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A Sese Uta, ia Tonu Tai: Local Government Management for Climate Change Adaptive Practices

Casuallen Iulieta Atuatasi
Walden University

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Casualen Iulieta Atuatasi

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Walden University
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Abstract

A Sese Uta, ia Tonu Tai: Local Government Management for Climate Change Adaptive
Practices

by

Casualen Iulieta Atuatasi

MS, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, 2012

BS, Chaminade University of Honolulu, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

May 2021

Abstract

American Samoa remains highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and has not developed the adaptive capacity to ensure resiliency. The current regulatory system influences the policy decisions of local policy leaders and therefore affecting the territory's adaptive capacity to climate change impacts. The purpose of this general qualitative interview-based study was to investigate the current governance framework and describe the factors in the territorial relationship that impact policy action of local policy leaders on climate change issues. The research question examined what major aspects of the current regulatory framework impact the policy action of local policy leaders on climate change issues. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 11 local policy leaders in executive organizations with climate change responsibilities. Data were analyzed qualitatively using inductive analysis. The evolutionary governance theory's constructs were used to analyze the findings. Findings indicated that federal funds, the oversight of the U.S. federal government, and the culture of territorialism affected the policy decisions of local policy leaders on climate change issues. The findings of this study speak to the need to raise awareness of climate change impacts and the impact of the territorial relationship on the climate change policy efforts of the territory. This study engenders new knowledge that may spur discussions by policy actors on how to create more effective policies in American Samoa, that may increase the territory's capacity to adapt to climatic changes, which is an implication for positive social change.

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Dedication

I thank God for the gift of compassion and for the desire to pursue the fight against climate change to protect my Pacific island nation. I will continue to seek refuge in God and lean on his strength when the fight becomes difficult. I will continue to seek God's help to "do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves...each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3-4)

I dedicate this dissertation to my dear husband, Mr. Alexander Francis Atuatasi who was always there when the load was unbearable. Thank you for uplifting my spirits when I needed it the most and for holding me up when I felt like giving up. I am grateful for the love, support, and encouragement he demonstrated during the challenging times of this doctoral journey.

I dedicate this dissertation to my father, Tauvela Fale, and my mother, Fialuma Fale, for their lifetime commitment to building my character. I will always love you both for your tireless support and love in every way possible.

Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to my darling boy, my Zechariah Eagaleleilealii Tauvela Atuatasi. You have been with me throughout this journey and I pray that it inspires you. Always remember that there is nothing too difficult to achieve with God's guidance, determination and hard work.

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Thank God for the gift of you!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Climate change impacts on American Samoa (AS) have presented major obstacles and challenges to sustainable development on the islands. To address climate change impacts, the American Samoa Government (ASG) policy leaders have developed local climate change adaptation policies and regulations. The territory's policy leaders also collaborate with its neighbor, the independent island of Western Samoa (WS), to coordinate strategic management priorities for the shared natural ecosystems of the Samoan archipelago through a forum on environmental issues knowledge sharing about natural resource conservation.

Despite these efforts, AS faces substantial challenges in developing and implementing plans for climate change adaptation due to its unique geographic, demographic, and socioeconomic characteristics and scarce resources available to the various organizations responsible for climate change adaptation efforts including the health and infrastructure sectors (Howes et al., 2018; McIver et al., 2016). Therefore, the people, infrastructure, health, economy, culture, and natural environment of the island remain vulnerable to the escalating effects of climate change (IPCC, 2014; IPCC, 2019; Ourbak & Magnan, 2017; Royer et al., 1998). This physical vulnerability is exacerbated by the island's limited capacity to manage and adapt to climate change risks due to the failure of government policies to build and maintain climate change resilience.

AS's regulatory framework governing climate change initiatives differs from its more successful Pacific Island counterparts because of the differences in political settings (Schwebel, 2018b). Territoriality, specifically being a territory of the United States, is not

a factor for other Pacific islands. The current governance framework of AS is a direct result of its unique political relationship with the United States. As a U.S.-unincorporated and -unorganized territory, AS's territorial affairs are subjected to the governance of the U.S. Department of the Interior (U.S. DOI). This relationship affords AS minimal autonomy over its affairs in most areas including defense, foreign relations, and internal security (Aga, 2017). In its position as a U.S. territory, AS's governance structure is developed and managed by U.S. governing institutions even though it has not been formally annexed by the United States. Federal laws are overlaid onto local policies and regulations (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016). Therefore, the development and enforcement of territorial policies and regulations is subject to the authority of the federal government (Schwebel, 2018a).

Within this governance framework, Indigenous voices are not proportionally represented in matters that directly affect Indigenous peoples such as climate change. Indigenous voices and leadership are crucial to climate change initiatives, not only because island residents are the most severely impacted yet the least responsible demographic for the climate crisis (Althor et al., 2016; Ourbak & Magnan, 2018; Tegart et al., 1990), but because island systems operate from a profound sense of interdependence with the earth and especially the ocean. The contribution of Indigenous peoples to climate change strategies is essential to address the multilayered impacts of climate change and the exploitative structures that have created the crisis (Organisation Internationale De la Francophonie, 2017). In this context, understanding the relationship between colonial worldviews and Indigenous systems for living sustainably with the

earth and listening to Indigenous peoples' voices are essential in developing solutions and guiding structural change (Nakashima et al., 2018). The absence of Indigenous voices on the issues of climate change within the current regulatory framework paints a flawed picture of the severity of climate change impacts that affect Samoans who live and experience rapid natural resource degradation firsthand.

The inability of Indigenous Samoans to directly represent themselves at multijurisdictional meetings and participate in international organizations obscures the severity of climate change impacts on U.S. territories. The U.S. State Department does not allow territories to represent themselves in international foreign policy-making bodies given the constitutional principle that the federal government speaks for the United States with one voice overseas (U.S. DOI, n.d.). The United States may, on a case-by-case basis, approve some form of participation of U.S. territories in multilateral meetings, subject to those territories not expressing views on foreign affairs or other issues beyond their competence (U.S. DOI, n.d.). Indigenous voices of Samoans are excluded from international organizations such as the Pacific Islands Forum that aim to ensure sustainable development in the Pacific by combining economic, social, and cultural development to improve livelihoods and use the environment sustainably. As a result, local policy decisions do not effectively help the Indigenous communities to build and maintain climate change resiliency and address the physical effects of climate change on the local population because the voices of the Indigenous population that experience such effects are excluded in international foreign policy-making bodies. Therefore, there is a need to explore the current regulatory framework to identify and describe the major

factors that affect the policy actions of local Indigenous policy leaders on climate change issues.

By identifying the gaps that exist in the policy framework, I sought to uncover potential strategies to solve the social problems caused by the limited capacity of the territory to adapt to climate change. I also wanted to contribute to the scarce literature on the extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change preparations of its territories. I identified ways that AS policy leaders may improve local policy processes and climate change policies. Such knowledge may help these stakeholders to build the adaptive capacity of the territory to effectively address the social issues caused by the lack of adaptive capacity of the territory and ensure climate change resilience, thus contributing to social change.

This study further contributes to social change because it provides insight relevant to the creation of a platform in governance in which Indigenous peoples are afforded the opportunity to have a greater voice in policy decisions directly affecting their lives, thus encouraging, securing, and strengthening their rights. The current regulatory framework has been unable to make remarkable strides in addressing the issue of low adaptive capacity. The impetus of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to improve the quality of life for all and ensure resiliency for people and the planet, now and into the future (United Nations, 2015). These outcomes would arise by revamping policies at the federal, state, and local levels of government to ensure sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11); taking urgent action to combat climate change impacts (SDG 13); conserving and sustainably using the oceans and marine resources for sustainable

development (SDG 14); and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development (SDG 16; United Nations, 2015). This study contributes to social change because it provides data that may help local policy leaders improve policies to achieve SDGs, therefore attaining resiliency, sustainability, and greater adaptive capacity of the territory to adapt to climate change impacts. The rest of this chapter includes the background of the study, the problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, the theoretical framework, nature of study, and significance of the study.

Background of the Study

Climate Change Impacts in American Samoa

The changing climate impacts the environment, economy and public health of the island territory. The 2012 Pacific Islands Regional Climate Assessment Report discusses scientific data that shows increasing air temperature, altered precipitation patterns, drought, frequent and intense extreme precipitation events and outlines multiple concerns for AS. Recent climate change trends show that surface temperatures in the tropical Pacific will continue to get warmer (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2014; McCarthy et al., 2001; Meehl, 1997), suggesting that small island states in the Pacific will experience greater climate variability such as more extreme high temperature and precipitation events. The consequences of increased climate variability will likely strengthen tropical cyclones and the intensity of such events (IPCC, 2019; Royer et al., 1998; Spennemann & Marschner, 1995). Climate variability and extreme weather events have impacted the population's health through certain vector, food and waterborne diseases (Ebi et al., 2006), and the island's economic and social well-being (Two

Samoas, 2011). Conservation, protection and careful management of already-scarce natural resources and ensuring a resilient island community is imperative as climate change risk factors contribute to present and future vulnerability of natural resources and communities in AS.

To address climate change impacts, multiple executive branch agencies responsible for adaptation to different impacts of climate change develop and enforce regulations unique to each organizational jurisdiction. The ASG created the following efforts:

1. American Samoa Climate Change Task Force (ASCCTF): The ASCCTF was created in 2015 to direct the future climate change management strategies of the territory. This advisory group consist of 14 cabinet directors from different executive organizations with responsibilities related to climate change.
2. Territorial Climate Change Adaptation Framework: The Territorial Climate Change Adaptation Advisory Group, mandated via Executive Order-002 by Governor Togiola Tulafono on 17 June 2011 developed the Territorial Climate Change Adaptation Framework in 2012 to guide resource managers and steer future climate change-related management strategies for the territory (American Samoa Governor's Coral Reef Advisory Group, 2012). This document outlines the climate change threats, risks, data gaps and potential adaptation projects for the territory and has not been updated since 2012.

3. Territorial Climate Change Advisory Group: The Territorial Climate Change Advisory Group was created in 2011 by Governor Togiola Tulafono to manage the threats of climate change. The Territorial Climate Change Advisory Group was only active for a year and created the Territorial Climate Change Adaptation Framework (American Samoa Governor's Coral Reef Advisory Group, 2012).
4. Climate Change Summit: In its efforts to develop and implement adaptation and mitigation strategies in the territory, the ASG, through the Department of Commerce's Coastal Zone Management Program (CZMP) and the Coral Reef Advisory Group, co-hosted a Climate Change Summit in February 2011. This summit was entitled "Making Climate Change Local: Building Climate Resilient Communities in the Pacific." The results of the summit highlighted four priority adaptation actions to immediately implement in the territory. These priorities include coral reef and mangrove ecosystems, human settlements and infrastructure, human health and agriculture and water resources (American Samoa Governor's Coral Reef Advisory Group, 2012).
5. American Samoa Renewable Energy Committee: The ASG established the American Samoa Renewable Energy Committee in 2010 to work with federal experts to reduce the territory's reliance on fossil fuels by bringing sustainable renewable energy technologies to the territory. The American Samoa Renewable Energy Committee developed strategies to assess and

take advantage of the solar, wind and geothermal renewable resource potential on the island and launched a project to supply the smaller Manu'a island group entirely with renewable-sourced electricity generation (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2019).

6. Coral Reef Resilience Local Action Strategy: A priority setting document that articulates a set of strategical coral reef management priorities developed by the coral reef managers in the territory. This document was used by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in conjunction with its 2010-2015 Coral Reef Conservation Program National Goals and Objectives to direct its investment in activities in each jurisdiction through grants, cooperative agreements and internal funding (Territory of American Samoa & NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, 2010).

The territory is also a part of the Two Samoas Environmental Collaboration Initiative. The Two Samoas Environmental Collaboration is a program that establishes a forum for environmental organizations in AS and WS to collaborate effectively on shared environmental concerns. This forum creates an opportunity to discuss environmental issues, to create an archipelago-wide Marine Protected Area Network, and to share knowledge on Coastal Management Programs and National Parks (Two Samoas, 2011) between the two Samoas. Normally, a territory cannot represent itself in any international body if the rules of that body do not allow for such participation, if the United States is not a member of the international forum or if the United States has determined

disapproval of such participation based on the scope and purpose of technical, political nature and foreign policy aspects of the forum (U.S. DOI, n.d.). However, because this international collaboration is not a forum for policy development, AS membership does not require representation by the United States as is common in most international and unilateral meetings for policy and treaty development (Fallon, 1991).

Governance Framework

AS is an unincorporated and unorganized territory of the United States. An unincorporated status defines that not all of the provisions of the U.S. Constitution apply to the territory (Weaver, 2008). The doctrine of incorporation asserts that if a territory is unincorporated, only fundamental rights of the U.S. Constitution apply to the territory (Fallon, 1991). Unfortunately, that class of fundamental rights has proven difficult to define and issues are now being determined on a case-by-case basis as to whether the extension of a particular right to the unincorporated territory would be impractical and anomalous (“U.S. Territories: American Samoa,” 2017). An organized status defines that Congress has established a civil government through an Organic Act which establishes a territorial constitution (Weaver, 2008). These specific political statuses create a unique governance framework for AS as an unorganized and unincorporated territory of the U.S.

Unorganized and unincorporated political status develops governance that is subject to the rule of Congress. The doctrine of incorporation ultimately grants the Congress virtually unlimited powers of administration which violates the separation of powers mandated in the U.S. Constitution (Laughlin, 1979). Fallon (1991) found that unincorporated territories are not fully protected by the U.S. Constitution. For instance,

citizenship is not equally applied to all unincorporated U.S. territories. While both AS and Guam are unincorporated territories of the U.S., Congress granted U.S. citizenship for the citizens of Guam but U.S. national citizenship for the citizens of AS. The constitutional power to decide the U.S. Citizenship status of territories illustrates the high level of Congressional power over territories. The doctrine of incorporation also condones an implicit colonialism whereby the unincorporated territories are legally inferior to the states (Fallon, 1991). In this sense, the federal government can take action or enforce legislation in unincorporated territories; an act that would otherwise be prohibited by the U.S. Constitution from being implemented in states. Local governance systems and policy processes are vulnerable to and easily influenced by the rule of Congress because of the territory's political status.

Territorial status of the island promotes a U.S. Congress-controlled governance system that impacts local policy processes, decisions and actions. AS's Attorney General Talauega Eleasalo Ale acknowledged that while the territory enjoys numerous benefits under the U.S. flag, the current form of government exists largely at the pleasure of the U.S. Congress and it "limits our ability to self-govern and exposes us to the vagaries of decisions made in Washington D.C. without local input" (Sagapolutele, 2018, para. 10). This political status allows the ASG to exist by virtue of delegation of authority from the president of the United States to the U.S. DOI and then to the ASG. For instance, the territorial status of the island does not allow the current AS legislature to override a veto of a bill by the governor without the approval of the secretary of Interior (Ale, 2015). Under this political status, AS lives under a delegation of authority from Washington,

D.C., therefore promoting a governance system that makes the territory more vulnerable to the authority and rule of the federal government (Sagapolutele, 2018). These aspects of the territorial relationship between the United States and AS illustrate the power of federalism and the Constitution over the territorial possessions of the United States as exercised and carried out by Congressional acts and the effects of that power on the people of AS.

In the territorial relationship between the United States and AS, the local governance system is governed by the federal governance system. In the context of natural resource management, the territory's natural resource governance framework is bifurcated where federal regulations are overlaid onto local regulations (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016). This regulatory framework places federal regulations such as the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), Clean Water Act and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as the guiding body of environmental laws used by AS to develop its own laws at the local level (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016). AS is required to adopt federal environmental regulations that are equal to or more stringent than the standards set forth in the federal regulations (Environmental Law Institute, 2013). Operating within such a federal framework subjects AS to the conventional accounts of federalism in which its existence as well as the existence of its laws is premised on the permission of a second political entity. The local governance system adopts federal regulations, without modifications, to address the specific economic, environmental, and public health issues and needs of the territory.

The current regulatory framework governs local natural resource management but does not consider the unique remote location, cultural setting and needs of the island territory. This arrangement can be problematic for AS as there is no place in the federal government where key issues such as environmental and economic issues are examined within a broad territorial policy framework (Leibowitz, 2013). The changes in federal policies and laws can damage economic developments of territories because of natural constraints such as their small land areas, geographical isolation and limited natural resources. For instance, in response to Stateside constituent pressures, federal laws placed quotas on one of the few sectors that aided the economic growth of the Virgin Islands causing watch factories to decline over the years (Austin, 2018; Leibowitz, 2013). Leibowitz (2013) found that through this transaction with the Virgin Islands, federal laws sacrificed employment in the island in favor of Stateside manufacturers. AS, much like the Virgin Islands, is vulnerable and susceptible to the actions of the federal government. Federal regulations take precedence over local regulations in the context of natural resource management.

No centralized office or program exists that is dedicated to overseeing climate change vulnerability assessments or adaptation strategies in the territory (Spooner et al., 2017). AS' s climate change adaptation strategies are broadly managed by designated climate change coordinators within the ASCCTF. The ASCCTF consists of 14 directors from the territory's Office of the Governor, Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources, Natural Resources Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Commerce, Department of

Agriculture, Power Authority, Department of Public Works, Department of Health, Department of Education, Historic Preservation Office, Community College, and Coral Reef Advisory Group. The mission, goals, and purpose of the ASCCTF are developed from the mission, goals, and purpose of their corresponding federal partners. The responsibilities for various aspects of climate change adaptation are spread over multiple executive branch organizations on the island. The ASCCTF is responsible for developing an Action Plan to address adaptation strategies and projects suitable for funding by the Office of Insular Affairs (OIA). Unfortunately, the proposed funding for AS's basic government operations and capital improvement projects (CIP) for the fiscal year 2019 was reduced under the U.S. DOI's OIA proposed FY 2019 budget submitted to Congress by the Trump Administration (OIA, 2018). This means projects intended to improve infrastructure to ensure climate change adaptation may be postponed or cancelled due to budgetary cuts to which AS lack recourse accorded to states or incorporated territories. This political setting creates a local governance system that consists of federal regulations overlaid onto local laws governing natural resource management which ultimately impact policy decisions and actions of local policy leaders on issues of climate change.

Adaptive Capacity Under Existing Territorial Law and Policy

In a study conducted by Pacific Regional Integrated Science and Assessments (PRISA), four characteristics define the adaptive capacity of a policy framework (Wallsgrave & Penn, 2012). These characteristics are as follows:

- being forward-looking, which requires management techniques to focus on long-range planning and crisis avoidance over mitigation;

- staying flexible, which requires techniques to be revised as uncertainties in climate conditions are resolved;
- being integrated, which acknowledges that climate change involves systemic threats that cut across existing physical and political divisions, therefore integrated solutions are favored over piecemeal ones;
- being consistently iterative, which requires that adaptation practitioners acknowledge and incorporate the changing conditions, scientific information, and social knowledge brought about by climate change into management decisions in a repeating cycle.

This section uses the four characteristics identified above to define the adaptive capacity of the climate change-related programs in the territory. These climate change-related programs include the CZMP and the Safe Drinking Water Program (SDWP).

Coastal Zone Management Program

The CZMP, a part of the three national programs under the Coastal Management Act 1990 and administered by NOAA, is enforced and issued by the AS Department of Commerce. Under this program, the Project Notification and Review System (PNRS) is commissioned with broad jurisdiction to coordinate an island-wide resource regulatory scheme to protect coastal zone resources (NOAA, 2016) from the impacts of climate change. For instance, the PNRS is responsible for conducting the environmental review for all land-use activities as part of its land-use permitting system (Spooner et al., 2017). As such, the PNRS has the ability to establish climate change resilient developments by ensuring that developments are situated in locations within proper distance from bodies

of water and enforcing proper building codes and standards. This broad jurisdiction can promote an integrated approach, lending some adaptive capacity. However, there is little in the CZMP that appears to mandate adaptive characteristics based on the four rubric criteria of adaptive capacity.

