC has also been responsible for facilitating the development of youth-related policy. Toward the end of the 1980s the first Provincial Youth Councils were established and formed a link between the NYC and local youth groups (SIG, 2004). In 1994 a Sports and Youth Division was set up under the new Ministry for Youth, Sports and Women to operate together with the NYC, this split in 1999 to form the Youth Division which is currently present (Scales, 2003; SIG, 2004). The role of the Youth Division, which now comes under the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs (see Fig. 3.3), is to implement policy, coordinate with various agencies working for youth and offer small-scale training (SIG, 2004). National Youth Policies were formulated in 1980, 2000 and 2010 (Scales, 2003). In 2008 the Solomon Islands Government identified youth as one of six priority areas needing attention in order for achievement of medium-term development goals (World Bank, 2008). The most recent National Youth Policy outcomes centre around career pathways, participation in governance, well-being, peace-building, sustainable development and mainstreaming of youth issues (MWYCA, 2010). In 2010 the National Youth Summit focused on Youth Mainstreaming, which is the most recent government-wide push to address youth issues; this was taken to a provincial level in 2011 and is a pioneering move in the Pacific region (MWCYA, 2011; Noble, et al., 2011).

Despite the strong government structure seen is Figure 3.3, communities lament the amount of funding that goes in at the national and provincial level with little visible benefits or results seen at a community/grassroots level (Scales, 2003). Funding and lack of resources remains an issue, especially based on transport costs needed to

reach the local level, as does lack of ownership and understanding of policy by young people and various stakeholders (Scales, 2003).

Figure 3.3 Youth-related government structures in Solomon Islands



Source: Drawn from MWYCA (2010), Noble, et al. (2011), Scales (2003), SIG (2004).[2]

A review of NYC concluded that within government institutions set up to work for youth there is still need for the basic things such as office space and professional development of staff (SIG, 2004). The Youth Division acknowledged in 2011 that much

[2] This figure was developed to the best of the author's ability, based on the available information. There is, however, a chance that it may not accurately reflect current relationships, or that these may change.

prior work had been around established youth-related mechanisations and awareness raising, and it was now time to take intentional actions in order to realise youth policy objectives (MWCYA, 2011). Indeed, it is good to bear in mind that the current government youth structure is less than a decade old and both the NYC and the Youth Division report challenges around lack of capacity and funds (MWYCA, 2010; Scales, 2003; SIG, 2004). In the 2010 National Youth Policy the government reaffirmed that collaboration between various agencies at a national and local level was needed and would be the best approach to bring about change for young people (MWYCA, 2010).

Links between the government structures and community-based organisations, NGOs and churches is important in Solomon Islands (Scales, 2003; SIG, 2004). It has been argued that the 'middle level layer' of churches and NGOs is very active but underutilised; they are already working with young people, have networks and respect in communities and should be viewed as effective service providers who are playing a vital role in supporting young people (Scales, 2003). Scales (2003, p. 38) states that, "the five main church denominations in the Solomon Islands are clearly the most pervasive community-based organisations working with or for youth". Different church denominations have youth coordinators, at national and provincial levels, and develop their own youth policies and programs (Scales, 2003). Additionally, all Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA) churches have representatives on the SICA Youth Executive, which also coordinates some youth programs. Churches, as a whole are seen as good at training and linking programmes to their urban headquarters - either by going out to the provinces or bringing people into urban headquarters (Scales, 2003). Donor reluctance to work with the church is usually based on concern that their engagement with young people may be overly influenced by church policy and theology than by best practice youth development and principles identified in national policies (SIG, 2004). Nevertheless, the church has established networks and influence and should therefore be seen as central stakeholders when addressing youth issues in Solomon Islands (Scales, 2003).

Furthermore, while there are a number of NGOs working with youth in Solomon Islands, they do not seem to have the same level of commitment and influence at the local level that churches have (Scales, 2003). NGOs working in the youth sector include: OXFAM, Girls Brigade, Scouts, World Vision, TEAR Fund, Save the Children, YWCA, Solomon Islands Football Federation and Netball Association, Solomon Islands Music Federation, Christian Care Centre, Community Policy, Solomon Islands Development Trust, Red Cross, ARH and SIPPA, and cover a range of areas including: reproductive health, sport, music, recording opportunities, income generating skills,

training and life skills, peace and reconciliation, and restorative justice (Jourdan, 2008; McMurray, 2005a; MWYCA, 2010; Noble, et al., 2011; Scales, 2003).

Despite the fact that some people feel there is an absence of government at a village level, many communities are proactive in developing solutions where government services are limited, and there are local youth activities happening in many villages and communities (Scales, 2003). For example, some rural villages are implementing strategies to encourage young people to remain in their villages, these are reported to include setting up youth centres and developing employment opportunities, such as giving land to young people to establish agricultural businesses, and organising sporting activities (McMurray, 2005a). Scales (2003, p. 2) concluded that, "young people want to know more about how they can do things more themselves", although with the support and concern of older people and their communities. There are examples of young people showing initiative, such as fundraising for local groups and projects, and organising youth rallies and sports facilities, and it is argued that such youth-led initiatives should be encouraged (McMurray, 2005b; Scales, 2003).

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The unique circumstances of Solomon Islands needs to be taken into consideration for the purposes of this study, in order to understand the specific socio-cultural context in which the findings are embedded. Solomon Islands is a relatively young nation and the challenges it faces are not dissimilar from those experienced in other post-colonial nations (ASPI, 2003). The country has a firm communal base, and familial and community relationships remain strong (Bennett, 1987). Both *kastom* and religion, particularly the church, play a strong role in the shaping of society and everyday life (Rohorua, 2007). Young people make up a quarter of the Solomon Islands population and face some challenges around service provision, especially in regard to education, and around unemployment. Some youth experience marginalisation, which is often linked to lack of services and participation opportunities, that may put them at risk for engaging in crime, substance abuse and risky sexual behaviour. A prominent youth bulge can be seen in Honiara, where there are more services, although increasing pressure is being placed on these. There is a strong youth-related government structure and examples of strong community and youth-led initiatives for young people within the country. Understanding more of how young people can contribute positively to their and their communities situation is the

key focus of this thesis. Investigations into this was guided by a number of methodological considerations, which are now outlined.

METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to understand how fieldwork was approached for this thesis, this chapter outlines the methodological approach undertaken, and the reasons for such an approach. From the onset of this research journey it was recognised that the research process is full of many subtle, and not-so-subtle, "philosophical choices"; and that who we are and our own understanding of how the world is, and how we can know about it, can impact on the research being undertaken (Graham, 1997, p. 8; O'Leary, 2009; Scheyvens & Storey, 2010). Positionality and motivation were outlined in the introduction chapter of the thesis in order to make the process as transparent as possible.

O'Leary (2009, p. 1) states that research is a, "creative and strategic process that involves constantly assessing, reassessing, and making decisions about the best possible means for obtaining trustworthy information". Therefore, this chapter is structured to reflect the 'thinking through' and 'reassessing' process that took place during this study in order to meet the research aim of understanding how support for young Solomon Islanders as agents of positive change can be conceptualised and delivered. The chapter starts by detailing the research methodology employed for the study commenting on the constructivist/interpretivist philosophical standpoint of the research, the narrative inquiry methodology and its unique implementation, and the methods used. Ethical issues pertinent to the study are subsequently outlined. Issues pertaining to entry into the field and selection and access to participants are discussed, followed by observations around how the research played out in practice, including several challenges encountered. Finally, data processing and analysing techniques, and comments on the reliability of the findings concludes this chapter.

4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Researching the social world brings with it specific challenges around the reliability and authenticity of the findings presented (O'Leary, 2009). In addition, development research brings further unique considerations as it often takes place in cultures and locations that are foreign to the researcher and researchers tend to enter

the research field at a higher social position than they have at home (Scheyvens & Storey, 2010). The need for reliable and authentic information, in light of this, as well as the overall theoretical background and research questions, impacted on the search for appropriate methodologies for this study. The chosen research methodologies and design, detailed below, therefore, play an important part in managing possible biases and promoting "integrity of the [research] process" (O'Leary, 2009, p. 11). Walter (2010) states that philosophical standpoint, methodological framework, methods or research techniques, and ethical considerations all make up the methodology. This section, therefore, starts with a comment on the philosophical lens of the research.

4.2.1 Philosophical standpoint

The overarching research philosophy influencing this study is best described as being constructivist/interpretivist, in that it is founded on the belief that we are continually constructing meaning and acting and interacting based on our interpretations of the world (O'Leary, 2009; Walter, 2010a). Constructivism holds that experience and meaning are subjective, while interpretivism focuses on the personal and social agency involved in the construction of this subjective meaning (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Walter, 2010a). A constructivist/interpretivist approach to research thus holds that knowledge is, "negotiated as a product of history and of social structure" and, therefore, seeks to give reverence to each participant's unique experiences and negotiation of knowledge (Sapsford & Jupp, 1996, p. 2). Gaining insight into the experiences, and meaning formed by young people as a result of these, is important in answering the research questions. For this reason a qualitative research methodology was employed in order to produce the "rich data" that is able to cover the complexity of human experience (Richardson, 1996, p. 160). There are numerous qualitative methods and approaches to research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This thesis employed narrative inquiry as the overarching methodological framework.

4.2.2 Narrative Inquiry Methodological Framework

Narrative inquiry approaches were popularised in the 1970s and motivated by the growth of qualitative research paradigms (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Narrative inquiry, in its basic form, is concerned with, "biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them" (Chase, 2005, p. 651). This approach fits in well with the constructivist/interpretivist philosophy, in that it allows for people to share their story, and also looks at the meanings behind the story, as well as, and the meaning of that story for the person involved (Chase, 2005; Riley & Hawe, 2005). A 'narrative'

represents "retrospective meaning making" in which people report and come to understand their own experiences and actions from their own unique perspective (Chase, 2005, p. 657). Narrative inquiry acknowledges, and founds itself on, a number of understandings. Firstly, it assumes that words and stories are a powerful form of data. Secondly, it implies that research needs to focus on the local and specific, rather than the universal and general. Thirdly, it argues that there needs to be an acknowledgement of alternative epistemologies and an acceptance of others' 'way' of knowing. Finally, it holds that rather than being in a position of objectivity, the researcher and the researched enter into a relationship and both learn, change and construct meaning as a result of the encounter (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Narratives are acknowledged to be "situated interactive performances" where information shared is based on the situation and may change if the circumstances (point in time, interviewer, research philosophy) were different (Chase, 2005, p. 657). Through using narrative inquiry as a methodology researchers acknowledge that not only research participants, but, additionally, the researchers are narrators. Researchers are held to form narratives based on their own 'meaning making' in the research process, as well as through the way they 'ask', their method of analysis, own ideological assumptions, and the voices in the literature they draw upon (Chase, 2005).

There is growing recognition that, as a research methodology in the social sciences, "narrative inquiry is a field in the making" (Chase, 2005, p. 651). Various forms and opportunities for exploring how it can be used exist (Riley & Hawe, 2005). The current research seeks to tailor the use of narrative inquiry to the Solomon Islands context, as discussed in Chapter Three, and toward prioritising agency, the importance of which was mentioned in Chapter Two. Conducting research in the Solomon Islands meant that as a researcher, with a Zimbabwean and New Zealand background, I would be a cultural 'outsider'. The notion of insider/outsider has long been present in social science research, with some authors critiquing the role of 'outsiders' as researchers by drawing on arguments of differing epistemologies and world views and holding that outsiders are likely to misinterpret and misrepresent (O'Leary, 2009; Smith, 2003). Further, there is particular concern when the researcher is from a Western country and participants are from a formerly colonised country (Scheyvens & Storey, 2010). Much literature has been written detailing how research of Third World communities by 'outside' Western researchers may reinforce and maintain many of the inequitable relations brought about under colonialism (Smith, 2003). Efforts to "decolonise research" and take steps to move towards understanding participants on their own terms is now increasingly seen (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Nabobo-Baba, 2008, p. 142). While the narrative inquiry approach, within a constructivist/interpretivist

paradigm, goes some way in acknowledging and respecting others' ways of being and knowing, for this thesis a further critique of narrative inquiry in the Solomon Islands context was done by investigating how it could be influenced by principles put forward in indigenous Pacific methodologies (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

There has been a rise in indigenous methodologies in recent years as a result of the post-colonial critique on Western research (Nabobo-Baba, 2008). *Talanoa* has been propagated as a Pacific research philosophy, methodology and method, with the Tongan words *tala* meaning to inform, relate or tell stories, and *noa* meaning common and without concealment or exertion (Halapua, 2000; Vaioleti, 2006). As a research methodology, the aim of *Talanoa* is to advance understanding and strengthen relationships through honest and open story telling (Halapua, 2000). Talanoa research is governed by principles of respect, equality, open-agendas, informal and cyclical dialogue, and following of ceremony and protocol (Halapua, 2000; Robinson & Robinson, 2005; Vaioleti, 2006). In addition to this, the Fijian *Vanua* Research Framework is increasingly being used within the Pacific as an, "alternative framing for indigenous Fijian research", with *Vanua* used to refer to the holistic nature of being (Nabobo-Baba, 2008, p. 142). The principles of the *Vanua* Research Framework include: respect and reciprocity, ensuring benefit to the researched community; centring indigenous cultural values, protocols, epistemologies and philosophies; and feedback and accountability.

However, unlike these indigenous methodological frameworks, there is no 'research framework', as such, in Solomon Islands; one reason for this may be that Solomon Islands has many diverse languages and cultures, so to assume one research framework for all is problematic (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2002; Henry & Pene, 2001; Nabobo-Baba, 2008; Vaioleti, 2006). While there has been some debate around the existence of 'Pacific thought' indigenous methodologies are based on unique epistemological factors, therefore to uncritically take *Talanoa* or the *Vanua* Framework into the Solomon Islands context would also be problematic (Sanga, 2004). Nevertheless, there are principles from the aforementioned research frameworks that are helpful, and there is literature around epistemology in the Solomon Islands that can be drawn upon to influence the use of narrative inquiry in this study.

Rohorua (2007, p.21, p.50) states that, "Solomon Islanders pass on information and knowledge through oral and non-formal means, by way of narratives and stories, and through conversation and personal contact" and describes his own research method as "unstructured conversations and storytelling". This oral and non-formal

manner of passing on stories has some similarity to the *Talanoa* approach of seeing research as "talk"..."discussion" (Robinson & Robinson, 2005, p. 1) and "a way to speak, hear, learn and build inter-subjective understandings" (Halapua, 2000, p. 1). The *Talanoa* principles of informal chat and mutual learning, therefore, guided the use of narrative inquiry away from more formalised and one-way relationships between the researcher and the researched.

Further, reciprocity and respect of *kastom* have been highlighted as important in Solomon Islands culture (Rohorua, 2007). This resonates with the *Vanua* Framework's research principles around being considerate of cultural values and protocols, valuing reciprocity, and showing appreciation of participants through "meaningful feedback to all involved" (Nabobo-Baba, 2008, p. 146). These *Vanua* principles of respecting cultural protocols, reciprocity and meaningful feedback were helpful in guiding the implementation of narrative inquiry in this study. In addition, Nabobo-Baba (2008, p. 147) states that when thinking about consent and entry protocols for research in the Pacific, "entry is not negotiated once only. It is done on a continuous basis and at all levels of the research exercise." In this regard, a further principle to guide the research was not taking access to potential participants for granted and constantly confirming permission to conduct research. Through adopting some of these principles many of the apparent disadvantages of being an 'outsider' can be managed for, and my role as a neo-colonial researcher productively critiqued.

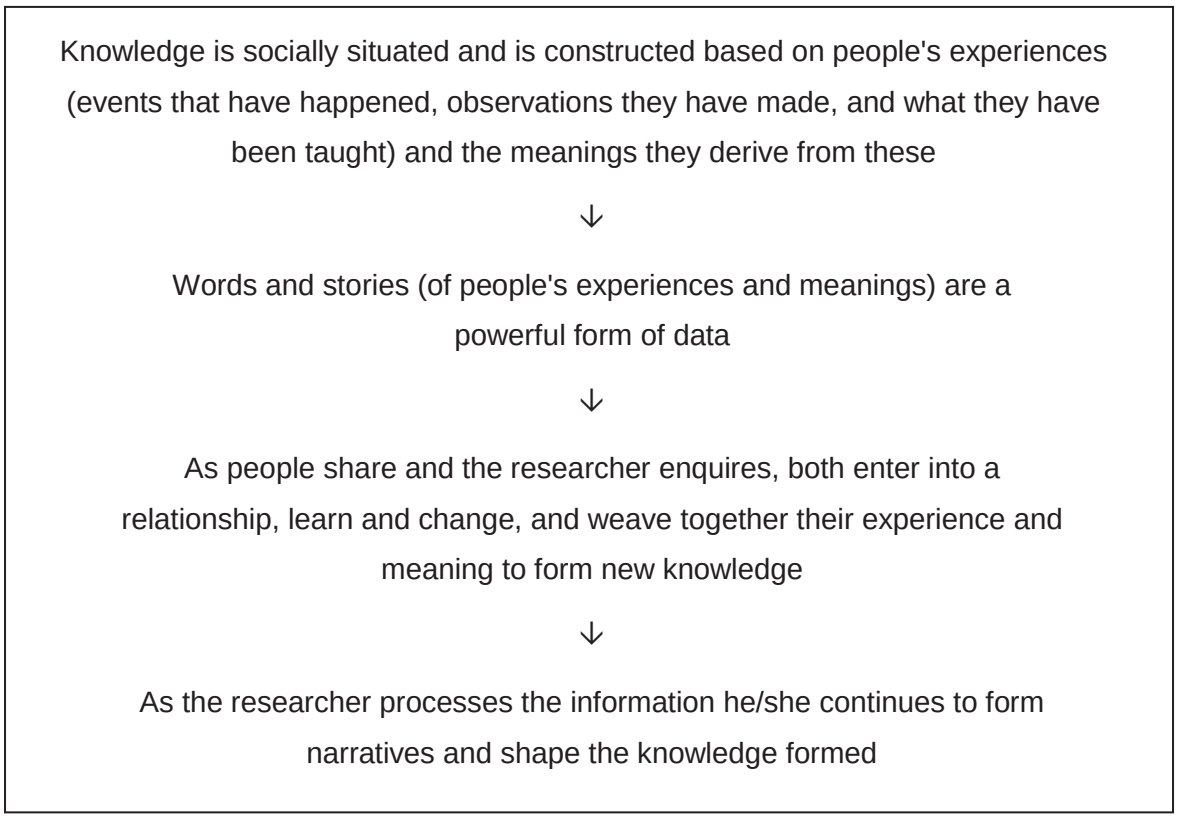
While it is important to manage possible effects resulting from being a cultural outsider, it is also important to bear in mind that viewing research in the South by Western researchers as always exploitative is itself problematic (Scheyvens & Storey, 2010). Taking an implicit view of the Third World as lacking agency and power is a key concern articulated in 'hopeful' post-development theorising (Kiely, 1999). One methodological example of this thinking is the actor-oriented approach of development sociology, which focuses on social actors and centralises human power and agency (Long, 2001). The actor-oriented approach was propagated within development sociology as an alternative way to examine development processes and has predominantly been used in studies examining development interventions (Hebinck, den Ouden, & Verschoor, 2001; Long, 2001; Turnbull, Hernandez, & Reyes, 2009). Actor-oriented approaches critique the overly structuralist stance on thinking about development policy and practice, and rather recognise the complexity of the interactions that occur between various actors in a development project (Biggs & Matsaert, 1999). Evaluation of development practice, based on this approach, reveals that people have agency in appropriating various development interventions to meet

their needs (Turnbull, et al., 2009). Within Development Studies, the actor-oriented approach has also been applied in recent years to examine agency in the light of development interventions (Bosman, 2004; Long, 2001). An actor-oriented methodology thus, "recognises the central role played by human action", and investigates the strategies social actors employ in managing and interpreting their environment/s (Hebinck, et al., 2001; Long, 2001, p. 13). When working from an actor-oriented approach, some guiding principles include: starting from the lived and concrete experiences of those involved; viewing and depicting people as capable of processing and acting on their experiences; realising that people can have different responses to the same experience; and viewing "social life as heterogeneous ... even under seemingly homogeneous circumstances" (Long, 2001, p. 49; Nyamu-Musembi, 2002).

The actor-oriented approach is incorporated for two main reasons; firstly, to draw attention to stories of agency and successful actions required to be a young change agent, undertaken by participants as a result of their broader narratives. In this regard the study seeks out a 'positive deviance' sub-group of youth, deemed to be already engaged in their communities, in order to understand how they have become successfully engaged despite possible barriers to this engagement. Positive deviance was mentioned in Chapter Two and involves looking for outliers, people within a community who are already successfully addressing the issue in question (Pascale, et al., 2010). Used in this study, this concept will involve providing space for these ‘positive deviants’, in this instance the Ola Fou students mentioned in the introduction chapter, to share their experiences so that these can be built on (Pascale, et al., 2010). Secondly, the influence of the actor approach helps promote a view of participants as having power in the research process. This compliments the narrative inquiry notion of participants and researchers as co-constructors of knowledge. Allowing the narrative inquiry methodology to be influenced by principles of an actor-oriented approach helps balance the researcher's position of power, and the past critique of Western researchers, with a view of people, even the most marginalised, as having some form of agency.

Given all these different influences on the narrative approach it is important to be clear how they all fit together as the methodological framework for this study. From an overarching perspective of how knowledge is formed the framework for this research is detailed in Figure 4.1 and draws on some of the philosophical and methodological issues mentioned earlier in the chapter around how knowledge is created.

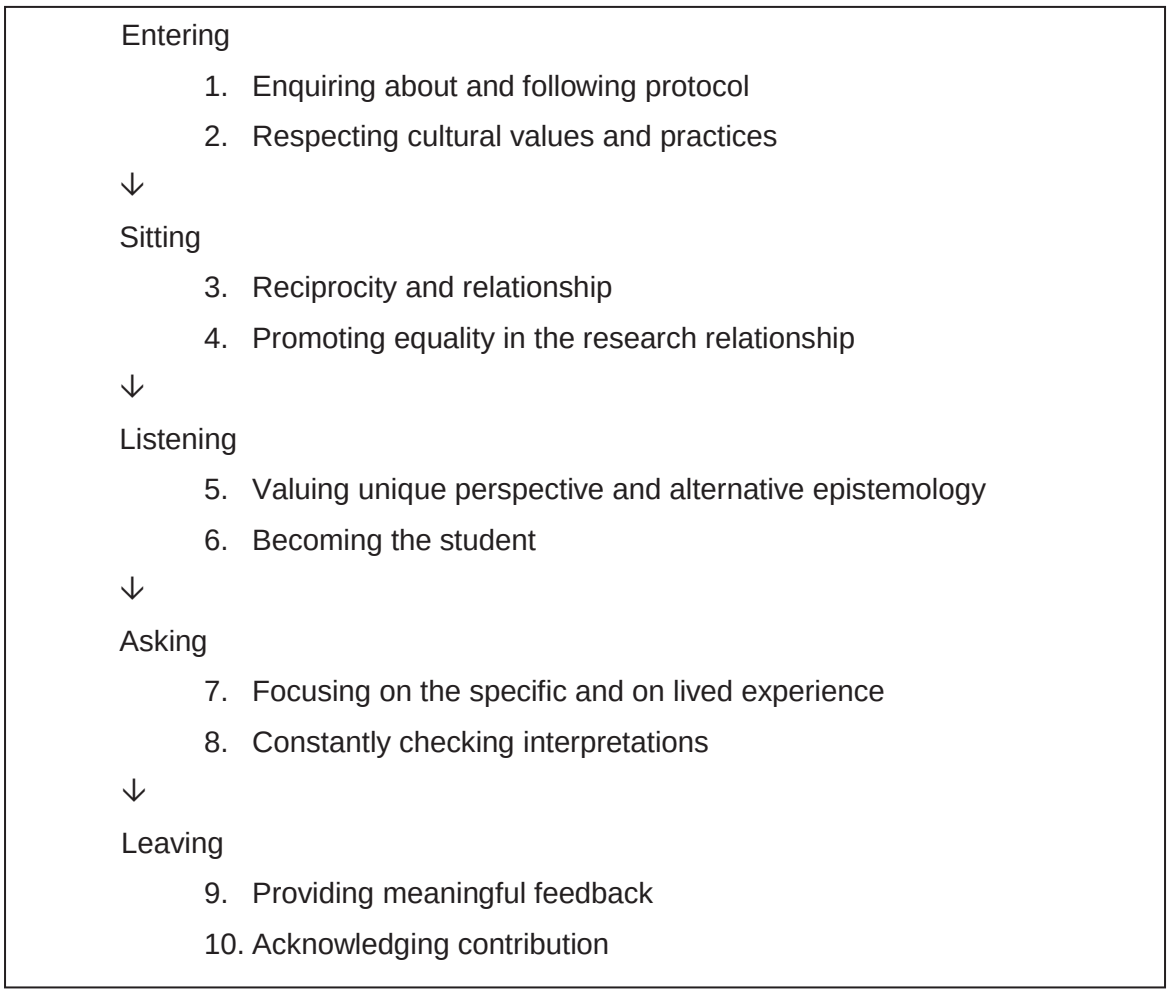
Figure 4.1 Narrative Inquiry Methodological Framework: How knowledge is formed in research



Source: Author.

With regards to a set of more practical principles guiding the implementation of the narrative inquiry approach, these are set out in Figure 4.2 and draw on and summarise the principles already mentioned in this section. Chambers (1983, p.202) states that in doing research, "Sitting, asking and listening are as much an attitude as a method. Sitting implies lack of hurry, patience, and humility; asking implies that the outsider is the student; listening implies respect and learning. Many of the best insights come this way." These steps of sitting-listening-asking, as well as, Nabobo-Baba's (2008) focus on the importance of entry and feedback stages, are used to form a process to direct all contact with participants in the field. These principles, and the understanding of how knowledge is formed, form the Narrative Inquiry Methodological Framework guiding this study. This framework sets the foundation for the more practical steps taken in the research.

Figure 4.2 Narrative Inquiry Methodological Framework: Principles for sharing and forming knowledge



Source: Author.

4.2.3 PLANNED RESEARCH METHODS

Words and stories, as outlined in the methodological framework, are held to be a powerful representation of people's experiences and meanings, and have been widely used as a form of data in social science research (O'Leary, 2009; Walter, 2010b). Various research techniques have been forthcoming to facilitate the sharing of words and stories by participants. For the purposes of this study, it was planned that semi-structured interviews and focus groups would be used to facilitate verbal sharing of participants' narratives (O'Leary, 2009). Semi-structured interviews involve a one-on-one process with "researchers asking respondents basically open-ended questions" in order to foster discussion (O'Leary, 2009, p. 162). Semi-structured interviews are used when questions act as a guide rather than as a set procedure for the interview, and

take on a flexible and informal tone where issues can be explored based on the direction the participant takes during the conversation (Laws, Harper, & Marcus, 2003; Travers, 2010). In addition to the use of one-on-one interviews, focus groups were also planned for this study. Focus groups are discussions conducted with a *group* of people around a particular topic and allow the process of shared construction of knowledge to take place (Laws, et al., 2003). They can counter any perceived power of the researcher through allowing the researcher to be outnumbered. Group discussion and debate can also provide a depth of information as participants build on or challenge others ideas (Laws, et al., 2003). Guidelines on conducting research with youth recommend the use of focus groups as a research technique for the purpose of reducing the perceived power of the researcher and helping participants feel more comfortable by placing them in a group of peers (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998).

The 'sitting-listening-asking' attitude mentioned by Chambers (1983), was planned to shape the interview and focus group processes in order to create a relaxed and respectful environment. Question schedules were developed prior to field work and were read by Solomon Islands counterparts and by supervisors and colleagues for relevance, appropriateness and clarity. It was planned that both the interviews and focus groups would be digitally voice recorded, if permission for this was given. While audio recording is sometimes viewed as intrusive and a potential cause of unease for participants, it frees the researcher to focus on the conversation at hand, and also allows the researcher to go back to the 'raw data' to clarify and enhance understanding during analysis (O'Leary, 2009). In addition to these research plans, careful ethical consideration was important.

4.2.4 Ethical issues

Researchers hold responsibility in the research process, both for the integrity of the production of knowledge and for the well-being of their research participants (O'Leary, 2009). Ethical research for this study was governed through the methodological design and principles of the research, as outlined in the previous section, and through the formal university ethics approval process, which was gained in two stages. Firstly, in analysing ethical issues for the proposed research the Development Studies 'in-house' ethics application form was completed, guided by the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants (MUHEC, 2010). Secondly, an ethics application was submitted to the Massey University Research Ethics Office which was approved and

recorded under the university's Low Risk Notification database (see Appendix One). In preparation for fieldwork this formal ethical approval also involved detailing procedures around gaining consent and maintaining confidentiality.

In terms of obtaining consent, this was planned to happen at two levels. Consent was firstly gained at a government and agency level through following the Solomon Islands regulations for foreign researchers by applying for a Solomon Islands Research Permit (see Appendix Two). This involved seeking written consent from various government agencies, civil society organisations and community leaders under whose authority I would be working, as well as, gaining various letters of personal and professional endorsement. Many developing countries have set up such research permit processes in an attempt to regulate the access of foreign researchers and ensure ethical behaviour and meaningful feedback by these researchers (Gopinathan & Shive, 1987). It was therefore important ethically, in terms of critiquing my role in neo-colonialism and honouring the country's entry and research requirements, to follow the research permit procedures. Secondly, gaining informed and voluntary consent from each person participating in the study was important (MUHEC, 2010). Prior to leaving for fieldwork information sheets (see Appendix Three), which outlined the purpose and benefit of the research, as well as, the time requirements and rights of participants, and participant consent forms (see Appendix Four) were developed and approved by supervisors. Further to this preparation, two other aspects needed specific ethical attention; the fact that I was conducting research with young people, and a potential conflict of interest given that I had previously worked, under the banner of TEAR Fund New Zealand, with Ola Fou and with some of the young people I intended to invite to participate.

Under the Massey University ethical regulations, children are deemed to be those 15 years old and younger, and parental consent is needed for them to participate in research (MUHEC, 2010). The decision was made to only involve young people aged 16 and over for the purposes of this study. In their guide to development fieldwork Scheyvens and Storey (2010) caution that young people are a potentially marginalised and vulnerable group and that research with youth must follow additional guidelines that are sensitive to the needs of this age group. There is very little in the literature about researching older youth and young adults, but drawing on guidelines for children under 18, there seems to be agreement that researchers need to work through gatekeepers and people youth trust to provide access (DeRoche & Lahman, 2008; Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). In addition, taking time to build relationships is also advised, as well as, giving participants some control over the research process, showing respect

and appreciation for their participation and assuring privacy and confidentiality (Scheyvens, Scheyvens, & Murray, 2010). How these were adopted are discussed in section 4.3.

A further ethical issue to be considered was potential conflict of interest, and issues around objectivity, based on previous involvement with Ola Fou through the running of DRR workshops. It was not expected that this would be the case but steps were undertaken to prevent this potentiality. It was made clear to the participants involved in Ola Fou, via a covering letter and verbally, that I was not conducting the research as an Ola Fou trainer or a TEAR Fund employee, but as a student of Massy University doing independent research. Additionally, participants were informed that their decision to participant in the research would have no impact on their Ola Fou involvement, or on any current or future funding applications to TEAR Fund. Furthermore, the research was planned not to overlap with any Ola Fou block courses, or in relation to any Ola Fou or TEAR Fund work or visits to the Solomon Islands. It has been acknowledged that even within positivist research frameworks, complete objectivity is an illusion, nevertheless to maintain some impartiality the qualitative researcher must acknowledge their positionality and be aware of and minimise their preconceptions (Ratner, 2002). These factors were taken seriously in the current research with positionality being openly expressed and all participants being treated in a similar manner.

Moderating the research and researcher 'presence' through the methodological and ethical guidelines, so far outlined, was important in enhancing the integrity of the research. In addition to these guidelines, "genuine respect for local people and customs, flexibility in the research design, a sense of humour, and a willingness to share one's own experiences and knowledge with research participants" are held to go a long way in research (Leslie & Storey, 2010, p. 129). The standards of respect, flexibility, humour and openness were thus also held to be important in the process of conducting ethical research. With the ethical and methodological groundwork prepared, a firm foundation was set to enter the field.

4.3 FIELD WORK

4.3.1 ENTRY TO THE FIELD

Field research took place over 5 weeks in the Solomon Islands from 25 October to 1 December 2011 in Guadalcanal Province and in Honiara City. Upon entering the Solomon Islands instead of feeling like a 'privileged' or 'powerful' Western researcher, the feeling was of being rather small and insignificant. Indeed, experiences of "fear, self-doubt and uncertainty" are held to be common on arrival in the field (Leslie & Storey, 2010, p. 119). I was unprepared for the dependency on others that would be experienced. Initially, in terms of being dependent on people responsible for granting permission to conduct the research, and, later, in terms of being dependent on people to agree to participate in the study and facilitate access to other potential participants. In terms of this 'entry' stage of the research, and gaining permission and following protocol, Nabobo-Baba (2008) states, "as a scholar I knew I had to follow rigorously University ethics and guidelines of research, but soon found out that it was the *Vanua* (tribe) and its protocols and ethics of knowledge that dictated research processes on the ground". This occurrence of the 'dictation of research processes on the ground' was also experienced during my fieldwork. One initial example of this was the research permit procedure and regulations, earlier discussed, which shaped the research process by ensuring that permission was sought, not only from relevant government authorities and ministries, but, also, from community leaders. A second illustration of this 'dictation of research processes on the ground' was the care participants took to guide my respectful entry into their communities. One example of this took place during an initial visit to a community in Western Guadalcanal when one participant told me that the first thing we needed to do was to go and see a community leader and share information about the study with him. In this sense this participant guided my behaviour in the community by showing me, and doing with me, what was culturally expected. This highlighted to me the importance of continually being open to how participants were guiding my behaviour and showing me how to behave appropriately in certain contexts.

4.3.2 PARTICIPANT SELECTION AND ACCESS

Prior to fieldwork Honiara had been decided on as the central research site based on the large number of young people present within the city and the ease of access, given the short fieldwork period, to relevant stakeholders. In addition to this,

one community in Western Guadalcanal was also included as a study site following an invitation from an Ola Fou Youth Worker to this area. This community had a high number of young people who travelled into Honiara during the week for study or work purposes. Conducting research at this site thus provided unique insights into the highly mobile youth population of Honiara and into some issues around youth engagement in rural settings surrounding Honiara.

The primary participants were youth, defined using the broader term of youth as 16-30, and using Scales' (2003) distinction of young youth as those between the ages of 16 and 20, and old youth as those between the ages of 21 and 30, and the positive-deviance group of youth who were involved in bringing about positive change for themselves and their communities. This positive deviance group was made up mostly of Ola Fou practitioners. Additionally, a number of key stakeholders were involved in the research and included: youth workers and leaders, some of whom were also part of the Ola Fou organisation, community members and leaders, NGO workers and provincial and national government officials.

To select participants for the study non-random sampling, in the form of purposive and snowball sampling techniques, was employed. Non-random sampling is commonly used in qualitative research where information rich cases are sought and representativeness and generalisability of findings is not the main goal (Bryman, 2001; O'Leary, 2009). Purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on the purpose of the study, while snowball sampling involves making contact with participants who are "gatekeepers" first, in this case, through purposive sampling, and then these 'gatekeepers' put me in contact with other participants (Tranter, 2010, p. 138). Two members of the Ola Fou organisation, one in Honiara and one in West Guadalcanal, acted as 'gatekeepers' facilitating access to youth and community leaders and members in each respective area. This approach fitted in well with ethical recommendations regarding approaching young people through trusted channels (DeRoche & Lahman, 2008). Two of the government officials involved in the research also acted as 'gatekeepers', recommending certain other key stakeholders and facilitating contact with these people.

In total, 46 people (26 male; 20 female) participated in the study, the coding used for the participants is as follows:

Young Youth (Those between 16 and 20 and who indicated that they were not necessarily working in their communities to bring about positive change).

Old Youth (Those between 21 and 30 and who indicated that they were not necessarily working in their communities to bring about positive change).
Young Practitioner (Youth between the ages of 15 and 30 who indicated they were working in their communities to bring about positive change, some of whom were Ola Fou practitioners and made up the 'positive deviance' group).
Youth Worker (Someone from the church, government or NGO who was over the age of 30 and was working with young people, some of whom were Ola Fou practitioners).
Youth Leader (Someone from the church, government or NGO who had responsibility over other youth workers, some of whom were Ola Fou practitioners).
Community Member (An adult community member with no leadership responsibility)
Community Leader (An adult leader - either a chief, elder or pastor)
NGO Worker (Staff members from NGOs working with young people)
Provincial Government Official (From Guadalcanal Provincial Youth Division or from Honiara City Youth Division)
National Government Official (From the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs or from the National Youth Congress)

The primary group of participants was made up of 11 young youth (F=6, M=5), aged between 16 and 19 with an average age of 17, seven old youth (M=7) aged between 26 and 30 with an average age of 28, and seven young practitioners (F=1, M=6), aged between 21 and 29 with an average age of 24. Key stakeholders included three youth workers, two youth leaders, two NGO staff members, nine community members, one community leader, two provincial government officials and two national government officials. Participant demographics are summarised in Table 4.1. Participants took part through four focus groups and 15 interviews. The four focus groups included two youth focus groups, one in Honiara with 11 participants and an average age of 17, and one in West Guadalcanal with seven participants and an average age of 29. Additionally, a focus group with four male young practitioners in Honiara was conducted (average age 25), and with eight women from a Women's Group in Western Guadalcanal. Interviews were then conducted with three young practitioners in Honiara, one female and two male, with an average age of 25, and with the remaining key stakeholders. Research participation is summarised in Table 4.2 and 4.3.

Table 4.1 Participant demographics

	Honiara		West Guadalcanal	
	Male	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**
Young Youth	5	6		
Old Youth			7	
Young Practitioners	6	1		
Youth Workers		1	1	1
Youth Leaders	2			
Community Members		1		8
Community Leaders			1	
NGO Workers	1	1		
Provincial Government Officials		1	1	
National Government Officials	2			
TOTAL	16	11	10	9

Table 4.2 Break-down of research participation in Honiara

Research method	**Participant code**	**Number of participants**		**Ages of participants**
		Male	**Female**	
Focus group	Young Youth	5	6	16-9 (ave.17)
Focus group	Young Practitioner	4		22-27 (ave. 25)
Interview	Young Practitioner	2	1	21-29 (ave.25)
Interview	Youth Worker		1	
Interview	Youth Leader	2		
Interview	Community Member		1	
Interview	NGO Worker	1	1	
Interview	Provincial Govt.		1	
Interview	National Govt.	2		

Table 4.3 Break-down of research participation in West Guadalcanal

Research method	Participant code	Number of participants		Ages of participants
		Male	Female	
Focus group	Old Youth	7		26-32 (ave. 29)
Focus group	Community Member		8	
Interview	Youth Worker	1	1	
Interview	Community Leader	1		
Interview	Provincial Govt.	1		

4.3.3 RESEARCH METHODS IN PRACTICE

Potential participants all lived within the geographical area where permission to conduct research was granted, and were approached to participate in the research in writing and in person. After gaining permission and following entry procedures all potential participants were given an information sheet about the study. The majority of participants received this information sheet in advance to have time to think over and accept or decline the invitation to participate. In addition, when I met with potential participants I verbally went through the information covered in the information sheet and gave space for any additional questions to be asked. Prior to departure for field work a friend from the Solomon Islands had helped me learn basic Solomon Islands Pidgin; introducing myself and the study in Pidgin became important. In all instances of introduction and invitation potential participants accepted the invitation and agreed to take part in the research.

Once the invitation to participate had been accepted a time to meet was arranged and participants defined the space in which the research encounter took place. Meetings occurred in a range of places: under a tree in a garden, on a lawn outside the church, on the veranda of someone's home, in a cafe, or in the participants office, and always involved food, usually in the form of biscuits, cake and fruit. At the start of each meeting background information about myself and the motivation behind the research was given. All discussions, except one focus group, were audio recorded, and a consent form was signed at the conclusion of each meeting once participants were happy with all we had discussed being included in the research.

During the initial interviews a different conceptualisation of the research process arose from the participants themselves; this was the notion of 'story', or *stori* in Pidgin. It seemed that *'to stori*' was more than just a Pidgin word for 'to talk' but rather involved a depth of conversation and storytelling with a particular purpose, similar to *Talanoa*, although perhaps more singular narratives than circular stories were shared. However, there is very little in the literature about this idea of *stori.* The concept of '*tok stori*' has been used by the Solomon Islands National Peace Council in peace and reconciliation meetings; this use was motivated by observation of the use of *Talanoa* in Fiji and Tonga, and involved meeting to *stori* through a set of issues in order to move towards a place of peace (Talanoa and Development Project). More recently, during her thesis research in the Solomon Islands, Titchener (2010, 35) stated that '"story telling' is a very strong component of the Solomon Island culture. In fact, the Pidgin word for when one enters dialogue with another person is to 'story' with that person''. For this study *stori* became a method, and interviews and focus groups morphed in one-on-one or group '*stori* sessions'. The idea of *stori* fitted well with the narrative inquiry principles driving the research and allowed the research encounter to be governed, to a greater extent, by how the participants saw and anticipated conversations to go. I acknowledge that in all instances I was not a fluent Pidgin speaker and am not a Solomon Islander, so there are many subtleties around *stori* that I may not have grasped. Nevertheless, I found the notion of *stori* to be a truer reflection, than 'interview' or 'focus group', in terms of the how the research played out in practice.

In addition to sitting down to *stori* with participants, building relationships became an important and enjoyable part of the fieldwork. As discussed in the ethics section of this chapter, building relationships with young people is deemed important in terms of equalising the relationship between participants and the researcher (Scheyvens, et al., 2010). Attending churches of some of the youth participants provided one space to 'hang out'. Furthermore, invitations by a number of participants to certain 'youth' activities, such as a Sabbath outreach and various youth and community concerts and graduations were accepted. These experiences provided space to deepen relationships and I also realised that, through including me in what youth were doing in the community, these participants were 'teaching' me about the lived experiences of young people.

4.3.4 FIELDWORK CHALLENGES

While working with young people was an enjoyable experience, two main challenges did emerge when researching with this age group. Firstly, as mentioned in Chapters Two and Three, it became apparent through the research process that there were difficulties in defining 'youth'. The broader definition of youth had already been taken, with the distinction between young and old youth. In classifying participants who were potentially on the border between youth and adult, participants were asked how they would classify themselves. A further age issue arose when a couple of participants were unsure of their age, in both instances these participants mentioned that they thought they were in their early twenties, so it was assumed this was far enough away from 16 to safely include them. Despite these challenges, I am quite confident that all those who actively participated in the research as youth met with the age requirements and will represent the population group of 'youth' within the Solomon Islands.

A second issue around research with young people was depending on others as gatekeepers. As already stated, guidelines on working with youth advise accessing them through gatekeepers or trusted individuals (DeRoche & Lahman, 2008). However, two concerns arose from this, firstly, that young people might feel obliged to meet with me because they had been asked by someone who was a trusted leader. In order to ensure that there was no pressure to participate an effort was made, where possible, to interact socially with the young people the first time we met and then invite them to participate in a focus group personally. Additionally, it was reinforced that participation was voluntary. The flip side of gaining access through a trusted person, however, was that this gatekeeper was key in helping the young people feel at ease in the meeting, and translating if needed. A second consequence of accessing youth through particular agencies and people was that all the young people who participated in the research were connected to some form of youth initiative, and, in this sense, it could be argued that the research was not accessing the most marginalised youth. While this was of concern, it became evident from the interviews and focus groups that engagement occurred at multiple levels, and while the youth were connected to some services they could reflect on areas of marginalisation and express desire to be more supported by and engaged with their communities.

An additional challenge during fieldwork was political unrest and security threats. Prior to leaving for the Solomon Islands, the travel risk rating for the country was 'some risk' on the New Zealand governments safe travel website, which recommend that all travellers register with the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs

and Trade before travel. Based on my previous experience in Solomon Islands, and reports from other researchers, I was not overly concerned with safety issues. Unfortunately, both political unrest and crime became a reality during my time in Honiara. The combination of parliament sitting, two motions of no confidence in the Prime Minister (PM), the resignation of one PM and re-election of another, who was not the public choice, all resulted in a level of political and civil unrest and rioting. The fear of a repeat of the 2006 violent rioting, mentioned in Chapter Three, was on people's minds. This unrest did impact on the research process in terms of delaying the approval of the research permit, given that government officials were in parliament dealing with the above mentioned crises. It also meant that there were four week days in total that I could not go into Honiara town, resulting in interviews planned for these days having to be rescheduled. Unfortunately, I was unable to reschedule one of the planned interviews before I left. In order to maintain personal safety, I moved, during the worst of the rioting, into a guarded compound further out of town. I had also registered with the New Zealand High Commission in Honiara. In each of the four instances mentioned above, the two days set for the votes of no confidence, the re-election of Prime Minister and the recommencing of Parliament, both the Australian and New Zealand High Commissions sent out updates advising all New Zealanders and Australians to stay out of Honiara town central. These updates were indeed useful in protecting my safety and were followed. Additionally, contact was maintained with my first supervisor via email and text message during this time.

Added to the political unrest and schedule inconveniences was also the emotional stress of real threats stemming from the experience of criminal activities in Honiara, where I encountered a number of incidents. This highlighted the need to have some personal safety mechanisms in place. I became more cautious in my travelling in and around Honiara and tried to do as much as I could with other people. I also planned to spend every weekend outside of Honiara, where it was safer, and was grateful to two people who made this possible. This gave me a break away from the threat of crime and unrest and helped me to keep going for the five weeks of fieldwork.

Lastly, a lack of fluent Pidgin did provide some challenges, mostly in the case of young people being apologetic about their English (even though it was perfectly understandable) and shy about using English. While speaking fluent Pidgin would have definitely been beneficial, there was always someone around who could translate if needed. Additionally, while my spoken Pidgin was weak I was able to comprehend it reasonably well and so invited participants to talk in Pidgin if they preferred, which a number did.

4.3.3 Fieldwork closure and feedback procedures

In terms of information sharing and the process for feedback, focus group sessions to conclude the study with participants and enable the sharing of initial interpretations and findings were initially planned. This was not possible, however, due to time constraints, and so the decision was made to check interpretations as the research process progressed. This involved noting down certain things that needed clarification and bringing them into subsequent conversations to check initial interpretations. This process worked well and helped with building and clarifying understandings throughout the process. At the end of fieldwork a disk was burnt for each participant or focus group with a copy of their audio recorded interview. Additionally, transcribed interviews were emailed to all participants who had email access (nine out of 15 of the interviews, and one out of four of the focus groups). Following this, a draft results chapter was emailed to these participants with their quotes highlighted in order to confirm they were happy for these to be included and were satisfied with the results in general. The majority of participants replied and were happy with the results chapter. A short summary of main findings and recommendations will be sent to each participant following publication of the thesis. Copies of the thesis will also be provided to Ola Fou, the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, the Solomon Islands National Library (which all participants will have access to) and the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs in the Solomon Islands, additionally the thesis will be available electronically online.

4.4 Data processing and reliability

4.4.1 Data analysis procedures

There are various ways of approaching qualitative data analysis, taking into account the narrative approach, analysis needed to reflect the deep meaning generated in the research process. (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005). To do this Titchener's (2010) framework of: data immersion, data coding, and data reduction was loosely followed, influenced by thematic analysis and concept mapping. The first step in data immersion is the transcribing of recorded data. In this study all but one of the interviews and focus groups were voice recorded, and while the transcription of these took time it was key in becoming 'familiar' with the data. Following this transcription a process of reading and re-reading is recommended for immersion and allows the researcher to

think over and reflect on their initial insights from the data (Hunter, Lusardi, Zucker, Jacelon, & Chandler, 2002; Willis, 2010). The transcription and immersion process provided insights into some commonalities in what participants shared and possible ways of structuring the findings, giving a good foundation to move onto data coding.