There is relatively little focus on forward-looking planning in the federal and local regulations within the CZMP. For instance, the CZMP's primary focus is on the protection of wetlands, with no specific directives on issues of sea level rise and other climate change impacts (NOAA, 2016), therefore failing to avoid the occurrence of sea level rise and other climatic change impacts and forcing mitigation planning in lieu of adaptation planning. In addition, there is little focus on forward-looking planning of the CZMP agencies enforcing and implementing the Coastal Management Act of 1990. The PNRS relies heavily on its interagency coordination to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the permitting system. A review conducted of the PNRS by NOAA (2016) noted that although the program has done a good job of regularly reaching a quorum (5 or more members present) at PNRS review meetings, not all of the 8-member team are present and, in some cases, several are ill prepared for the meetings. These meetings are necessary to ensure all development projects are in compliance with federal and local regulations unfortunately, the absence or lack of preparation by PNRS members limits the opportunity for effective review of projects to ensure compliance with environmental regulations, therefore influencing the adaptive capacity of the island's developments to climate change impacts. In addition, each organization operates with applicable federal regulations, therefore influencing their ability to address local issues.

Safe Drinking Water Program

The American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency's (ASEPA) SDWP ensures quality drinking water and addresses issues related to climate change such as drought. The SDWP adopts and implements the federal drinking water quality standards set forth in the SDWA of 1974 in its local Safe Drinking Water Regulations and Standards. Based on the application of the four characteristics of adaptation, the local Safe Drinking Water Regulations Standards establishes a mild adaptive framework (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016). For instance, the Safe Drinking Water Regulations and Standards definition of public water system (PWS) is "a system that has at least 15 service connections or regularly serve at least 25 individuals" (25 A.S.A.C § 25.3001). This definition qualifies water systems operated by the American Samoa Power Authority, the authorized water/power utility provider, and village community owned and operated water systems as PWSs. As PWSs, both government and village owned water systems must comply with the drinking water quality standards and chemical/biological monitoring requirements set forth in the SDWA of 1974. This becomes an issue for village water systems because the SDWA of 1974 and the local Safe Drinking Water Regulations and Standards require PWSs to have an owner and to comply with water quality standards which are costly. Unfortunately, village water systems do not have owners because these systems are owned and operated by the village communities that do not have financial resources to conduct required bacteriological and chemical testing to comply with federal and local drinking water regulations (Shuler Hydrologic LLC, 2018). As a result, federal and local regulation standards and requirements render village water

systems non-compliant with the SDWA of 1974 and local Safe Drinking Water Regulations and Standards, therefore Federal Administrative Orders were issued for five different village water systems on the island of Tutuila requiring these PWSs to halt and cease operation.

Village water systems have supplied water to Samoans for many years. Although the SDWA of 1974 may be flexible in its definition of PWSs to qualify village water systems as PWSs, the stringent standards and regulations of the SDWA require village water systems to shut down due to non-compliance. Several villages utilize village water systems for recreational and emergency purposes while using water from the Government-owned and operated water systems for consumption purposes (Shuler Hydrologic LLC, 2018). Ceasing operations for village water systems because of failure to comply with federal and local drinking water standards results in the loss of the territory's only source of water for emergency and recreational purposes.

The SDWA of 1974 focuses on current water consumption over climate-adaptive approach. It authorizes the shut-down of noncompliant water systems (25 A.S.A.C § 25.3001) rather than keeping village water systems operable in anticipation of frequent extreme weather events where the American Samoa Power Authority's PWSs may shutdown due to the lack of electricity. A forward-looking and a more climate-adaptive approach involves the development of proper procedures for surface water treatment to ensure public health and provide adequate water during emergencies. This approach will require the appropriate ASG departments to work together with village communities to develop and improve the water quality of village water systems to avoid vigorously

enforcing local and federal water quality standards onto marginalized village communities. In doing so, managing drinking water quality become flexible to account for future demand of water supply during uncertain and extreme weather events, therefore achieving resiliency and sustainability in the face of a changing climate.

The lack of adaptive capacity in local climate change related regulations is evident. The legal and regulatory structure of AS governing the natural resource management and the territory's response to climate change issues consist of less adaptive federal regulations mapped onto less comprehensive territorial law and policy (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016). Basic information on climate trends and projections confirm a need for enhanced adaptive capacity in AS (Schwebel, 2018a). However, the existing law, policy and management framework presents a challenge. The people, infrastructure, health, environment and ecosystems of AS remain highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change (IPCC, 2014; IPCC, 2019; Ourbak & Magnan, 2017; Royer et al., 1998) and the adaptive capacity of this management framework is limited (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016; Wallsgrove & Penn, 2012). As a result, the territory has not developed the adaptive capacity required to build and maintain climate change resilience. To build the adaptive capacity of AS, there is a need to focus on the governance framework of the territory as it is a contributing factor to the issue given the influence of federal regulations on local laws. In doing so, this study will uncover some of the keys that may improve local climate change policies and policy processes which will build the adaptive capacity of the territory to build and maintain climate change resilience.

This study is important because it provides information that may help local policy leaders improve local climate change policies and policy processes, therefore increase the capacity of AS to adapt to the impacts of climate change. In addition, this study is important because it contributes to the scarce literature on the extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change preparations of its territorial possessions by investigating the current governance framework to uncover and describe the major aspects of the U.S. regulatory framework that impact local climate change policy actions of policy leaders in AS on issues of climate change.

This study is necessary because the adaptive capacity of the territory's management framework is low but basic information on climate trends and projections confirm the need for enhanced climate change adaptive capacity in the territory (Schwebel, 2018a). A contributing factor to the issue of low adaptive capacity in the territory is its governance structure, therefore there is a need to study the current regulatory framework to describe the impact of federalism on existing territorial policies which influence the policy decisions of local policy leaders. In doing so, local policy leaders are provided with information that may be used to aid their policy decisions that may build the resilience of AS in the face of extreme climate and environmental changes. Moreover, this research discusses the extreme disparity between the marginalized population that live and experience climate change and those who hold the power to enact legislation for these marginalized peoples (territory versus U.S. Congress). This research uncovers a larger issue concerning the constitutionality of the way in which Congressional power is exercised over the affairs of territories. Specifically, it unveils

how territories are treated by Congress based on their political status and the varied level of protection afforded to each territory under the Constitution as Congress sees fit to confer by statute.

Discussions on remaining a territory are usually focused on the financial stability provided by the United States. Commissioners believe that although the financial assistance the United States provides for AS have generously contributed to the development and stability of the territory, there is a need to reconsider AS's political status because of the minimal power exercised locally over the territory's affairs (Aga, 2017; Ale, 2015; Sagapolutele, 2018). Economic prosperity was a main concern of commissioners in these discussions, but there was no consideration of environmental issues as a reason to reconsider its political status (Aga, 2017; Pacific Islands Report, 2006). This study adds to the public policy literature on territorialism by pursuing an area topic that is usually not considered when reexamining the political status of AS: environmental issues, specifically climate change.

Problem Statement

The problem this study addressed is the limited adaptive capacity of AS to address the issues of climate change. AS is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and lacks a comprehensive plan to address the current and future effects of climate change. The climate change preparations of extraterritorial lands of countries is a topic that is generally overlooked by federal and local policy leaders (Schwebel, 2018a). Much like Small Island Developing States, AS has unique vulnerabilities in addition to economic difficulties and development imperatives like those of other developing

countries (Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, 2011). For instance, climate change is already causing sea level rise that exacerbates inundation, erosion, and other coastal hazards, threatening vital infrastructure that is predominantly based on the coast (Boruff et al., 2005; Fakhruddin et al., 2015). The susceptibility of the island's infrastructure to climate change impacts is exacerbated by the island's remote geographical location, its small land mass surrounded by the vast ocean, highly populated coastline, and its location in a region prone to severe natural disasters (Ourbak & Magnan, 2017; Nunn, et al., 2014). In addition, the health of the territory's population is prone to the increase of waterborne and vector borne infections caused by the increased frequency of heavy rainfall and extreme weather events (Hunter, 2003). The island's vulnerability to natural disasters and extreme weather events and the sensitivity of its economy to external shocks affect the territory's ability to adapt to current climate variability and future climate change.

AS has low capacity to build and maintain climate change resilience and adapt to climatic change impacts and, therefore, remains vulnerable to climate change. The information on climate trends and projections from the IPCC (2019) suggest that global warming will likely reach 1.5 °C between 2030 and 2052. The change in global temperature results in increased heat; drought; declining water supplies; reduced agricultural yields; and adverse health impacts due to vector and airborne diseases, flooding, and erosion in coastal areas (Bolton et al., 2020; Taylor & Kumar, 2016), therefore exacerbating the susceptibility of low-lying island settings. The geographic

setting and scarcity of natural resources of the island make it very sensitive to modest changes in climate in which its sensitivity includes the potential for substantial harmful effects, and for which its ability to adapt is severely constrained. The vulnerability of the island to climatic changes confirms the need for enhanced climate change adaptive capacity in AS.

The lack of adaptive capacity of the island to adapt to climatic changes is exacerbated by the territory's governance system. Kuruppu and Willie (2015) contend that some of the common barriers that impact the climate change adaptation capacity of most Small Island Developing States include the type of governance systems and the use of governance systems to guide the development of territorial policies relevant to climate change. AS's governance system is even more precariously positioned than those of the surrounding Small Island Developing States due to its political status; therefore this study is relevant and significant to the public policy and administration discipline. The island's political status results in a governance system in which federal laws frame the development and implementation of policies. Within this multigovernance context, AS operates at specific jurisdictional levels and acts within its respective position as a territory; therefore AS's political status plays an important role in the setting of the territory's policy decisions and course of actions on climate change issues. Governance systems that weaken and constrain local institutions and management of environmental issues reduce the adaptive capacity of governance structures to address such issues (Albert et al., 2012; Bayliss-Smith et al., 2010). Considering the vulnerability of AS to the impacts of climate change, its lack of adaptive capacity to address such impacts, and

the multigovernance context in which adaptation takes place, the territory's political status and governance situation are detrimental to the resilience of the territory.

Although AS remains highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, it has not developed the adaptive capacity to ensure resilience. The local governance system that is a result of the island's political status frames the development and implementation of policy decisions by local policy leaders and is therefore a contributing factor to the lack of adaptive capacity. Previous researchers who studied the climate change initiatives of Pacific Islands have focused on topics such as independent islands' climate-change forecasts, imminent exposure to climate-change effects, and the lack of political and related resources for coping with those effects (Betzold, 2015; Petzold & Magnan, 2019). Even when climate change is analyzed with regard to related challenges, extraterritorial lands of countries, whether nearby or halfway across the globe, are often left to the margins of these analyses (Schwebel, 2018a). This study was warranted by the absence of research on Pacific Small Island States, which have been overlooked in discussions of resiliency (Schwebel, 2018a). Thus, in this study, I aimed to fill the gap in the literature by examining the extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change policy actions and decisions of local policy leaders on climate change issues.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this general qualitative interview-based inquiry was to investigate and describe the factors in the current regulatory framework that affect the climate change policy actions of local policy leaders. Wallsgrove and Grecni (2016) found that AS can effectively address the impacts of climate change if it has the administrative and

adaptive capacity to do so. Researchers have yet to explore and describe the extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change policy actions of its territories or possessions (Schwebel, 2018a). Scarce literature has addressed the issue of limited adaptive capacity in the territory (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016). In describing the factors in the territorial relationship that impact climate change policy action of local policy leaders, I sought to provide information that could be used to improve the territory's policy processes and policy decisions of local leaders on climate change issues. With more administrative and adaptive capacity to increase and maintain climate change resilience, the local government will be better able to protect its population's health, environment, economy, and socioeconomic well-being.

Governance systems influence the development, implementation, and enforcement of policies. Governance is modulated by the continuous interaction of factors to include institutions and actors and power and knowledge (Adger et al., 2005; Leiserowitz, 2006; Mortreux & Barnett, 2009). These factors interact to create governance and its by-products, such as policies. Understanding these factors and how their interactions impact the development of climate related policies may provide an opportunity for local policy leaders to determine how the adaptive capacity of the territory can be improved through its policy processes. Ultimately, I explored ways to assist government officials in making decisions that more appropriately further the resilience of AS in the face of extreme climate and environmental changes.

Research Questions

The research question of this study was: What major aspects of the current regulatory framework impact policy action of local policy leaders on climate change issues? Findings from the research addressed the impact of territoriality on local climate change policy actions of local policy leaders. The problem I addressed is the limited adaptive capacity of AS to address the issues of climate change.

In AS, the people, infrastructure, health, environment, and ecosystems remain highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change (IPCC, 2014; IPCC, 2019; Ourbak & Magnan, 2017; Royer et al., 1998) and have not developed the adaptive capacity required to build and maintain climate change resilience (Wallsgrave & Grecni, 2016; Wallsgrave & Penn, 2012). Compared to its other island counterparts, AS lags in its climate change preparations (Schwebel, 2018a). Governance structure is a contributing factor to this issue (Ale, 2015; Sagapolutele, 2018). Researchers have yet to explore and describe the extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change policy actions of its territories or possessions (Schwebel, 2018a). In addition, scarce literature has addressed the issue of limited adaptive capacity in the territory (Wallsgrave & Grecni, 2016). The purpose of this general qualitative interview-based inquiry was to investigate the current governance framework to describe the factors in the territorial relationship that impact policy action of local policy leaders on climate change issues, influencing the adaptive capacity to address the region's complex social problems.

The findings from this investigation provide a framework to understand how the political relationship between the United States and AS affects local policy decisions and

actions on the issues of climate change and the overall environmental policy regime of the islands. The results of the study may assist local policy leaders to build the adaptive capacity of the territory by adjusting its local policy processes and policy decisions. These changes may increase the territory's ability to adapt to climatic changes and address climate change impacts such as vector/airborne diseases, economic struggles of the island and, sea level rise that continues to increase inundation into the territory's coastal infrastructure.

Theoretical Foundation

The evolutionary governance theory (EGT) was the theoretical lens I used to investigate the research question, and it informed the research design and analysis. EGT was developed by Kristoff Van Assche, Raoul Beunen and Martijn Duineveld to clarify the nature and function of dependencies that create governance evolutions. Specifically, the EGT offers a framework for understanding governance in a community (Van Assche & Duineveld, 2014). EGT provides a structure that shows and describes the interactions of the different elements of governance, which include its actors, subjects, objects, formal and informal institutions, power and knowledge. EGT offers a framework for understanding how governance elements create different dependencies that develop and constrain the course of governance evolution. These elements continuously co-evolve thus, reproducing governance and the by-product of governance (policies) (Beunen et al., 2015). A more detailed explanation of the major theoretical propositions is offered in Chapter 2.

EGT contributed to the study by providing a framework to investigate the current regulatory framework and uncover the major aspects of the current regulatory framework that impact the policy actions of local policy leaders on climate change issues. EGT was used in this study to understand the elements of governance that have led to the current governance path of the territory. Observations and analysis of the interworking of the elements of governance have led to the development of descriptions and understanding of the governance path of the territory, therefore addressing the main research question. These descriptions and analysis may be used by policy leaders to spur discussions on improving the climate change policies in AS and build the climate change adaptive capacity of the territory.

Nature of the Study

Descriptions of the major factors of the current regulatory framework that impact the adaptive capacity of the territory was necessary to provide local policy leaders with information that may assist them in improving the local policy processes and policy decisions on climate change issues. Data collected from semistructured interviews with 11 local executive organizations provided descriptions of the major factors of the current regulatory framework that impact their policy actions on climate change issues. The results of the study provided an in-depth understanding of the issue of lack of capacity of the territory to adapt to climatic changes. Sandelowski (2000) found that the qualitative design is limited in scope to allow a clear description of a specific phenomenon from the perspective of the participant. As such, the general qualitative interview-based inquiry design met the purpose of this study because it provided a research design that yielded

rich descriptions of the phenomena which facilitated understanding of policy actor's experiences in making climate change relevant policy decisions within the context of the current regulatory framework.

The key issue this study aims to address is the lack of adaptive capacity of the territory to address climate change issues. The people, infrastructure, health, environment, and ecosystems of the territory remain highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change however, the territory has not developed the adaptive capacity required to build and maintain climate change resiliency. Weak governance systems are a contributing factor to the issue of low adaptive capacity (Adger et al., 2009; Amundsen et al., 2010) especially in a complex governance structure like AS's. This in-depth study of factors that influenced the lack of climate change adaptive capacity of the territory was conducted by investigating its current regulatory framework to understand the climate change policy actions of local policy leaders.

Semistructured interviews with local policy leaders captured the descriptions of the major factors of the current regulatory framework that impact climate change policies and policy processes in each organization under the current administration. The telephonic interview sessions were digitally recorded and transcribed into a Microsoft Word document. Analysis of the data employed the hand-coding method where the transcribed data was evaluated and coded line-by-line. Patterns were drawn from the study using the pattern coding method and the theoretical framework was used to analyze the patterns to identify central themes. This study's findings provide insights into the impacts of the current regulatory framework on the adaptive capacity of the island

territory and engenders knowledge to help local policy actors create more effective policies to improve the adaptive capacity of the territory to climate.

Definitions

In this section, I define the key terms as used in this study.

Adaptive capacity: The ability of eco and human systems to adjust to climatic changes, to abate potential damages, to take advantage of opportunities, or to cope with the consequences (Smit & Wandel, 2006).

Bartering system: A method of exchanging services and goods for other services in return (McPhee et al., 2008).

Case study: Empirical inquiry that is used to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2012).

Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA): A law that was passed in 1972 and is administered by the NOAA. It aims to preserve, protect, and restore the resources of coastal zones (NOAA, n.d.).

Colonialism: A form of domination that involves the subjugation of one people by another (Butt, 2013).

Discourse: An approach of organizing knowledge that structures the constitution of social relations through the understanding of the discursive logic and the acceptance of the discourse as fact (Foucault, 1991).

Extraterritoriality: The ability of a state to make, apply, and enforce rules of conduct in respect to the people, events, and properties beyond its territory (Kamminga, 2012).

Fa'amatai system: A system of chief leadership in the Samoan culture (Lutali & Stewart, 1974).

Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA): A law that establishes employment standards in terms of minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, and youth employment requirements for employees in local, federal, and state governments and those in the private sector (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.).

Fono: A term that refers to the Village Council of Chiefs. The Village Council of Chiefs make rules for the maintenance and development of villages (Lutali & Stewars, 1974).

Indigenous people: Tribes, first peoples/nations, aboriginals, and ethnic groups. These groups of people often have much in common with other neglected segments of societies (i.e. lack of political representation and participation) and are holders of unique languages, knowledge systems and beliefs invaluable for the sustainable management of natural resources (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, n.d.).

Institutions: Policies, plans and laws in governance (Assche et al., 2014).

Insular Cases: Cases heard by the Supreme Court in 1901 – 20 which defined how the United States would handle its relationship with the new territories and its governments (Torruella, 2013). The series of Supreme Court rulings on the legal status and rights of people from territories is still in effect today (“U.S. Territories: Territorial Federalism,” 2017).

Knowledge: Foucault’s work and interest in the archaeology of knowledge production. He was interested about the systems that primarily inform the thinking and

dominate the social context in which certain knowledges and practices emerge as permissible (Foucault, 1991).

Lived experiences: The way in which individuals understand, give meaning to, and interpret their own world (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Malumalu: A temple or place of worship (Va'ai, 2012).

Matai: A chiefly honor bestowed upon a person (Va'a, 1987).

Power: The normalizing powers that shape and create meaning, which structures how individuals define and organize themselves and the social world (Foucault, 1991).

Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA): A law that aims to protect public drinking water supplies through the establishment of drinking water quality standards (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2017).

Semistructured interviews: In-depth interviews that require respondents to answer preset, open-ended questions (Patton, 2014).

Small Island Developing States: A distinct group of developing countries facing social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities (Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, 2011).

Taulaitu: A spirit medium in pre-Christian Samoa (Va'ai, 2012).

Territoriality: In the specific case of AS and for the purposes of this study, an unorganized and unincorporated insular area in the possession of the United States ("U.S. Territories: American Samoa" 2017).

Va Tapuia: The concept of sacred space in a covenant relationship (Va'a, 1987).

Unincorporated: A U.S. insular area in which the U.S. Congress has determined that only selected parts of the U.S. Constitution apply (U.S. DOI, 2016).

Unorganized: An unincorporated U.S. insular area for which the U.S. Congress has not enacted an organic act (U.S. DOI, 2016).

Assumptions

This study is based on several assumptions. First, participants have valuable insights working under the current governance framework that is highly influenced by the territory's political relationship with the United States and participants can answer interview questions honestly. Second, I assumed a degree of frustration from the participants about the inquiry on the governance affairs between the United States and AS because most policy leaders perceive the administering power as "benevolent" to the economic growth of the territory (Ale, 2015) and because of the steady flow of financial aid support offered to AS by the United States. Third, this study focuses on the relations of U.S. federal policies to AS as a territory, therefore it assumes that external institutions have a direct impact on the policy actions of local policy leaders. Fourth, I assumed that the selected policy leaders will provide information to address the main research question because these individuals have the capacity to develop, implement, and enforce policy actions on climate change issues. Finally, a semistructured interview is the best method to collect information for this study because it requires the researcher to take on a relational interaction with the participants and develop and incorporate the skills of interviewing to ensure quality data. More importantly, semistructured interviewing is a powerful tool for researchers in the public policy and administration field to understand the thoughts,

beliefs, and experiences of individuals that are involved with developing, implementing, and enforcing policies and policy processes.

Scope and Delimitations

AS is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change but lacks a comprehensive plan to address the current and future effects of climate change. The lack of adaptive capacity of the island to adapt to climatic changes is exacerbated by the territory's governance system. The island's political status results in a governance system in which federal laws frame the development and implementation of local policies. Within this multi-governance context, AS operates at specific jurisdictional levels and acts within its respective position as a territory, therefore AS's political status affects the development of the territory's policies and course of actions on climate change issues. Considering the vulnerability of AS to the impacts of climate change, its lack of adaptive capacity to address such impacts, and the multi-governance context which its adaptation efforts are developed, the political status of and governance arrangement in AS is detrimental to the resilience of the territory. Research has yet to explore and describe the extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change policy actions of its territories or possessions (Schwebel, 2018).

Although the ASCCTF was established through an executive order to guide local climate change efforts, this entity does not have the authority to establish any policies. Therefore, this study focused on the policy decisions of local policy leaders from the different executive offices with climate change responsibilities. The individual executive organizations were selected because of the absence of an overarching policy framework

to address climate change impacts. Each executive organization has different climate change responsibilities. The efforts of each executive organization to address climate change impacts that are relevant to their organization's line of work are guided and directed by the federal government. Therefore, it is important to include all of the executive organizations with climate change responsibilities in this analysis to build descriptions of the aspects of the U.S. regulatory framework that impacts the policy actions of local policy leaders on climate change issues. The analysis focused only on the climate change policies and actions of the selected organizations. This study addressed the issue of adaptive capacity in AS; therefore, the results are not transferable to other Pacific islands or U.S. territories.

Limitations

This general qualitative interview-based study was limited to the specific case of AS, therefore generalization was unlikely (Tsang, 2014). The findings of this study were intended for AS specifically and not for other Pacific Island U.S. territories; therefore transferability of results was unlikely. A researcher must recognize and acknowledge their personal role and biases related to the research. While it is essential for researchers to immerse themselves in data to support the analytic imagination necessary for understanding the data in the light of this study's purpose, the rigor in qualitative analysis is dependent on the research process and its trustworthiness. To ensure data objectivity and avoid bias, Yin (2012) suggested that researchers actively identify and mitigate their biases. My experience with the impact of federalism on local regulations from my previous work with the ASEPA had the potential to affect my interactions with

participants during the interviews as well as analysis. I exercised objectivity throughout the entire process by utilizing the interview protocol with all of the study participants, avoid leading questions that would have received a closed yes or no response, avoid overlooking data inconsistent with personal beliefs during data analysis, and I shared a brief summary of the findings with the research participants using the member checking process.

Significance of the Study

The fundamental goal of public administration is to improve government function and government responses to public problems by studying government decision making, analyzing policies and policy processes, and investigating the factors that produce alternative policies to ensure the functionality of governance in effectively addressing social issues. The results of this study may have several social change implications that may be remarkable for scholars and practitioners. For scholars, the results of this study may serve as a foundation for future research because it pursues an understudied topic and that is, the extraterritorial influence on climate change policies and policy processes of U.S. territories. This study reveals the superiority of extraterritorial laws on local regulations and determines the aspects of such governance framework that affects the efforts of the territory to adapt to climate change. It brings to light the serious democratic deficiencies concerning the relationship between United States and its territories specifically, the unjust application of the U.S. constitution by Congress in its territories. As one Samoan attorney insisted “we are a 116-year-old colony of the U.S. filled with non-citizens and controlled by a Congress where our delegate has no vote” (Aga, 2017, p.

9). Likewise, the results of the study may offer a new path for future researchers to advance inquiry into extraterritorial influence on various matters that impact the social well-being, health, and environment in AS and in other territorial islands in general. This study provides insights into the aspects of the current regulatory framework that influence the climate change policy actions of local policy leaders. This information may assist local policy leaders in making policy decisions that will build the adaptive capacity of the territory and enhance resiliency.

For practitioners, the results of this study offer support to policy makers with their efforts to formulate and implement policies that may improve the adaptive capacity of the island to climate change. From a public administration perspective, this study is a step towards shifting the mindsets and deepening the knowledge of policy makers on climate change issues which may aid their efforts in developing, supporting, and formulating policies to improve the adaptive capacity of the territory. The results of this study also offers valuable alternatives to the government to address the issue of the lack of adaptive capacity of the territory to climate change. Lastly, the results of this study sheds light on the factors of the current regulatory framework that influence climate change policy decisions. Understanding these factors may be a key factor to improving the adaptive capacity of the territory to climate change.

In terms of social change, this study looks at the influence of the current regulatory framework on the climate change policy actions of local policy leaders as another way to understand the influence of colonialism on the public policy and administration of AS thus, contributing to the growing research utilizing perceptions to

determine the degree and nature of adaptation actions (Adger et al., 2005; Leiserowitz, 2006; Mortreuz & Barnett, 2009). This approach can also be used in places with a heritage of colonialism such as Greenland and WS. Greenland is still a part of Denmark while WS is an independent state. Despite its independent status, colonial practices are still evident in the WS religion, culture, and politics. All of these approaches and study objectives serve as foundational knowledge of a framework that will aid Indigenous people in understanding the influence of colonialism on their policies and policy processes.

Globally, SDGs were developed to ensure a better and sustainable future for all by addressing global challenges. Some of the goals of the SDGs were to ensure resilient and sustainable human and infrastructure settlements, climate change action, conserve marine resources, promote sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective and accountable institutions at all levels of government. The goals of SDGs aimed to support plans that would change the trajectory of pollution levels in the atmosphere, develop resilient infrastructure, build sustainable ocean economy, provide justice for all communities in light of climate change, and improve institutions at all levels of governance to ensure policy decisions promote and execute resiliency. Several of these 17 SDGs efforts must be prioritized, implemented, and practiced within the federal and local levels of government to change the way in which territorial government systems develop policy decisions on climate change issues. In doing so, local policy processes and policies may change from one that is highly influenced by less adaptive

federal regulations to one that is focused on the adaptation needs of the territory; therefore, enhance the adaptive capacity of the territory to climate change impacts.

A well-developed approach to improve the adaptive capacity of the territory to climate change through its policies should focus on policy processes that dovetail the environmental, public health, economic setting, and economic needs of the territory. Local policy processes and policies address the needs of the territory offer a new paradigm for true resiliency, adaptation, and sustainability. The results from this study may help local policy leaders in AS identify and overcome barriers within the current regulatory framework that affect their ability to make policy decisions that promote adaptation and resilience in the territory. The results of this study may also spur necessary discussions, create collaboration, and foster support between local territorial governments and the federal government to create and develop adaptation efforts that increase island territories climate change adaptive capacity.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I focused on the issue of lack of adaptive capacity of AS to adapt to climate change. I discussed the limited adaptive capacity of the territory under the current territorial law and policy framework which presents a challenge to effectively addressing the impacts of climate change thus, leaving the island's population, infrastructure, environment, and economy highly vulnerable to the impacts of extreme weather events. The island's governance system is precariously positioned because of its territorial status, therefore local climate change relevant regulations and efforts are developed under the umbrella of federal laws. This study investigated the current regulatory framework and

described the key factors that impact the climate change policy actions of local policy leaders.

The EGT theory was used to develop the research question, study design, and inform the analysis of the elements of governance that lead to the current governance path of the territory and impact the policy decisions and action of local policy leaders on climate change issues. This study provides descriptions of the relations of U.S. federal policies to AS as a territory that influences the development of local climate change policies and policy processes. The results of the study may lead to deeper understanding of practitioners, public administrators, and local policy leaders alike and meaningful discussions about the territory's lack of adaptive capacity to climatic changes. Also, the results of this study may assist local policy leaders in making policy decisions that build the necessary adaptive capacity of the territory to solve climate change issues, build resilience, and improve the environmental regulatory framework of the territory.

To provide an overview of the AS's limited adaptive capacity to adapt to climate change, this chapter clarified the problem statement, explained the background of the problem, the significance of the study, provided definitions of terms used throughout the study, identified the limitations, research question, and explained the implications for social change that could be expected from the results of the study. Chapter 2 includes a review of past and existing literature of scholars' viewpoints on the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the United States over AS which extend to the institutions that govern natural resource management in AS. Chapter 2 begins with an introduction of the study, elaboration of the EGT and the way in which the theory is used in this study, and the

strategy and method utilized to review the articles. Chapter 3 provides a detailed explanation of the methodology used for this study, the research design used to address the main research question, details on the sample size, sample population, and the instrument used to collect the data. A discussion of the process in which the data was analyzed and the results of the study are outlined in Chapter 4. As a public policy tool, the results of this study may assist in understanding the factors of the extraterritorial relations between the United States and AS that influence local climate change policy decisions. In the last chapter of this study, I interpret the findings and discuss its limitations. Based on the shortcomings and the findings of the study, I make recommendations for future studies. I used the results of the study to illuminate this study's implications for positive social change and concluded the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem this study addressed was the lack of adaptive capacity of AS to adapt to climate change impacts. The lack of adaptive capacity endangers the population due to the increase in the incidence of vector- and water-borne diseases, increased vulnerability of most infrastructure to sea level rise, high energy waves, and storm surges. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relations of U.S. federal policy to AS as a territory and describe the factors in this territorial relationship that impact the local climate change policy actions of local policy leaders. The people, infrastructure, health, environment, and ecosystems of AS remain highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change (IPCC, 2014; IPCC, 2019; Ourbak & Magnan, 2017; Royer et al., 1998) and have not built the necessary adaptive capacity to address climate change issues (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016; Wallsgrove & Penn, 2012). Compared to its neighboring islands, AS falls behind in terms of its climate change preparation efforts and policies (Schwebel, 2018a).

Many of the previous studies have focused on independent islands' climate change forecasts while often ignoring other development-related issues, placing them in a catch-all climate change category when in fact, other social challenges abound and need to be addressed (Funk & Kennedy, 2016). A contributing factor to the problem of limited adaptive capacity, the governance structure of AS, has also not been adequately examined. As Schwebel (2018a) noted, researchers have yet to explore and describe the extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change actions of its territories or possessions. Scarce literature has addressed the issue of limited adaptive capacity in the territory (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016). Schwebel (2018a) found that while

the position of extraterritoriality plays an important role in policy processes and policy development of territories, the topic is often left to the margin of analyses in climate change policy studies. Therefore, it is important to investigate the relations of the U.S. federal policy to AS as a territory.

Although all of the Pacific Islands share similar cultural rituals, religious practices, and social/physical settings, AS differs from the entire chain of Pacific islands because of its political status as a territory of the United States. In this political setting, Setzer (2015) found that territories are treated as mere subdivisions of the United States, have neither legal standing nor independent presence in formal international institutions, and operate within a specific jurisdictional level with specific legal and constitutional limits in the realm of environmental policy. As such, AS's governance framework consists of federal laws overlaid onto local regulations.

Policy systems governing the management and use of natural resources are mediated by the interplay between the structural and discursive forms of power and knowledge and the configuration between institutions and policy actors, all of which are facilitated by discourses. Following Foucault (1980), a discourse is a structure of interconnected concepts that makes parts of reality accessible while hiding others. The concept of discourse is simply the act of hiding and veiling either by choice or simply by not considering alternatives. Applying this Foucauldian perspective to natural resource governance and management, the management and policy decisions about a natural resource is always a product of discourse (Van Assche et al., 2017). I drew from the concepts of power, discourse, policy and governance to complete this historical review of

the extraterritorial relationship between the United States and AS. Findings may assist government officials in improving climate change governance and policy decisions and ensuring resiliency in the face of extreme climate changes.

In the historical review, I examined the extraterritorial influence on the different aspects of the Samoan way of life, which extend to those institutions governing environmental matters in AS. The three aspects include the Samoan culture/religion, economy, and politics. In this chapter, I present the literature published on the topic of extraterritorial relations on the different aspects of the Samoan way of life through literature on power, discourse, policy, and governance to situate policy systems on natural resource management. Chapter 2 includes the literature search strategy, theoretical foundation, review of the current literature, and summary and conclusions.

Literature Search Strategy

I used the following databases in compiling the literature: ProQuest Central's Earth, Atmospheric and Aquatic Science Database, Environmental Science Database, Political Science Database and Social Science Database; Academic Search Complete, ERIC, Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis Online, Emerald Insight, Sage Journals, Sage Knowledge, Political Science Complete, ScienceDirect, United Nations Public Administration Network and Wiley. Search terms included *colonialism*, *history of AS*, *territorial-federalism*, *insular cases*, *federalism-state relationship*, and *environmental laws under different U.S. presidents*. When terms were exhausted in one database, I attempted similar terms in other databases using information discovered in new articles to go back to the original database and do iterative searches.

The literature included primary and secondary sources, seminal literature, and policy documents, an examination of which yielded repetitive themes that led to new sources. I found a broad range of scholarly peer-review journals related to extraterritorial power using Google Scholar. When I focused on the extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change preparations and efforts of its territorial possessions, I found no current research, dissertations, books, or peer-reviewed journal articles published on the topic. I expanded my search to include the influence of the United States on the general affairs of its territorial possession, AS. This search expanded and covered the extraterritorial relations on the different aspects of the Samoan way of life to include its culture, religion, economy, and politics, which also extend to the institutions that govern the local policy leaders' decisions related to natural resource management and climate change issues. I found and reviewed approximately 190 literature sources. I stopped the literature review when the search was not revealing anything drastically new. I found that saturation was met when there was a mix of classic literature, literature that have the biggest impact in the public policy and administration field, and literature on the topic of colonialism and Pacific island cultures that were published five years ago and earlier.

Theoretical Framework

Kristof Van Assche, Martijin Duineveld, and Raoul Beunen developed the EGT in response to the difficulty of understanding change in temporary governance and explaining unexpected events and changes across different fields and disciplines. In the field of public administration, the authors developed EGT to understand how policy

decisions evolve (Assche et al., 2011; Beunen & Opdam, 2011). The EGT posits that by focusing the attention on the major elements that constitute governance, specifically the evolution between discourses modulated by actors and institutions and power and knowledge, policies are understood because policies are a by-product of governance (Assche et al., 2014). As the actors and institutions and power and knowledge elements continuously interact, the discourses within governance evolve (Beunen et al., 2015; Vershraegen, 2015). As a result of such coevolution, the policies and regulations that are a by-product of governance change.

Researchers have applied EGT to understand government management of various policy issues. Although some researchers define and explain governance and the potential benefits of effective governance, little has been done to study the context of governance and its effects on decision-making (Luhmann, 1989) that contribute to effective governance. Previous research using EGT shows that the knowledge base for the management of ecosystems is institutionalized by state policies and regulations that encourage the spread, or lack thereof, of sustainable innovation (Luhmann, 1989). However, overlooking the interactions between social and ecological systems at present and in the past underestimates rigidities in evolving policies and therefore underestimates obstacles to reform (Djanibekov et al., 2016). As such, many researchers have recently used EGT to understand governance and its by-products as it provides a platform to analyze factors that constitute governance and their interrelations to determine how complex structures and processes are created within governance (Görg, 2007; Kallis & Norgaard, 2010; Van Assche et al., 2017).

EGT has been applied by researchers to illuminate the path dependencies in governance when managing certain issues (Rammel et al., 2007). EGT has also been applied by researchers to illuminate the interdependencies among institutional systems to understand the factors that contribute to the knowledge and perceptions of decision makers (Djanibekov & Finger, 2018). As such, EGT was selected to investigate the current regulatory framework to understand the governance path of the territory. Observations and analysis of the interworking of the elements of governance developed descriptions of the governance path. The descriptions of the governance path of the territory highlighted the territory's policy direction and actions on climate change issues.

EGT was selected because it provided a lens in which policy actions of local policy leaders were studied by focusing and uncovering the different factors of the current regulatory framework that influence policy decisions. The governance framework of the territory is precariously positioned because of its political status. The governance framework of the territory creates a policy space that overlays federal laws over territorial governance and territorial regulations. As these aspects of the current governance framework continuously interact within the policy space, local governance and local regulations change simultaneously thus, transforming local governance. Through the lens of EGT, this study focused on the interactions between the institutions and actors and knowledge and power as forces that work intertwiningly to influence policy action of local policy leaders on climate change issues.

The theory draws from various theoretical sources to include Biological Theories of Evolution, Social Systems Theory, Institutional and Development Economics, and

Post-structuralism (Van Assche et al., 2014). EGT claims that the elements of governance create a basis in which governance is seen as radically evolutionary. Governance is driven by actions, ideas, and evolving images of self, the environment, the past, and the future. EGT thus provides an aid in understanding governance as evolutionary: the elements of governance co-evolve. As such, the elements of governance mediate public policies. The EGT was used to analyze the current regulatory framework that governs the policy actions and decisions of local policy leaders on climate change. The power and knowledge configuration and actor and institutions configuration create a meta configuration that was used to describe the relationship between the major factors of the current regulatory framework and the policy decisions of local policy leaders on climate change issues. These configurations are as follow.

Power/Knowledge Configuration

Governance revolves around power/knowledge interactions. Power/knowledge interactions serve and create actors in governance. Following Foucault (1991), EGT suggests that power is everywhere, therefore it should not be viewed as an agency or a structure. In this sense, power is not a force of coercion or acts of domination (Butt, 2013) but a type of 'truth' that pervades society. Building upon Foucault's basic concept of discourse, Butt (2013) argues that a discourse is a structure of interconnected concepts that makes parts of reality accessible while hiding others. Creating a discourse is an act of hiding information which might run counter to the aims of the discourse creators either by choice or simply by not considering alternatives. In this perspective, the truths or

power forces function as mechanisms that enable the distinguish of true and false statements and are different in every community.