Data coding and reduction were influenced by thematic analysis in which, "data is analysed by themes through an inductive process" (Titchener, 2010, p. 37). It was inductive in the sense that the meaning and patterns in the data drive the themes, rather than finding themes to test a theory or fit predetermined categories (Natalier, 2010). That said, themes do need to, "capture something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represent some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set", in this sense the research questions were used to guide the categorising of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data coding, which is basically a categorising stage in the analysis, was done first, by going through each transcript and writing various summary words or phrases beside sentences and paragraphs. Following this summary words and phrases were used to come up with some initial codes (Willis, 2010)

Data reduction was the final step and involved "exploring relationships" between codes in order to reduce the data into manageable and meaningful themes (Willis, 2010, p. 421). It is during this stage that much referral back to the 'bigger picture' in terms of research aims and questions was done (Titchener, 2010). Conceptual mapping was used as the data reduction technique in this study and allowed for a visual representation of the various ideas that emerged in the research and exploration into how these were connected. Codes were then grouped into themes and sub-themes. I agree with Braun and Clarke (2006) who argue that thematic analysis involves the defining and redefining of themes in a cyclical manner until the researcher is happy that the themes do justice to the knowledge shared. Doing justice to what participants shared was important throughout the process. A further concern was to avoid being reductionist and flattening the findings, in light of the depth of meaning evident in the data and the complexity, interconnectedness and 'energy' the information held for the participants. For this reason constant referral back to the transcripts was made to check that meaning had been captured correctly. Additionally, direct quotes from participants were used throughout the results section to allow their voice to come through.

4.4.2 RELIABILITY OF THE FINDINGS

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in terms of assessing validity and reliability of findings, but this is no less (O'Leary, 2009). Producing dependable findings was of concern for this study to ensure that the findings were trustworthy and honoured to the participants narratives. Research can be described as dependable and trustworthy, "if the reader is able to audit the events, influences and actions of the researcher" (Koch, 2006, p. 91). Various criteria for judging trustworthiness of qualitative research findings have been forthcoming. For the purposes of this thesis, an adaption of O'Learly's (2009) framework for credibility was used and involved three factors: managing subjectivities; methodological consistency and verifiability; and authenticity of data.

It has already been mentioned that acknowledging personal subjectivities is important within qualitative research with regards to ensuring integrity of the research process (O'Leary, 2009). This transparency in acknowledging subjectivities, personal positionality and potential biases was the first step in conducting dependable and ethical research. Secondly, detailing how personal subjectivities are mediated for, and ethical research conducted in light of them, is another important step. This was undertaken in the current research by discussing my positionality within the research and detailing, through the narrative inquiry methodological framework, the principles and procedures used to manage potential biases.

In terms of methodological consistency and verifiability, research should never be a "haphazard activity" (O'Leary, 2009, p. 59). A well-designed and well-documented research process reinforces the dependability of findings (Koch, 2006). A lot of thought, as well as consultation with Solomon Islanders, went into the design of the current study. This was important in ensuring ethical and systematic research procedures could be followed that remained true to the research questions and the theoretical and philosophical background of the study. This design was then clearly documented in this chapter through outlining the methodological framework and approach. In addition, how the research played out in practice, including challenges encountered, and adaption of research techniques, were also outlined.

Regarding authenticity of the findings presented, qualitative research is not as concerned with generalisability of findings as quantitative research, nor with measuring how well 'truth' about the phenomena being studied has been captured (Walter, 2010b). Rather, acknowledgement is made from the beginning of people's unique

knowledge and negotiation of meaning, as well as, of the fact that narratives created during research are "situated interactive performances" (Chase, 2005, p. 657; Sapsford & Jupp, 1996). The "truth value" and authenticity of qualitative research, therefore, comes from ensuring that findings presented are true to the 'data' collected and that a range of voices and techniques are drawn upon in the research to gather this data (O'Leary, 2009, p. 61). The concept of 'triangulation', "using more than one source of data to confirm the authenticity of each source", is important here (O'Leary, 2009, p. 115). For this study triangulation occurred through the use of both one-on-one and group *stori* sessions, and though consulting with a range of 'voices', including: youth, community members, and other key stakeholders who work with youth. Authenticity is also linked to presenting findings that do justice to the 'data' collected (Koch, 2006). The transcripts allowed constant referral back to the 'raw data' (O'Leary, 2009). Additionally, sending transcripts and results chapters to participants allowed them to verify the authenticity of the findings.

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In summary, this chapter outlined the methodological approach undertaken in this study, including fieldwork experiences and data analysis techniques, thereby setting the scene for the presentation of findings. The constructivist/interpretivist philosophical standpoint, which holds that people are continually constructing meaning and acting and interacting based on their interpretations of the world, and the research aims, objectives and questions, all guided the methodological approach undertaken for this study. The narrative inquiry methodological framework, influenced by principles of indigenous Pacific methodologies and actor-oriented approaches, together with the ethical considerations made in the study, provided the foundation from which to enter the 'field'. Through obtaining the Solomon Islands Research Permit, and the access to participants through the Ola Fou network and government departments, I was able to *stori* with a wide range of people around the issue of youth agency. This fieldwork was a process in which I, as the researcher, became the student and learnt from the participants, not only about the research topic but also about how to behave and 'be' in the Solomon Islands context. The chapter concluded with comment on the procedures taken to analyse the data and ensure dependability of the findings which are presented in the following chapter.

I would like to close this chapter with the comment one participant made at the conclusion of our *stori* time together which reflects the power of the research

relationship to give participants space to speak out their dreams, insights and concerns. It also highlights the desire, of both those who participated in this study and myself, for this research to contribute to bringing about positive change for young people in the Solomon Islands.

> *"Just to say thank you to you for the work you are doing; because it kind of draws out in us what we have, as youth workers, in what we want to see happening in our country for our young people. So they* [our thoughts] *have been with us and we have been keeping them to ourselves, but when such opportunities come we share them and when we share them we feel that we are doing something that later on, in years to come, will actually bring forth results for our young people"* Male Youth Leader, Honiara.

The following chapter details what was shared by participants, with the hope that it may play a part in 'bringing forth results for young people'.

THE THINNING, THICKENING AND ARTICULATION OF YOUTH AGENCY

5.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the fieldwork with the aim of analysing what contributes to both the 'thinning' and 'thickening' of young people's agency. It also explores how young people exercise their agency, and work to be recognised as valid change agents within their communities. The research was guided by the narrative inquiry methodological framework outlined in Chapter Four, and was informed by an understanding of youth and development and youth agency, as outlined in Chapter Two, and by an understanding of the Solomon Islands context, as outlined in Chapter Three. This chapter presents the specific findings of this thesis with an aim of meeting the research aim and objectives. The chapter is divided into four sections and begins with a brief comment around how the participants defined 'youth' and what they subsequently provided as a picture of the 'desired for' situation for young Solomon Islanders, detailing expectations of young people, adults, community leaders and the government. It then explores how and why these expectations are not being met and the factors that constrain the expression of young people's agency. The third section looks at factors that enable or facilitate a positive environment for youth, as well as, provide opportunity for expression of their agency. Finally, the articulations of young Solomon Islander's agency is detailed by examining how they make use of the structures that are present, and overcome potential constraints, in order to 'act' to bring about positive change for themselves and their communities. The aim, throughout this chapter, is to have the voices of the participants come through and have an authoritative influence within the presentation of findings. This is done through the weaving of direct quotes from participants into the text. The final two sections also include two full narratives from two participants which exemplify the thickening of young people's agency and the articulation of youth agency.

5.2 'YOUTH' IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

In exploring the situation for young people in the Solomon Islands, this section presents findings around the definition of youth and the *desired* situation for them.

Participants were asked about the roles young people played in their community and the expectations which were placed on them, as well as what adults, the wider community, and government should be doing to support youth. These questions were then analysed in an effort to understand what participants thought things would look like in an ideal positive and supportive situation. The definition of 'youth' is briefly commented on. Subsequently, factors contributing to a 'desired situation' are presented by examining societal expectations of young people; the expectations young people hold of adults and community leaders, and lastly, expectations of the government, and what the government aims to do, with regards to meeting the needs of the younger generation.

As mentioned in Chapters Two and Three, there are some complexities when defining 'youth'. There was a moderate level of consensus amongst participants with the majority identifying an official definition of youth as those between the ages of 15 and 29. Participants reported that this understanding came from the Solomon Islands Youth Policy or from United Nations official definitions. Despite awareness of 'official' definitions, participants highlighted some complexities around defining youth at a community level. A major complicating factor was marriage, with acknowledgment that once a person is married they are usually not considered a 'youth' based on the respect that marriage earns them. Similarly, if a person was over the age of 30 and had never married, were divorced or widowed, they were often still considered youth, partly due to the lack of 'adult' responsibilities that unmarried or newly-single people faced. Marriage was thus seen, more often than biological age, as a sign of maturity that distinguished adulthood from 'youthhood'. A further complicating factor in defining youth stemmed from 'youth' being a fairly recent social category and concept in the Solomon Islands, that was, simultaneously, becoming increasingly broad. This was acknowledged in Chapter Three by Scales (2003) who drew distinction between 'young youth' and 'old youth'. The broadness of the 'youth' category was acknowledged by some youth workers and leaders to mean that not all the needs of everyone who identifies as a young person will be the same. Thus, participants were aware that there were complexities around defining youth, although they nevertheless could talk freely about 'youth' within the Solomon Islands and identify the situation for young people.

5.2.1 Expectations of young people

There were a number of expectations placed on young people, as reported by participants. The general presumption was that they 'behave' and contribute. This is

described in the following quote from a community women's focus group in Guadalcanal,

> *Youth should stay good, have goals, aims, be a good citizen within the country, and stay in church. They need something to keep them busy, like sport or running small businesses*, *and they should not do bad things.*

'Bad things', as reported by young participants, included smoking, drinking or taking drugs, making or selling *kwaso*, going clubbing, loitering on the streets, risky sexual behaviour and engaging in riots, crime or violence. Many older community members feared that if young people had nothing positive to do they would become involved in such undesirable activities. It was, therefore, considered necessary that they avoid these behaviours by pursuing positive activities. The majority of participants, old and young, listed sport and music as examples of acceptable and constructive activities, as well as, attending church and being involved in church activities, which was a central expectation of youth. This was stated by a male Youth Leader in Honiara, "*It's more like when you go to church you are good, when you don't go to church you are not good.*" Church related requirements were that young people attend church on Sundays, participate in church youth groups, outings and outreaches, and obey church doctrine.

Another way that young people were expected to be positively engaged was through contributing to their families' and communities' well-being. Regarding their families, they were required to help in and around the home, with girls tending to help prepare food, look after younger children, do general household cleaning and chores, and work in the gardens. Boys were usually involved with the gardens, fishing, hunting, and building. Young people were also partly responsible for looking after other family members, especially the elderly and children. At a community level, young people were often referred to as the "*workforce*", or the "*frontline people, energy people*" (Young female Practitioner, Honiara), and were counted-on to volunteer their time to help with various community events and initiatives. Their tasks tended to include organising and fundraising for events, doing set ups and clean ups for community events, and providing security. As well as helping their families and communities, they were expected to be respectful toward adults and toward church and community elders and leadership and to work toward building good relationships with elders, and be obedient to them. Lastly, young people were, "*to be useful young people, not to be liabilities*" (Female Youth Worker, Honiara) by getting an education and becoming economically productive. Going to school, and completing school, at least to the level of secondary school, was identified by many participants as a central expectation. Following

schooling, a further assumption was around becoming economically productive and finding some form of employment or income.

5.2.2 YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS OF ADULTS AND LEADERS

Young people, likewise, articulated a number of expectations they held of adults and community leadership. Young participants tended to discuss community leadership in the form of elders, chiefs or church leaders, and usually spoke of leaders and 'adults' as one group. The most frequently expressed desire was for respect, recognition and encouragement from older community members. This respect and recognition was linked to the hope of young people to be understood and to belong. One female Youth Worker in Guadalcanal expressed this link stating that, "W*hen you have the respect from someone you feel you belong to that place. We are all human and belonging to a community is what we all long for.*" This young women explained how important it is for youth, as for everyone else, to have a place to belong and to be cared for, guarded, protected.

On a more practical level, young people wanted adults and community leaders to plan and provide activities for them, and to attract NGOs and government initiatives to the community. It was also assumed that elders should give them directions, lead and motivate, as well as to open up opportunities and give permission for participation. For example, by providing work experience, skills building and involving them in community decision making. Additionally, some young people wished for elders to be more aware of the situation facing youth and the factors affecting them. This was particularly mentioned in the light of changing values and the influence of technology on young people. One young male Practitioner from Honiara explained:

> *Today we live in this information age, people see things from TV, through their mobiles. I think that this is one thing that older people need to understand. Like, compared to the past we know the church and the chief are just the main influence, but today it's all in the mobile phone.*

This young man pointed out that older people should be aware of these new influences, which fall outside of the traditional structures, and should accommodate and integrate these in the way they interact with youth.

5.2.3 EXPECTATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT

At a wider level, there was a high expectation, by youth and adults, of the concern the government should have for young people. The majority of participants expressed a desire to see the government undertaking practical things to support youth. Participants frequently commented that the government should be actively providing more jobs and seeking solutions for the high youth unemployment, as well as, increasing the number of schools and focusing on improving education. A number of young participants also counted-on the government to provide youth friendly areas, offer various forms of training and skills building for young people, and supply funds for community-based, youth-focused initiatives. Linked to the expectation for tangible results from the government, was the desire by the majority of participants that government extend initiatives and services through the Provinces, to a community level. Lastly, there was the presumption that the government should act with integrity and hold the best interests of the population at heart. Young participants also wanted the government to include them in the formulation of policies and interventions.

5.2.4 GOVERNMENT EXPECTATIONS

The government held similar expectations of what should be done for young Solomon Islanders. A National Government Official said that the government was working to, "*give the youth sector some kind of structure that goes down to the community*", by working with Provincial Youth Councils and having representatives on these Councils from each community to represent youth and advocate for their needs. In addition, the government saw their role as developing and implementing youth related policies in consultation with young people, and taking a coordinating role. The central government hoped that, as they took on a coordinating role, young people would come to actively participate in the systems and structures they provided. The government officials who participated in the research all held that youth should be engaged with government efforts to support them, and that youth can play an important part in the economic and social development of their communities. A high expectation was placed on Youth Councils to represent young people and to follow-up the work they conducted within the government structures. Additionally, the government held that NGOs should help fund, train, and implement youth-related policy; and that, through the mainstreaming of youth issues, various government Ministries should become involved in meeting the needs of young Solomon Islanders.

In summary, participants painted a picture of the 'desired' situation for young people in the Solomon Islands. If things were working well the expectation from older people is that young people would be engaged in constructive activities and in church, contribute to their families and communities well-being and respect adults, and be educated and become economically productive. For young people, a desirable situation would be one in which they were respected and valued, and where they had a sense of belonging in their communities. Additionally, they would like older people to provide activities for them, foster opportunities to participate and understand the expanding factors influencing them. It was anticipated that the government show tangible impacts on the situation for young people at all levels of society, and act with integrity and accountability. The government aimed to meet these expectations, and to contribute to the creation of positive circumstances for young people, by providing youth-related policy and a structure for this to be implemented. With this understanding of how it is hoped things would look, the following section goes on to identify the reality of the situation for young people, which tends to be a deviation from the 'desired situation' and expectations.

5.3 Factors that 'thin' youth agency: Departure from the hoped for situation

Thin agency refers to decisions and actions, "carried out within highly restrictive contexts, characterized by few alternatives" (Klocker, 2007, p. 85). In this way 'thin' agency is more likely to be reproductive of oppressive social structures. This section presents findings around the constraints young people may face in terms of meeting expectations and exercising agency in order to bring about constructive change. It uses Klocker's (2007) framework of thick and thin agency, that was outlined in Chapter Two, to illustrate identified constraining factors and how these impact agency. Participants were asked about the societal perceptions of young people and why these were prevalent. They were also asked what barriers were present that made it difficult for young people to be positively engaged. The findings in this section are analysed in three parts. Barriers identified that are linked to relationships with adults and community leaders are first discussed. Secondly, government related barriers are presented. Finally, factors resulting from youth and adult's attempts to deal with a changing social and cultural environment are explored to ascertain how they may negatively impact on youth.

5.3.1 CONSTRAINTS THROUGH YOUTH INTERACTIONS WITH ADULTS

Evidence in the literature discussed in Chapter Two pointed toward the potential barriers that arise for young people through their interactions with adults and elders (Robson, et al., 2007). The current thesis research found two main 'thinning' factors in relation to older people, outlined below in more detail. Firstly, negative conceptualisations of youth, which may result in thin agency as these conceptualisations marginalise young people and sometimes lead to negative self-perceptions and a decreased sense of being 'able'. Secondly, a lack of recognition and support, which may thin agency due to young people potentially not having a voice in their communities, and older people being perceived as incapable of supporting them. Consequently, some young people may experience a decreased sense of self-worth, belonging and self-esteem, and may have limited opportunities to participate and 'act' in their communities.

1) A NEGATIVE CONCEPTUALISATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The first barrier the majority of participants mentioned was a negative societal conceptualisation of young people. This frequently formed a central point around which young participants told the story of their involvement in the community, and their attempts to challenge this conceptualisation. Both young and older participants, when asked how young people tended to be perceived in the community, thought that youth were usually seen negatively, as "*crazy*", "*trouble makers*", and as "*lazy*". Two issues fed into this negative conceptualisation. The first was an acknowledgement that young people did engage in disagreeable behaviours and activities, and were developmentally vulnerable to do so. This was discussed by a male Youth Leader in Honiara, "*They are young and they are prone to make decisions that are not right for them, so it is easier for them to be influenced to do something that is wrong*." Based on their developmental stage, it was therefore anticipated that youth would be vulnerable to involvement in objectionable activities and behaviours. While young people acknowledged that the negative conceptualisation may, in part, be fairly based, the second, and more frequently talked about reason for negative views by young participants, was that older generations tended to focus more on the negative, without seeing the strengths of youth. This bias toward the negative was seen as the primary cause behind the pervasiveness of this negative conceptualisation. One female Youth Worker in Honiara noted,

> *I think most of the time they* [older community members] *recognise the young people, is when they are in trouble - that's when they know, "Oh,*

> *ok, these are young people." That is the normal day to day music to every young person's ears - the bad side.*

This youth worker explained that by only focusing on, "*the bad side*" this negative conceptualisation is seen as being reinforced.

Two possible consequences of this persistent negative conceptualisation were recognised by participants. Firstly, this negative discourse was held by many youth participants to be related to marginalisation and the way in which they come to view themselves negatively, and as lacking value and the ability to positively contribute. A young female Practitioner in Honiara stated,

> *A hindrance to young people engaging in their community is they will say, "We don't feel special, we are nothing, so why bother about this. We just do what we are thinking and feeling because they didn't care about us."*

Additionally, a clear branding and separating out from the community of those young people, who are viewed negatively was reported by some older youth participants. A young male Practitioner in Honiara noted, "*People see them* [youth] *and they read their life and they paint rubbish on them, bad names: "marijuana guy", "smoker", and they feel out from the community*." The resulting discouragement and disengagement by such youth was held by a few participants, who worked with them, to be related back to the vulnerable developmental stage of young people. A young female Practitioner in Honiara argued that, "*Young people are really fragile, you must be mindful of how you talk to them because it impacts their life. If you discourage them then that's the end - they will never go on.*" This fragility of young people toward the negative view others held of them, combined with the risk of subsequently taking on perceived negative views and disengaging, or being ostracised, all may be seen to constrain some young people's positive contribution to their communities.

A second consequence of the negative conceptualisations was that young people were aware of the need to promote a 'good' image. This was most often reported by older youth, some of whom expressed the feeling of being constantly watched in case they made a mistake and who argued that the strong bias toward seeing the negative means that any positive image associated with young people is very transient. Subsequently, many young people, particularly Young Practitioners, reported being very careful about the things they were involved in. One young male Practitioner gave the following example, "*I have opportunities to go out and involve with other groups singing in the secular world, but I chose not to because if the church sees me involving with them they will put me out*." Some young participants explained that

they were adapting their behaviour to avoid negative branding and possible marginalisation. On the other hand, some participants noted that even if they were not engaging in undesirable behaviour themselves, but were spending time with young people who are seen negatively, they may also be perceived as such. One young male Practitioner shared that;

> *It's challenging when you work with people who are out from the community. People see that I invite a smoker into my house and they will complain about me, "What kind of leader is this who involves with marijuana guys?"*

The negative conceptualisation of young people as a whole, made it challenging to engage with marginalised youth as doing so sometimes resulted in criticism or ridicule. In Chapter Two it was mentioned that thin agency occurs in a highly restrictive environment with limited alternatives, the above examples illustrate the limited 'ways to be' for young people who felt obliged to try and meet the positive expectations held of them (Ortner, 2006).

2) Lack of recognition and support from older community members

Some participants reported that, while older people in their community frequently criticised and gossiped about them, they did nothing to support them. This was summed up by a young man during a focus group with male youth in Guadalcanal,

> *Most older ones will just stay and watch, never do I see anyone come and say, "Oh this is the way". They just sit down and look and say, "Oh young people are so stupid". But one time they should resolve that if the stupidity continues they should provide an avenue to end that stupidity or drunkenness or unlawful activities. So young people see that they haven't got any potential in them and feel neglected in the community, like they are doing nothing.*

Men in this focus group acknowledged that adults' indifference worsened the situation for youth.

The lack of support and recognition from older people in the community was put down to two main issues. Firstly, many young participants and youth workers felt that youth did not have a voice in their communities, and therefore were unable to request support or highlight issues that were important to them. Some participants explained that chiefs, elders and church leaders rarely consulted with young people regarding

community and church issues, and that young people frequently remained uninvolved in such matters. One young male Practitioner from Honiara believed that,

> *There are a lot of young people who want to see change in our communities, but it's really frustrating. It's just a total waste of time because people are not going to listen to you as a young person, it's just part of our culture, elderly don't listen to younger people.*

While the view that older people do not make space for youth to be heard was held by some participants, younger youth tended to share that there was opportunity to be involved, but that they felt shy and ashamed, and lacked confidence to participate when given the chance. This was discussed by a young female during a mixed youth focus group in Honiara, "*I guess young people have a say but maybe its within us Melanesians that we have the right but we don't want to talk out, maybe shy or something like that.*" However, again there was an understanding among some participants that this lack of confidence was more the responsibility of older community members who had not acknowledged youth or encouraged them to speak out. For example, one young male Practitioner shared that,

> S*ome young people have low self esteem because they were not given the opportunity to participate. They think that they are nobody in the community and so they don't have the courage to come forward.*

The need for respect, permission to speak out and participate in community matters and in issues effecting them, has been linked to the potential for transformative agency (Robson, et al., 2007). Conversely, the agency literature discussed in Chapter Two highlighted that silencing practices, or the perceived presence of these practices, was a constraining factor on agency (Klocker, 2007).

A second reason given for why adults and community leaders did not support the younger generation was that they were perceived as lazy or lacking the capacity to do so. Conversely, some young people and Youth Workers felt that chiefs and elders lacked the necessary capacity, knowledge and leadership skills to support youth in their communities. This view is backed up by the admission of some adults that they did not know how to support young people in their communities. One community leader in Guadalcanal shared that some adults in the community did not have enough land to divide between their children and so they were not teaching them to garden or farm and felt they could no longer provide a livelihood for them. The Community Leader stated:

> *So the time my kids grow they're in trouble. So, as a parent in Melanesia we try to keep our young people, but the problem is me. So my children are not at home, they go out and find their own employment. If we can*

> *put some project for our young people, then they wouldn't have to worry about going to town to find employment because their parents would have prepared for them.*

Thus, the lack of support from adults and leaders was also linked to cultural changes taking place and uncertainty around how to support young people under this transforming situation.