Power is inextricably connected with the social structures through which people understand, create, and organize the world as they know it (Foucault, 1980; Van Assche et al., 2017). Foucault (1991) found that power is everywhere and comes from everywhere. In this sense, power are forces that create things and circumstances to be understood and allows for aggregations of power at higher levels of understanding to occur (Beunen & Opdam, 2011; Van Assche et al., 2011). In this definition, power is neither an agency or a structure but a type of regime of truth that pervades society. The decision-making of policy actors is influenced by the different forms of power that constitute the territory's policy development process. Analysis of the territory's political status renders the federal government and federal laws as forms of power that moderate the policy space where the territory's policy processes and decisions materialize. The inversion of the common dictum knowledge is power shows power as a result of discourse and through discourse, institutions governing the topics of interest are reinforced and redefined through the flux of political ideologies constituted through different forms of knowledge.

Knowledge is embedded in a community context that produces discourses. The context of a culture and its values, in an economy and its exchange principles, and through a political system and its power relations are constantly changing (Assche et al., 2011; Foucault, 1980; Van Assche., 2011). As elements of the community context change, the discourses discursively change. The way in which policy actors view and

understand (knowledge) climate change issues depend on the forces of power embedded within the social structures that ultimately influence their policy actions. The configuration power/knowledge then refers to how knowledge of the world is always embedded in power relations. As knowledge changes, power changes because power creates knowledge and knowledge produces power simultaneously (Beunen et al., 2015).

Power produces knowledge and knowledges produces power. Power produces reality, domains of objects, and rituals of truth (Foucault, 1991). The current governance structure is the form of power that influences the way actors understand and approach their environment which ultimately impacts their policy actions on climate change issues. In this case, knowledge is an exercise of power and power is a function of knowledge.

Actor/Institution Configuration

EGT acknowledges the perception of self and the understanding of other actors, their actions and of the governance arena. Therefore, actor and institutions are concepts that should not be seen as independent variables. Actors in governance, in their observations and in their agency, are constantly evolving through discourse (Foucault, 1991). All interactions, communications and strategizing are deep-seated and reinforced by discourse. The impacts of institutions on governance always depends on their embedding in a web of other institutions and actors. Therefore, actors and institutions are not separate entities but exist to shape each other in coevolution. North (2005) and Greig (2006) contend that actors and institutions are each other's catalysts. The political status of AS creates a policy space where federal laws and the federal government are constituted to govern the decisions of its territorial possessions on issues that directly

impact the quality of life of its people. The federal government and federal laws are institutions that moderate the policy decisions of local policy leaders on issues pertaining to the territory.

Coordination of actors is a coordination of interests and of perspectives. Actors attitudes, behavior, choices and beliefs transform in governance and with governance as a result of the manner in which actors are institutionally coordinated and the manner in which actors coordinate personally with each other (Foucault, 1980). Actors in governance never escape the power and autonomy of discourse (Assche et al., 2011; Blyth et al., 2011; Foucault, 1980; Love, 1989). Interpretations, communications and strategizing are all embedded in and molded by discourse. Local policy leaders develop a set of beliefs, principles, and ideas which stem from the institutions which they belong to or institutions which coordinate their behavior and actions.

The continuous confrontation between federal laws and local policy actors create a platform where the strategies and ideas of local policy leaders are developed. Federal laws and the authority of the United States are institutions that coordinate local policy actors. In this discursive configuration of federal and local policy actors, some coalitions become more likely than others and some conflicts more likely than others. As such, the outcome of discourse depends on the confrontation between federal and local government system institutions. The coordination of local policy actors by federal government system institutions inevitably change the beliefs and principles of local policy actors. Redefined actors will handle institutions differently and participate differently in the production of new institutions which likely pressures actors into a new phase of reinvention. The

interactions between actors create power relations, institutions or general discourse which influence the behavior of actors (Assche et al., 2011; Blyth et al., 2011).

Meta Configuration

Policies are influenced by the interaction between the elements of governance. Governance constantly changes due to evolving power/knowledge configurations and actors/institutions configurations. The evolving state of these configurations can be understood as the meta-configuration that represents the unique mode of self-reproduction of governance in the community (Blyth et al., 2011; Van Assche., 2011). The interplay between power/knowledge configurations and actors/institutions configurations is a meta configuration that is central to describing and understanding governance (Beunen et al., 2015). The meta configurations that constitute the current regulatory framework of the territory are a result of extraterritoriality jurisdiction of the United States and the territoriality position of the island. The island's political status subjects the territory to the federal government which require federal laws to take precedence over the territory and be diffused into AS's culture, society, economy, and ultimately its identity. In this sense, territoriality is a form of power incited to influence local policies and regulations in light of U.S. federal laws (Foucault, 1991).

Developing local regulations that conform with Federal laws is an illustration of power forces that produce knowledge and institutions that coordinate actors (Foucault, 1980). As local policy leaders operate within the current regulatory framework that is moderated by federal laws and highly influenced by the presence of the federal government, their political identity at the core of the self comes into existence (again, a

form of knowledge). This identity is monitored, cultivated, and often controlled by other institutions and actors (again, back to power). The elements of governance and their interconnections provide a platform to understand governance as a process in which discourses compete and transform through the logic of power/knowledge configuration (Beunen et al., 2015) and as a result of the schemes by actors, and the logic of actors/institution configuration (Verschraegen, 2015).

EGT also suggests that governance evolves. Policy actors are coordinated by institutions and the configuration of power/knowledge. The discursive shifts of these configurations alter the governance framework (Vershraegen, 2015). The process of confrontation between actors causes different discourses to interact, thus changing an actor's identity, role or its position (Beunen et al., 2015). The continuous control and coordinative authority of powerful elite institutions of the federal government over territorial government transform the knowledge of local policy actors. In this same vein, authors found that institutional frameworks and the configuration of actors effect the inclusion and exclusion of certain forms of knowledge and expertise of actors (Beunen et al., 2015; Foucault, 1980). Local policy actors handle institutions differently and participate differently in producing new institutions because of the manner in which they are coordinated, the manner in which they coordinate with each other, and as a result of ongoing confrontations with power/knowledge configurations (Beunen et al., 2015). Redefined actors will handle institutions differently and will participate differently in the production of new institutions.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

Historical Review of Extraterritorial Relationship Between the United States and American Samoa

The phrase “the Samoan way” was coined to describe the sociopolitical and traditional-customary way of life of the Samoans. The phrase centers on the importance of religion, culture, and family elements (Ofahengaue & Godinet, 2008; Yamamoto, 2001) to the identity of all Samoans. For Samoans then and now, the “Samoan way” was and still is the way in which Samoans live life (Yamamoto, 2001). While there is no research published on the topic of extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change preparations and policy system governing climate change impacts of AS, the literature reveals the extraterritorial influence on the elements of the Samoan way of life which extend to the institutions governing local environmental matters (Engel, 1993; Tui Atua, 2009a). These elements of the Samoan way of life include the Samoan culture, religion, economy and politics.

The history of Samoa’s encounter with the United States illustrates the workings and interlinkages of power, knowledge, actors and institutions, and the discourses embedded in these configurations which create the cultural, religious, economic, and political systems of Samoa. These elements of the Samoan way of life extend to those institutions that govern environmental matters and climate change policy decisions. As such, the following analysis begins with the literature on the history of the United States and AS with a focus on the extraterritorial influence through literature on power,

discourse, policy, and governance to situate policy systems on natural resource management.

Religion and Culture

The Samoan religion and culture have a deep reverence and respect for nature and all life. The Samoan Indigenous religion and culture promoted a sustainable relationship with the environment based on respect for and kinship with the natural world (Va'ai, 2012). For instance, Samoans worshipped supernatural beings, referred to a creation story to gain perspective on their position in the natural world, and incorporated religious beliefs in every aspect of their lives prior to the arrival of Christianity (Wildermuth, 2012). Samoans believed in different gods: god of the individual, family god, village god, district god and the war god (Kamu, 1996; Morrell, 2012; Vaai, 2012). These gods incarnated into some form of animal life or resided in some natural object. As such, these animals or natural objects were protected by the people, never killed or eaten, but most importantly, the animal or object meaning was inferred from its behavior in various contexts (Va'a, 1987). Every family and village had its own god in which titled chiefs of families or the *matais* were the appointed individuals to act as the family's intermediary with the family god. In the case of the village gods, appointed priests known as the *taulāitu* filled the intermediary role (Va'ai, 2012). These individuals were the mouthpieces or vessels of the gods they represented. A priest, who was usually a titled chief, was considered to be the incarnation of a god and as such, he was regarded with the greatest of awe. At its genesis, the Samoan culture and religion valued the environment

by applying the label of ‘god’ on various resources thus, protecting, preserving, conserving, and worshipping these natural elements.

Samoans strong belief in gods and the powers of such gods institutionalized the knowledge base that created the Samoan culture and religion. The Samoan culture and religion require villages to act in accordance with the demands of gods and their rituals. The Samoan gods hold supreme power, therefore in its culture, the primitive practice of offering a libation to the gods at a kava ceremony is necessary. The gods were also prayed to and worshipped. For example, Hardie’s encounter with the Samoan culture in 1836 afforded him the opportunity to experience Samoans praying to Le Fanoga, a war-god, before setting out to war (Davidson, 1840). In addition, Le Tagaloa (2001) found that all sicknesses were believed to be caused by the gods or the spirits of the dead. In the event of an illness, a priest was contacted, and a séance was conducted (Va’ai, 2012). The priest would enter into rapport with the god or spirit to ascertain the cause of the spirit’s action and would announce it to the family. In response, the family would bring offerings of food and property to the god or the spirit, through the priest (Wildermuth, 2012). Priests announced feasts after having been possessed by the god or following his encounters with the god under certain propitious circumstances (Le Tagaloa, 2001; Morrell, 1946). The food and various gifts were offered to the priest in the name of the village god. For example, in his missionary work, Heath wrote about the gifts offered to the war-goddess Nafanua prior to an attack being launched on a rival district.

The Samoan religion and culture also valued the importance of upholding the balance between humans and the environment. Tagaloa, a progenitor or god of Samoans,

created humans last to reinforce their place in creation and necessity for a relationship based on respect for the natural environment (Va'ai, 2012). According to Tui Atua (2009a), he explains that "in the Samoan Indigenous religion, Tagaloa claimed that all matter whether human, water animal, plant, and the biosphere are connected" (p. 117). From this perspective, all creations are divine and are connected by genealogy. Tagaloa also claimed that humans are not a separate creation but part of the land, the seas, and the skies (Tui Atua, 2009b). As such, the discourse embedded in the Samoan culture and religion emphasized balance between humans and the environment where humans do not dominate over nature rather, the environment is a part of humans, their blood, and bodies. The Samoan religion and culture prior to its evolution recognized inherent equality in all of creation (Engel, 1993; Kamu, 1996; Morrell, 2012; Tui Atua, 2009a). This is supported by the Samoan Indigenous concept of *va tapuia*, which refers to the sacred relationship between humans and all things.

The discourse within the Samoan culture and religion was informed by the Tagaloa mythology that also bore the concepts of *Va* and *Va Tapuia*. Discourse produces knowledge through language which interferes in the process of describing what is "true" or false" (Bevir, 1999; Richardson, 1996). The beliefs and rituals that the gods and chiefs diffused into society created the "truth" or discourses which constituted Samoa's Indigenous culture and religion. Foucault (1980) states that discourses are created through particular practices of knowledge and power. The concepts (form of power) of *Va* and *Va Tapuia*, which were enforced within the Samoan communities, required humans to have a sacred relationship with all things and an understanding that humans

were not owners of anything in the universe (knowledge). These concepts pervaded the Samoan society and informed the discourses embedded in the Indigenous Samoan religion and culture, therefore control the manner in which Samoans treated the environment. The conservative and preservative nature of the Samoan community towards natural resources is a result of the conservative and preservative discourses embedded in the Indigenous Samoan culture and religion.

The Indigenous Samoan culture and religion evolved over the years when a new religion/culture arrived on the shores of Samoa in 1830. Aspects of the Indigenous religion and the traditional culture were altered when Christianity was introduced by the London Missionary Society (LMS) in 1830 (Va'a, 1987). The doctrines of Christianity introduced the monotheistic tradition which claims that Jehovah is the God of superior material culture (Va'a, 1987). The discourses of Christianity are profoundly different from the Indigenous Samoan polytheistic religion. Upon the arrival of Christianity and the acceptance of Jehovah, the Indigenous Samoan religion was institutionalized by Christianity discourse. The Indigenous Samoan culture and religion dimensions are often intertwined (Hanson, 1973; Kamu, 1996), therefore the new religious and cultural landscape of contemporary Samoan society resulted in changes to the way that Samoans identified with its religion and culture.

The changes in the discourses of the Indigenous Samoan religion and culture changed the perspectives of Samoans on natural resource management. Juvik (1993) discusses three dominant viewpoints concerning the relationship between humans and nature which impact the preservation of biological diversity and attitudes toward the

natural world. The first viewpoint refers to an animistic religious viewpoint where nature and creator are equal. This viewpoint illustrates the Samoan Indigenous religion and culture where the relationship between the creator and nature is centered on respect for sacredness of natural objects (knowledge) as required by Tagaloa, the god of Samoans (form of power). The third point of view Juvik (1993) discusses is that of the dominant Judeo-Christian (form of power) perspective which places human beings above nature and God above humans (knowledge). The European perspective (form of power), which was introduced to Samoa by the LMS, posited that humans are the center of creation and all creation is meant to serve humans purpose (form of knowledge). According to Va'ai (2012), this is the type of theology that was brought into Samoa and it is evident in Samoan prayers when they use the phrase "the human being is the crown of your creation." Christianity or Judeo-Christian discourse permeated the Indigenous Samoan community and changed the Samoan religion and culture from one that emphasizes the importance of balance between all things to one that places humans above nature (Le Tagaloa, 2001; Va'ai, 2012; Wildermuth, 2012).

The Christianized Samoa changed the Indigenous population's perspectives on natural resource management. For instance, the arrival of missionaries from Europe introduced the concepts of production and extraction (Hempenstall, 2012; Wildermuth, 2012;). Kamu (1996) found that missionaries came from Europe at a time of industrialization, therefore causing them to view land as a commodity to be bought and owned for profit. The missionaries encouraged and shared these ideas with the lands that they explored and conquered by exemplifying habits of industry (Davidson, 1969). While

these changes introduced a variety of goods in Samoa, it also had unsustainable effects on the environment. In addition, the missionaries of the LMS introduced the institution of annual contributions to the church during the month of May when the LMS was founded in 1840 (Freeman, 2004). Every year, contributions were offered to Jehovah through the missionaries. The first contributions were made in the May meeting of 1840 which consisted of fine mats, cinnet, tapa cloth, and blue beads (Wildermuth, 2012). Over the years, families, villages, and districts began to offer money as contact with Europeans increased. As the connection with Europe increased, money gradually became recognized as the peculiar medium of the Christian God. To date, these monetary contributions to the LMS protestant churches in AS are still the principal use of money in the islands. The term *taulaga* applies to these monetary gifts presented to the Christian God which was formerly used to refer to a sacred offering made to the primitive gods.

Discourses embedded within the Christianity religion drastically changed the discourses of the Indigenous Samoan religion and culture. For instance, the Christianity concept of annual contributions changed the discourse in the Indigenous religion and culture. According to Va'ai (2012), production evolved from subsistence to cash market plantations in Samoa. Prior to the practice of donating to the church, small plantations were sufficient to serve the needs of families and the requirements of the polytheism Indigenous religion and culture. However, when Christianity arrived, annual contributions became a requirement and the scale of plantations increased and were used as commodity to get money to give to the church (Tui Atua, 2009b). In this same vein, Samoans began to compete for the honor of donating the most to the church, often

resulting in a struggle to meet the needs of the family and increase in farming productions. The Christian gospel believes that faith and donations to the church will increase wealth (Le Tagaloa, 2001; Tui Atua, 2012; Va'ai, 2012). In this sense, in order to give to the church, Samoans were taught to increase the size and production of plantations which significantly impacts the management and preservation of natural resources.

On the other hand, as a monotheistic tradition, missionaries transferred the power of matais and chiefs to ministers and priests. Christian disciples encouraged belief in one God and introduced the Bible as a guide for its followers and priests as the primary minister of its beliefs (Engel, 1993; Hempenstall, 2004; Kamu, 1996). For instance, the traditional practice of talomua celebrates the first harvest of the taro fruit. This tradition remained in its original form through the introduction of Christianity with a few modifications. Before Christianity, a chief was responsible for blessing the first harvest however, ministers of churches have taken over the role. These modifications shifted the power from an animistic religion to Judeo-Christian religion that places humans as superior over the environment. Christianity discourses institutionalized the knowledge base of the Samoan Indigenous religion and culture and drastically changed the way that Samoans perceived and pursued natural resource management.

The discourses of the present-day Samoan religion and culture is a result of the interlinkages of power and knowledge of Christianity. The monotheistic religious beliefs introduced by the Europeans (form of power) incited Samoans to change their perspectives on natural resources (from preservation to selling them as a commodity),

their cultural perspectives (from conservative to a industrialized and productive view), and giving financially to the church at the expense of increased and unsustainable plantation practices (form of knowledge). The discourse within the modernized Samoan religion and culture is that humans are above the environment and God above the humans. Such discourse extends to the institutions governing environmental matters and natural resource management in American Samoa because the Samoan religion and culture impacts every aspect of life for all Samoans.

Economy

The economic activities of Samoans and other people in the Pacific prior to western influences can be characterized as subsistence. Island communities had integrated economies (McPhee et al., 2008) where people engaged only in economic activities necessary to sustain families and for the daily needs of people. For instance, a farmer would only farm for the needs of his family which resulted in sustainable agricultural and economic practices. In addition, the barter system was a common form of economic development in the islands (McPhee et al., 2008). The concept of bartering is embedded in the Samoan culture. For instance, a family of fishermen would exchange their goods with family of farmers. In addition, antique fine mats were exchanged through the marriage ceremonies and arrangements surrounding aristocratic intermarriage (Amosa, 2012).

Prior to western contact, Tutuila's economic setting was inextricably linked to that of its neighboring islands Samoa. Subsistence agriculture and fisheries were the basic foundation of both Tutuila and Samoa's economies (McPhee et al., 2008). Agriculture

was the focus of economic strategies in terms of crop diversification and pest control. Able to exchange goods via the bartering system, the population in Tutuila and Samoa exchanged bananas, cocoa, and copra with each other and with other islands in the Pacific (Amosa, 2012). Subsistence (form of power) lifestyles promoted thriving local economies that were consistent with the Indigenous religion and cultural institutions prior to the arrival of Christianity. Subsistence lifestyles encouraged a conservative approach to the management of natural resources (form of knowledge). The power and knowledge evident in this economic system created discourse that centered on preservation. These economic practices or institutions extend to those institutions governing environmental manners because the sustainable consumption and conservative utilization of natural resources were the nature of the primary economic activities of that time. Low resource consumption and subsistence were key aspects of the Indigenous economic system, therefore sustainable management of natural resources.

AS's economy changed drastically when it became a territory of the United States. From the traditional barter system of goods to a thriving economy dependent on various sources of income, AS's economy evolved immensely and strengthened over time (Malcom D. McPhee & Associates, 1981). AS's economy is essentially made up of local appropriations and enterprise revenues, tuna canneries, and federal aid. However, the economic growth of the territory is primarily supported by the tuna canneries and federal financial aid (McPhee et al., 2008). The tuna canneries increased production and support for local economy over a thirty-year period (1970-2000) and in turn, increased employment in the territory from 16.5 percent to 26.2 percent (McPhee et al., 2008).

AS's economy has thrived with the influence of federal policies on local tuna canneries and major support of federal financial assistance (Campling & Havice, 2007; Catarci, 2001).

AS's economy was quickly enhanced as a result of its political status. The success of AS's economy is a result of several features which include its unique economic and political relationship with the U.S., its locational advantage of proximity to the world's richest tuna fishery, and the supply of cheap labor power from the U.S (Campling & Havice, 2007). In 1977, the total employment impact of federal government grants and expenditures amounted to 3,890 jobs. According to McPhee et al. (2008), this meant that the federal government provided 28.1% of all new jobs in the territory. Combined, fish processing and federally supported jobs accounted for 82.8 percent of AS employment (McPhee et al., 2008). Essentially, this means that the local revenue and appropriations contribute 17.2 percent to the economic growth of the territory. The success of the two canneries in AS is closely tied to the continued economic and policy support from the United States and the government of AS (McPhee et al., 2008). For instance, the exemption of the territory from the Nicholson Act, which bans foreign vessels from delivering to U.S. ports which in definition should also ban delivering to the port of AS port because it is a territory of the U.S., allowed for the continuous supply of fish to canneries in the territory (Campling & Havice, 2007). Another example is the exemption of the territory's canneries under the U.S. Tariff Policy which allows tuna exports from the islands duty-free access to the United States. (Catarci, 2001). These examples

illustrate the importance of the territory's political status in the island's economic development.

While AS's main economic component (tuna canneries) is supported by some federal policies, it is also challenged by federal regulations that affect business and employment. For instance, as a U.S. territory, AS is subject to minimum wage legislation (U.S. Department of Labor [U.S. DOL], 2007). New minimum wage legislation passed in the United States in 2007 requires AS to incrementally increase wages from their current rate of \$3.21 per hour to more than \$7.00 per hour (U.S. DOL, 2007). The minimum wage bill enacted by Congress requires the territory to increase the current minimum wage by \$.50 per hour and each year thereafter until the AS minimum wage reached that of the United States. From a public policy perspective, the aim of the bill is to raise wages (Campling & Havice, 2007). However, if the minimum wage increases at a rate that exceeds labor productivity increase, the bill can potentially close the doors of the tuna canneries (U.S. DOL, 2007).

In a separate application of federal minimum wage hikes in another U.S. territory, the U.S. DOL (2008) found that the minimum wage in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) would increase in three steps from \$3.05 to \$7.25 per hour according to the Public Law (PL) 110-28. The PL 110-28 (Public Law 110-28 110th Congress § Title VIII) raises the U.S. minimum wage in accordance with the requirements of the FLSA. The PL 110-28 specifies that the CNMI is required to increase its minimum wage to \$3.55 an hour effective July 25, 2007 and scheduled for further increases of fifty cents per year until parity with the U.S. minimum wage is reached (U.S.

DOL, 2008). While the covenant that created the CNMI “in political union with and under the sovereignty of the U.S.” became law in 1978 which relaxed some U.S. legal requirements to include the FLSA minimum wage provisions, the U.S. DOL (2007) found that even with such lax minimum wage increases, the effect of the minimum wage increase in the CNMI would be like raising the Federal minimum wage to \$16.50 per hour in the 50 states. Job losses in the CNMI will result in the return of foreign workers to their home countries and the migration of the U.S. citizen workers to other U.S. jurisdictions (Stayman, 2009).

The minimum wage increases could cause the canneries in AS to relocate to lower cost countries long before they are forced to pay \$7.25 per hour. These increases could also cause more garment factories in the CNMI (U.S. DOL, 2008), which is the second primary industry contributing to its local economic growth, to close sooner than otherwise expected. The shuttering of industries in these territories could cause the respective economies to suffer prolonged and wrenching contractions.

The discourses in the covenant between the CNMI and the United States and the constitution between AS and United States shifted the institutional configurations that create the economy of both islands. This discourse in the constitution between the United States and its territories affect the governance of economic growth and economic resources in the territories by affecting the policy space where economic decisions are materialized. Policy leaders that operate within policy spaces that are governed by external institutions such as the constitution are influenced by such institutions and their knowledge of economic governance changes simultaneously. For instance, when the

FLSA established a U.S. minimum wage in 1928, committees were established to phase in the minimum wage in those places where a minimum wage increase would substantially curtail employment (U.S. DOL, 2008). The initial intent of Congress was to raise the minimum wage by increments in these places so that no industries and jobs would be impacted severely. However, when Congress enacted PL 110-28 (Public Law 110-28 110th Congress § Title VIII), it also declined to continue this special industry committees that it initially created to implement the FLSA requirements in the territories (U.S. DOL, 2008). In turn, it directed the U.S. DOL to report on the impact of the minimum wage increases on living standards, employment, and the economy of the territories within 8 months of the enactment of the Act. The advantage of the committee structure was to ensure that the people who determine the minimum wage increases had first-hand knowledge of island economies and represented the different stakeholder groups within those economics and the public interest.

The extraterritorial influence of the U.S. on the economic growth of its territories are evident through the discourses of its covenant and the constitution. The covenant and constitution (forms of power) create the institutional configurations (form of knowledge) which influence how policy actors operate and what policy decisions are rendered. The FLSA is accorded the power through the extraterritorial relationship to establish what counts as truth and knowledge. The current governance system provides a framework which consists of the form of power (federal regulation – FLSA) that influences the knowledge of local policy leaders on economic operations. This structure of governance creates discourse for local territorial government systems which mirror discourses

embedded in the federal government system concerning the operation of economies.

Unfortunately, in the case of AS and CNMI territories, the FLSA would devastate local economies.

The economic systems of territories are the result of discourses of the U.S. Constitution (Foucault, 1991; Chun, 2017). These discourses stipulate the functionality of local economies in territories and have contributed to immense economic growth in some sectors while also curtailing other economic development. The influences of federal legislation, policies, and programs on the territories is evident in the legislation passed by Congress to remove federal corporate tax incentives and raise the minimum wage in AS and the CNMI. The shift of local economic institutional configurations because of the discourses of the covenant and constitution have influenced the operation of territories economies (Chun, 2017). There is a need for more clearly defined policies for the economic development and treatment of territories under federal laws and programs. Also, discontinuing the contribution of the special industry committees ignores the local knowledge which may contribute to ensuring productive territorial economies. Including local knowledge and expertise within the model of decision making would improve policy decisions because people with appropriate experience would play a significant role in the policy processes (Kaiser et al., 1999; Kuruppu & Liverman, 2011).

The changes in the Indigenous economic system of AS extend to the institutions governing environmental matters because as economic growth continues, increased consumption of scarce resources will follow. Economic growth is evident in the territory as seen in the number of jobs offered by the tuna canneries, the federal and the local

governments. However, increased economic growth also means that the population will have a different perspective on resource consumption and management. The literature on the economic growth of AS reveal that the institutions of federalism institutionalized the knowledge base of local policy leaders which affect economic governance of the territory. The transition and changes of economic governance throughout the years have shifted the focus and priorities of economic governance in the territories and have affected the policy actors perspectives on natural resource management. Evidently, federal institutions extend to those local institutions governing environmental matters by affecting the way the local economy is governed.

Politics

Samoa had its own unique traditional political system and institutions prior to the influence of the Western style of democracy (Stayman, 2009). In the Samoan culture, the *Fa'amatai (matai system)* is the sociopolitical system of governance. In contemporary Samoan discourse, as well as in writings by Samoans or Westerners from the 1930s to the most recent books and theses, the word *matai* is used as the Samoan term for chiefs (Tcherkezoff, 2000). Matais are family leaders established by blood or marriage which fall under the higher matai, a unifying leader. The selection of a matai includes the consideration of commendable conduct, blood connections and descent, service to the clan and previous title holders, and reputation in the village (Keesing, 1934). Unlike most governance structures, the selection of a matai does not depend on succession from father to eldest son; all members in a family group are eligible. Titleholders are elected by their family groups and represented them in the village council or the *fono*. The process of

selecting a matai is summed up by the maxim “O le ala I le pule o le tautua” which means in “the path to leadership is through service” (Stayman, 2009). Service is the bona fide prerequisite for the bestowment of the authority by becoming a *matai*.

The *matai system* is the core institution of the *fa'asamoa*. The discourse in the Samoan Indigenous culture places power on the matais or chiefs to make decisions for the entire community (form of knowledge). Families were subject to the authority of Matais which allowed chiefs to administer family customary land, direct family labor relating to use of the land and working of plantations, and distribute or apportion proceeds of work performed (Yamamoto, 1994). The *matai* system is valued by community members because they believe that matais are blessed with wisdom. As such, Samoans perceive matais as wise and knowledgeable individuals, therefore depend on and obey matais. Each matai's influence in the village council or *fono* depended largely on the rank of his *matai* title across the family and the rank of the family within the village. Samoan communities rely on the *village council* which consists of *matais*, for their guidance. Decision-making within Samoan families were guided by *matais* and decisions for Samoan communities were conducted with the *village council*. This Indigenous political structure changed when AS became a territory of the United States.

The discourse within the deeds of cession positioned the federal government as a powerful entity above its territorial possessions. In April 1900, the United States and the chiefs and orators of Tutuila or Eastern Samoa and the island of Aunu'u signed deeds of cession which ceded the authority of the islands to the United States. This political arrangement allowed the “dominant Federal Government to exercise its authority over a

passive populace” (Yeung, 2017, p. 10), therefore influencing the Indigenous political system of AS. Foucault (1980), and subsequent scholars such as Burchell, Gordon and Miller (1991) contend that discourse produces knowledge through language and practices which interfere in the process of describing what is true. The authority of the United States over its territories created extraterritorial discourses that institutionalized the knowledge base of the local governance system.

The deeds of cession signed by Samoans and the United States created new institutions which normalized and refined how Samoans govern through its political system. For instance, AS became an unincorporated and unorganized territory of the U.S after the deeds of cession were officialized. The governance requirements for AS under these new conditions required a revamp of the Indigenous political system from a hierarchal internal governance structure to one that operates within the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the United States and subject to the rule the federal government. In addition, the U.S. federal government required local chiefs to ensure that the Indigenous matai and land tenure systems were in compliance with the laws of the United States pertaining to AS. Lastly, the U.S. DOI was constituted to managed the territory’s policy processes and decisions. This means that while the local Senate is composed of matai chiefs, the Samoan courts are created under Article II of the U.S. Constitution, utilizing the U.S. president’s power. The justices of the courts are appointed by the secretary of the U.S. DOI. The island’s political status institutionalized the knowledge base of local policy actors, therefore coordinating them to operate within the extraterritorial jurisdiction. In doing so, the Indigenous policy processes and policy decisions were

moderated by federal laws and the authority of the federal government. The federal government plays a direct role in coordinating the local government system, therefore coordinates and shapes local policies.

The institutionalization of the Indigenous religion, culture and political systems resulted in changes within the Samoan community. In the case of religion and culture, the religious beliefs and practices of the Samoans transitioned from a polytheistic religion to Christianity. Polytheistic practices prevalent in the Indigenous Samoan culture encouraged worshipping multiple gods whereas Christianity enforced worshipping one God. Although the western economic institutions enabled the territory's economy, the federal regulations requirements can disable the territory's economy just as it can enable it (U.S. General Accounting Office [U.S. GAO], 2008). Concerning politics, while the political status of the island qualifies AS for various financial opportunities, security, and other benefits the island enjoys, there is an imbalance of power in the territorial-federal relationship which demonstrates a negative connotation for AS in the territorial relationship.

The imbalance of power within the territorial-federal government relationship affects the territory's ability to adapt to the issues that impact the quality of life of its population. For instance, in the context of environmental management, states and territories are required to meet certain standards to ensure compliance with federal environmental legislations. In order for states/territories to be in compliance with Federal laws, they must adopt the provisions of the law in a way where it is either just as stringent or more stringent than the federal regulations (U.S GAO, 2002). Some states have moved

to enact laws which limit local state agencies authority to adopt stringent environmental rules and regulations (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014; U.S. GAO, 2002); however, AS does not have the ability to enact such law because of its political status. While AS's relationship with the United States is that of a territory and not a state, federal environmental legislations are still enforced and coordinated in the territory in the same manner as it would in a state. There is no federal policy that details how the territories should be treated in the process of formulating and extending laws and programs ("U.S. Territories: Territorial Federalism," 2017). The U.S. GAO (1985) found that territory officials identified instances where federal policies and laws have constrained economic and social development because such federal policies and laws were inconsistently applied and enforced, insensitive to unique territorial circumstances and needs or inappropriate for local conditions.

The external cultural, religious, economic, and political entities institutionalized the Indigenous systems. These institutionalized systems normalize the knowledge base that develops the modernized Samoan culture, religion, economic, and political systems today. As these external factors evolve, the Samoan culture, religion, economy, and political systems will change simultaneously. Because these factors extend to the institutions governing the island's environmental issues, the governance of environmental matters will change simultaneously. External institutions are the forces of power that normalize the territory's governance framework, therefore coordinating and developing social structures that inform policy actors and affect their policy decisions and actions. Through these transformations, the elements of governance evolve and redevelop the

governance path of the territory which affect the policy actions and decisions of local policy actors on natural resource management and environmental issues.

Constitutional Jurisdictional Levels

The jurisdictional level in which AS operates is constituted by its political status. Feindt and Oels (2005) found that the management, value, and use of a natural resource is constructed in the power relations of a community context, in the context of a culture and its values, and in the context of the economy and political system. From the Foucauldian perspective, discourses on and about a natural resource are discursively constructed and moderated by the power/knowledge configurations and the institutions/actors configurations. Setzer (2015) found that jurisdictional levels and the monopoly of central governments limit subnational governments to the specific context for which they operate in. In the context of this research, the power of external institutions created by the political relationship between the United States and AS institutionalizes and normalizes the policy space that local policy leaders operate, therefore affect the knowledge base of policy leaders which influences the development of policy decisions on environmental matters.

AS is required to operate within its jurisdiction as a territory, therefore having its policy processes and decisions subject to the rule of the federal government. Local policies are created under the umbrella of the federal political systems that are more elite (Fallon, 1991; Leibowitz, 2013). As such, territorial laws and regulations are created in the political context of the United States. As external political institutions coordinate and normalize local political institutions, the local policy actors are structured accordingly to

develop policy decisions that reflect the priorities and requirements of the new local political institutions. For instance, the local policy regime on natural resource management is influenced by the policy regime of the United States on environmental matters.

The natural resource management policy regime in the United States fluctuated with each presidential administration (Dillon et al., 2018; Fallon, 1991; Leibowitz, 2013; Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016). As the support for natural resource management, conservation, and preservation efforts were in a flux in the United States, so it was for U.S. territories. For instance, in ASEPA is one of the main entities that exists to safeguard the environment and natural resources. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency promulgates laws while the ASEPA is responsible for adopting the laws either in the same manner or in a more stringent way (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014; U.S. GAO, 2002). This political set-up allows external institutions (federal government) to develop the policy space that coordinates and affects the knowledge base of local policy actors. As such, the policy direction and policy priorities of the United States directed the policy direction and priorities of the territories.

The constitutional jurisdiction of the territory requires AS to follow the policy direction of the federal government on policy issues. For instance, the United States may disengage from certain policy efforts as they please such as their withdrawal from international climate change efforts such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Climate Accord. With such disengagement, the United States requires its territorial possessions to do the same because of the territory's constitutional jurisdiction (Leibowitz, 2013). As

such, the discourses on natural resource management within the United States institutionalize the policy space which local policy leaders operate. Such policy space coordinate the knowledge base of policy leaders which affects the development of the territory's policy direction on environmental issues. The abdication of climate change responsibilities by the United States neutralizes its climate change efforts which has spiraling effects on the climate change preparations of its territories. Despite the setback of natural resource preservation, conservation and management policy efforts initiated by the federal government administration, an increasing number of Americans continue to prioritize environmental protection over economic growth and are supporting environmental groups (Laitos & Wolongevicz, 2014). For instance, some states have notably resisted the federal government's policy position on climate change as many state governments have taken proactive roles in national environmental policy with little to no attention or support from the federal government (Dillon, 2018; Engel, 2006; Fredrickson et al., 2018; Funk & Kennedy, 2016; Hai-Bin et al., 2017; Laitos & Wlongevicz, 2014). Territories cannot pursue its policy priorities because of their political position as a possession of the U.S. federal government.

Federal-Territorial Relationship: Treatment of American Samoa Under Federal Law

AS is an U.S.-unincorporated and -unorganized territory and it is not formally annexed by the United States. This unique political relationship subjects AS to operate within the U.S. constitutional system and allows the United States to exercise governmental power over the island's affairs (Fallon, 1991; Leibowitz, 2013).

Sovereignty of territories exist to the extent allowed by the superior power as the existence of territories are premised by the United States. Effective check and balance within territorial relations are more illusory than realistic. Under the U.S. constitutional law, AS lacks sovereign independence from the federal government; “Territorial governments are entirely...creations of Congress which retains plenary power over them so long as their territorial status persists” (“U.S. Territories: Territorial Federalism,” 2017, p. 1632) demonstrates the relationship between territories and the federal government. The *Harvard Law Review* (“U.S. Territories: American Samoa,” 2017) found that this relationship is best described as simply self-rule that the territories exercise is simply a product of congressional grace. The political status of the territory requires AS to operate within a political framework that is institutionalized by the American constitutional system.

The United States, through the U.S. DOI, governs the affairs of AS to include matters of, but not limited to, defense, immigration, and environmental quality. As such, federal laws determine the policy direction of local regulations on policy issues. This means that the federal laws coordinate the local governance framework that manages natural resources. Operating under such territorial-federalism framework requires the territory to uphold and enforce the federal policy priorities which in turn impacts territorial policy priorities. This is problematic for territorial governments because territorial policy priorities may not always align with federal policy priorities. Therefore, territories may not develop the capacity to effectively address their social issues. In such instances, it is unfortunate that territories cannot easily opt out of political arrangements

that would impede their ability to address social issues unique to their communities. As a U.S. unincorporated territory, AS has the option to either maintain its political status or attain statehood within the U.S. federal framework or independence from it (Harvard Law, 2017a). However, such a possibility may be far from likely because the territory's population wish to maintain the existing relationship with the United States as it enjoys the financial security provided by the United States while protecting the Samoan Indigenous land tenure system (Aga, 2017).

The treatment of territories under federal regulations is a recurring topic on the relationship between federal governance and its territories. Federalism is a joint exercise of government power over a region under a balance and check system ("U.S. Territories: Territorial Federalism," 2017). However, Francis (2014) contends that such a notion of an effective check on the second entity to ensure that its actions and ambitions align with the philosophy of "territorial federalism" appears more illusory than actual ("U.S. Territories: American Samoa," 2017). This definition of territorial federalism illustrates that the relationship between the two political groups is one in which the existence of one entity (territory) is based on the permission of the other (federal government). For instance, in the case of Puerto Rico, the Congress developed the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA), a law that created a federal oversight board to help the territory restructure its debt. Through PROMESA, Congress granted the board with the autonomy to oversee the development and approval of the territory's budgets and fiscal plans ("U.S. Territories: Territorial Federalism," 2017). The board's powers had no boundaries (Park & Samples, 2017). For example, the board had

the power to develop and submit a fiscal plan if the governor of the territory fails to submit one that satisfies PROMESA's requirements by a specific deadline. The Board's mandate to assume such power over the finances of the territory of its elected government poses a direct challenge to the vitality of territorial federalism. Territorial federalism emphasizes the importance of shared power as it is evident between the typical relationship between national and subnational governments (Lawson & Sloane, 2009). However, the imposition of the oversight board into the role of the territory's governor challenged and dismantled the functional mimicry of traditional federalism's shared power structure.