Circumstances in which young people are not recognised and supported were held to be linked to gender as well. Some young women commented on being less free to express their views and not being taken as seriously as men when they do. Additionally, the most common gender related challenge was the expectations on young women. For younger youth these usually involved fulfilling duties at home, such as cooking and babysitting. While for older youth this often involved going out to work in order to contribute to the family financially. One young female Practitioner in Honiara shared that,

> *They* [my family] *wanted me to work, not doing something that won't earn money. The voluntary thing is just out of their mind, I won't blame them because they spent school fees on me. So like they really don't like for me working in community.*

This young women shared how she experienced little support for activities she wished to engage in outside of the expected roles. Thus, the agency of young women may be thinned as silencing practices tend to be stronger around them and there is less space for them to pursue alternative activities.

In summary, the feeling of being unsupported was held to create a barrier between young people and adults/leaders. One male Youth Leader stated that: "*There is a lack of engagement and communication and that builds barriers between young people and elderly people. I have witnessed a hatred between young people and chiefs.*" The creation of a barrier was the opposite of the respect, recognition, and support that the majority of young participants desired. One male Youth Leader explained,

> *Young people have been part of the community all along because they were born to parents who come from those communities. But the issue is in relation to them being recognised as someone, or as a group within a community that also has some responsibilities, something to offer to help the wider community with regards to their community well-being and development*.

For young people and youth workers the issue came down to older people recognising young people as having value. Respect, acceptance and the ability to be heard and contribute to decision making were discussed in Chapter Two as enablers of agency (Bell & Payne, 2009; Robson, et al., 2007). On the other hand, the absence of this respect and acceptance leads to a decreased sense of self-worth and ability, thus, potentially limiting or 'thinning' youth agency.

5.3.2 YOUTH AND THEIR PROBLEMATIC RELATIONSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT

Constraining structures may also occur at a more macro level, such us in relation to government practices (Stones, 2007). The current thesis research found two main 'thinning' factors in relation to government, outlined below in more detail. Firstly, limited government impact at a community level, and, secondly, a mistrust of government.

1) LIMITED GOVERNMENT IMPACT AT A COMMUNITY LEVEL

The most commonly discussed issue, with regards to the government, was that the majority of participants felt the government was not doing enough to positively impact young people at a community level. Two main reasons for this were frequently discussed. Firstly, many participants mentioned that there was disconnection between the national, provincial and community level, resulting in a lack of support, particularly for rural young people. This view was explained by a male Youth Leader in Honiara,

> *We are glad to have a ministry that is responsible for youth in the government, but the sad thing is services are not yet felt down at the base level - that is the big problem. We have heard that there is lots and lots of money pumped into the ministry for youth development programmes* [Youth Division in the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs}*, but we haven't heard of any activities, or we haven't seen, from the village level, that a young person has changed because of a programme that is done by the government through this funding - never.*

While many people were aware that there were national and provincial mechanisms focused on assisting youth, and heard of funds being spent on 'youth', there was little evidence on the ground of the work of the national and provincial governments. As a result, a number of participants felt that the services and support that was available from government tended to be centralised and working 'on the surface', resulting in

assistance tending to go to the already privileged. One example given of this, by a male youth leader was the huge investment into the Solo Icon (a music competition). Solo Icon received large donor and government funding but was almost exclusively accessible only to the Honiara population. Therefore, a disconnection between the government and the community was believed to benefit those who already had a lot of support, and marginalise those who did not even further, thereby potentially restricting the agency of some youth.

A second reason for the limited impact for young people was held to be a lack of co-ordination between, and the use of churches by the government. The majority of young people who participated in this research were linked in with their local church and identified it as the main institution providing support and activities for them. One male Youth Leader shared, however, that,

> *There are some programmes that the churches are doing that are actually touching the lives of young people, because the churches are more community based. The challenge is getting resources to help churches carry out their work, because most people* [donors and government] *don't support the church.*

The lack of acknowledgment and integration of churches, and other 'middle-level' organisations, such as NGOs, could be seen to potentially thin agency by hindering wide-reaching improvement for young people and access to services at a community level.

2) Mistrust of government by young people

The second thinning factor related to government was a general cynicism and distrust toward the government expressed by many young participants. Many older youth saw the government as lazy and not doing anything practical for young people. This was expressed by a young man during a Focus Group with young male Practitioners in Honiara,

> *We're not complaining, we don't get paid, government officials are getting paid, but we're doing some work implementing lots of programmes and making an impact while they sit down and write and don't practice*.

As identified in this quote, there was particular frustration around the lack of practical involvement by government in instances when young people themselves were making efforts to do something practical in their communities.

Many young people also felt silenced and sidelined by the government and tended to, "*feel like outcasts in the decision making body of the country*" (Female Youth Worker, Honiara). Some government officials, however, put young people's lack of participation down to a lack of capability or confidence, lamenting the fact that young people were not able to fit into and benefit from the youth-related government structures established to assist them. One National Government Official stated that,

> *It takes capacity building in order for them to actively participate. A lot of the time we take young people in and they don't talk, they don't participate. To me it's not really active participation.*

In some instances, when young people had experienced interaction with government, some felt there was a lack of accountability and follow-up. One young male Practitioner in Honiara reported on his experience of participating in the revision of youth policies,

> *So we were reviewing the policies but when we arrived at the implementation stage nothing happened, we were just frustrated. One thing I think is that this youth policy is just using us for the funding. I am not happy with these people. Now whenever things from the ministry come youth don't want to accept it because they know that they are just being used. So that creates some barrier between the government and us.*

As expressed in the above quote, there was a feeling among some youth participants of being used by the government for funding that never benefits them. As a result they were sceptical of the government's attempt to encourage participation, and distanced themselves from any future involvement with government initiatives and opportunities to participate.

Related to this, some participants also felt government officials were just there for their own benefit and to gain wealth and recognition for themselves. Additionally, *Wantokism*, or nepotism, was mentioned by a few participants as being a further reason for mistrust of government. *Wantokism* was perceived to be prevalent and a barrier to young people being able to participate and meet their goals in their communities and nation. A number of participants expressed frustration over observations that people did not vote because it was their right, or for a better future, but rather because they were related to one of the candidates. This was held to decrease the motivation of young people to engage with government and democratic processes. The lack of government presence at a community level, whether perceived or real, and the mistrust of government lead, in some instances, to young people disengaging from country systems.

5.3.3 Factors resulting from attempts to deal with a changing social and cultural environment

The final thinning factors can be seen to relate to attempts to deal with a changing socio-cultural environment. In Chapter Three it was discussed that many young people in Solomon Islands, particularly in Honiara, are experiencing major socio-cultural change, often related to urbanisation, westernisation and the increasing need for disposable income in order to survive (Jourdan, 2008; Noble, et al., 2011). The current thesis research found three 'thinning' factors related to these trends: the false promise of Honiara, the lack of education and employment related opportunities, and the increasing importance of money.

1) The false promises of Honiara

The growth of urban areas within the Solomon Islands was a major social change commented on by many participants. As was discussed in Chapter Three, the services available in Honiara, particularly education and employment, were most frequently held as reasons for urban migration. There was also agreement that young people were drawn to Honiara for entertainment and in search of a better future. However, on coming to Honiara the hoped for opportunities often proved empty and young people found they had nothing to do and no way of making an income. A male Youth Leader in Honiara shared,

> *A lot of young people from the provinces are here with the mentality that something good is happening in Honiara and that it will be easy for them to get a job and have money. But what is the truth is the opposite - it's not easy for them*.

Participants indicated that, instead of finding the better opportunities they were seeking, young people, ironically, risked being further marginalised in Honiara. This marginalisation was discussed as particularly likely if young people ended up living in a settlement or relying on petty crime to survive or in an attempt to achieve the standard of living they observed in town. Further, the majority of older participants commented on the lack of traditional social structures in Honiara, and the negative impact this had on urban young people. The high mobility of youth, within and around Honiara, was also regarded as a hurdle to young people being embedded in a community in which they could be heard and supported. Youth Workers, in particular, held that young urban people were left to their own devices and were harder to build support systems around.

In this way young people's agency may be thinned by being away from traditional support structures and being potentially marginalised in an urban area.

2) Disillusionment with education and employment opportunities

The majority of participants acknowledged the importance people placed on education and finding a form of employment, and the benefits and choices these were held to provide in terms of becoming economically productive. However, some participants, more frequently youth workers or adults, said that gaining education and employment was hard for many young people. Regarding education, some younger youth held that, "*Young people are not interested to be educated so they just leave school*" (Youth Focus Group, Honiara). The majority of older participants, however, mentioned that a good education was desired but that there were limited school positions, particularly at a secondary and tertiary level, resulting in increasing numbers of students not able to complete their education. One female Youth Worker noted that,

> *Education opportunity is like a triangle, the higher you go the less we will have. So a lot of students drop out when they are young. I'm not sure why the government gives free education and yet don't increase the number of schools. It's very frustrating.*

The inaccessibility to good schooling and the consequent lower level of education of many young people was linked to high youth unemployment. Many participants noted that if young people left school at Form Five or Six[3], "*they don't have any qualification and here they don't really accept them to be employed*." (Youth Worker, Honiara). One NGO Worker in Honiara stated that of the young people they work with,

> M*aybe 80% of them have not attended any school, attended only primary or only form four or five. So even if they have the dreams and goals, I mean realistically they won't be able to, they need more training.*

However, even when young people do complete schooling they often still struggled to find employment due to a limited number of jobs. Additionally, a mismatch between education and employment opportunities was held by many older participants to be a crucial issue preventing young people meeting employment-related expectations. Studying business, with the aim of starting a small enterprise, or finding employment in one, was the most favoured path to becoming economically productive identified by

[3] The Solomon Islands education system starts at age six in the first year of Primary School, which has six years. Secondary schooling has seven forms, with students at form Five and Six generally being aged between 16 and 19 (SIG, 2007).

young participants. Many adult participants, however, felt that vocational and technical training were more viable alternatives for young people, although some adults acknowledged that vocational or non-formal qualifications were not recognised at the same level as formal qualifications and so young people graduating from vocational schools may still struggled to find work. The struggle for young people to meet their educational and employment related expectations was widely acknowledged and there was a fear of "*raising young people's hope*" (NGO Worker, Honiara) with regards to employment when so many factors appeared to work against them.

3) The increasing importance of money

Finally, and perhaps linked to young people's apparent attraction to business, the increasing importance of money, and expectations around having a disposable income, was mentioned by a number of participants. One young male from Guadalcanal shared that, "*young people just want fast money.*" The importance of money impacted on the expectations young people had when they travelled back to their rural villages, and expected a high disposable income there. One Community Member in Honiara gave the following example,

> *My boss pays weekly $300, so when I go back to the village and people want me to do jobs I am expensive because if you people want to hire me as a house-mary you have to pay me according to my boss*.

As a result people may be discouraged from going back to work in the village once they have earned some money in town.

Another more frequently mentioned issue relating to the centrality of money was that people were less motivated to be involved in things if money was not on the table. This was particularly challenging for those working with youth, as an NGO Worker shared, "Y*oung people are looking for money, so when we take their time in anything, they are interested, but the people at home will say what good did you take out of this.*" Therefore, unless some form of funds or payment was available the motivation for participating in initiatives, such as awareness raising or personal development was very low. Related to this, the motivation to volunteer in the community was held by some participants to be declining, although the church was often held to be an exception with church youth groups frequently being involved in volunteer related activities. This is important as the agency literature discussed in Chapter Two found links between volunteerism and increased confidence and connectedness (Jeffrey, 2011).

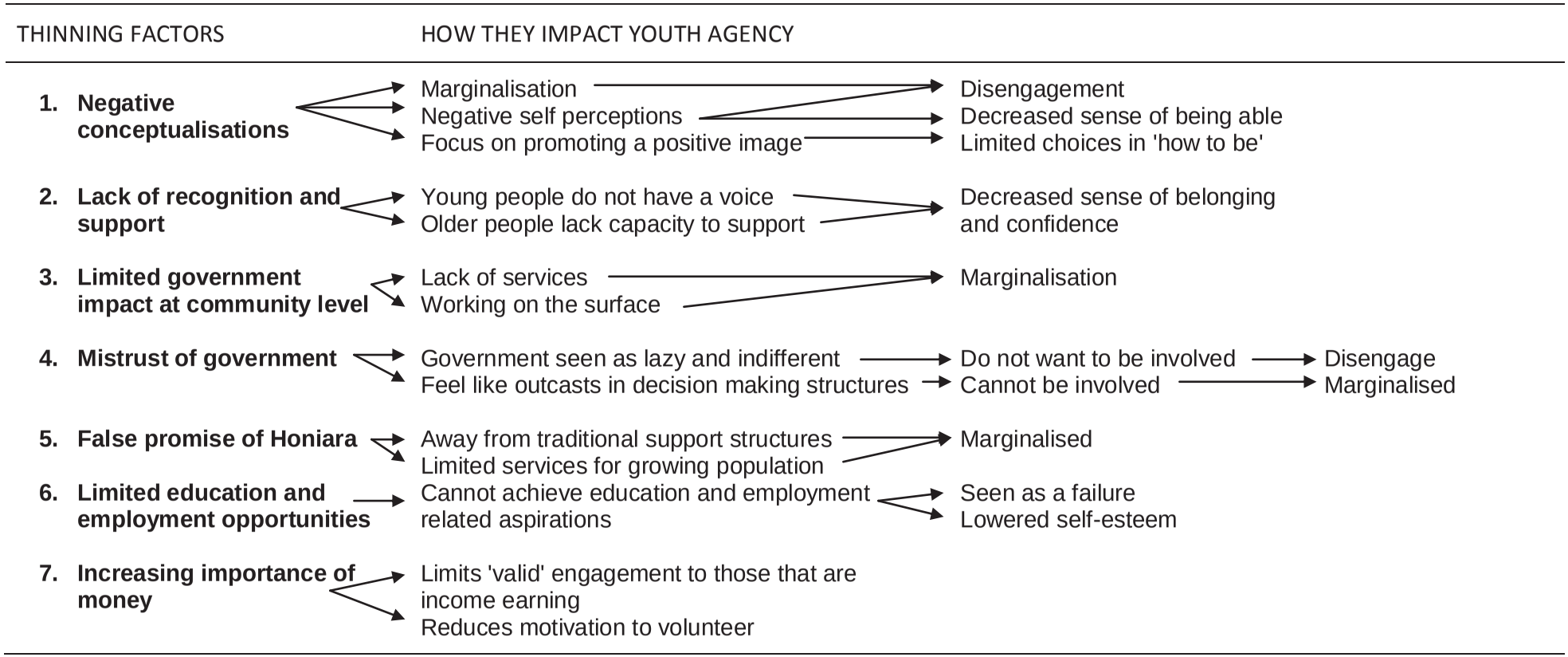
In summary, there are a range of factors within the relationships between youth and adults and youth and government, as well as those brought about by attempts to deal with a changing social and cultural environment, which are seen as limiting for youth. These are summarised in Figure 5.1. Negative conceptualisations, lack of support from adults, limited government impact in communities, a general distrust of government, and the false promises of town, education, employment and money all thin the landscape under which young people develop in a healthy manner, engage in their communities, and express their agency in order to improve their own and their communities' circumstances. However, as will be seen in the next section, there are instances when young people do break out of the negative conceptualisations of themselves, and of the lack of support of others.

5.4 Factors that 'thicken' agency: Creating a transformative environment for young people

Thick agency refers to decisions and actions carried out within the liberty of a broad range of alternatives, and may be agency that is transformative of social structures in a direction that is beneficial for the actors (Klocker, 2007). Social structures and relationships, while they have the potential to constrain expressions of agency, are also the processes that may enable it, and that can support a transformative nature of this expression (Hays, 1994). This section explores some factors that enhance or create a transformative environment for young people, and which are brought about in relation to outside factors. The theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Two is used to illustrate the identified 'thickening' factors and how these impact youth agency. Participants were asked what supports young people to be involved positively in their communities and the findings in this section were analysed in an effort to understand the factors that facilitate a positive environment for young people's articulations of transformative agency.

When exploring an enabling environment for articulations of agency, the 'positive deviance' group of young Ola Fou practitioners were invited to share the story of their involvement in their community and how their involvement was made possible by outside factors. Positive deviance, as outlined in Chapter Four, is a strength-based approach that examines 'successful outliers', rather than 'the problem' itself, in order to ascertain what factors are supporting these 'positive deviants' that could be used to support others (Pascale, et al., 2010).

Figure 5.1. Thinning factors for young Solomon Islanders' articulations of agency



Source: Author.

Participants involved with Ola Fou were identified as actively taking up responsibility within their communities as agents of positive change. As outlined in the introduction chapter, the aim of Ola Fou is to strengthen Pacific communities through empowering young people to become active in responding to their and their communities' needs. Through hearing the stories of participants involved in Ola Fou and seeing what common themes arise, insight into what a thick environment for exercising agency looks like can be provided. This section begins with a case study from an Ola Fou Youth Leader which epitomises the creation of a thick environment for the expression of transformative agency. It is important to note that instances of 'thick' agency were not observed only in the Ola Fou positive-deviance group, but were also expressed by other young participants.

CASE STUDY ONE

The findings from this thesis show that opportunities for participation, good local leadership, strength-based approaches to working with young people, and education and training are all enabling factors for young people's articulations of agency. These thickening factors are illustrated in the narrative in Box 5.1 from an Ola Fou Youth Leader, who has worked with young Solomon Islanders for over ten years. This case study is subsequently drawn on to address and identify these enabling factors in more depth.

Box 5.1 Case Study One: An Ola Fou Youth Leader

It's always the case for us in the islands that when we talk about a particular group of people we tend to talk about those who are good, but then what can we do with those on the other side of the coin? Personally, that's how I've been viewing young people as well, to be honest; focusing on those who met the expectations I had on who is supposed to be part of the youth circle. But where I was changed and began to realise my failure was when I was introduced to Ola Fou, that is my honest confession. Ola Fou is strength based and this changed my perspective on young people and the way I work with them. It's all about closing our eyes on the bad that he is doing, but focusing on the good that is in him. And it's hard to do that - it takes someone who is really transformed, I should say, to be able to handle that and step onto that kind of thinking.

Last year I did a life skills workshop for youth. I informed our village elder that I would be bringing in six young people from each of the four communities. He said, "Okay, I will call the church minister to help you out with the participants." The church leader brought a list with all the good youths - all the ministers gave me that! But before I consulted them I already had my own list, because I had been there for four months, so I recognised those who were called 'bad', I already had their names, and those were the ones I was targeting.

Case Study One continued...

So I said, "Oh no, I'm sorry minister this workshop is not targeting your group but they are targeting this group", and I gave him my list and he goes, "Wow, those people never come to church, those people they drink kwaso every Friday...", and the list goes on. And I say, "Yes! They are the ones that I am targeting." The pastor goes, "Okay, it is your workshop so it's up to you". And you know what - after that week, those 24 young people, who we trained in live skills, printing, dying clothes, floral, making soap, kerosene, all those stuff, they started to regroup in their communities and they started their own things. In September last year there was a big international meeting, and you know what - all the sign design for printing and all that stuff - it was that group that came and did it, and then the minister went, "Your workshop bears fruit", and I said, "Yes."

So helping our older folks within the community understand who young people are, and helping them also understand what we are trying to do with young people is important. Because most of the time it is the older folks who have become obstacles to youth development. So the awareness is very important for them - so working from both directions is a must if we want to move things forward for young people. The only way I believe we can change that situation around for young people is for us as leaders to begin to recognise the wealth that is in young people and entrust some responsibilities to them so that they can contribute and participate to develop the whole community. Then Solomon Islands will change - there'll be a bright future for this nation.

5.4.1 Thickening factors in relation to adults and leaders

1) Opportunities for participation

In Case Study One the youth leader made an effort to support and encourage community youth through offering the opportunity to participate in a life skills workshop, and then by providing space for them to be involved in an important community event. Young participants frequently shared that support and encouragement from elders in this way was significant. When asked what this support looked like, a commonly mentioned factor was community elders or the church providing things for young people to participate in, such as, youth camps, life skills training, and work experience. This allowed them to develop their talents and areas of interest. Additionally, giving young people permission and opportunities to speak out, as well as, giving them tasks and responsibilities, such as leading and organising, was important. This was evidenced during fieldwork at a church in Guadalcanal which announced the church roles for the coming year, with a number of significant roles going to some of the youth who participated in this research.

Of particular encouragement and support was when older people listened to youth and asked them for advice. One young female Practitioner in Honiara shared,

> *What has supported me is sometimes the leaders just come up to me, and when they try to discuss things with me, I think why did they have to pick me like that. So I was like maybe they see that I can do this that's why they come and get advice - so it's really supporting.*

Asking for a young person's advice can build their confidence and encourage future participation. Showing appreciation for the participation of young people was likewise identified as an supportive factor. This appreciation was, most commonly, expressed by providing a meal, and occasionally by providing bus fares, office space or small payments. One male Community Leader in Guadalcanal shared the importance of this stating that,

> *When we have bigger jobs like building we depend on our young people very much. Us senior people, we must provide some things for them, like if we provide food for them they will work hard. It's a way that they would like to see that we value them.*

Older people giving young people space and permission to participate and take responsibilities, as well as, valuing their contributions by asking their opinion and rewarding their work were important ways in which young people's articulation of agency was facilitated. As this occurred young people's self-esteem often increased and their perceived ability to act was strengthened.

2) GOOD LOCAL LEADERSHIP

The most frequently commented upon supporting factor for young people was the presence of good community leadership, irrespective whether this came from elders, chiefs, the church or youth leaders within the community. The youth leader in Case Study One showed good leadership in the form of humility, a willingness to learn and confidence to do things differently, and to encourage other leaders to do the same. Young participants identified two key areas that marked good leadership. Firstly, being present and involved in the community; this was seen in the earlier case study in the form of the youth leader knowing all the youth in the community by name and seeking to involve them in something positive and earn their trust. Linked to this, when leaders were seen to be involved, young people were also more inclined to become involved in their communities, "*In our community we see that if community leaders sit down and discuss things the youth will follow*." (Youth Focus Group in Guadalcanal). Thus, leaders who were present in the community and who led by example, by being involved

and interested in youth and community issues, thickened youth agency by creating space for young people themselves to be involved positively.

Secondly, leadership that built sustained relationships with community members was seen as important. The importance of a sustained relationship with a community member who was concerned for young people, and could draw them into the community, was highlighted by a number of participants. These leaders were seen as a champion for young people in their community. This could be seen in the youth leader's narrative at the start of this section as he had built up a relationship with young people in the community and out of this was able to support, defend and advocate for young people at a leadership level. The visible presence of a leader, along with their involvement and relationship building and championing for young people, was therefore an important factor in creating an enabling situation for young people.

3) Strength-based approaches to working with youth

Working from and drawing out young people's strengths, their 'positive side', was clearly highlighted in Case Study One where the youth leader valued the strengths of young people in his community and sought to include those who may not have usually been included in youth-related programmes. Similarly to the youth leader in the case study, a number of older participants saw youth as valuable and sought to assist them in finding their identity and strengths, they also tended to see them as leaders now, not as 'leaders-in-making'. Additionally, a number of older participants acknowledged the contribution young people made to their communities and the way in which communities are in fact dependant on young people, thus challenging discourses of exclusion. A discourse around young people as valuable, talented, leaders and a necessary part of the community, provided an alternative to the negative conceptualisations young people held were dominant.

Strength-based approaches may thicken youth agency by ensuring all young people have the opportunity to grow and be involved in their communities. This was evidenced in the Case Study One by the fact that the most marginalised young people would have been excluded from life skills training had the youth leader not intentionally sought to include them and find their strengths. The creation of an enabling environment for young people, as a result of focusing on their strengths, was also highlighted by youth participants themselves. One young male Practitioner in Honiara, who had gone through the Ola Fou programme, shared,

> *I'm not realising before that I had a strength or where to start in my community or what I will do. I've got a strength, even though people don't recognise me or realise that I was important in the community, because I was fatherless and they see me as a low person and they don't worry about my life. Through the training at Ola Fou I realised my strength. The training gives me an idea of how to help my community and even myself and my family. I came to trust myself, because sometimes we have a strength but we do not trust ourselves, we think we cannot do anything.*

The above quote highlights the power of a strength-based approach to facilitating the personal transformation of young people, and subsequently enabling them to bring about transformation in their own communities. However, as identified in Case Study One the ability of those working with youth to employ a strength-based approach requires some training and transformation on their own part.