Territories are treated like states. The assertion of congressional power over Puerto Rico through PROMESA demonstrates how territories are being treated like states. In addition, the imposition of federal policies upon the territories and the way in which federal policies are required by be adopted by territories demonstrate the over assertion of federal power in territories. The U.S. GAO (1985) found that there is no federal policy that details how the territories should be treated in the creation of, implementation and enforcement of federal laws. As a result, territories are required to fully adopt, implement and enforce federal regulations much like states do. While states have the procedural means to advocate for itself through established political processes, a U.S. territory does not have such ability. Instead, territories do not have the ability to vote in federal legislature and Executive settings. Territories depend on virtual representation to advocate its policy interests and preferences. States are able to advocate on behalf of itself through political processes unlike territories. U.S. territories have no tools to

advocate for themselves and are devoid of voting representation in the federal legislature and Executive. In such cases, U.S. territories depend on virtual representation to consider its policy preferences and interests in these higher platforms. As a result, territory officials identified that federal policies and programs have constrained economic and social development in the territories because federal policies and programs were inconsistently applied, insensitive to unique territorial circumstances and needs, and inappropriate for local conditions (U.S. GAO, 1985).

Such treatment of territories by the federal government creates a gridlock-based inability to overcome issues territories face. Federal laws do not have a clause specific to the unique situations of the islands (Fallon, 1991; Leibowitz, 2013; Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016), therefore territories conform to the political context of the federal government which create local policies that do not effectively address social issues. In addition, territories are possessions of the U.S., therefore territories operate within the federal regime even if federal laws constrain their economic development, social prosperity, and environmental protection efforts (Leibowitz, 2013). Within such legal framework, the adaptive capacity of the territorial climate change legal framework is constantly challenged (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016). If the political context (form of power) of the U.S. towards climate change is negative, it will influence the political context (knowledge) in AS and the actors and institutions simultaneously.

The literature demonstrates that the notion of federalism as a balanced system is more of an illusion than reality. It also illustrates the unfair practice and application of federalism in its relationship with territories. This is evident in the underrepresentation of

territories by the Department of State personnel in multilateral meetings where the territories do not have a voice in multilateral meetings while the federal government over asserts itself in the governance of local territories. While federalism aims to protect the freedom of the individual from the powers of government, it has failed to do so in the case of the U.S. territories. In this section, the extent of the power the U.S. federal government holds over its territories and the inability of the latter to create a strong and firm legal and political approach towards the issue of climate change are illustrated.

The U.S. Territory of American Samoa and the Matter of Colonialism

The westernized religious, cultural, economic, and political institutions fused with the aspects of the Samoan way of life to create the current religious, cultural, economic and political paths of AS. These westernized and Samoan institutions are in a continuous flux, therefore continuously changing the way of life for Samoans and the manner in which environmental manners are governed. The western impacts on politics and governance of AS created a federal-territorial relationship in which federalism serves as a structure of government and sovereign political entity exercising governmental power over AS.

Is the relationship between the United States and AS colonialism? Tusalem (2016) contends that the ability and inability of governance to overcome issues in the modern world relies on the interdependence and interaction of the different elements of governance. This refers to the interaction of actors with each other, with other institutions, and with other forms of power and knowledge. Therefore, if the relationship is colonial, how does it affect local governance?

A colony is defined as a “territory that is subordinate in different ways to include politics, culture or economy to a more developed country” (“U.S. Territories: American Samoa,” 2017, p. 1681). Supreme legislative power and much of the administration rests with the controlling country which is usually a different ethnic group from the colony (Torruella, 2013). This definition fits the unique relationship between the United States and AS, therefore the nature of the relationship is colonial. The Samoan culture, religion, and politics extend to those institutions governing environmental matters and climate change policy response in the territory. As such, a deeper analysis of the colonial relationship between the United States and AS is necessary to understand the context in which the local policy decisions on climate change issues are developed.

Cultural and Religion Manifestations of Colonialism

The Indigenous culture and religion of AS are institutionalized by external factors which affect the knowledge base of the local population. Culture refers to the “intellectual and artistic contributions of a people” (Torruella, 2013). Culture generally refers to the people’s knowledge, beliefs, morals, customs, opinions, religions, superstitions, and art forms (Assche et al., 2014). The Indigenous Samoan culture is the core identity of the Samoan people. The Samoan culture is the basis in which Samoans live life. The Samoan Indigenous culture and religion evolved drastically when the island became part of the United States as a territory. The culture, economic, and political systems of America institutionalized the Indigenous culture and religion of AS thus, causing the culture/religion of the island to evolve. The Samoan culture and religion will continue to evolve as the external institutions coordinate the environment in which policy

actors operate. This process of westernization is described by Toruella (2013) as the underlying cause of the *Insular Cases*: race language, religion, and ethnicity.

The knowledge of the local population is moderated by the external institutions in which they are coordinated, therefore decisions and actions of the local population change simultaneously. For instance, the Samoan tradition of tattooing, which is one of the defining elements of the Indigenous Samoan culture was discouraged by LMS missionaries (Toruella, 2013). The LMS missionaries perceived the art of tattooing as morally bad and evil. As a result, Samoan Christians who were tattooed were seen as participating in an impure act which resembles the spilling of the blood of Christ (Le Tagaloa, 2001). The Christian values introduced by the missionaries into the Samoan community developed Samoan Christianity. This transition shifted the Indigenous cultural and religious practice of traditional tattooing from an art of value to a form of art which is frowned upon by the Samoan westernized religion. Adherence of and the continuous compliance of the local religion to the values of Christianity results in constant changes of the Samoan religion. This relationship resembles colonialism as the local religion is subject to the governance of a higher religious faith, Christianity. Another example is the spiritual ecology perspective of Samoans.

Prior to the arrival of missionaries, Samoans had a special relationship with the environment (Engel, 1993; Kamu, 1996; Morrell, 1946). The nature of the relationship is best described by Juvik (1993) as “an animistic religious viewpoint in which nature and creator are one and there exists a respect for the sacredness of natural objects” (p. 149). The Samoan Indigenous religion and culture suggests that all things are descendants of

the god *Tagaloa*, therefore people must respect nature (Kamu, 1996). This mindset drastically shifted when Christian ideals and beliefs were introduced to the islands. The missionaries introduced and imposed a hierarchy which places human beings above nature and God above humans (Wildermuth, 2012). Today, Samoans practice the religion introduced by the missionaries and have done away with the atheist practices which were once native to Samoa (Morrell, 1946). The introduction of Christianity and the cultural lens through which it was presented and interpreted in Samoa led to changes in the Indigenous culture and religion perspectives, in turn, affecting their perspectives on the economy and natural resource management.

The changes in the environmental perspectives of the local population stem from the introduction of Christianity and conformity of Indigenous culture and religion systems to Christian values. Similar investigations elsewhere in the Pacific suggest that religious values have played a large role in recent environmental degradation. In the Solomon Islands, Juvik (1993) found that the more traditionalistic religions may well be more environmentally sustaining than introduced Christian religion. For instance, European missionaries arrived in Samoa with the mentality that land is a commodity to be bought and owned by anyone or commercial ventures to earn a profit (Tui Atua, 2009a). These ideals were highly influenced by the European Industrial Revolution. Arriving in Samoa, the missionaries imposed these values and promoted the production of exportable goods by introducing new crops and processing methods (Le Tagaloa, 2001). While these changes improved the economy of Samoa, they also had negative environmental effects and significantly changed the way Samoans viewed their

relationship with the environment and obligations to the Church. The transformative potential illustrates that the Samoan culture and religion are important vehicles to understanding the environmental perspective of the Samoan people.

Conformity of Indigenous culture and religion with the values and ideals of external institutions constitutes a colonial relation. For instance, the practice of giving offerings to the church was introduced to the Indigenous religion by Christianity. As a result, Christianized villages built churches and homes for the pastor, contributed to the church by supporting the pastor with foods, and contributing coconut oil to senior representative of the mission in each district (Meleisea, 2014). However, such practice brought about the beginning of huge plantation and mass production in Samoa (Tui Atua, 2012; Va'ai, 2012). Initially, the practice of offering did not include money because coconut oil and arrow root were the main crops planted in Samoa. Originally, these crops were grown in sustainable amounts which were sufficient to provide for families (Va'ai, 2012) however, the Christian practice of offering required people to plant more at unsustainable rates which led to the unsustainable harvest of produce and increased utilization of land (Tui Atua, 2009b). Today, Samoans compete for the honor of donating the most to the church often resulting in a struggle to meet the financial needs of the family (Tui Atua, 2012).

The institutionalization of the Indigenous culture and religion by external factors illustrates the superiority of westernized cultural and religious ideals. The normalization of Indigenous culture and religion illustrates that external western institutions took precedence over Indigenous communities. Sailiata (2014) found that westernized cultural

and religious ideals which were introduced to the Indigenous population of Samoa purposely aimed at downgrading and eradicating the local cultural and religious practices. Samoans successfully responded to the introduced beliefs and Christian ideals, therefore allowing Christianity values to normalize the Samoan society. The effects were widespread and not wholly beneficial for the environment. As the Christian values institutionalized the Samoan community, the Indigenous culture and religion changed to conform with the Christian ideals, therefore changing the environmental perspectives of Samoans, in turn affecting resource management and decisions. As the Samoan communities continue to adhere to the evolving ideals and traditions of Christianity, the environmental perspectives will evolve simultaneously, therefore causing changes in the way Samoans manage natural resources and make policy decisions regarding environmental issues.

Economic Manifestations of Colonialism

The numerous economic benefits offered to AS by the United States makes the territorial relationship appear as one that is not colonial. However, Román and Simmons (2002) contend that the United States uses hegemonic tools to mask its imperial rule. One of these hegemonic tools is the wealth and resources of the United States and its ability to provide aid, coupled with a democratic rhetoric. Hegemony lies with a dominant state and is operated through colonial rule by one state over external territories (De Santibañes, 2009). In this case, the U.S. federal government controls a preponderance of material resources, makes decisions on participating and sponsoring international regimes, and promotes values and visions that have deep appeal beyond its borders. Hegemonic tools

are used strategically by the United States to transform itself into the only state able to maintain control and hegemonic power globally (Catley, 1999). The hegemonic characteristics of the United States attract developing countries with financial, political, and economic needs to pursue and maintain relations with the United States.

Economic dependence of a smaller country on the dominant country is a unique area of subordination. The American colonial experience used in this study is not the naked form of subordination and abuse by elite powers, rather, it is illustrated by the economic dependency (Román & Simmons, 2002) of the U.S. territories on the United States. In the case of AS, the United States has implemented and modified federal programs which encourage economic dependence and reliance of the territory. For instance, the United States exempted AS from the Nicholson Act; a political move to allow foreign vessels to deliver to AS port to ensure supply to its tuna canneries, and the exemption of AS from the U.S. Tariff Policy to allow tuna exports to enter U.S. markets duty-free (Campling & Havice, 2007). The modifications made to these federal policies creates a thriving economy in AS, therefore encouraging the need to rely on and maintain political affiliations with the United States.

AS maintains economic prosperity as a result of its political status. Economic incentives associated with the current political status of AS reinforces the dependence of the territory on the United States, therefore promoting reliance on the dominant rule of the United States as it is more economically beneficial than being independent (Román & Simmons, 2002). The dependence of the territory on the United States, as required, encouraged and reinforced by its political status, subjects the functionality of the

territory's economy on the laws and policy decisions of the federal government (McPhee et al., 2008). As a territorial possession of the United States, AS depends on the wealth and resources of the United States and, therefore, is mandated to comply with the laws, rules, and policy decisions of the federal government on economic matters. The hegemonic quality of the dominance entails that colonially subordinated subjects believe that imperial power exerts rightful rule over them (Go, 2008). As such, conforming to the laws, rules, and policy direction of the federal government on economic matters without counter-hegemonically resisting such dominant rule by the United States is a form of colonialism.

Territoriality discourse requires territories to operate within its jurisdictional level under the authority of the United States. The jurisdictional level in which territories operate encourage and reinforce dependence and reliance of the territory on the guidance and governance of the federal government, therefore eliminating any possibilities of challenging the status quo. Embracing the dominance of western imperialism and operating under such dominant power is a form of colonialism. Trask (1990) found that the United States' resources and financial aid to the colonies is an extension of exploitation, given to strengthen the economic dependency which binds colony to colonizer. For instance, generous federal grants offered by the federal government to AS totaled \$126.8 million in 2002 (McPhee, Conway & Wolman, 2008). This money supported 2,915 jobs in the federal government and AS government. Federal government aid ensures economic wealth and functionality in its territories however, it encourages reliance and dependence of territories on the dominant rule of the federal government.

Economic dependence of the territories on the United States binds the territorial government to the rule and governance of the federal government.

The economic dependence of AS on the United States is a special type of subordination that manifests a colonial relationship. AS relies heavily on imported goods from the United States for economic prosperity. At the same time, most local job opportunities exist because of federal aid and the political connection with the United States. Such dependency encourages AS to continuously and consistently opt for association with the United States even if the territory is subject to the extraterritorial rule and decisions of the federal government. In a conversation between members of the Political Status Study Commission, a commission member stated that “for 106 years, the United States has obliged us (AS) by letting us do what we want. I am thankful for the funding they (U.S.) provide, and this is why I believe we should stick with the status quo” (Pacific Islands Report, 2006, para. 11). The power held by the United States over its territorial possessions facilitate and coordinate the functionality and operation of the local economy. This power is embraced by the territories and met with no resistance; therefore, the territorial relationship illustrates colonial relationship.

The political status of the territory positions the federal government above the local government. External factors institutionalize the knowledge base of local policy actors and creates the context in which decisions on local economic matters are developed. The ideals and beliefs of the U.S. federal government are imposed on its territorial possessions and diffused into the culture, religion, and economy of AS which influence local governance. Power, as defined by Foucault (1991), is specific to a

community and it creates the 'truth' or knowledge through which norms, beliefs, and behaviors flow. Power is constantly evolving as a result of the interaction between different institutions, between institutions and actors, and between actors themselves, therefore continuously changing knowledge (Gül, 2006). Within the jurisdictional level of a territory, AS is required to operate under the jurisdiction and guidance of the United States. As the ideals of the federal government institutionalize the local governance system, the local economic priorities shift in accordance with the economic priorities of the federal government. The constant shifts in economic values and priorities of the local government impact the environmental perspectives of Samoans as economic growth and the environment are interlinked, in turn affecting resource management decisions. As the local government continues to adhere to the evolving economic ideals of the federal government, the environmental perspectives will evolve, therefore directly impacting the way Samoans develop policy decisions on environmental issues.

Political Manifestations of Colonialism

The United States established its dominion over the territory of AS but eluded the label of colonizer by granting illusionary sovereignty and self-determination for its territories. The label "autonomous territory" was applied to AS which granted the territory the ability to self-determination or independence. Roman and Simmons (2002) found that this label was a euphemism for sovereignty as it granted the illusion of self-determination to AS which contradicted reality where the United States had power and exercised its rule over territorial possessions. For instance, the governance in AS is composed of an executive, legislative, and judiciary branch; however, the secretary of the

U.S. DOI “holds the power of appointment over virtually every member of the government in the territory, including the judiciary” (Faleomavaega, 1994, p. 120). In addition, AS has the power to vote for its governor; however, the chief of Justice is still appointed by the U.S. DOI (Ale, 2015). The locus of power remains with the dominant group (Fallon, 1991; Leibowitz, 2013). External institutions such as the U.S. political institutions (form of power) created the deed of cessions and constitution (form of knowledge) that continuously affects the policy space where local policy actors operate. The secretary of the Interior holds nearly all legislative, executive, and judicial power over AS (“U.S. Territories: Territorial Federalism,” 2017), appoints or removes government employees at will, and overrules any decision of the Samoan courts (Fallon, 1991; Leibowitz, 2013; Trask, 1990). The United States created the notion of self-determination for its territories manifested through the concept of territorialism however, the degree and amount of power it has over of the affairs of AS denies the territory the right to true self-determination (Butt, 2013). The secretary of the U.S. DOI is constituted power to govern affairs of the territory. Although it has not acted on its other powerful responsibilities, the fact that it holds power over the territory’s politics confirms the colonial nature of the territorial relationship.

The political system of the territory is coordinated by external institutions which influence the policy actions of local leaders on policy issues. Foucault (1991) that knowledge precedes the formation of discourses. The discourses within the federal government influence how territorial societies understand themselves. A popular discourse concerning the Insular Cases, as stated in Article IX of the Treaty of Paris,

holds that “the civil rights and political status of the native inhabitants of the territories...ceded to the U.S. shall be determined by Congress” (Torruella, 2013, p. 59). Therefore, the United States’ ideals and priorities provide a structure that develops the political identity of AS. Under this regulatory framework, the United States governs the affairs of the territory and institutionalizes the knowledge base of policy actors (De Santibañes, 2009). As such, the nature of the territorial relationship is colonial.

Another illustration of colonialism that stems from the relationship between the United States and AS concerns the rights of AS citizens. AS citizens are not guaranteed all of the rights as a U.S. citizen. Samoans born in AS do not have any voting representation in Congress but the Congress has plenary power over AS its enactments permeate every facet of AS (Butt, 2013). The Supreme legislative power lies solely on an institution that enacts laws without any effective participation from the AS citizens who are obligated to comply with them. As a result, AS is treated the same as states under federal laws and regulations (U.S. DOL, 2008). In a general sense, what exists in AS is a government without the consent of the governed (Leibowitz, 2013). The Samoan people are dictated by a distant metropolitan power. Politically, this is a classic colonial relationship. The power of the elite is embedded in the social structures that moderate how the territories understand, create, and organize the world on both sides of the power continuum. The concept of power, in the context of the political relationship between the United States and AS results in an unstable relationship between the federal government and the territory (federal-territorial relationship; Fallon, 1991).

The discourse in the federal-territorial relationship places the United States above its territorial possessions. Territoriality is a form of power that incites the knowledge of territorial governments. Forms of power shape people's ability to have agency and are the basis with which individuals conceive their interests and values. Foucault claims that power molds people and their interests by shaping the notion of truth and legitimate knowledge in a society (Foucault, 1991). As a result, although the federal-territorial relationship creates unethical circumstances for the territories, these unethical circumstances are often overlooked. For instance, the mistreatment of AS under the U.S. federal laws (Fallon, 1991; Leibowitz, 2013) is a matter that is constantly overlooked by local policy actors. For example, since the annexation of the territory in 1900, the people of AS have been denied U.S. citizenship. The people of AS remain the last to be classified as U.S. nationals. While nationals are part of the American polity, they do not have all the same right and privileges as citizens (Morrison, 2013). In 2012, the case of *Tuaua v. United States* was filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia that sought recognition from the State Department that persons born in AS are citizens by virtue of the citizenship clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (Harvard Law, 2017a). In turn, the United States dismissed the complaint arguing that the citizenship clause of the Fourteenth Amendment does not apply to the territories. Despite the disparities of the colonial territorial relationship, AS continues to operate within the political context that is institutionalized and coordinated by external institutions.

The examination of the cultural/religion, economic, and political systems of AS leads to the conclusion that the nature of the relationship between the United States and

AS is colonial. What does this mean for AS governance? As the external factors continue to institutionalize the political system of the territory, the territorial government will continue to evolve to conform to external demands (Laitos & Wolongevicz, 2014; Laughlin, 1979; Leibowitz, 2013). The extraterritorial jurisdiction of the United States will continue to influence the government of territories, therefore changing the local policy priorities and values. As the local policy priorities and values change, the environmental perspectives of Samoans will change simultaneously in turn, affecting resource management and decisions.

Extraterritorial Influence

To date, AS is an unincorporated and unorganized territory of the United States. Over the years, American Samoans have reassessed their political status since it came under the United States' control in 1990. In 1970, two commissions reassessed the territory's political status and concluded that the risks to the Samoan culture outweighed the benefits of becoming a state. Therefore, it canceled its quest to become an organized territory (Faleomavaega, 1994; Fallon, 1991; "U.S. Territories: American Samoa," 2017). The territory also assessed three ways of loosening ties with the United States to include independence; returning to the ways of Samoa prior to U.S. arrival; and rejoining WS (Aga, 2017). AS rejected all three options because it did not want to lose the financial support of the United States (Aga, 2017). As the current Governor of the territory stated in his address to his cabinet members,

There is a desire to gain membership status in the Pacific Forum in order to fully participate in international discussions regarding the future of the Pacific region

however, it is important to safeguard our relationship with the United States but also important to clarify our position regarding the need to have a voice in regional issues. (American Samoa Government NEWS, 2016, para. 4)

In assessing the consequences of increased political integration with and disassociation from the United States, AS selected to remain an U.S.-unincorporated and -unorganized territory. What does it mean for its future climate change policy efforts?

The propensity to maintain the status quo is based on the islands' sense of well-being or economic-driven consumption (Aga, 2017). As the Director of the American Samoa Office of Political Status, Constitutional Review and Federal Relations, Dr. Aga (2017) contended that the desire of the territory to remain a possession of the United States stems from personal and governmental priorities. One of the reasons Dr. Aga (2017) found that the territory should remain in its political position is to prioritize the "global impact of climate policies at the *national level* that can damage our fragile ecosystems" (p. 4). However, it is evident that territoriality allows the United States to exert institutions that influence the policy direction of the local government on the topic of climate change.

The cultural, religious, economic, and political changes in AS are a result of adaptation to different internal and external institutions that are a result of the federal-territorial relationship. The discursive nature of external institutions will continue to shift configurations in and around territorial governance thus, causing governance to evolve and changing the policy decisions and actions of local policy leaders simultaneously. The literature reveals that the extraterritorial influence of the United States on its territorial

possessions imposes external institutions which coordinate the affairs of the territories and shape the knowledge base of local policy leaders. The decisions of policy leaders moderate the evolving Samoan way of life and moderate the management of natural resources.

Analyzing power/knowledge dynamics and institution/actor configurations provide insights on governance reform. As Foucault (1991) contended, the power/knowledge configuration inherited from the past are the factors that shape current interdependencies between various governance elements and embody obstacles for reform. Knowledge of power in its other forms can also inspire strategy towards more adaptive governance (Kaiser et al., 1999). Once a power/knowledge configuration is settled in governance, it acts as an infrastructure that frames the discourses that coordinate the institutions and policy actors. The exercise of power is framed by institutionalized power/knowledge, controlled by knowledge/discourse, and affected by the exchange of strategies and exposure with other actors. To reform ineffective policy decisions and actions, it is important to examine the workings and interlinkages of power, knowledge, actors, institutions, and the discourses embedded in these configurations which create governance in AS. As AS struggles to address policy issues such as environmental degradation and climate change, it is necessary to examine the fundamental institutions which shape the policy actions of local leaders that may implement effective policy reform. Therefore, to understand policy actions of local policy leaders on climate change issues, it is imperative to look at the power/knowledge configuration and institution/actor dynamics that constitute governance.

Summary and Conclusions

The literature presented in this chapter describes the historical relationship between the United States and A.S in the literature of discourse, policy and colonialism. The literature written on the topic of extraterritorial influence and relationship details the interlinkages of power, knowledge, institutions and actors which institutionalize the policy space where local policy leaders operate. The institutionalization of policy spaces affect the knowledge base of local leaders which affects the way they govern the culture, religion, economy, and politics in AS. What is known is that the Indigenous religion, culture, economy, and politics of AS evolved due to the influence of external factors such as Christianity and the governance of the United States. Because of its political status, the religion, culture, economy, and politics of AS will continue to evolve as they are subject to the governance and rule of the United States. The Samoan culture, religion, economy, and politics impact the perspectives of Samoans on environmental management, therefore analyzing the impacts of external institutions on these elements provides insight on natural resource management in AS.

The literature reviewed illustrates that the U.S. dominance over its territorial possessions subjects the Samoan culture, religion, economy, and politics to the rule of the U.S., therefore illustrates that the territorial relationship is colonial. As such, the U.S. institutions coordinate the territorial government and its ideals take precedence over the territory and normalize the territory's governance system. Given its political status, AS will continuously be subjected to external institutions. What was unknown are the major factors of the current regulatory framework which impact the policy actions of local

leaders on climate change issues. Therefore, to reform climate change policies of the territory to ensure adaptation to climate change, there was a need to investigate the current regulatory framework and describe the factors which impact the policy decisions of local policy actors.

As AS struggles to address issues such as natural resource management and climate change, it becomes necessary to examine the fundamental factors that shape the policy space where local policy leaders operate and the factors that affect the policy decisions of local policy leaders. By describing the factors of the current regulatory framework that coordinate policy action of the territory's policy leaders on the issues of climate change, local policy leaders may be able to identify and determine appropriate policy reforms to ensure resiliency. No research has explored the extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change actions of its territories therefore, there was a need to investigate the current regulatory framework and describe the factors which have led to the climate change policy efforts in AS. The findings of this study filled the gap in the literature and extended knowledge in the public policy and administration field by describing the extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change preparations of AS. Specifically, descriptions of the factors which impact policy decisions of local policy leaders were provided to better conceptualize the relationship between the United States and its territory to identify ways to reform climate change policies. In Chapter 3, a description of the research design, sampling, procedures for data collection and analysis are presented.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this general qualitative interview-based inquiry was to investigate and describe the factors in the current regulatory framework that impact the climate change policy actions of local policy leaders. The people, infrastructure, health, environment, and ecosystems of AS remain highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change but have not developed the adaptive capacity required to build and maintain climate change resilience. Researchers have yet to explore and describe the extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change policy actions of its territories or possessions (Schwebel, 2018a). Scarce literature has addressed the issue of limited adaptive capacity in the territory (Wallsgrrove & Grecni, 2016). The results of this study may assist AS policy leaders in making decisions that build the necessary adaptive capacity to solve climate change issues and build and maintain climate change resilience. The specific phenomenon under study is the territory's lack of capacity to adapt to climate change issues. Given the territorial nature of the political relationship between the United States and AS, territorial laws that are promulgated by the former supersede the laws of the latter. As such, it was imperative to explore the current governance framework to identify and describe the aspects of the current regulatory framework that impact the policy actions and decisions of local policy leaders on climate change issues.

In this chapter, I present the research design of the study. The overview includes an outline of the methodology and the analysis design of the study and their alignment with the problem and purpose statements to address the research question (Marshall & Rossman, 1998). Also, I discuss the reasons for selecting the method, explain my role as

the researcher, and discuss the procedures I used to manage potential bias on my part. The selection of participants for the study, procedures for recruiting participants and collecting data, and the data analysis plan are discussed in the Methodology section. In addition, the credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures of the study are included in the Issues of Trustworthiness section. Chapter 3 concludes with a summary of the methodology and a transition to Chapter 4, which includes the study results.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question this study was: What major aspects of the current regulatory framework impact policy action of local policy leaders on climate change issues? The people, infrastructure, health, environment, and ecosystems of the territory are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and territory leaders have not developed the adaptive capacity required to build and maintain climate change resilience. Researchers have yet to explore and describe the extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change policy actions of its territories or possessions (Schwebel, 2018a). Scarce literature has addressed the issue of limited adaptive capacity in the territory (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016). I investigated the current regulatory framework of the territory and described the extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change actions of its territories or possessions. In doing so, the results of the study may assist local policy leaders in building the adaptive capacity of the territory by adjusting local policy processes and policy decisions. These changes may increase the territory's ability to adapt to climatic changes and address climate change impacts such as

vector/airborne diseases, economic struggles of the island, and sea level rise, which continues to increase inundation into the territory's coastal infrastructure.

The phenomenon I focused on is the lack of adaptive capacity to address climate change issues in AS. The reality is that local policy actors operate within a regulatory framework that consists of U.S. federal policies overlaid onto local regulations (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016; Wallsgrove & Penn, 2012). As such, the policy actions and decisions of local policy leaders are guided by the U.S. federal regulations. Governance structure is a contributing factor to the phenomena. The results of the study may be used as a precursor to further analysis of how and why the identified factors of the current regulatory framework influence the policy decisions of local policy leaders.

EGT provided a theoretical lens for my examination of governance and public policy and influenced the research design of this study. The ultimate goal of this study was to investigate the major factors of the current regulatory framework that impact the policy actions of local policy leaders on climate change issues. A tenet of EGT is that public policies are a product of governance (Beunen et al., 2015; Van Assche & Beunen, 2017). It proposed that governance elements (policy actors/institutions and knowledge/power) are continuously in a flux, which results in an evolving governance (Foucault, 1972; Hall, 2001; Turkel, 1990; Van Assche et al., 2017). As governance elements change, governance changes as well as laws and regulations. Therefore, EGT propositions were used to identify and describe the major factors of the current regulatory framework that influence the policy actions of local leaders. To understand the major factors of the current regulatory framework that impacted the local policy actions of local

leaders, I conducted interviews with policy actors to gain insight on their experiences operating under the regulatory framework. As such, a general qualitative interview-based inquiry was employed.

General Qualitative Interview-Based Inquiry

The purpose of this study was to describe the major factors of the current regulatory framework that impact the policy decisions of local policy actors on climate change issues. The AS territory remains highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change but has not developed the adaptive capacity to build and maintain climate change resilience. Researchers have yet to explore and describe the extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change policy actions of its territories or possessions (Schwebel, 2018). Scarce literature has addressed the issue of limited adaptive capacity in the territory (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016). The main research question was: What major aspects of the current regulatory framework impact the policy actions of local policy leaders on the issues of climate change? To get a deeper understanding of the phenomena, the study required interaction with local policy leaders to collect their descriptions of the major factors of the regulatory framework that impact their policy decisions. Therefore, the data collection technique and data source were interviews with local policy leaders. I coded, categorized, and analyzed the collected data to identify themes. The development of this research design was informed by the theoretical framework in looking at the research question and addressing the purpose of the study.

A general qualitative interview-based inquiry research design was the preferred method for this dissertation study for several reasons. First, it lends itself to descriptions

of what, how, or why something happened (Percy et al, 2015). No researcher has investigated the lack of adaptive capacity of the AS territory to adapt to climate change impacts (Schwebel, 2018b). Therefore, there is a need to describe the major factors of the current regulatory framework that impact the policy actions and decisions of local policy leaders before explaining how and why such factors influence policy leaders' policy actions. In doing so, the results of the study may assist policy leaders in making policy decisions that build the adaptive capacity of the territory to climate change and contribute to the scarce literature on the climate change preparations of territorial possessions. The nature of the research question, which centered on identifying the factors that impact policy decisions, required a research design that would enable understanding of the phenomena. Merriam (1988) found that qualitative research designs provide a way to deeply explore the richness and complexity of the study phenomenon. As such, the qualitative method was appropriate for this study.

In addition, the purpose of this study and the research question required a research design that would focus the analysis on the participant's descriptions of the major factors of the regulatory framework that impact their policy actions. A research design that allowed for the researcher and participant interaction, directed focus on the nuances of external and internal influences on participant's decision-making, grounded the participants experience and perceptions within the context of the current regulatory framework, and ascertained the elements of the participant's experiences that cannot be quantified by a questionnaire, was necessary.

Also, this study required a research design that enabled the organization of descriptive summaries of the data in a way that allows for the collection of and analysis of true descriptions provided by policy leaders. Merriam (1988) found that general qualitative studies keep structure to a limit to allow the data to express itself as it is. The flexibility of this approach allows incorporation of unexpected events into the research design as the research progresses, therefore lending this research design appropriate for this study. This study's purpose and research question required a research design that allowed for the development of descriptive elements.

Percy et al. (2015) defined general qualitative inquiry as "investigating people's reports of their subjective opinions, attitudes, beliefs or reflections on their experiences of things in the outer world" (p. 78). As such, the generic qualitative inquiry is appropriate for research that focus on the subjective opinion of participants (participants making sense of their particular experiences) or when the focus of the research is external. Each qualitative method has a different focus, therefore requires specific data collection techniques which yield various types of data. For instance, ethnography studies focus on defining culture, grounded theory studies focus on explanation of theory and phenomenology studies focus on the lived experiences of the participants. These types of data did not answer the main research question. The case study method was considered but not selected because this study used one source of data (interviews), therefore triangulation could not be done. As such, the general qualitative interview-based inquiry was most suitable for this study.

Generic qualitative studies are often found in research related to the “softer” sciences including psychology, sociology, and culturally based studies (Funk & Kennedy, 2016) which require a more flexible approach to illuminate the phenomena. In these types of studies, there is a need for flexible research design approach and analysis processes which may draw from a single established methodology but deviate from its intent and rules. In these studies, researchers blend congruent tools and techniques from more than one established methodology to meet the purpose of the study and properly study the phenomena. However, in doing so, these studies walk a tricky but creative line between borrowing and making prescriptiveness and flexibility by borrowing overtones at epistemological and theoretical levels, which is beneficial to the study and ensures the purpose of the study. The flexibility and fluidity of the general qualitative inquiry approach are the same reason it was employed for this study.

Role of the Researcher

In this general qualitative interview-based inquiry study, I served as the sole data collector, interview transcriptionist, and data analyst. Patton (2014) contends that the researcher’s roles, perceptivity, and potential biases should be documented when conducting qualitative inquiry that include interviews. The researcher’s epistemological beliefs, values, knowledge, and experience inarguably impact the collection, interpretation, and analysis of data in qualitative research. Patton (2014) contends that disclosing the background, expertise, and potential biases of the researcher can enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the analysis.

With respect to the public policy discipline and specific climate change area, I am a member of the 350 Pacific youth-led grassroots network in AS that works with the community to highlight the vulnerabilities of the island countries to climate change. This organization networks with other organizations that share the same vision for the Pacific through educating and empowering youth in the region to raise awareness and participate in UN climate negotiations. Along with such experiences and associations comes a certain degree of potential bias towards the influence of the U.S. regulatory framework on the climate change preparations and actions of AS. I support using policies and regulations as effective means to achieve adaptation in the face of extreme climate change events.

Participants are empowered through qualitative studies because they actively engage in the study and have opportunities to voice their individual experience during interview sessions. The data collected from the telephone interviews were transcribed. All of the transcribed data were sent to each participant for data validation. A researcher must ensure that participants have the opportunity to verify and validate findings through member checking (Cooper et al., 2007). After all participants verified the data, the transcribed data were coded, categorized, and analyzed for themes. Bias may occur during the data collection process because of how respondents may be feeling at the time of the interview sessions. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) found that it is the responsibility of the researcher to balance personal involvement with the interviews and the respondents. As such, it was my goal to remain objective throughout the data collection and analysis process considering my experiences of working within similar environments. To remain

neutral, I religiously followed the interview protocol with all the interviews held for this study. The interview protocol ensures that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed (Patton, 2014), therefore eliminating the possibility of researcher bias and transferring any personal experiences, thoughts or perceptions into the research study. The interview protocol included a well-structured interview guide for the participants.

Methodology

Yin (2012) found that the research design is the logical sequence which connects the empirical data to a study's initial research question and ultimately to its conclusions. This section includes discussions on the theoretical propositions which guide and inform data collection and analysis, participant selection logic, instrumentation and researcher-developed instruments, procedures for recruitment and data collection, and the data analysis plan for this study.

Theoretical Propositions

General qualitative inquiry investigates participants reports of their subjective opinions, beliefs, and reflections on their experiences of things in the outer world. To gain a deeper and better understanding of the major factors of the current regulatory framework that impact the policy actions of local policy leaders on climate change issues, the EGT was used to analyze the patterns in the data. Specifically, the EGT theoretical propositions were used to investigate the context in which policy decisions are developed in extraterritorial jurisdictions. The theoretical propositions were used to interpret the experiences of local policy leaders in making policy decisions within the current

regulatory framework. As such, the EGT ensured that the research question, analysis, and interpretation of data were logically linked.

The EGT was the appropriate theoretical framework because it provides a structure to understand governance, policy development, and policy processes. The propositions of EGT suggest that several constructs work to create governance and policies. These constructs are the configurations of institution/actor and the power/knowledge. The purpose of this research was to describe the major factors of the current regulatory framework that impact the climate change policy actions of AS in the face of extreme climate and environmental changes. To build the adaptive capacity of the territory to address climate change impacts, there was a need to investigate the current governance framework of the territory.

EGT suggested that the power/knowledge influence the institutional configurations that coordinate actors. The power/knowledge and institution/actor configurations are mediated by discourses which are discursive in nature thus, causing governance to evolve. The relationship between these constructs modulate governance and in turn, policies. Through the lens of EGT, data collection and analysis focused on the interworking of institutions/actors, and knowledge/power configurations of the extraterritorial relationship between the United States and AS to understand the forces that influence policy action of local policy leaders on climate change issues.

Participant Selection Logic

The population this study focused on are the policy leaders from executive organizations with climate change responsibilities. The EGT finds that the actors in

governance must be assessed in its relation to institutions and the interaction between power and knowledge forces to understand the evolutionary and transformation nature of governance (Van Assche et al., 2015) and policies. The reasons behind selecting the current executive administration are as follows: the U.S. federal policies heavily influence executive and public organizations compared to the private organizations, executive and public organizations are more federally supported and funded than private organizations, and executive and public organizations are responsible for promulgating and enforcing climate change relevant policies in the territory. As such, the data was collected from policy leaders that work in all executive organizations that are responsible for addressing the various impacts of climate change under the current executive administration.

Sampling Strategy

Patton (2014) found that purposive sampling allows the selection and exploration of information-rich cases that will provide information that answers the main research question. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about the influence of the current regulatory framework on local climate change relevant policy actions. Merriam (1988) found that selecting people because of the value they bring to the study is an important step in developing a case study. I used the purposive sampling strategy to recruit the 14 participants for this study. Patton (2014) also suggests the consideration of resources, time, and the thickness of information at the research site to ensure saturation and the purpose of the study. The individuals selected for this study provided information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources.

Criteria for Participant Selection

All participants were from executive departments responsible for developing, approving and enforcing policies which are relevant to climate change issues. Participants were selected based on the following criterion: individual(s) who are in the capacity to officially make policy decisions on the various issues of climate change. Participating organizations were informed that potential participants must be in the position to officially make policy decisions on climate change issues from their organization. Fourteen participating organizations identified fourteen participants that meet this criterion from the following AS agencies: Office of the Governor, Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources, Natural Resources Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Commerce, Department of Agriculture, Power Authority, Department of Public Works, Department of Health, Department of Education, Historic Preservation Office, Community College, and the Coral Reef Advisory Group. A brief description of how each organization addresses climate change issues is provided in Appendix A.

A total of 14 local executive organizations were identified by the literature to have responsibilities related to climate change but only 11 organizations participated in the study. The AS Natural Resource Commission was decommissioned in 2011 and the other two participants withdrew from the study. One of the two organizations withdrew participation due to an unfortunate accident and the other organization withdrew participation because of its organizational duties and obligations to combating the

measles outbreak which occurred in early 2020. As such, 11 participants participated in the study.

I contacted the executive organizations and discussed the purpose of the study via telephone. All representatives from the participating organizations showed interest in the study and identified possible participants based on the purpose of the study. Once approval was acquired from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB; approval no. 12-23-19-0528436), a request for participation letter (see Appendix B) that included my contact details, information on the voluntary nature of the study, the risks and benefits of being in the study, and protocols for maintaining privacy was delivered to each individual. I attached the consent form to the letter. In these communications, I reminded each participant that participating in the study was voluntary, informed them of my responsibilities as the researcher, assured them that their confidentiality would be protected, and reminded them that they had the right to withdraw at any time during the study. The purpose and content of the informed consent form were explained to each participant and I answered their questions and addressed concerns. Finally, I required each participant to read the consent form. Participants were given a copy of the signed consent form. I also emailed participants with convenient times and days to conduct the interview (see Appendix C).