5.4.2 Training and education as factors contributing to a thick agency

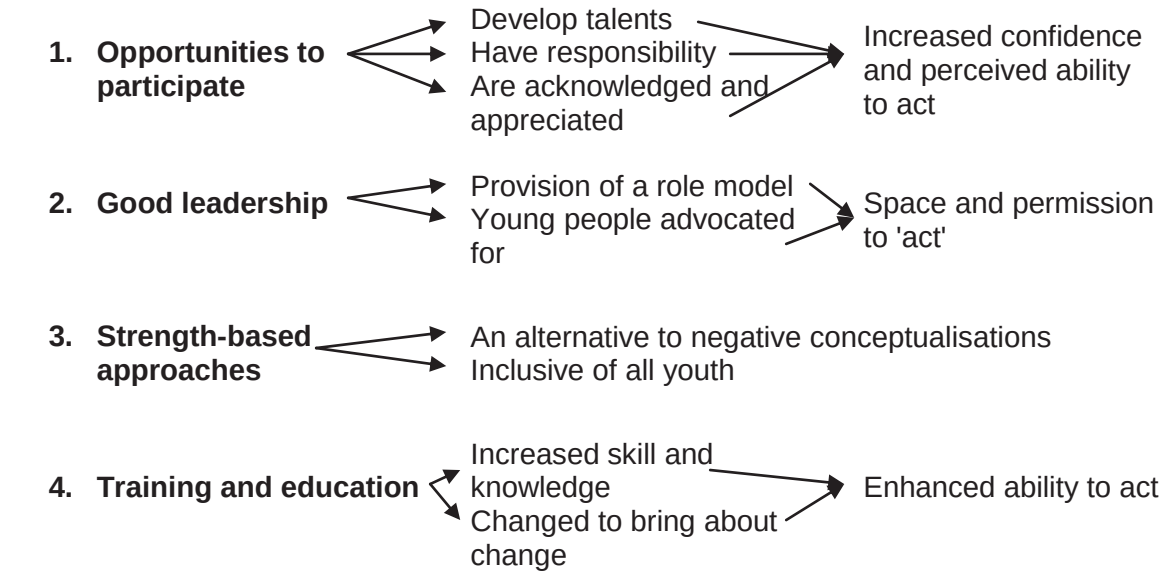
In Case Study One, the youth leader highlighted how his approach to working with young people changed following his own training with Ola Fou. Employing the skills learnt through this training enabled him to facilitate a positive environment for youth. The importance of training and education as a thickener for agency was also identified by young participants themselves. The majority of the sub-group of young practitioners had been involved in the Ola Fou training, and credited much of their personal growth and skills development to this programme. It was highlighted in Chapter Two, that perceived ability with regard to exercising agency is important for young people seeking to facilitate change (Robson, et al., 2007). Many of the young participants who can be seen to be 'positive deviants', bringing about change in their communities, reported having undergone some personal change, often as a result of training, mentoring or personal growth and development. Through training and mentoring these young people reported understanding themselves better, being more aware of their strengths, finding their voice, and then having the skills to work with others in their communities.

Related to this confidence, some young practitioners no longer created negative narratives around themselves. For example, a female Youth Worker shared that she spent time with young people who were viewed negatively by her community and as a result came under some criticism for associating with them. She was not drawn into

this negativity, however, explaining that, "*I choose to be with them, I'm with them most of the time, I invite them over, they come to our place, we hang out. People talk but I can't die because they talk - let them talk*." Through training, increased confidence and breaking out of the negative view of young people, the agency of these young practitioners was enhanced as their confidence was increased and they became aware that they could do something positive for themselves and their communities.

In summary, there are a number of factors identified in the research which are seen as enabling for young people. These are summarised in Figure 5.2 and were the factors that young people who were engaged in their communities had in common. Many examples of young participants expressions of agency, in order to bring about change, were seen over the course of this research. One of these is highlighted in Case Study Two at the start of the following section which presents findings around the articulation of young Solomon Islanders agency.

Figure 5.2. Thickening factors for young Solomon Islanders' articulations of agency



Source: Author.

5.5 Articulations of young Solomon Islander's agency

In Chapter Two evidence of youth agency was seen as being increasingly reported on in the literature. Some examples of young people's articulations of agency included resourcefulness, mobility, conforming to adult expectations and civic involvement (Jeffrey, 2011; Robson, et al., 2007). This section explores some specific articulations of agency by youth who participated in this study. It further explains how these young people can be seen as working actively as enablers and negotiating social structures to carve out a place of credibility for youth in their communities. Participants were asked how they were involved positively in their communities, what responsibilities and roles they took on, and how they gained support for themselves and their community work. While the Ola Fou positive deviance group gave many examples of transformative agency, several other young participants shared about their positive involvement in their communities, and thus the articulations of agency observed during fieldwork can be seen to be common to the majority of youth who participated in the study. As with the previous section, this section begins with a case study which details the narrative of a young Ola Fou practitioner and his story of working in his community. Within his story the articulation of agency is evidenced as he works to build relationships with youth and leaders in his community, honours protocol and leadership and is a humble volunteer in the community project he initiates. These factors are discussed in more depth following the case study.

CASE STUDY TWO

Box 5.2. Case Study Two: The narrative of an Ola Fou Young Practitioner

Through the training they gave me a camera to take photos to identify the difficulties the community are facing. So one young boy who I was working with took a photo of our small water tank. Water is one big problem we face in our community, because we live in the highland. So I worked with the chief and the church leader and told them that in the future that little tank will not supply water for us so we have to do something. I came to Honiara to take the price of the tank and put it together with the project to give to Ola Fou with some stories from the community, and they funded the project. In January I went back to the community and installed the tank. One challenge was how to get the community to come together and work together to carry that tank, because to gather them is hard. So I talked with them and talked to the pastor and he gives a letter for other communities to come together to carry that tank. We go down to the river and for about 20kms we carry the cement and we carried the tank, we live in the mountain and it is hard to carry the tank because it is huge. So one thing I do is buy some rice, tuna, noodles and other things and I tell the community to cook food and do things to help and be involved.

Case Study Two continued...

One thing I want is the community to pick up ownership of the project, not myself - they will see it as their project. To become a leader you have to humble yourself and work together with everyone in the community. I will not take pride to say that is mine.

I just saw amazing things happening, through that project people work together, even other communities they see that they can do anything. One chief of my community saw people carrying the tank and working together and he said, "I almost cried." They see now that I am important in the community, it's so surprising. They see that I really stand out in the midst of the community, even the young people they see that I am important and that I have a strength even though I am young. Through my life I will help other young people, to give them some roles and identify their strengths. The young people often involve with marijuana and smoking and the community say that they are useless. So I want to bring them back to be involved in the community, and work together with the community, to restore them back; because they feel out of the community. So I will stay with them and they will have a heart to share with me because when I work with them they will trust me. From there I will work with their parents and the church leaders to go and restore them in the community - that's what my plan and vision is - we will work together.

The above narrative in Case Study Two includes a number of actions and strategies that the young practitioner employed in order to ensure the water tank project was successful. Examining these strategies and articulations of agency is motivated by understandings of 'positive deviance' and the desire to learn from what is already happening that supports young people. Some of the things the young practitioner undertook was to build relationships with elders and pastors in his community, provide food for those who helped with the project, ensure the community and elders had ownership over the project and draw other young people into the community once he had gained respect. The range of strategies that he employed to create space for their expression of agency can all be seen to be related to an awareness that he needed the support and buy-in of adults and leaders if he was to improve the situation for himself and his community. This critical understanding of culture allowed the young practitioner to then move beyond it and 'play by the rules of the game', so as to speak, for the purposes of bringing about change. The strategies and expressions of agency, which other young participants also reported using, and which will be discussed in the following section, thickened the environment for active involvement in the community and included: building relationships; honouring protocols and leadership; humble volunteerism and initiating and running community projects.

5.5.1 Expressions of youth agency

1) Building relationships

Building relationships was reported by all young practitioners as a crucial strategy in being able to do something positive in their communities. This was evident in the narrative in Case Study Two with the talk of restoring young people back to their communities through building relationships with them, and the adults and leaders responsible for them, and thereby starting to mend the barriers that existed between youth and adults. Simply talking with other young people, and building connections and relationships with them was reported by many other young practitioners. They also expressed the advantage they had, being young themselves, in being able to see which young people were being excluded and work to include them. A young male in one Focus Group in Guadalcanal shared,

> *We* [youth] *can build each other or motivate each other to achieve a common goal - if he is left out or neglected in the community the youths will involve him to get involved and get in to the activities*.

Young Practitioners were also finding ways to enhance the sense of belonging of young people in the community. In Case Study Two the participant discussed giving young people a place and helping them identify their strengths. Other examples were shared by other participants. One Honiara based Young Practitioner noted that he had formed a home-made gym for young males to work out at. He shared that,

> *Now every four o'clock, each day, they are looking forward to go to the gym and are bringing others to involve there, like those who are not doing something positive. And they have stopped smoking marijuana and drinking kwaso.*

Additionally, including a wide range of youth helped improve the situation for young people by breaking down barriers between them, as another young male Practitioner in Honiara noted,

> *The community I live in has different places that are enemies with each other. But when I did a soccer team all of them started to participate together and know each other and the fight and crime reduced*.

Getting to know other youth and working to include those on the margins, and taking a leadership role, were all reported by young participants working positively in their communities.

The majority of participants also spoke of the importance of building relationships with older community members, especially with the leadership. This was

highlighted in Case Study Two as the young practitioner sought to inform and gain support from pastors and elders in his community. There was acknowledgement by many participants that respect goes both ways and that being on good terms with leaders was vital. Young people frequently mentioned getting involved with older people, visiting them and helping with things they organised in the community. As one young male Practitioner in Honiara shared,

> *When I first started working with the community I found it difficult because I am very young and wonder how to connect with the older people. So I have to go and visit them and participate with them in whatever things they do in order for them to get used to me.*

Showing an interest in adults and leaders and what they were doing was the first step in building a relationship. Some young people then went a step further and tried to involve the older people in the work they were doing with young people, by asking for advice and inviting some elders to join them in their work with youth. Some young practitioners advocated for young people by trying to share young people's points of view and encouraging older people to understand and become involved with younger people.

2) HONOURING PROTOCOL AND LEADERSHIP

The second strategy the majority of young people reported using to be successful and credible change agents was around honouring protocol and leadership, or as one Young Practitioner said, "*playing by the law*". This meant "*following the right channels*" in terms of behaviour, work and relationships with adults and leaders (Female Youth Worker, Guadalcanal). For example, in Case Study Two the young practitioner worked with and respected the leaders in authority over his community. The majority of other young practitioners shared the importance of approaching leaders first to get their support and following the protocol the leaders required them to follow. This often meant ensuring church leaders, elders and chiefs were included in all meetings and decision-making, and invited to all training and programmes that were happening for young people. One young male Practitioner in Honiara shared that,

> *If we always recognise their* [leaders] *authority over us and always report back to them then we will earn their respect and support.*

Additionally, respect and support from leaders was gained by some youth through honouring the expectations around being a 'good' young person. Some young people felt that they earned respect through going to church, dressing and presenting themselves appropriately, and by avoiding involvement in negative behaviours, such as

drinking, smoking and swearing. An example of this strategy was given during a Focus Group with young males in Guadalcanal:

> *We just try to humble ourselves and respect them and do something that is acceptable within the church and our community and the culture.*

This was backed up by youth workers and leaders who likewise spoke of the importance of young people building a positive image in their communities. A female Youth Worker in Guadalcanal talked of this as a skill young people should learn,

> *Young people might not have the respect and skill to work in their community, by skill I mean particularly the way they present themselves, the language you speak and your appearance and code of dressing. Those kind of things contribute to gaining respect in the community*.

Thus, 'learning', to honour expectations and particular protocols around dress and speech were important ways young people could create space to be respected and supported in their efforts to bring about positive change.

3) HUMBLE VOLUNTEERISM

It was illustrated in Case Study Two how the young practitioner researched needs in the community and presented evidence for them to leaders, and subsequently organised the water tank project. Furthermore, he was also humble in terms of ensuring ownership for his work lay with the community and the leaders and that people who helped him were honoured. This hard work, done voluntarily, paired with a willingness to not be acknowledged for it, were key expressions of agency and strategies that many young practitioners reported using to gain respect and support for themselves, and for positive change in their communities.

Young practitioners did not wait for older people to do something for youth, but reported going ahead and starting to do things themselves, and holding themselves, not others, responsible if nothing constructive was happening for young people in their communities. Additionally, in their pro-activeness to bring about change, some young practitioners were willing to prove their worth by "*giving back to the community, producing results"* (Male Youth Worker, Honiara). Participants shared that one way for young people to earn respect, which they may have otherwise gained through meeting educational and employment-related expectations, was through contributing to their communities. Some participants explained that if the community, especially older people, could see that they were producing positive results they would gain respect through this. The majority of young practitioners shared that while they initially had

permission to work with other young people, the encouragement and support they desired came only *after* older people observed that they were indeed doing something positive. For example, in the Case Study Two the social position of the young practitioner shifted following his involvement in the water tank project. Through this project he gained respect and importance within his community, and, in this way, his ability to 'prove' his commitment to improving the situation in his community was seminal in changing the way he was viewed and opening up future opportunities.

Linked with this willingness to initiate and prove their worth, was a willingness to sacrifice of their time and give of their skills, often without recognition and encouragement from others. This was discussed during a focus group with Young Practitioners, "*We do it voluntarily we just do, even though they don't pay us for it we just do it. We sacrifice our time and even our money, we stay up late at the night to organise.*" A number of youth explained that they frequently gave credit to others and allowed others, especially leaders, to take the ownership and praise for the positive things young people were doing in the community. While this was the case, not all participants found this easy, struggling with the frustration brought about by a lack of support from older people who they then had to honour. One young male Practitioner shared his experience of a scholarship programme a group of young people set up in their community:

> *The families, when you talk to them they are like, "Oh whatever, oh okay, we will see". But when the young people are going* [to town after receiving a scholarship] *these older people will come talking, "Oh I really encourage you to go." And man I was sitting down and I just wanted to give them a punch to their face! I was thinking, "Where have you been all this time, when we were headaching after these things and you just talked to our face, "What are you trying to do and what are you trying to prove", and now you are standing here with your big speech.*

Nevertheless, young people acknowledged the need to continue yielding to older community members if they were to bring about change for themselves and their communities.

4) Initiating community projects

Many young participants volunteered in their communities and also initiated various community projects. Several young practitioners explained that they saw themselves as a solution to some of the problems they saw, and reported being

involved in their communities in a number of ways. All the young participants involved with Ola Fou were researching issues in their community and formulating, by themselves or within a group, solutions for these. Projects that these young practitioners were involved in included: setting up water tanks in their community, establishing income generating projects, such as piggeries, setting up a production label for young people to produce music under, building a gym and getting young males involved in working out, running drug, alcohol, and HIV awareness programmes, working with school drop outs to help them find employment, seeking scholarships for community youth and finding ways to engage other young people positively by organising dance, music and sports groups, and tournaments. Young practitioners were often involved in tasks such a coordinating transportation, pricing, budgeting and purchasing supplies, and communicating with various community stakeholders. Additionally, the majority of active youth reported working personally to raise money for projects and running community-based fundraising activities to fund youth activities and groups. The wide range of tasks, responsibilities and achievements involved in some of the above work is noteworthy in light of the reported challenges and constraints young people in the Solomon Islands report facing. The strategies that these young people employed to be credible and successful in their community work are thus evidence of young people working actively as enablers for themselves and their communities.

5.5.2 YOUNG PEOPLE AS AGENTS OF POSITIVE CHANGE

The expressions of agency shared in the current findings are summarised in Table 5.1. It can be argued that these articulations of agency resulted in transformation for the individual young person, in terms of having more respect in their communities, more space to 'act', and being more socially connected; as well as, for the community, in terms of meeting community needs and enhancing the situation for other youth. In this way, these young people can be seen as agents of change, a term a number of participants used themselves. While it was initially anticipated that only the 'positive deviance' group would share stories of being 'agents of change', the findings revealed that other young participants were also involved in similar ways, indicating that this behaviour is more common than initially expected.

When asked what being an 'agent of change' meant to them, the most common response was being someone who does something to improve a situation for themselves or for others.

Table 5.1 Young Solomon Islanders' articulations of agency

ARTICULATION OF AGENCY	POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES
Buidling relationships →	Respect gained; Social connection; Mended barriers between youth and adults; Young people advocated for at a leadership level; Older people more involved with youth; Increased sense of belonging among young people.
Honouring protocol and leadership →	Respect gained and permission/space to 'act'.
Humble volunteerism →	Respect gained; Some community needs met; Increased value of young people.
Initiating community projects →	Young people meeting their own needs and those of the community

Source: Author.

A Youth Leader in Honiara noted, "*An agent of change to me is someone who believes in change, embraces change, lives change and facilitates change where he/she is.*" The motivation to do so was most commonly due to a desire to see situations improved for themselves and others. Additionally, a few participants also stated that their anger about the situation for young people motivated them to do something about it. A young male Practitioner shared that:

> *When you see a problem and you are moved by it or got angry about it, you are the solution to that problem, the moment you take the first step to tackle the issues and gain momentum, you are an agent of change*.

Additionally, it was reported that anyone could potentially be an agent of change, and young people who were agents of change saw themselves as having something different to offer, which did not necessarily fit in with traditional leadership structures; the chiefs, the church, and the government. As one young male Practitioner in Honiara noted,

> *Agent of change leadership is not inherited like chiefs, it's not a specific gift, like church workers. It's not out of universities and through competence like our governments leaders. We dig drains and meet with partners, we achieve with no media attention, we are just part of the struggling community.*

Thus, these young people were doing something outside of the traditional structures and, while they may have felt at times marginalised in their communities, behaved

actively to contribute to positive change for themselves as well as for their communities.

5.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the findings from fieldwork with the aim of analysing what constrains and enables young people to bring about positive change for themselves and for their communities, and examples of their agency. The definition of youth and expectations around young people, adults and the government was first examined. Thinning factors for youth agency, factors that constrain the creation of a positive environment for young people were explored as found to be: negative conceptualisations, a lack of recognition and support, limited government impact, a mistrust of government, the false promises of Honiara, lack of education and employment opportunities, and the increasing importance of money (see Fig. 5.3 below). Thickening factors for youth agency, those that enabled the creation of a positive environment for young people, included: opportunities for participation, good leadership, strength-based approaches to working with youth, and training and education (see Fig. 5.3). The final section explored the forms that youth agency took, which included: building relationships, honouring protocol and leadership, humble volunteerism, and initiating community projects (see Fig. 5.3). It was argued that these young people could be seen as agents of change in their communities, in that they worked to find solutions for themselves and their communities.

The findings revealed that a barrier was seen to be built up between young people and adults, making it increasingly difficult for youth to gain the desired support of older people. The key way in which young people were enabled, in their expressions of transformative agency, was by the presence of supportive leaders who focused on their strengths. Working within their culture to gain support for themselves by mending the barrier between themselves and adults, as well as leaders, in their community was also found. The building of understanding between young people and older people, and the bridging of this relationship, enabled the conditions necessary for positive change for young people and their communities to be realised. This highlights the need for socially situated understandings of youth agency in the Solomon Islands. This socially situated nature of agency, as well as constraints to it and how it can be used to inform development practice and policy with youth, is discussed in the following chapter. Additionally, the findings in this chapter revealed that young people can indeed be seen as valuable within their communities. Many young participants were working, despite

the 'thinning' factors they identified, to bring about change. This positive view of youth, which contested perceived negative conceptualisations, and the need to centre development practice with young people around this, is also further discussed in the following chapter.

Figure 5.3 A summary of youth agency in participants' narratives

THE AGENCY CONTINUUM

THINNING FACTORS	THICKENING FACTORS
May disable people from: seeing, feeling, understanding, imagining and acting to transform May result in: • Decisions and actions being carried out in a highly restrictive environment with few alternatives • Maintenance and reproduction of current structures	May allow people to: see, feel. understand, imagine and act to transform May result in: • Decisions and actions being carried out within the liberty of a broad range of alternatives • Transformation of current structures in a beneficial way for the actor
1. Negative conceptualisations 2. Lack of recognition and support 3. Limited government impact at community level 4. Mistrust of government 5. False promise of Honiara 6. Limited education and employment opportunities 7. Increasing importance of money	1. Opportunity for involvement and participation 2. Good leadership 3. Strengths-based approach to working with youth 4. Education and training
ARTICULATIONS OF YOUTH AGENCY	
1. Building relationships 2. Honouring protocols and leadership 3. Humble volunteerism 4. Running and initiating community projects	

Source: Author.

ENHANCING A SOCIALLY SITUATED YOUTH AGENCY AND ENLARGING THE FIELD OF CREDIBLE EXPERIENCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Using a narrative inquiry methodology, this research listened to, interpreted and re-told the perceptions of youth, young practitioners, youth workers and leaders, government officials and community members in exploring the study objectives with the intention of meeting the stated aim. This chapter seeks to further examine the experiences of young Solomon Islanders and how they translate overall with youth and development. The chapter provides an opportunity to consider what the results mean and goes beyond the results to a wider discussion of how the findings can be applied within development policy and practice to enhance young people's ability to bring about positive change. First, a recap of the thesis aims and objectives in provided. The factors that thin youth agency are then discussed, in relation to Objective One, arguing that development initiatives should work to reduce the impact of these on young people. Discussion of the socially situated nature of youth agency is then presented in relation to findings for Objectives Two and Three. The importance of conceptualising young people as active contributors, and recommendations for supporting them as such are then detailed. Finally, this chapter reflects on the research approaches and frameworks employed for this thesis, as well as the implication and significance of the thesis findings for youth and development.

The main goal of this thesis was:

TO BETTER UNDERSTAND HOW SUPPORT FOR YOUNG SOLOMON ISLANDERS AS AGENTS OF POSITIVE CHANGE CAN BE CONCEPTUALISED AND DELIVERED.

Under this aim, three specific research objectives were pursued:

OBJECTIVE 1: To understand the constraints affecting young Solomon Islander's ability to bring about positive change for themselves, other young people, and their communities.

OBJECTIVE 2: To understand the enablers affecting young Solomon Islander's ability to bring about positive change for themselves, other young people, and their communities.

OBJECTIVE 3: To explore how young people articulate their agency and work to be acknowledged as credible change agents in their communities.

While this study aims to take a positive look at young people's agency, it is important to acknowledge that structural constraints are real and important, and must also be considered in order to provide a full picture when examining agency (Ortner, 2006). This chapter thus starts with discussion around Objective One and the need to minimise the presence of factors that thin agency.

6.2 MINIMISING THE PRESENCE OF 'THINNING' FACTORS

Research Objective One of this study was concerned with understanding the constraints affecting young Solomon Islander's ability to bring about positive change. Theories of constraint hold that "human behaviour [is] shaped, moulded, ordered, and defined by external social and cultural forces and formations" (Ortner, 2006, p. 1). The concept of 'thin' agency, decisions and actions carried out in a restrictive environment with few alternatives, and 'thinning factors', factors which constrain young people's acting, feeling, imagining and understanding, was used as a framework to explore and understand potentially constraining forces and formations (Klocker, 2007; Ortner, 2006). This section argues that development interventions with youth need to take thinning factors for youth agency into consideration and endeavour to implement policy and practice which does not reinforce these constraining factors, but rather seeks to alleviate their impact on young people. This is discussed in more detail by looking at young peoples' relationships with adults, government, and socio-cultural changes.

6.2.1 YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

The first section of findings in Chapter Five addressed Objective One and pointed toward a growing barrier between young people and adults/community leaders that created a thinning environment for expressions of youth agency. Negative conceptualisations of young people were central in the majority of young people's narratives and risked being internalised in a manner which limited young people's

motivation and self-perceived ability to be engaged in improving their own, and their communities' circumstances. The presence of negative conceptualisations was held to be further complicated by a lack of recognition and support that young people faced. In Chapter Five it was argued that this was potentially constraining for young people, as they did not have a voice in their communities and experienced a decreased sense of belonging and self-worth. The importance of this barrier between older and younger generations, and a perceived lack of support from elders, has not been *directly* addressed in the development literature to date. Research suggests, however, that youth suicide in the wider Pacific region seems to be linked to feelings of abandonment, and a sense of frustration, anger and shame that young people experience as they struggle to meet the "often conflicting and divergent values that are articulated by the family, the community and the peer group" (Lowe, 2001, p. 32). Indeed, the findings presented in Figure 5.1, highlighted this perceived indifference of adults to be linked to negative self perceptions by youth and to marginalisation and disengagement. These two thinning factors, of a negative conceptualisation along with a lack of recognition and support, are thus supported by the literature as having the potential to negatively impact on young people.

In Chapter Five it was also explained that young participants often held that the negative conceptualisations, and a lack of support, stemmed from older people only focusing on the negative, and to older people lacking the capacity to support them. Indeed, within the literature the role of older people in supporting youth has been highlighted as a valuable, but often missing factor. In a report on young Solomon Islanders, adults wanted to support the youth in their communities but were not sure how to do so (Scales, 2003). This was similarly highlighted in the story shared by a community leader from Guadalcanal who could not support his children if they stayed in the village. Two reasons for reduced support from adults are presented in the literature. Firstly, Jayaweera and Morioka (2008, p. 10) state that many Pacific societies, "are experiencing conflict between traditional and modern ways of living and thinking". The 'institutions' of extended family, village, community, and elders/chiefs, often seen as a source of affirmation, identity, and social and economic support, are struggling to retain relevance (Griffen, 2006; Woo & Corea, 2009). An example of this was given by a young participant who shared how much influence mobile phones have on young people in Honiara. Vakaoti (2001, p. 50) states that, "[t]he infiltration of modern values and ideas into village life, and the promises of urban life, have greatly affected aspirations, needs and identity of our young people". Thus, changing societal relationships and influences, and clashing expectations between older and younger generations, feed into a situation where there may be limited choices and opportunities

to act to bring about change, and where older people are unsure of how to support youth in light of these new influences.

Secondly, in agreement with what many young participants stated, the literature holds that there is often a "culture of silence" for youth in the Pacific (Jayaweera & Morioka, 2008, p. 11). Silencing practices were discussed in Chapter Two, as being a thinning factor for young people's agency, and in Chapter Five, where some young participants noted that elders did not listen to youth or include them in decision-making (Klocker, 2007). Silencing practices may place youth at risk of being further marginalised when elders do not create space for young people to be heard in their community and to express their needs and possible solutions for them. This is in agreement with other Pacific-wide research that has found that a key concern for young people is a feeling of exclusion from decision-making processes, particularly around decisions that affect their own lives (Curtain & Vakaoti, 2011; Jayaweera & Morioka, 2008). In instances where there is a process for young people to be heard, such as in village meetings, they easily feel shamed or reprimanded for their 'problems', and may lack confidence to speak up about the real issues that concern them (Jayaweera & Morioka, 2008; Woo & Corea, 2009). This was similarly identified in this thesis by younger youth who expressed how shyness and a lack of confidence prevented them from speaking up when they did have the chance.

When explaining the situation between adults, particularly those functioning as community leaders, and youth, many participants reported that the barriers between them were just part of the culture, or were indicative of the 'Melanesian way'. This could potentially be related to the more anthropological understandings of Melanesian *Kastom* as discussed in Chapter Three. While understandings around where young people sit within the *kastom* system needs further investigation, *kastom* as a form of resistance, or as a creation rather than a given, may be coming into play with the clash between youth and adults. This could be linked with the reported anti-modernist message of *kastom*, and a desire to resist societal change (Akin, 2005). Instead of giving more space, young participants mentioned that older people tended to reinforce and expand traditional views and expectations around young people, silencing and marginalising them more. As youth seek to step out of these expectations older people may be enforcing them more, resulting in decreasing alternatives for behaviour and activities and a more restrictive, 'thin' environment in which young people can act (Klocker, 2007). This reinforces the post-development argument of not romanticising the local and acknowledging the various agendas that exist there (Kiely, 1999; McGregor, 2009). Older social structures change slower than newer ones. The

environment for young people is changing at a new rate and this societal transition heightens the clash between modern and traditional (Jayaweera & Morioka, 2008).

A situation where young people are silenced and marginalised, and where the environment they are embedded in is not understood and valued, may *result* in them being viewed negatively and lacking support, and may limit the extent and nature of their agency. Bell and Payne (2009, p. 1039) state that, "agency is determined and framed by what other people perceive to be appropriate in terms of preconceived ideas around identities, and young people act accordingly". How youth are perceived and treated, and the expectations placed on them, is thus linked to the creation of an enabling or limiting environment in which to act to bring about positive change, as well as to young people's own perceived sense of being able (Bell & Payne, 2009). When young people come to view themselves as 'unable', it is possible that they may act in accordance with this, resulting in their agency being 'thinned'. In terms of factors framing youth and development, viewing young people as fragile and vulnerable to other's perceptions of them should be taken into consideration. Additionally, this thesis confirms an argument made in the introduction chapter, that young people need to be viewed as dependent and in need of support, at the same time that they are seen as change agents (Robson, et al., 2007).

6.2.2 YOUNG PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT

The above potentially thinning factors presented in relationships between youth and adults do not occur in a vacuum and may be rooted in wider socio-economic issues (Vakaoti, 2001). Examining some of these wider influences for thinning factors, namely the government and societal attempts to adapt to socio-economic change, is thus also important (Curtain & Vakaoti, 2011). With regards to the government, it was mentioned in Chapter Three that Solomon Islands has a youth policy and well structured youth-related government arm (MWYCA, 2010; SIG, 2004). Similar to Scales (2003) conclusions, this research found that the government does not yet have a strong presence 'on the ground'. Consequently, work for youth too often occurs at a 'surface' level, not reaching those most in need. The perceived lack of government presence at a 'grassroots' level also leads to a mistrust of government and reluctance to engage in government systems. In Chapter Five conflicting reasons for this were given by young people and the government, with young people saying the government lacked the capacity to facilitate meaningful participation, and the government maintaining that youth lacked the capacity to participate.

One issue potentially further contributing to a weak connection between government and communities, which government officials who participated in the research expressed, was around the poor access to infrastructure for rural communities. Another Solomon Islands based study also found that transport and communication costs remain high, making it difficult and expensive to extend nationalised services to remote rural areas (Scales, 2003). The physical landscape of Solomon Islands, similar to other Pacific Island Countries (PICs), and the isolation of some communities, augments this (UNICEF, 2004). Another reason for the perceived ineffectiveness of government has been described in the literature as a possible lack of devolution and capacity at a provincial level, along with the inadequate inclusion of traditional leaders in governance issues and leadership training (Rohorua, 2007; SIG, 2004; Timmer, 2008).

In Chapter Three the centrality of the church in Solomon Islands was discussed. The thesis findings, in agreement with literature, found that the government is not making adequate use of NGOs and churches for the purposes of reaching to a grassroots level (Scales, 2003; SIG, 2004). Some participants held that this was due to donors being unwilling to fund church related projects. The literature, however, adds to this by arguing that part of this reluctance is around a lack of professionalisation of youth work (SPC, 2006). One challenge youth work, as a part of NGO or church activity, faces is that often youth and community workers are not recognised in their country or community as valid practitioners and professionals (SPC, 2006; Vakaoti, 2001). NGOs and faith-based practitioners are conducting much transformative work in the region, and professionalising and improving the institutional capacity and recognition of those working with youth is held to be a priority for improving the situation of young people in PICS. Thus allowing services to be felt for all young people, while providing support for them as change agents (SPC, 2006; Vakaoti, 2001). An example of this is seen in the work of Ola Fou which is building the value and capacity of youth work within the Pacific.

As a result of the thinning factors present in relationships with government, it was summarised in Table 5.1 that young people may lack access to needed services, and may feel like they cannot or do not want to be involved with government initiatives. This disconnection or disengagement from government support may contribute to increasing marginalisation and disengagement, as was evidenced by the accounts of a number of young participants who were reluctant to engage with government initiatives. In terms of informing developmental interactions with youth, three issues are important to address in order to minimise the above discussed thinning factors. First, it is

important to build the capacity of young people to participate; all efforts to provide space for their participation and engagement must be linked to capacity building and providing the needed skills to engage. Second, once youth are invited to participate in policy formation or intervention, there is a need for meaningful feedback and follow-up, as well as for maintaining consistent relationships with those involved. Finally, increasing the capacity and recognition of those working with young people will play a key role in enabling youth expression of transformative agency.

6.2.3 YOUNG PEOPLE AND SOCIETY

A further issue potentially contributing to a thin agency, is that people are trying to meet expectations by following proposed solutions, such as education, employment and moving to an urban area. Participants shared how these are often false promises and consequently younger generations may be unable to fulfil the roles expected of them and, as a result, risk being viewed negatively. The 'false promises' of moving to an urban area for better opportunities is in agreement with the literature, as rapid urbanisation was identified in Chapter Three as one of the underlying causes for some of the issues facing young people in Honiara and Solomon Islands in general (Storey, 2006; Ware, 2004). Geographical dislocation, in the form of migration, resulting from the search for better educational and employment opportunities, may weaken social cohesion (Woo & Corea, 2009). This was seen in this research, as those working with youth identified poor social structures in Honiara as constraining youth agency because they lacked support and a sense of belonging.

Education and becoming economically productive are increasingly being advocated as pathways to success for young people and were expressed as central expectations placed on young participants in this research. Roughan (2000 cited in Chevalier, 2001, p. 39), however, makes the harsh conclusion that, "the bulk of Solomons youth has been schooled for non-existent urban jobs, effectively alienating them from their village resource base and branding them as failures in a system foreign to their lives". Chevalier (2001, pp. 38, 40) goes so far as to state that universal education and full employment is a "foolish fantasy" for the Solomon Islands and, "needs debunking, along with the idea that drip feeding development aid will solve the problem. Previous models of education and employment must be challenged and their appropriateness to the long-term sustainability of the country questioned." An example of this was highlighted in the findings by a youth worker who lamented the decision of government to promise free education without ensuring there were enough schools and

by an NGO worker who was concerned that they were raising a false hope amongst youth in terms of employment opportunities. This is particularly poignant in light of links which have been made between social exclusion/marginalisation and the failure to achieve educational employment-related expectations (Woo & Corea, 2009). Thus continuing to push inappropriate education and employment options could risk further marginalising young people and reinforcing the negative conceptualisations around them, potentially thinning their agency.

The desire for formal employment often as a result of education and moving to an urban area, is linked with the monetisation of the economy and the increasing importance of having a disposable cash income. This is confirmed in the literature which discusses reduced dependence on the land and a growth in the cash economy as an alternative to subsistence economies (Duncan & Voigt-Graf, 2008). This monetisation has changed attitudes toward income, land tenure, and employment (Woo & Corea, 2009), for example, one community member who participated in the research said that she was now 'expensive' and therefore reluctant to work in her village. Additionally, cash is now required to meet birthday, marriage, funeral and other ceremonial obligations (McMurray, 2005b). Particularly in urban areas, money becomes an important part of survival, and the urban cash poor are often cut off from traditional systems and have no safety nets in town (Duncan & Voigt-Graf, 2008; Griffen, 2006). Earning cash money is also viewed with prestige, and purchasing power is now increasingly a measure of wealth. Family members earning cash have more 'power' in the family, thus changing social structures around decision-making and leadership and linking economic change to social change (Duncan & Voigt-Graf, 2008; McMurray, 2005b). In Chapter Two it was noted how employment opportunities were a 'thickener' of agency as they resulted in respect, income, and decision-making power (Bell & Payne, 2009).

The risks of not meeting educational, employment and monetary goals become especially problematic in conditions where young people are shamed or reprimanded for not achieving them (Woo & Corea, 2009). Related to such false expectations is the sense that once you have gone forward you cannot go back. As one Community Leader in Guadalcanal explained, "*Because when you go higher - Melanesian culture is when you go higher then you cannot go down because you've taken your schooling.*" In many cases, if young people move toward urban areas, and are unsuccessful there, or if they fail to meet their educational and employment related expectations, their main option is to return to their families, who are generally unhappy with them because of the expense they invested in their education. McMurray (2005a, p. 38) states that,

"stigmatisation of those who appear to be ‘failing’ may discourage them from seeking the assistance they need." In this sense, it could be seen that young people risk getting 'stuck between a rock and a hard place' in that they are unable to remain in their villages, for socioeconomic reasons, resulting in a lack of opportunities and support. They then may attempt to move to an urban area and/or embrace education and employment as a pathway to success and recognition, but when these do not produce the expected outcomes they find themselves shamed and reprimanded and the negative conceptualisations of them may be reinforced.

In summary, this section has presented the potentially constraining background, and the reasons behind these constraints given in the literature, against which young people are expected to be positive agents. A pertinent question to ask is: after so much 'thinning' is there any potentially transformative agency left? (Klocker, 2007). It is important to note that this 'thinning' is just one side of the coin, it presents a false separating out in order to see what the constraints are and understand them, and as such gives an overly pessimistic picture. In reality, however, these 'thinners' cannot be understood separately from instances of agency and the factors that support and 'thicken' this. As Ortner (2006, p. 2) states, "a purely constraint-based theory, without attention to either human agency or to the processes that produce and reproduce those constraints" is problematic. An awareness of thinning factors does, however, draw attention to areas the can be addressed through development interventions in order to minimise potential thinning of young people's agency. Additionally, social, economic and political structures are both constraining and enabling (Ortner, 2006). Thus, the next section examines instances where space has been made to enable and support young people in being positive change agents.

6.3 Recognising the socially situated nature of young people's agency

This following section discusses the last two research objectives and argues for a socially situated nature of young people's agency, and the need to situate young people within their social support structures thus enabling them to bring about positive change to their own and their communities' circumstances. Research Objective Two of this study was concerned with understanding the enablers affecting young Solomon Islander's ability to bring about positive change. Klocker's (2007) notion of 'thick' agency was used as the framework to investigate enablers and describes decisions and actions that are carried out within the freedom of a broad range of alternatives.

Thickening factors can therefore be seen to facilitate young people's ability to act, feel, imagine and understand. Research Objective Three was concerned with understanding young people's articulations of agency and how they work to be successful and credible change agents. The notion of youth agency as being socially situated was introduced in Chapter Two, as this research progressed it became evident that this was central to young people in Solomon Islands and their scope for agency. This section therefore draws in further literature in order to conduct a deeper discussion of the socially situated nature of youth agency.

In relation to Objective Two, the study found that opportunities to participate, good local leadership, strength-based approaches to working with young people, and training and education were thickeners for young people's agency. Objective Three identified young people's expressions of agency, which can also be seen as strategies they used in order to gain respect and space to be plausible change agents. Four main articulations of agency were shared in Chapter Five, which were also promoted by the thickening factors discussed, these included: building relationships, honouring protocols and leadership, humble volunteerism, and initiating community projects. The findings revealed that through these, transformation occurred for young people themselves and for their communities. Additionally, it could be argued that the gap between adults and youth was narrowed and young people were more supported and had a greater sense of belonging as a result of these expressions of agency.

The importance of belonging was highlighted in participants' responses as they expressed a desire to be respected and have responsibility within their communities. Belonging is defined as, "a sense that one is part of the community or society in which one lives" (Young, 2005, p. 4), and is argued to be based on, "identifications and memberships, [and] emotional and social bonds" (Anthias, 2006, p. 21) and through recognition by those around you (Bailey, 2011). Possessing a sense of belonging has been regarded as a protective factor for reducing the likelihood of engagement in risky behaviour and for promoting healthy youth development (Woo & Corea, 2009; World Bank, 2007). There have been few studies regarding the relationship of belonging and agency for youth, although there have been some inquiries around this in relation to women. One such study found that community connectedness and belonging could act as a thickener of women's agency and increase their sense of security and confidence (Panelli, Kraack, & Little, 2005). Further, two studies on refugee women reported that these women employed agency to make space to belong; that they actively negotiated belonging and inclusion (Bailey, 2011; Tomlinson, 2010). This can be seen in some of the stories young people shared through the way they proved their worth, intentionally

sought out relationships with adults, and embedded themselves within their community. One further way that studies have found women negotiated their inclusion was through volunteering and contributing in their communities, which created a sense of belonging (Tomlinson, 2010). In a similar way, many of the young participants were seen to be volunteering and contributing in their communities, and held that this was a key way to gain respect and recognition that may have otherwise been given had they successfully met educational and employment related expectations of them.

In looking at youth agency it has been argued that young people's, "negotiation practices are expressions of agency which reflect individual histories and social contexts" (Wierenga, 2009, p. 91). In light of this, it is not surprising that the strategies young participants employed reflected and fitted in with the social context in which they were embedded and understandings of what was expected on them. These articulations included building relationships, honouring leaders and protocols, humble volunteerism and initiating and running community projects. The important question then is whether these expressions of agency, were in fact reproducing social structures, and, consequently, fostering youth marginalisation. In answering this it is important to note Ortner's argument (2006, p. 151) that, "whatever 'agency' they seem to 'have' as individuals is in reality something that is always in fact interactively negotiated." Ortner (2006) discusses the notion that people 'play the social game' in order to change the situation they find themselves in. This may not necessarily be manipulative but may stem more from confidence in and respect for systems, and past experiences which showed how this respect can open up enabling situations. Thus, 'playing by the rules of the game' in order to facilitate positive, possibly transformative change, while it may feed into the reproduction of social structures and processes, is indicate that agency is always socially situated.

Ortner (2006, p. 130) argues that, "there is something about the word "agency" that calls to mind the autonomous, individualistic, Western actor." Indeed, when examining agency, especially among young people, it was mentioned in Chapter Two that it is important to be aware of this bias and to, instead, seek an understanding of the socially situated nature of agency and the manner in which young people, "can never act outside of, the multiplicity of social relations in which they are enmeshed" (Ortner, 2006, p. 130). Jeffrey (2011, p. 6) concludes that, "young people in many contexts equate agency with the cultivation of interdependencies rather than individual action and autonomy". Evidence for this was seen in this research as young participants saw themselves as dependent on adults and expecting adults to respect, care for, guide and lead them. It could be argued that when young participants did not

receive the expected relationship, for example by experiencing a lack of support instead, they themselves made efforts to build relationships with adults. The young Solomon Islands practitioners, through their strategies of building relationships and following protocol in order to gain respect and support, showed that they were not seeking to be autonomous actors, but were positioning themselves in social relationships that would enable them to bring about change. In this way it could be argued that the young people who participated in this study were very aware of how to increase their agency and empowerment through restoring good relationships with others. This was evidenced by the fact that the young participants who were successful in bringing about change had worked to bridge barriers present in their communities between youth and others. This bridging of bonds is key as, "young people are able to endure hardships, rework structures, and resist oppression precisely through forming bonds with other young people and with older adults" (Jeffrey, 2011, p. 6).

Thus, the choices young people make as they negotiate the social structures and employ strategies to be seen as credible and successful change agents are important. Wierenga (2009) argues for a view of youth as active negotiators (p. 74) making their choices through, "ongoing negotiations between individuals and their social world", part of which is, "negotiating relationships or contracts with significant others" (p. 73). Those young people who are socially isolated or not embedded in socially supportive relationships will therefore, "come to the negotiating table very poor" (Wierenga, 2009, p. 91). Conversely, youth who have an understanding of their culture and are able to activate their social networks, may show increased involvement, acceptance and success as agents of positive change. This was evidenced in Case Study Two where the young practitioner understood and acted on cultural protocols and involved other community members and leaders in the implementation of his water tank project. Lessons learnt from the ways young people were actively engaged in their communities should thus inform youth and development; and development interventions targeting young people must recognise the socially situated nature of youth agency in their planning and implementation.

6.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF CONCEPTUALISING YOUNG PEOPLE AS ACTIVE CONTRIBUTORS

In concluding the discussion of the research objectives, and focusing specifically on the articulations of youth agency found in this thesis, comment must be made on the active contributions of young people. Many young and older participants

noted that youth tended to be conceptualised negatively, and youth frequently commented on lacking confidence, feeling unappreciated and unrecognised as well as having limited support in their communities. McMurray (2005a, p. 35) argues that:

> In traditional Solomon Island society, roles were pre-determined, but in the semi-modernized cash economy of today success in finding work or self-employment of some kind is fundamental to the development of self-esteem and community acceptance. As population growth outstrips economic growth and diversification, it becomes increasingly difficult for young people to find their place in society.

Young people in this thesis, however, were simultaneously perceived as a workforce with community responsibilities and roles to fulfil. Additionally, in Table 5.1, the articulations of young participants agency highlighted the active and strategic ways in which they were 'acting' within their communities. One government official who participated in this research contested the notion of youth as marginal by stating that communities are in fact very dependent on young people for their functioning.

The negative conceptualisation and perceived lack of support for youth, in relation to adults and government, as well as difficulties in meeting educational, employment and income expectations, is argued to be thinning young people's agency. This thinning could be conceptualised as a 'downward spiral' in which older people may come to perceive youth negatively and heighten their expectations of them. Youth may subsequently be at risk of taking on the negative conceptualisations and failing to meet expectations, based on wider societal issues. Negative societal beliefs about young people, such as that they are a "time bomb", are thus likely to be reinforced (Coxon & Munce, 2008, p. 151). This is linked to the conclusion in literature that when promoting young people as agents of positive change, "efforts to promote this perspective have been undermined by a pervasive societal view of young people as a problem and not a potential resource" (Wheeler & Roach, 2005, p. 3). Consequently, there is a risk that young people's contribution will be socially constructed as 'non-existent', or as an invalid alternative for change, as discussed in relation to hopeful post-development in Chapter Two, and that they may feel invisible and unvalued. This could impact the whole community as Wheeler and Roach (2005, p. 3) argue that, "when adults write youth off as apathetic and disengaged, they miss out on some of the richest resources in their community".

This research has highlighted how communities are, to an extent, reliant on youth, and how youth are active contributors to their own and their communities situations. Viewing young people this way is a crucial factor that must guide development planning and the implementation of youth related interventions. Since there is evidence that many young people are actively contributing to their communities, they need to be repositioned and conceptualised as agents, doers, thinkers, and actors in their worlds (Robson, et al., 2007). Robson, et al. (2007) argues that by even conceptualising youth as agents results in a positive shift in how they are integrated into policy and practice.

6.5 SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

The main research aim of a better understanding of how support for young Solomon Islanders as positive change agents can be delivered is directly addressed in this section through a number of recommendations for development. The following recommendations arise from the specific lessons learnt from this study and assist in exploring how understandings of agency can frame the way development works with young people.

In supporting young Solomon Islanders as positive change agents, the social nature of their agency has been highlighted and confirmed through this research. Working to situate young people in their social contexts and build community connectedness is thus a key way of supporting youth. The young practitioner in Case Study Two called this 'restoring youth back to the community'. One opening for this is to deliver interventions that promote inter-generational dialogue and debate and that educate and build the capacity of elders, adults and agencies to effectively engage young people (Woo & Corea, 2009). Young participants in this study felt that adults were concerned about youth issues but did not prioritise or know how to deal with them, and indeed the "failure to foster inter-generational dialogue" is also seen more broadly as marginalising young people in the Pacific (Jayaweera & Morioka, 2008, p. 11). An additional opportunity is to envisage ways in which interactions between young people and wider society benefit both parties (McMurray, 2005b). This raises the question: where can there be space made for older and younger to work together to transform things for everyone's benefit? Helping older people and those working with young people to know what to do to help them can open up space for young people to make creative and transformative moves for themselves and their communities. An inter-generational framework for development programmes, and training of those

working with young people have been suggested as ways to promote this (Scales, 2003; SPC, 2006).

Additionally, the types of interventions offered for young people in the Solomon Islands need to be considered with great care, as regards the socially situated nature of young people's agency. The community, and young people's relationships with adults, function as a platform for them to be involved in positive change, and should be valued and incorporated into interventions as such. For example, two issues were identified by participants regarding the creation of a barrier between youth and their communities following an intervention for youth. Firstly, one NGO worker talked about the burning of the youth centre they had established for young people in the community due to ownership issues between youth and adults over the centre. Secondly, a couple of adult participants complained about the behaviour of young people following a rights-awareness programme by NGOs. While young people may be seen to have employed agency and choice in the act of burning the youth centre and citing 'their rights' to not listen to adults, these forms of agency are likely to reproduce the negative conceptualisations around young people. Neither building a youth centre nor rights awareness programmes are inherently problematic. As illustrated in the above examples, however, interventions targeted at assisting youth may, ironically, increase the barriers between older and younger people, leading to more difficulties and further marginalisation for youth. A failure to work with both adults and youth may be an issue here. A guiding question underlying youth and development, therefore, should be to ask, what does this policy or practice, targeted at young people, mean for older people, and for the relationship between older and younger people in the community? Interventions must, consequently, be designed to ensure they do not widen the gap between youth and adults.

Another possible way to 'restore youth back to the community' is through continuing to increase mechanisms that facilitate greater and more meaningful participation by youth (Jayaweera & Morioka, 2008; Woo & Corea, 2009). Ensuring that participation is not tokenistic and that young people are indeed listened to is vital for the success of future work with young people in the region. Some participants expressed that involvement in Ola Fou allowed them a voice and knowledge of how to express this. There is, therefore, room to further investigate creative ways to give youth a meaningful voice in Pacific society and in national policy (Curtain & Vakaoti, 2011; McMurray, 2005b). When young people have been engaged, good follow-up processes around how recommendations and decisions made were implemented or had affected policy, need to be established (Woo & Corea, 2009). Additionally, building the capacity

of youth people to participate is important, simply making space for participation is not enough. One key way this can be done is by providing personal development opportunities for youth (Woo & Corea, 2009).

Once the capacity of young people is invested in, focusing on youth-led initiatives and exploring ways for 'youth to work for youth', along with the initiation and monitoring of inventions by young people, are other openings to pursue (Curtain & Vakaoti, 2011; McMurray, 2005b). Supporting young people to help themselves is an exciting opportunity as there are a large number of youth in the Pacific region who understand the situation they face and have ideas for solutions (Curtain & Vakaoti, 2011). The Ola Fou young practitioner in Case Study Two is an example of a young person brining about practical change for his community through a water tank project. The State of Pacific Youth Report 2005, however, argues that, with the exception of some income-generating schemes, there are very few examples of other youth-led initiatives in the region (McMurray, 2005b). Ensuring that young people, firstly, have appropriate skills; secondly, have the ability to use these skills; and thirdly, have life skills/leadership training and continued support, must all go hand in hand in order for young people to support themselves and bring about change to their own circumstances and in their communities (McMurray, 2005b).

Lastly, working with organisations at a community level could be an important way to create community connectedness around young people. As mentioned by many participants in this study, across the Pacific region, NGOs and churches, with their broad access at a community level, are seen as playing a vital, and perhaps more grassroots, role in youth work (Curtain & Vakaoti, 2011; Woo & Corea, 2009). There are several international and local NGOs, such as Ola Fou, involved in youth development through providing various training programmes for youth, funding youth initiated projects, providing meeting places for young people, and supporting youth in self-employment and income generating activities (Hamena, 2008; McMurray, 2005b). Churches in PICs have historically played a significant role in young people's development through Sunday school, camps, programmes, outreaches, and youth conferences (Hamena, 2008). Reports have commented on the centrality of the church and the need to work with this institution (Hamena, 2008; Rohorua, 2007). This, therefore, needs to be taken seriously and the best ways of doing this investigated. Equally important is the need to build the capacity of local church leaders around best-practice principles of working with young people.

6.6 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are three main limitations to this research that should be noted. Firstly, there was a limited inclusion of NGO workers in the study, due in part to accessibility to these organisations, and also to the limited time frame of the fieldwork. While inclusion of the NGO sector would have been useful, young participants tended to refer to adults, community leaders, the church, and government as structures they believed should be supporting them. Only a minority of participants commented on the work of NGOs in their communities. Secondly, the research was predominantly conducted in an urban area, therefore care should be taken when considering the conclusions of the thesis in reference to rural youth. Nevertheless, a number of participants lived and worked in both Honiara and in their provincial communities, so there may be some relevance to these areas. Lastly, the young people who participated in this research tended to be already linked to some form of support, therefore it could be argued that the voice of the most marginalised young Solomon Islanders did not influence the findings in this study. While this may be the case, and intentional research with 'excluded' young people should be undertaken in the future, it was important ethically to use established channels to access young people, and many of the youth who did participate in the study could reflect on experiences of exclusion and marginalisation.

Recommendations relating to future practice, policy and research should take note of the above limitations. Future research could investigate an experimental inter-generational framework for interventions with young people and explore what factors would foster inter-generational dialogue and transformation. Within Melanesia, the influence of *kastom* on the relationship between older and younger generations, and any links to the marginalisation of young Melanesians, would be an interesting avenue to explore. Youth-led initiatives, and factors supporting these, as well as the experiences of young people leading change should continue to be investigated. A further important future direction is that development must be informed by locally relevant understandings of 'youth' and 'development', and particularly by understandings of the socially situated nature of youth agency. In this way a praxis of youth and development within a hopeful post-development can grow and be tested.

6.7 Final Conclusions

In order to fulfil the research aim, three major conclusions emerged from this study. Firstly, young people face varying and interrelated constraints on their ability to bring about change. Minimising these should be a key concern within development initiatives. Two further conclusions were drawn from evidence that young people were able to express agency in spite of these constraints, especially when they were socially supported. The socially situated nature of youth agency should thus form a cornerstone within youth and development initiatives. Lastly, the negative conceptualisations of young people need to be contested on the grounds that young people are making active contributions within their communities. The discussions and recommendations detailed in this chapter arise from the specific lessons learnt from this research. The thesis used the framework of a 'hopeful' post-development, and drew on principles from Pacific methodologies and an actor oriented approach in order to highlight the agency of an otherwise marginalised group. Reflecting on the employed research approach and frameworks, as well as this thesis' contribution to these, is an important part of the conclusion.

It was mentioned in Chapter Four that narrative inquiry is a field in the making and there are opportunities for exploring how it may be used (Chase, 2005). This thesis added to these explorations by allowing the narrative inquiry methodological framework for the study to be influenced by Pacific methodologies and an actor-oriented approach. Reasons for this were to take into consideration the unique Solomon Islands context and to prioritise experiences of agency amongst the participants. The use of some principles from Pacific methodologies, namely *Talanoa* and the *Vanua* framework, which were in line with literature around Solomon Islands culture, provided a respectful way in which to conduct research as a cultural 'outsider'. There has been wide reaching criticism of the role of outsiders as researchers, particularly in regard to concerns around neo-colonialism (Smith, 2003). Scheyvens and Storey (2003) report that some tendencies subsequently seen in Western researchers are: to abandon development research, to overly romanticise indigenous knowledge, to embrace more empowering and participatory methodologies, or, lastly, to continue to value the potential of cross-cultural research through respectful research in order to enhance understandings of development issues. This thesis aimed to embrace this last option and contributes to the exploration around the use of narrative inquiry by highlighting how it can be used to conduct valuable cross-cultural research.

Additionally, the use of narrative inquiry was informed by actor-oriented approaches, which have critiqued the overly structuralist stance of development thinking and research, calling instead for a focus on social actors and the strategies they employ to ensure their own needs are met (Biggs & Matsaert, 1999; Turnbull, et al., 2009). The overall aim of this thesis was concerned with agency, therefore, having a methodology that prioritised this was key in drawing out narratives around *how* young people exercised their agency in order to gain respect and be able to contribute positively. The value of an actor-oriented approach was highlighted in this thesis by allowing insight into the positive actions young people took, and the factors that supported them. Key to the implementation of actor-oriented principles was the concept of 'positive deviance', an asset based approach which involves focusing on individuals, 'positive deviants', who are being successful in the topic of investigation, in this instance youth who were known to be positive contributors in their communities (Pascale, et al., 2010). Through examining a 'positive deviance' group of Ola Fou practitioners, rather than looking at 'needs' or 'problems', solutions being already enacted by Solomon Islands' youth could be seen and learnt from. This research found that many other young people were engaging positively in their communities, and hence those who are agents of positive change need to be recognised less as 'outliers' and be provided with more support. The use of positive deviance as a research methodology should continue to be investigated as a valuable and alternative way to think about the experiences of the 'recipients' of development. Focussing on the experiences of the young Solomon Islanders, viewed as 'positive deviants', was central in allowing for the socially situated nature of their agency, and their active contribution, to be seen.

This study took a specific focus on young people as agents of change, and how they could be conceptualised and supported as such within development policy and practice. It was mentioned in Chapter Two that there is currently no comprehensive framework for theorising youth and development. Rather, the 'demographic imperative', the UNCRC, the increasing focus on participatory development and development sustainability and effectiveness, and positive youth development are all drawn on to theorise work with youth. This thesis argues that an understanding of youth agency should form a key part of frameworks guiding youth and development. Klocker's (2007) framework of 'thin' and 'thick' agency was used in this thesis (Klocker, 2007). Thin agency refers to decisions and actions carried out within a restrictive environment classified by few alternatives, and factors which 'thin' agency disable people from seeing, understanding, imagining and acting to transform (Klocker, 2007; Ortner, 2006; Robson, et al., 2007). Conversely, thick agency refers to actions carried out within the

freedom of a wide range of alternatives, and factors which thicken agency can be seen as those which enable people to see, understand, imagine and act to transform (Klocker, 2007; Ortner, 2006; Robson, et al., 2007). White and Wyn (1998, p. 316) state that, "the goal of a liberating social science is to understand how social life is shaped by these structural relations, in order to expand the scope of potential human agency". This study sought to be a 'liberating social science' and to explore how space can be made, within development, for young people to be seen and supported as credible agents of change. The use of thin and thick agency was a valuable way of understanding how young Solomon Islanders' lives were shaped by structural relations, as well as how these may be supportive of young people's transformative agency. A deeper use of this framework, and a potential future direction, would be to consider the multiple layering of thinning and thickening factors and which ones may override the others. Klocker (2007), for example, found silencing practices to be more common in rural then urban areas. Investigating the multifaceted nature of thinning and thickening factors would also be informative for a more nuanced understanding of youth agency.

The focus on agency for this thesis was motivated by an underlying interest in the principles of a 'hopeful post-development practice'. Post-development approaches are seen as alternatives *to* development which are interested in evaluating the knowledges and meanings that are by-products of development (Beban-France & Brooks, 2008). The earlier post-development critiques were pessimistic in nature calling for the abandonment of development (Esteva, 1992; Sachs, 2010). Recent approaches have been more hopeful in outlook, with the invitation to "imagine and practice development differently" and to 'open up' the nature, discourses, meanings and ways of bringing about change (Gibson-Graham, 2005a, p. 6). Hopeful post-development practice holds that different ways of bringing about change are already taking place and need to be acknowledged and built upon (Agostino, 2007). This understanding of 'opening up' and building on alternative ways for change was a central motivating factor behind founding this thesis on a hopeful post-development approach.

Two themes of hopeful post-development informing the thesis were: enlarging the field of credible experience and prioritising assets and agency (McGregor, 2009; Santos, 2004a). Arguments around enlarging the field of credible experience draw on the understanding that some practices have been subjugated or invalidated and that efforts should be made to render these credible and visible pathways for change (Santos, 2004a). This thesis highlighted how young participant's valuable contributions may become socially constructed as invalid, due to negatively held perceptions of them

and as a result of a lack of support for their positive development. Conversely, the research also made evident the real and active contributions these young participants were making to their own and their communities' well-being, challenging the views of them as 'lazy' or 'trouble makers'. The findings of this thesis thus contribute to a hopeful post-development approach that seeks to validate what has been rendered non-existent.

Further, arguments around prioritising assets and agency caution against the bias of looking 'outside' the community for solutions and rather emphasise the need to start from the strengths within a community (Gibson-Graham, 2005a). The manner in which young participants articulated their agency indicated that they were aware of how to best gain support and change things positively for themselves and their communities. Using instances of agency as the "building blocks" for the development of young people and their communities, as discussed in this thesis, should be a central focus of a 'hopeful' post-development approach to working with youth (Matthews, 2004, p. 282). Valuing young people's insights and solutions can challenge notions of the "locality as inferior, residual, non-productive and ignorant" (Gibson-Graham, 2005a, p. 11) and assist with the pursuit of local, meaningful and positive change that is determined to "theorise conditions of possibility [rather] than limits to possibility" (Gibson-Graham, 2005b, p. 123). The thesis contributes to a hopeful post-development practice by highlighting how focusing on positive contributions, agency and assets has value in identifying meaningful and relevant pathways for change. For example, development practices that support young people's agency to be positive contributors in their communities.

In the introduction section it was stated that the intention of this research was to investigate and better understand how young people could be supported, within development, as agents of positive changes for themselves and their communities. A focus on youth agency has increasingly been seen in the literature, as has the propagation of viewing young people as being capable of changing their circumstances for the better (Abebe & Kjørholt, 2011; Jeffrey, 2011). However, very little is understood about the nature, constraints and enablers on youth agency, and how understandings around this can be used to enhance the situation for young people (Robson, et al., 2007). This thesis drew on the experiences of young Solomon Islanders, some of whom were engaged as agents of positive change in their communities, as well as on a range of other key stakeholders, and presented constraints and enablers to transformative expressions of agency, and some recommendations around how development could work to support young people as change agents. There is a

growing proportion of young people within Pacific countries, and there has been a shift to seeing Pacific youth as a solution not a problem for their communities. The need for young people in the Pacific to, subsequently, perceive themselves as having both the ability and opportunity to contribute to a positive future in their communities and countries needs to be acknowledged (Jayaweera & Morioka, 2008). Development policy and practice must, accordingly, work to enlarge the field of credible experience for young people to be seen and supported as potential agents of positive change.

REFERENCES

Abebe, T., & Kjørholt, A. T. (2011). *Young people, participation, and sustainable development in an urbanizing world: A Working Paper* United Nations Human Settlement Program, UN-Habitat.

ADB. (2008). Education and Skills: Strategies for Accelerated Development in Asia and the Pacific: Asian Development Bank

ADB. (2010). Asian Development Bank and Solomon Islands: Fact Sheet. Manila: Asian Development Bank

Agostino, A. (2007). Post-development: Unveiling clues for a possible future. In A. Ziai (Ed.), *Exploring Post-Development: Theory and practice, problems and perspectives* (pp. 197-211). Oxon: Routledge.

Akin, D. (2004). Ancestral Vigilance and the Corrective Conscience. *Anthropological Theory, 4*(3), 299-324. doi: 10.1177/1463499604045566

Akin, D. (2005). Kastom as hegemony? A response to Babadzan. *Anthropological Theory, 5*(1), 75-83. doi: 10.1177/1463499605050871

Alasia, S. (1989). Population movement. In H. Laracy (Ed.), *Ples Blong Iumi: Solomon Islands, The Past Four Thousand Years* (pp. 112-120). Suva and Honiara: University of the South Pacific.

Anthias, F. (2006). Belonging in a globalising and unequal world: Rethinking translocations. In N. Yuval-Davis, K. Kannabiran & U. Vieten (Eds.), *The Situated Politics of Belonging* (pp. 16-31). London: Sage.

Argenti, N. (2002). Youth in Africa: A major resource for change. In A. De Waal & N. Argenti (Eds.), *Young Africa: Realizing the rights of children and youth* (pp. 123–153). Trenton and Asmara: Africa World Press.

ASPI. (2003). Our failing neighbour: Australia and the future of Solomon Islands. Barton ACT: Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

Atkinson, P., & Delamont, S. (2005). Analytic perspectives. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed., pp. 821-840). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.

Bailey, O. G. (2011). Migrant African women: Tales of agency and belonging. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 35*(5), 850-867. doi: 10.1080/01419870.2011.628037

Bajaj, M. (2009). 'I have big things planned for my future': The limits and possibilities of transformative agency in Zambian schools. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 39*(4), 551-568. doi: 10.1080/03057920701844503

Beauvy, M. (2006). Youth participation in development projects. *EQ Review: Educational Quality in the Developing World, 4*(1), 1.

Beban-France, A., & Brooks, J. (Eds.). (2008). *Guide to International Development: Terms and Acronyms (Pacific Focus)*. Wellington: Development Resource Centre.

Bell, S. (2007). 'The child drums and the elder dances'? Girlfriends and boyfriends negotiating power relations in rural Uganda. In R. Panelli, S. Punch & E. Robson (Eds.), *Global Perspectives on Rural Childhood and Youth: Young Rural Lives* (pp. 179-192). New York, NY: Routledge.

Bell, S., & Payne, R. (2009). Young people as agents in development processes: Reconsidering perspectives for development geography. *Third World Quarterly, 30*(5), 1027-1044. doi: 10.1080/01436590902959297

Bennett, J. A. (1987). *Wealth of the Solomons: A history of a pacific archipelago, 1800-1978*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Berg, C. (2000). *Managing difference: Kinship, exchange and urban boundaries in Honiara, Solomon Islands.* University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway.

Biggs, S., & Matsaert, H. (1999). An actor-oriented approach for strengthening research and development capabilities in natural resource systems. *Public Administration and Development, 19*(231-262).

Boseto, L. (1992). Church and community after independence: A reviw of the development of the United Church, Solomon Islands. In R. Crocombe & E. Tuza (Eds.), *Independence, Dependence, Interdependence: The First 10 Years of Solomon Islands Independence* (pp. 105-115). Honiara: Government Printing Press.

Bosman, W. (2004). *An analysis of the actor-oriented approach as a tool in international development cooperation.* Doctor of Administration, University of South Africa.

Boutilier, J. (1981). Solomon Islands. In R. D. Craig & F. P. King (Eds.), *Historical Dictionary of Oceania* (pp. 264-267). London: Greenwood Press.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*, 77-101.

Brennan, M. A., & Barnett, R. V. (2009). Bridging community and youth development: Exploring theory, research, and application. *Community Development: Journal of the Community Development Society, 40*(4), 305-310.

Brett, E. A. (2003). Participation and accountability in development management. *Journal of Development Studies, 40*(1-29).

Brohman, J. (1996). *Popular Development: Rethinking the Theory and Practice of Development*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Bryman, A. (2001). *Social Research Methods*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Catalano, R. F., Hawkins, J. D., Berglund, M. L., Pollard, J. A., & Arthur, M. W. (2002). Prevention science and positive youth development: Competitive or cooperative frameworks? *Journal of Adolescent Health, 31*(6, Supplement), 230-239. doi: 10.1016/s1054-139x(02)00496-2

Chambers, R. (1983). *Rural development: Putting the last first*. Harlow: Longman.

Chand, S., & Yala, C. (2008). Informal land systems within urban settlements in Honiara and Port Moresby *Making Land Work* (Vol. 2, pp. 85-105). Canberra: AusAID.

Chapman, M. (1992). Population movement: Free or constrained. In R. Crocombe & E. Tuza (Eds.), *Independence, Dependence, Interdependence: The First 10 Years of Solomon Islands Independence* (pp. 75-97). Honiara: Government Printing Press.

Chase, S. E. (2005). Narrative Inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Reserch* (3rd ed., pp. 651-679). Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.

Chevalier, C. (2001). From chimera to chimaera: Changing the realities for youth in Solomon Islands. *Development Bulletin 56*, 38-41.

Cornwall, G. A. P. (2008). *Youth in participatory development at the local (community) level*. Paper presented at the 'Development Challenges in the 21st Century', St.Augustine Trinidad.

Coxon, E., & Munce, K. (2008). The global education agenda and the delivery of aid to Pacific education. *Comparative Education, 44*(2), 147-165. doi: 10.1080/03050060802041050

Curry, G. N. (2003). Moving beyond postdevelopment: Facilitating indigenous alternatives for "development". *Economic Geography, 79*(4), 405-423.

Curtain, R. (2001). Youth and employment: A public policy perspective. *Development Bulletin, 56*, 7-10.

Curtain, R., & Vakaoti, P. (2011). The state of Pacific youth, 2011. Suva, Fiji: UNICEF: Sectretariat of the Pacific Community.

DANIDA. (2007). *Children and Young People in Danish Development Cooperation*. Copenhagen: DANIDA.

De Vries, P. (2007). Don't compromise your desire for development! A Lacanian/Deleuzian rethinking of the anti-politics machine. *Third World Quarterly, 28*(1), 25-43. doi: 10.1080/01436590601081765

Del Felice, C., & Solheim, L. (2011). Youth organisations as learning organisations: Exploring special contributions and challenges. *Development in Practice, 21*(8), 1094-1108. doi: 10.1080/09614524.2011.606892

Delcore, H. D. (2004). Development and the Life Story of a Thai Farmer Leader. *Ethnology, 43*(1), 33-50.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed., pp. 1-32). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.

DeRoche, K. K., & Lahman, M. K. E. (2008). Methodological considerations for conducting qualitative interviews with youth receiving mental health services. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 9*(3).

Desai, V. (2008). Community participation in development. In V. Desai & R. B. Potter (Eds.), *The Companion to Development Studies* (pp. 115-119). London: Hodder Education.

Devaney, M. L., Reid, G., Baldwin, S., Crofts, N., & Power, R. (2006). Illicit drug use and responses in six Pacific Island countries. *Drug and Alcohol Review, 25*(4), 387-390. doi: 10.1080/09595230600741396

Devesi, B. (1992). Independence or Dependence. In R. Crocombe & E. Tuza (Eds.), *Independence, Dependence, Interdependence: The First 10 Years of Solomon Islands Independence* (pp. 1-6). Honiara: Government Printing Press.

DFID-CSO. (2010). *Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies and Policy Makers*. London: DFID-CSO Youth Working Group.

Dinnen, S. (2008). Dilemmas of intervention and the building of state and nation. In S. Dinnen & S. Firth (Eds.), *Politics and State Building in Solomon Islands* (pp. 1-38). Canberra: ANU E Press and Asia Pacific Press.

Duncan, R., & Voigt-Graf, C. (2008). Labour Market Scenariors for the Asian Decent Work Decade in the Pacific Island Countries *ILO Asia-Pacific Working Paper Series*. Bankgok: ILO Regional Office for Asia ad the Pacific

Durham, D. (2004). Disappearing youth: Youth as a social shifter in Botswana. *American Ethnologist, 31*(4), 589-605.

Elliot, S. (2008). Evaluation of Ola Fou Pasifika Youth Development. Wellington: New Zealand Agency for International Development.

Esteva, G. (1992). Development. In W. Sachs (Ed.), *The Development Dictionary* (pp. 6-25). London: Zed.

Forster, C. (2011). Ending domestic violence in Pacific Island Countries: The critical role of law. *Asian-Pacific Law & Policy Journal, 22*(2), 123-144.

Fraenkel, J. (2004). *The Manipulation of Custom: From Uprising to Intervention in the Solomon Islands*. Wellington: Victoria University Press.

Freeburg, E. (2004). Youth and the Millennium Development Goals: Challenges and Opportunities for Implementation: Ad Hoc Working Group on Youth and the MDGs, United Nations Programme on Youth in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Friedman, J. (1992). *Empowerment: The Politics of Alternative Development*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers.

Fugui, L. (1989). Religion. In H. Laracy (Ed.), *Ples Blong Iumi: Solomon Islands, The Past Four Thousand Years* (pp. 73-93). Suva and Honiara: University of the South Pacific.

Gegeo, D. W. (1998). Indigenous knowledge and empowerment: Rural development examined from within. *The Contemporary Pacific, 10*(2), 289-315.

Gegeo, D. W., & Watson-Gegeo, K. A. (2001). "How we know": Kwara`ae rural villagers doing indigenous epistemology. *The Contemporary Pacific, 13*(1), 55.

Gegeo, D. W., & Watson-Gegeo, K. A. (2002). Whose knowledge? Epistemological collisions in Solomon Islands community development. *The Contemporary Pacific, 14*(2), 377-409.

Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2005a). Surplus possibilities: Postdevelopment and community economies. *Singapore Journal of Development and Community Economies, 26*(1), 4-26.

Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2005b). Traversing the fantasy of sufficiency. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography, 26*(2), 119-126. doi: 10.1111/j.0129-7619.2005.00208

Gibson, K., Cahill, A., & McKay, D. (2010). Rethinking the dynamics of rural transformation: Performing different development pathways in a Philippine municipality. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 35*(2), 237-255. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-5661.2009.00378

Gopinathan, S., & Shive, G. A. (1987). Scholarly access: Opportunities and problems in North-South academic relations. *Comparative Education Review, 31*(4), 490-508.

Graham, E. (1997). Philosophies underlying human geography research. In R. Flowerdew & D. Martin (Eds.), *Methods in Human Geography* (pp. 6-30). Harlow: Longman.

Griffen, V. (2006). Gender relations in Pacific cultures and their impact on the growth and development of children. Suva: UNICEF.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed., pp. 191-216). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.

Halapua, S. (2000). *Talanoa process: The case of Fiji*. Honolulu, HI: East West Centre.

Hamena, R. K. (2008). *How can Traditional Culture be a link to Positive Youth Development? A Case Study in Goroka, Papua New Guinea.* Master of Philosophy in Development Studies, Massey University, Palmerston North.

Hart, D., Atkins, R., Markey, P., & Youniss, J. (2004). Youth Bulges in Communities. *Psychological Science, 15*(9), 591-597. doi: 10.1111/j.0956-7976.2004.00725.x

Hassall, G. (2006). The origins of the Bahá'í Faith in the Pacific Islands: The case of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies 16*, 33-59.

Hays, S. (1994). Structure and agency and the sticky problem of culture. *Sociological Theory, 12*(1), 57-72.

Hebinck, P., den Ouden, J., & Verschoor, G. (2001). Past, present and future: Long's actor-oriented approach at the interface. In P. Hebinck & G. Verschoor (Eds.),

Resonances and dissonances in development: Actors, networks and cultural repertoires (pp. 1-16). The Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum.

Henry, E., & Pene, H. (2001). Kaupapa Maori: Locating indigenous ontology, epistemology and methodology in the academy. *Organization, 8*(2), 234-242. doi: 10.1177/1350508401082009

Hosking, P. (2004). Solomon Islands. *View on the Pacific Briefing Series*. Kings Cross, NSW: Uniya: Jusuit Social Justice Centre.

Hunter, A., Lusardi, P., Zucker, D., Jacelon, C., & Chandler, G. (2002). Making meaning: The creative component in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research, 12*(3), 388-398.

ILO. (2001). Employment opportunities for youth in the Solomon Islands. Suva: International Labour Organisation.

IMF. (2011). Joint IMF/World Bank Debt Sustainability Analysis 2011. Honiara: International Monetary Fund.

Ipo, J. (1989). Land and Economy. In H. Laracy (Ed.), *Ples Blong Iumi: Solomon Islands, The Past Four Thousand Years* (pp. 121-136). Suva and Honiara: University of the South Pacific.

Jayaweera, S., & Morioka, K. (2008). Giving South Pacific youth a voice: Youth development through participation. Sydney: The World Bank

Jeffrey, C. (2011). Geographies of children and youth II: Global youth agency. *Progress in Human Geography*. doi: 10.1177/0309132510393316

Joseph, K., & Browne-Beu, C. (2008). Church and state in Solomon Islands. *State Society and Governance in Melanesia: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies ANU*(Discussion Paper 2008/11).

Jourdan, C. (2008). Youth and Mental Health in Solomon Islands: A Situational Analysis. Suva: Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International.

Keesing, R. M. (1982). Kastom in Melanesia: An Overview. *Mankind, 13*(4), 297-301. doi: 10.1111/j.1835-9310.1982.tb00994.x

Kiely, R. (1999). The last refuge of the Noble Savage: A citical assessment of Post-Development theory. *European Journal of Development Research, 11*(1), 30-55.

Klocker, N. (2007). An example of 'thin' agency: Child domestic workers in Tanzania. In R. Panelli, S. Punch & E. Robson (Eds.), *Global Perspectives on Rural*

Childhood and Youth: Young Rural Lives (pp. 83-94). New York, NY: Routledge.

Koch, T. (2006). Establishing rigour in qualitative research: The decision trail. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 53*(1), 91-100. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2648.2006.03681.x

Kuschel, R., Takiika, A. F. T., & Angiki, K. (2005). Alcohol and drug use in Honiara, Solomon Islands: A cause for concern. In A. J. Marsella, A. A. Austin & B. Grant (Eds.), *Social change and psychosocial adaptation in the Pacific Islands* (pp. 211-254): Springer US.

Laracy, H. (1981). Maasina Rule. In G. Craig & F. P. King (Eds.), *Historical Dictionary of Oceania* (pp. 168). London: Greenwood Press.

Laws, S., Harper, C., & Marcus, R. (2003). *Research for Development*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Lerner, R. M., Almerigi, J. B., Theokas, C., & Lerner, J. V. (2005). Positive Youth Development: A view of the issues. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 25*(1), 10-16. doi: 10.1177/0272431604273211

Leslie, H., & Storey, D. (2010). Entering the field. In R. Scheyvens & D. Storey (Eds.), *Development Fieldwork: A Practical Guide* (pp. 119-138). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Long, N. (2001). *Development Sociology: Actor Perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Lowe, E. D. (2001). Globalisation and the mental health of youth in Pacific Island societies. *Development Bulletin, 56*, 31-34.

Mamaloni, S. (1992). The road to independence. In R. Crocombe & E. Tuza (Eds.), *Independence, Dependence, Interdependence: The First 10 Years of Solomon Islands Independence* (pp. 7-18). Honiara: Government Printing Press.

Matthews, S. (2004). Post-development theory and the question of alternatives: A view from Africa. *Third World Quarterly, 25*(2), 373-384.

Matthews, S. (2007). What, then, should we do? Insights and experiences of a Senegalese NGO. In A. Ziai (Ed.), *Exploring Post-Development: Theory and practice, problems and perspectives* (pp. 131-144). Oxon: Routledge.

Mayo, M. (2001). Children's and young people's participation in development in the South and in urban regeneration in the North. *Progress in Development Studies, 1*(4), 279-294.

McGregor, A. (2007). Development, foreign aid and post-development in Timor-Leste. *Third World Quarterly, 28*(1), 155-170.

McGregor, A. (2009). New Possibilities? Shifts in Post-Development Theory and Practice. *Geography Compass, 3*(5), 1749-8198.

McKinnon, K. I. (2007). Postdevelopment, professionalism, and the politics of participation. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 97*(4), 772-785.

McKinnon, K. I. (2008). Taking post-development theory to the field: Issues in development research, Northern Thailand. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint, 49*(3), 281-293. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8373.2008.00377

McLaren, K. (2002). Youth Development Literature Review: Building Strength, A review of research on how to achieve good outcomes for young people in their families, peer groups, schools, careers and communities. Wellington: Ministry of Youth Affairs.

McMurray, C. (2005a). Solomon Islands. A Situation Analysis of Children, Women and Youth. Suva: UNICEF Pacific Office.

McMurray, C. (2005b). The State of Pacific Youth Report 2005. Suva: UNICEF.

Melkote, S. R., & Steeves, H. L. (2001). *Communication for Development in the Third World: Theory and Practice for Empowerment*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.

Mohan, G. (2008). Participatory development. In V. Desai & R. B. Potter (Eds.), *The Companion to Development Studies* (pp. 45-50). London: Hodder Education.

MUHEC. (2010). *Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants*: Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

MWCYA. (2011). *Honiara Youth Mainstreaming Summit Report*. Honiara.

MWYCA. (2010). *Partnership for Youth Empowerment: Solomon Islands National Youth Policy 2010-2015*. Honiara: Ministry of Women, Youth, and Children Affairs.

Nabobo-Baba, U. (2008). Decolonising framings in Pacific research: Indigenous Fijian Vanua Research Framework as an organice response. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Scholarship, 4*(2), 140-154.

Natalier, K. (2010). Research design. In M. Walter (Ed.), *Social Research Methods* (2nd ed., pp. 31-60). Melborne: Oxford University Press.

Nguyen, P. A. (2006). State–society relations in contemporary Vietnam: An examination of the arena of youth. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint, 47*(3), 327-341. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8373.2006.00314.x

Noble, C., Pereira, N., & Saune, N. (2011). Urban Youth in the Pacific: Increasing resilience and reducing risk for involvement in crime and violence. Suva: UNDP Pacific Centre.

Nustad, K. G. (2001). Development: The Devil We Know? *Third World Quarterly, 22*(4), 479-489.

Nustad, K. G. (2007). Development: The devil we know? In A. Ziai (Ed.), *Exploring Post-Development: Theory and practice, problems and perspectives* (pp. 35-46). Oxon: Routledge.

Nyamu-Musembi, C. (2002). Towards an actor-oriented perspective on human rights *IDA Working Paper 169*. Brighton: University of Sussex.

O'Leary, Z. (2009). *The essential guide to doing research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Ortner, S. B. (2006). *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject*. London: Duke University Press.

Palmer, E. (2010). Solomon Islands riots spark reminders of 'Black Tuesday', *Pacific Scoop*.

Panelli, R., Kraack, A., & Little, J. (2005). Claiming space and community: Rural women's strategies for living with, and beyond, fear. *Geoforum, 36*(4), 495-508. doi: 10.1016/j.geoforum.2004.08.002

Pascale, R., Sternin, J., & Sternin, M. (2010). *The power of positive deviance: How unlikely inovators solve the world's toughest problems*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press.

Pieterse, J. N. (2000). After post-development. *Third World Quarterly, 21*(2), 175-191.

PIFS. (2008). Solomon Islands *The Forum Principles of Good Leadership* (pp. 171-195). Suva: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

Pinnegar, S., & Daynes, J. G. (2007). Locating Narrative Inquiry historically: Thematics in the turn to narrative. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 3-34). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Porcaro, G., & Teng, J. (Eds.). (2008). *Development Needs Youth! Youth Organisations in Action*. Belgium: European Youth Forum.

Praxis Pacific. (2011). The Praxis Network 2010/11 Annual Report. Wellington: Praxis Pacific.

Praxis Pacific. (2012a). 2011/12 Ola Fou Annual Report. Wellington: Praxis Pacific.

Praxis Pacific. (2012b). Ola Fou Pasifika Strategic Plan 2012/13. Suva: Praxis Pacific.

Punch, S. (2007). Negotiating migrant identities: Young people in Bolivia and Argentina. *Children's Geographies, 5*(1-2), 95-112.

Ratner, C. (2002). Subjectivity and Objectivity in Qualitative Methodology. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 3*(3).

Richardson, J. T. E. (1996). *Handbook of qualitative reseach and methods for psychology and the social sciences*. Leicester: The British Psychological Society.

Riley, T., & Hawe, P. (2005). Researching practice: The methodological case for narrative inquiry. *Health Education Research, 20*(2), 226-236.

Robinson, D., & Robinson, K. (2005). Pacific ways of talk – hui and talanoa. Wellington: Social and Civic Policy Institute.

Robson, E., Stephen, B., & Klocker, N. (2007). Conceptualizing agency in the lives and actions of rural young people. In R. Panelli, S. Punch & E. Robson (Eds.), *Global Perspectives on Rural Childhood and Youth: Young Rural Lives* (pp. 135-148). New York, NY: Routledge.

Rohorua, F. I. (2004). Between rhetoric and reality: A retrospective look at national development policy and planning in Solomon Islands in the 1980s and 90s. *He Puna Korero: Journal of Maori & Pacific Development, 5*(2), 3-13.

Rohorua, F. I. (2006). Solomon Islands: Colonisation and the Complexity of Nationhood. *He Puna Korero: Journal of Maori and Pacific Development, 7*(1), 4-21.

Rohorua, F. I. (2007). *The concept of development in Ulawa in Solomon Islands and its implications for national development policy and planning.* Doctor of Philosophy, University of Waikato, Hamilton.

Roth, J., Brooks-Gunn, J., Murray, L., & Foster, W. (1998). Promoting healthy adolescents: Synthesis of Youth Development program evaluations. *Journal of Research on Adolescence (Lawrence Erlbaum), 8*(4), 423-459.

Sachs, W. (2010). Introduction. In W. Sachs (Ed.), *The Development Dictionary: A guide to knowledge as power (2nd Edition)* (pp. xv-xx). New York: Zed Books.

Sanga, K. (2004). Making philosophical sense of indigenous Pacific research. In T. Baba, O. Mahina, N. WIlliams & U. Nabobo-Baba (Eds.), *Researching Pacific and Indigenous Peoples: Issues and Perspectives* (pp. 41-52). Auckland: Centre for Pacific Studies, The University of Auckland

Santos, B. d. S. (2004a). The WSF: Toward a counter-hegemonic globalization (Part I). In J. Sen, A. Anand, A. Escobar & P. Waterman (Eds.), *World Social Forum: Challenging Empires* (pp. 235-245). New Delhi: The Viveka Foundation.

Sapsford, R., & Jupp, V. (1996). Validating Evidence. In R. Sapsford & V. Jupp (Eds.), *Data Collection an Analysis* (pp. 1-24). London: SAGE Publications.

Sardar, Z. (1997). Beyond development: An Islamic perspective. *European Journal of Development Research, 8*(2), 36-55.

Scales, I. (2003). Youth in Solomon Islands: A participatory study of issues, needs and priorities. Canberra: AusAID.

Scheyvens, R., Scheyvens, H., & Murray, W. E. (2010). Working with marginalised, vulnerable, or privileged groups. In R. Scheyvens & D. Storey (Eds.), *Development Fieldwork: A Practical Guide* (pp. 167-194). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Scheyvens, R., & Storey, D. (Eds.). (2010). *Development fieldwork: A practical guide*. London: Sage.

Sidaway, J. D. (2008). Post-development. In V. Desai & R. B. Potter (Eds.), *The Companion to Development Studies* (2nd ed., pp. 16-20). London: Hodder Education.

SIG. (2004). Review of National Youth Congress and SIG Youth Division. Honiara: Solomon Islands Government.

SIG. (2007). Education Strategic Framework 2007 – 2015 Honiara: Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development.

SIG. (2011). Statistical Bulletin 06/2011. *Solomon Islands 2009 Population and Housing Census*. Honiara: Solomon Islands National Statistics Office.

Smith, L. T. (2003). *Decolonising methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Dunedin: University of Otago Press.

Solomon Star. (2011). Pressure building on new Solomons PM from opposition, civil society, *Solomon Star*.

SPC. (2006). Pacific Youth Strategy 2010: Youth empowerment for a secure, prosperous and sustainable future. Suva: Pacific Youth Bureau, Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

SPC. (2009). Solomon Islands family health and safety study: A study on violence against women and children. Suva: Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

SPC. (2011). SDP Population Data Sets. *Pacific Island Population: Estimates and projections of demographic indicators for selected years*. Suva: Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

STARR. (2011). Deep Brain Learning: Evidence-cased principles for prevention, education, and treatment. Clinton Township, MI: STARR Commonwealth Institute for Training.

Stones, S. (2007). Structure and Agency. In G. Ritzer (Ed.), *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*: Blackwell Publishing.

Storey, D. (2006). Urbanisation in the Pacific *State, Society and Goverance in Melanesia Project*. Canberra: ANU.

Swanson, K. (2009). *Begging as a Path to Progress: Indigenous Women and Children and the Struggle for Ecuador's Urban Spaces*. Atlanta, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Talanoa and Development Project. Solomon Islands Tok Stori Retrieved 18 January 2012, from http://talanoa.org/TDP_Solomon_Islands_Tok_Stori.html

Thieme, T. (2010). Youth, waste and work in Mathare: Whose business and whose politics? *Environment and Urbanization, 22*(1), 1-20.

Thomas, N., & O'Kane, C. (1998). The ethics of participatory research with children. *Children and Society, 12*, 336-348.

Thomas, P. (2001). Introduction: Involving young people in development. *Development Bulletin, 56*, 4-6.

Timmer, J. (2008). Kastom and theocracy: A reflection on goverance from the uttermost part of the world. In S. Dinnen & S. Firth (Eds.), *Politics and State Building in Solomon Islands* (pp. 194-212). Canberra: ANU E Press and Asia Pacific Press.

Titchener, S. (2010). *Entering unknown territory: Exploring the impact on indigenous field researchers when conducting gender based violence and child abuse research in the Solomon Islands.* Master of Philosophy in Social Work, Massey University, New Zealand.

Tomlinson, F. (2010). Marking difference and negotiating belonging: Refugee women, volunteering and employment. *Gender, Work & Organization, 17*(3), 278-296. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0432.2008.00399.x

Tranter, B. (2010). Sampling. In M. Walter (Ed.), *Social Research Methods* (2nd ed., pp. 123-148). Melborne: Oxford University Press.

Travel Portal (Cartographer). (2012). Solomon Islands Map. Retrieved from http://www.travelportal.info/oceania/solomon-islands/maps

Travers, M. (2010). Qualitative Interviewing Methods. In M. Walter (Ed.), *Social Research Methods* (2nd ed., pp. 287-321). Melborne: Oxford University Press.

Turnbull, B., Hernandez, R., & Reyes, M. (2009). Street children and their helpers: An actor-oriented approach. *Children and Youth Services Review, 31*, 1283-1288.

UN. (2004). *World Youth Report 2003: The global situation of young people*. New York, NY: Department of Economic and Social Affairs: United Nations.

UN. (2009). World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision, Highlights, Working Paper No. ESA/P/WP.210. New York: United Nations: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division.

UN. (2011). Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2011. Thailand: United Nations.

UNDP. (2011). Solomon Islands Country Profile: Human Development Indicators. *International Human Development Indicators* Retrieved 24 February 2012, from http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/SLB.html

UNICEF. (2004). Children's Well-being in Small Island Developing States and Territories. New York, NY: United Nations Children's Fund

UNICEF. (n.d.). Understanding HIV and AIDS Risk and Vulnerability Among Solomon Islands Youth. Suva: UNICEF Pacific.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

UNPY. (2008). *Youth Participation in Development: Summary Guidelines for Development Partners*. London: Restless Development and the United Nations Programme on Youth.

Urdal, H. (2004). The devil in the demographics: The effect of youth bulges on domestic armed conflict, 1950-2000 *Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention & Reconstruction*. Washington World Bank Working Paper Series No. 14.

Vainerere, T. (2001). Prevailing challenges for Pacific youth. *Development Bulletin, 56*, 28-30.

Vaioleti, T. M. (2006). Talanoa research methodology: A developing position of Pacific research. *Waikato Journal of Education 12*, 21-34.

Vakaoti, P. (2001). Socially disaffiliated and marginalised youths in Fiji. *Development Bulletin, 56*, 49-51.

Van Ausdal, S. (2001). Development and Discourse among the Maya of Southern Belize. *Development & Change, 32*(3).

Walker, P., & Dorrit, J. (2001). Use of drama for youth employment and empowerment: Wan Smolbag, Vanuatu. *Development Bulletin, 56*, 52-54.

Walter, M. (2010a). The Nature of Social Science Research. In M. Walter (Ed.), *Social Research Methods* (2nd ed., pp. 3-30). Melborne: Oxford University Press.

Walter, M. (2010b). *Social Research Methods* (2nd ed.). Melborne: Oxford University Press.

Ware, H. (2004). *Pacific instability and youth bulges: The devil in the demography and the economy*. Paper presented at the 12th Biennial Conference of the Australian Population Association, Canberra.

Wheeler, W., & Roach, C. (2005). Community-Based Youth Leadership: A Pathway to Civic Engagement: Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development.

White, R., & Wyn, J. (1998). Youth agency and social context. *Journal of Sociology, 34*(3), 314-327. doi: 10.1177/144078339803400307

Wierenga, A. (2009). *Young People Making a Life*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillian.

Willetts, J., Asker, S., Carrard, N., & Winterford, K. (2011). Exploring SINPA's strengths-based practice: A learning paper. Sydney: Institute for Sustainable Futures: University of Technology.

Willis, K. (2010). Analysing qualitative data. In M. Walter (Ed.), *Social Research Methods* (2nd ed., pp. 407-436). Melborne: Oxford University Press.

Woo, S., & Corea, R. (2009). Pacific Youth Literature Review East Asia and Pacific Region's Social, Environment and Rural Development (EASER): The World Bank.

World Bank. (2007). World Bank development report 2007: Development and the next generation. Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank. (2008). Solomon Islands youth in transition: Summary note. Honiara: The World Bank.

Wyn, J., & White, R. (1997). *Rethinking youth*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd

Young, J. (2005). *"This is my life": Questions of agency and belonging among youth living with less than full status.* Master of Arts, Ryerson University, Toronoto.

Ziai, A. (2004). The ambivalence of post-development: Between reactionary populism and radical democracy. *Third World Quarterly, 25*(6), 1045-1060.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: LOW RISK NOTIFICATION

MASSEY UNIVERSITY

31 August 2011

Alice Davidson
10 Moerangi Street
West End
PALMERSTON NORTH 4410

Dear Alice

Re: Enlarging the Field of Credible Experience: Young Solomon Islanders as Agents of Change in their Communities

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 30 August 2011.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committees.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

> *"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.*
>
> *If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz".*

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

J. O'Neill

John G O'Neill (Professor)
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and
Director (Research Ethics)

cc Dr Maria Borovnik
School of People, Environment and Planning
PN331

Mrs Mary Roberts, HoS Secretary
School of People, Environment and Planning
PN331

APPENDIX TWO: SOLOMON ISLANDS RESEARCH PERMIT

FORM – R.B

THE RESEARCH ACT 1982
(No. 9 of 1982)

RESEARCH PERMIT

Permission is hereby given to:

1. Name: **Joy Davidson**
2. Country: **New Zealand**
3. To undertake research in (subjects): **Youth Development – Focus on Experience of Young Solomon Islanders as agents of change in their communities**
4. Ward(s): **All Wards (Hon) & Saghalu Ward (GP)**
5. Province(s): **Honiara City and Guadalcanal Province**
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 **13th December 2011** 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: 14/11/11

APPENDIX THREE: INFORMATION SHEET

Invitation to Participate

Hello. My name is Joy Davidson. I am from New Zealand and am a student at Massey University, Palmerston North, where I am studying Development Studies.

Why I am in the Solomon Islands:

I have come to Solomons to do some research toward my Master's degree.
The research title is: "Enlarging the field of credible experience: Young Solomon Islanders as agents of change in their communities"
The purpose of the research is to understand the experience of young Solomon Islanders who are seeking to be agents of change and contribute positively to their communities development.
I hope to story with young people, and agencies working with young people, and learn more about:

- perceptions and roles of young people in the Solomon Islands
- the incentives, barriers and enablers for young people to be agents in the development process
- how young people interact with the structures around them to bring about change and participate in development
- and how young people can be supported to lead and participate in development

The invitation:

I would like to invite you to take part in this research. If you are willing to be involved we would meet for about an hour, at a place and time convenient for you, to story about issues for youth. This may be voice recorded if you are happy with this. The identity of all participants will be kept confidential.

When I have finished the research I will produce a summary of my findings which I can post to you if you would like. Information from the research will be used primarily for the purpose of completing my thesis, and may also be used for related publications. The full thesis will be available online and at the Ministry of Women Youth and Children's Affairs once it has been completed.

Your opinions and stories are highly valued and will contribute toward greater understandings of how young people can and do contribute positively toward development.

Your rights as a participant in this research:

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you do decide to participate:

- you may withdraw from the study at any time (you do not have to give an explanation for withdrawal)
- you may decline to answer any particular question
- you may ask for the recorder to be turned off at any point during the interview
- you may ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
- you provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used
- you will be given access to a summary of findings at the end of the study

If you have any questions about the research please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor.

My contact details are:
Joy Davidson
Email: davidson.joy@gmail.com
Phone: 7581914

My supervisors contact details are:
Dr Maria Borovnik
Email: M.Borovnik@massey.ac.nz
Phone: +64 6 356 9099 ext. 7249

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named above is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 350 5249, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Massey University
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

APPENDIX FOUR: CONSENT FORM

Enlarging the field of credible experience: Young Solomon Islanders as agents of change in their communities.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

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

☐ I agree to the interview being sound recorded.

Full Name - printed _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____