Following Walden University IRB approval to conduct the study, data collection took place from January 14, 2020 to March 24, 2020. The 11 participants provided a total of 11 semistructured telephonic interviews. Transcriptions were conducted and provided to the participants for their review and approval. The member-checking process was

employed so that the participants can confirm that my transcriptions and interpretations of their responses accurately represented their responses. Data saturation was reached with seven participants, when no new information emerged from the qualitative data (Guest et al., 2006). I continued the interview process until I had interviewed 11 participants.

Sample Size

Sample saturation in purposive sampling has traditionally been very difficult to determine (Guest et al., 2006). Having a numerical value to estimate a sample size and saturation was a problem investigated by Guest et al. (2006) using 60 in-depth interviews conducted in a qualitative study in Africa. The study outcome was not the measure of the methodology study but rather the outcome of saturation. Before that study, Bertaux and Kohli (1984) stated that 15 participants would be absolute minimum for saturation in a qualitative study. After reviewing all studies prior to 2006 regarding saturation for qualitative studies and coding the Africa study to determine a valid number of participants, Guest et al. (2006) determined 11 as the saturation number. Executive organizations that address climate change issues in the territory are few in numbers, specifically 14, that any additional criteria for case selection of the purposive sample could result in the exclusion of some individuals, prolong the data collection process, and impact sample size.

Instrumentation

I was the primary data collector for this study. Oye et al. (2015) suggest that interviews are a source of rich, in-depth, and individualized form of qualitative data,

therefore interviews were the choice of instrument used to collect data for this study. Yin (2012) identified six sources of evidence of which I used one. In this study, the data source was interviews. In conducting the interviews, I followed an interview protocol (see Appendix D) that I developed.

Semistructured Interviews

Interviews provide a platform for researchers and research participants to interact and exchange experiences. The purpose of the study was to identify and describe the major factors of the current regulatory framework which impact policy actions of policy leaders on climate change issues. As such, an interactive relationship with the policy leaders was necessary. Specifically, data collection methods necessary for the purpose of the study should focus on real events, processes and the experiences of participants. Percy et al. (2015) found that data collection in general qualitative studies elicit people's reports on their ideas about things which are outside themselves and requires semi- or fully structured interviews or activity-specific participant observation, and the like. As such, I used semistructured interviews to collect data from participants.

The interviews consisted of specific questions included in the protocol that guided the interview process. The interview questions were crafted carefully based on the main research question. Participants responded to the open-ended questions via telephone interview thus, had the flexibility to answer the interview questions in a non-biased setting. This setting was conducive for the participants of the study to alleviate any emotional pressure participants may feel that are associated with interview process. The interview protocol consisted of a note to welcome participants, the interview questions, a

reminder of the contents of the study, and thank-you note for participation. The interview protocol ensured uniformity of the interview process across all participants and the uniform direction of the interview questions. When I felt uncomfortable with the information shared by the participants, I followed the interview protocol religiously to avoid research bias. More importantly, I reminded myself that it was important to hear their input and responses of participants to fully understand the phenomena. To ensure anonymity, confidentiality, and safety of the participants (Patton, 2014), I prevented disclosure of participant's identities by reviewing all the interview data to remove personal information. To further reduce bias, I was prepared to position myself in the study by sharing my possible bias (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The responses of the participants to the interview questions provided data necessary to answer the main research question and serve the purpose of the study. The last interview question was an opportunity for the participant to add any other information related the influence of the U.S. regulatory framework on their policy decisions and actions on climate change issues which were not captured in the other questions. The responses provided by the participants built a database of descriptions of the major factors of the current regulatory framework which impact the policy decision of local policy leaders, therefore effectively addressing the main research question. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and provided to the participants for their review and approval.

Interview Protocol

I used an interview protocol throughout the entire interview sessions with the participants. The interview protocol was produced by the researcher. I used the main research question and literature sources to guide the development of the open-ended interview questions to ensure that they were aligned with the study's purpose. Literature sources provided the overarching direction of the research instrument by providing the background information which supported the development of the interview questions.

I was the primary data collector for this study. I created the interview protocol to structure the interview process to ensure uniformity of the entire interview process. The interview questions were crafted based on the main research question and theoretical underpinnings of the study. To ensure the validity of the interview instrument, I conducted content validity analyses on the interview instrument. Angell (2017) found that content validity is the degree to which the elements of an assessment instrument are relevant to and representative of the targeted construct for a particular assessment purpose. I consulted subject matter experts on the topic of adaptive capacity and climate change policy decisions and efforts of local policy leaders. I relied on their expertise to determine if the items on the interview instrument were satisfactory or needed alterations. All subject matters that were consulted ensured that the interview instrument would appropriately measure the construct in question. I used the interview protocol consistently throughout the telephonic semistructured interviews to ensure content validity. Also, I performed member checking with participants to ensure the accuracy of interview data (Patton, 2014). This also enhanced the credibility and reliability of the data.

The literature sources specified key variables and configurations of the variables that influenced governance in the territory. I created the open-ended questions under the specific categories that emerged from the literature which were derived from the literature and main research question. The last open-ended question captured other experiences and viewpoints the participants wish to share related to their climate change policy action but did not get to during the earlier interview questions. Therefore, the data collected answered the main research question.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

After obtaining approval from the Walden University IRB, I undertook the following procedures to recruit participants and collect data. First, I sought and obtained the interest of the executive organizations which were amenable to the purpose of the study. I contacted the executive organizations to discuss the purpose of the study and determine their interest in participating in the study. Second, upon agreement of the participating organization to participate in the study, the authorizing person at the organization selected a possible participant to be interviewed. I provided the participants with informed consent forms and obtained consent from the participants to carry out the interviews with them. All participants were informed about voluntary participation in the research study and if they decided to participate, that their participation is confidential throughout the entire study. All of the participants agreed to participate in the interview sessions and to have their responses audiorecorded. Third, I coordinated the date and time of the telephonic interviews with the participants that have signed the consent form. Fourth, I conducted data collection.

The interviews took place at the time and date scheduled by the interviewee. On the time and date scheduled, I contacted the participant and conducted the interview via telephone. I conducted 1 interview session per participant and the eleven interview sessions totaled three hundred minutes. The interviews were recorded using a tape recorder. At the completion of the interview session, I conducted a debrief of the interview session, asked the interviewees if there were any concerns or questions, informed them that I would contact them if I had any follow-up questions and informed them to expect the transcribed data for their review.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions of the data and synopsis of their responses were sent to each participant for confirmation of the transcribed data via member-checking method. The data were member-checked to allow the participants the opportunity to confirm that the summary produced from the transcripts were a true representation of the discussions that took place during the interview sessions. All of the participants ascertained that my interpretation of the meaning of their responses was accurate. Finally, the data were coded, categorized and themed.

Data Analysis Plan

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current regulatory framework to identify and describe the major factors that impact the policy decisions of local policy leaders on climate change issues. The territory's public health, economy, and environment remain highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change but has not developed the adaptive capacity to build and maintain climate change resilience. No

research has yet to explore and describe the extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change policy actions of its territories or possessions (Schwebel, 2018). Scarce literature has addressed the issue of limited adaptive capacity in the territory (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016). The purpose of the study and research question required a data analysis process that focused on analyzing the data to develop descriptions of the major factors of the current regulatory framework provided by local policy leaders to understand the phenomena, the lack of adaptive capacity. As such, the inductive analysis process was used in this study to analyze the qualitative data because it relies on inductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning allows for themes to emerge from the raw data, therefore descriptions of the major factors of the current regulatory framework that impact territorial policy decisions emerge directly from the responses of the policy actors.

The inductive analysis process allowed for data to emerge which may be used by policy actors to develop a pragmatic approach to governance that could improve climate change policies and increase the adaptive capacity of the territory. Building the descriptions of the factors that influence territorial policy action using the experiences of policy actors addressed the purpose and main research question of the study. The intent of the study was to remain close to the data through the analysis process to ensure that the descriptions provide by policy leaders are analyzed. In addition, the inductive analysis approach was selected for this study because it provided a flexible data analysis process in which key themes were identified by reducing the raw data to a set of themes or categories. Also, the inductive approach was appropriate for the purpose of this study because it encouraged the utilization of in vivo coding to code and organize the raw data.

The in vivo coding process is defined as the coding process which applies the words verbatim that participants use to examine the possible dimensions of categories (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2016). Following the first round of in vivo coding which was conducted manually using Microsoft Word, I conducted a second round of coding which employed the pattern coding approach to categorize and analyze the correspondence pattern of codes to create themes. The steps I used to conduct inductive analysis are as follows:

1. Data Collection: I conducted the recorded semistructured interviews with 11 participants over the phone. I transcribed data after repeated listening, reviewing and reflection on the data. The repetitive review process was conducted to ensure that I included all the required data in the analysis. Data transcription for each interview session was conducted and completed within 12 hours after each interview session. The transcribed data were returned in a Microsoft Word document to participants for confirmation of their responses.
2. Review Data: Upon confirmation of the interview transcriptions by the interviewees, I reviewed and re-read the transcripts to become familiar with the entire body of data corpus. I listened to audio recordings as necessary for clarity of thoughts and responses and in doing so, I identified trends and relationships of the data to the research question. Thereafter, I began coding the data.

Data Coding and Themes

This study provided contextual information on the major factors of the current regulatory framework which impacts the policy decisions of AS on climate change issues through analyzing 11 in-depth interviews of policy leaders working in local executive offices with relevant responsibilities to climate change.

First Cycle Coding. Following the participants approval of the transcribed data, I carefully removed all elements that could easily reveal the identities of the participants and the participating organizations that could compromise participant confidentiality. Next, I conducted the initial round of coding by hand using the line-by-line coding method. The by-hand analysis was selected to determine codes because it allowed for the separation of sections of the transcripts for analysis of responses, therefore afforded the researcher the opportunity to engage in an in-depth understanding of the data prior to creating themes. The line-by-line method of coding was employed because I wanted to code the data using meaning units or actual phrases used in specific text segments. As I reviewed the material, I made notes alongside the text using phrases or words from the material itself. I re-read the material repeatedly, then transferred the notes into the coding sheet. After the completion of the initial cycle of coding, I realized that the codes were repetitive and needed to be grouped based on the research question and purpose of the study.

Second Cycle Coding. During the second cycle of the coding process, I recoded and regrouped the codes, and then patterned the codes to create categories and themes. The codes were filtered through the main research question and purpose of the study. As

the codes were filtered, recoded, and regrouped, patterns of correspondence between the codes emerged. Pattern codes are explanatory or inferential codes that identify an emergent theme or explanation. The pattern coding method was employed to analyze the correspondence of the codes. Saldana (2009) found that a pattern that is characterized by correspondence are those patterns which happen in relation to other activities or events. In this study, the codes were patterned based on the correspondence with other codes. These patterned codes identified similar patterns that were collapsed to create categories. The categories of correspondence patterns were then analyzed using the propositions of the EGT to create themes. At this point of analysis, major patterns were observed, and the data were organized to ease the writing of the findings which led to the development of themes. I sent each participant a copy of their transcribed interview response, codes, categories, and themes for their confirmation on the accuracy of the data.

The interworking of the elements of governance to create policies and laws as suggested by EGT was used to inform the analysis of the data. The EGT proposes that the configurations of the elements of governance are in a continuous flux, therefore causing governance to evolve. The configuration includes the interaction between the concepts of institutions/actors and power/knowledge which constitute governance and policies. As governance evolves, its by-products such as laws and regulations change. I used the configurations of governance elements to analyze the patterned data and develop the write-up.

Coding Sheet. The coding process resulted in in vivo codes, patterned categories, and themes. The analysis process that documented the evolvement of codes to themes

were documented in a code sheet. The code sheet was a Microsoft Word document which consisted of a table in which the first column contained the interview questions, the second column contained the responses of the participants, the third column contained in vivo codes, the fourth column contained patterned categories, and the last column provided themes. The coding sheet provided a platform to organize the data and perform analysis. I used the coding sheet to clarify the codes, classify the patterned categories and identify the themes that were consistent with the research question. In the case that there was evidence inconsistent with the identified themes, I would include the outliers since the descriptions of the major factors of the current regulatory framework that impact AS climate change preparations is a topic that is understudied.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The primary concern for qualitative research is rigor. The concern regarding the rigor of qualitative study is building trust in the research without the strict scientific background seen in quantitative studies. As such, the findings of a qualitative study must be credible, trustworthy, and accurate to ensure that the entire study is acceptable to the scholarly community and the public. Various strategies were employed to ensure the validity of the study's findings so that those reading this study could understand the link between the research and the realistic experience of the participants.

During the interview sessions, I took notes to ensure that I captured all the respondents discussed and remained open to the responses of the participants. I collected rich and thick descriptions from all participants to ensure trustworthiness of the data. These responses were recorded in audio. I repeatedly listened to the audio to ensure

accuracy of the transcriptions. To further confirm the accuracy of the transcribed data and prevent distortion of the descriptions provided by the participants, I prepared the transcriptions and sent them to each participant for their review. Upon confirmation of accurate transcripts by each participant, I began the analysis process. I re-read and consistently reviewed the transcripts to familiarize myself with the data and checked my coding for precision. I merged the codes which were identical and patterned the codes. I sent the transcriptions, codes, categories, and themes to each participant to ensure the credibility of the findings.

Credibility

To establish the trustworthiness of qualitative studies, researchers must ensure the study's findings are credible, dependable, transferable, and confirmed. Patton (2014) suggest rigorous data collection strategies and analysis procedures. To ensure credibility of the findings, Maxwell (2012) suggests the use of triangulation, collection of rich and thick data through in-depth semistructure interviews, feedback from peers, codes, and themes that cover relevant data, and notes from site visits to link the findings with reality and demonstrate the truth of the findings. For this study, I used interviews as the data collection technique to link the findings of the study with reality to demonstrate the truth of the findings. However, Moustakas (1994) found that the open-ended and interactive aspects of interview processes result in an increased expectation of misconceptions, therefore I listened to the response of the interviewees and asked questions that clarify any possible misconceptions that are a result of the interview questions and participants responses. I addressed all misconceptions throughout the interview sessions to ensure that

the findings were credible. In addition, I employed the member-checking process to confirm the accuracy of interview transcriptions. The participants of the study were given the opportunity to authenticate the transcriptions and confirm the accuracy of the codes, categories, and themes. The participants were able to examine and confirm the descriptions they provided regarding the major factors of the current regulatory framework which impact their policy decisions on climate change issues.

Transferability

Tsang (2014) found that transferability refers to whether or not the study's results are generalizable to ensure the external validity of the study. The findings of this general qualitative interview-based inquiry research were not intended to be generalized to other studies as it is specific to AS.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency of the study results (Merriam, 1988). To check the dependability of a qualitative study, researchers use dependability audit (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail is a major technique used to ensure that the interpretations of the data are not based on the researcher's preferences but grounded in the data. Here, the focus is on the interpretation process embedded in the process of analysis. As such, the audit trail requires researchers to note the decisions made during the research process, reflective thoughts, sampling, research materials adopted, emergency of the findings, and information about data management. This enables the public to study the transparency of the research path. For this study, I documented what I did each day during the entire inquiry. I created a brief chronological index that listed the

choices I made each day of the study, actions I engaged in, and thoughts about how the study was going at each stage. I included the field notes I took while conducting the study and after each day. I reanalyzed the audit trail document to ensure the dependability and confirmability of the research plan. Synthesis reports during the member checking process and coding structure were also included in the audit trail.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the researcher's efforts to ensure that the findings are shaped by the participants more so than they are shaped by the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Techniques used by researchers to achieve confirmability include leaving an audit trail and engaging in reflexivity. This study used the audit trail technique to establish confirmability by noting all the decisions made in terms of data collection, analysis, and interpretation to show the reason behind the research decisions. Reflexivity is another way to enhance the rigor of the study. To ensure the findings reflected the participants' experiences and the meaning they attributed to those experiences unfettered by my personal experiences, I kept a research journal. The research journal was used to document personal reflections, which allowed myself to understand the position of the participants in relation to the topic, justify research decisions, and enhance transparency. This critical self-evaluation was facilitated by these techniques to ensure that the researcher remains unbiased while interpreting the behavior and reflections of others. I ensured confirmability of the study by combining an audit trail of decisions and keeping a reflexive journal of notes and memos during data collection and analysis activities.

Ethical Procedures

Qualitative research requires direct engagement of the researcher with human subjects. As such, ethical protocols were required for this research. Patton (2012) and Yin (2012) found that interaction with human subjects is a way to obtain data for research; however, the risks associated with progress should never inflict or cause harm. To that end, I completed a Walden University IRB application to gain permission to engage in the research elements of this project. Potential participants were not contacted until IRB approval was granted. When I received Walden University IRB approval (no. 12-23-19-0528436), I contacted all possible participants and briefed them on the focus and goal of this work. There were no ethical concerns related to recruitment because recruitment did not begin until IRB approval was received. The participants were provided with consent forms that were prepared in accordance with the requirements of the IRB. The participants were permitted to discontinue their involvement at any time and for any reason without any penalty. There were no ethical concerns related to data collection because all of the interview sessions were guided by the interview protocol.

All data are considered confidential. Participants names and the names of the participating organizations were concealed to ensure confidentiality. The notes and protocols from the interviews are saved on a flash drive and remain in the researcher's possession. All signed consent forms and all documents collected from this study are properly stored in a secured and protected area for the duration of the study. The data will be backed-up on a daily basis to avoid data damage or loss. All documents stored on the computer are password protected and I am the only one with access. The researcher bears

the sole responsibility for maintaining the data and will keep the data for five years beyond the date of completion of the dissertation process. After that time, all documents, notes, flash drives, and transcriptions will be destroyed. To further protect the identity of the participants, their specific offices and exact work locations will remain anonymous.

Summary

The people, infrastructure, health, environment, and ecosystems of AS are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and have not developed the adaptive capacity required to build and maintain climate change resilience. Researchers have not explored the extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change policy actions of its territories or possessions (Schwebel, 2018). Scarce literature has addressed the issue of limited adaptive capacity in the territory (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016). AS lags behind its neighboring island counterparts in building the capacity to adapt to climatic changes. A contributing factor to this problem is the territory's governance structure. The purpose of this study was to investigate the current regulatory framework to identify and uncover the major factors in the current regulatory framework that impact the climate change policy decisions of local leaders on climate change issues. The consequences of the lack of adaptive capacity of the territory to adapt to climatic changes are many and varied. According to the Climate Change 2014 Synthesis Report (IPCC, 2014), it is likely that extreme weather caused by climate events may increase. Considering the lack of the capacity of the territory to adapt to climate change and the vulnerability it faces in a changing climate, there is a need for an increased adaptive capacity of the territory.

Therefore, this study focuses on the territory's public policies relevant to climate change issues, hence the applicability of this study to creating social change in AS.

This study investigated the current regulatory framework to uncover the major factors that impact the policy decisions of local leaders on climate change. The study sought to find descriptions of the major factors that influence the policy decisions of local leaders which impact the adaptive capacity and resiliency of the territory to climate change. To understand and explore the main research question, I used semistructured, one-on-one interviews to collect data. This data collection technique allowed me to collect data from the 11 study participants through open-ended interview questions. This open-ended and interactive platform provided insight and information on the various factors of the current regulatory framework that organizations and local policy leaders experience when developing relevant climate change policies. This information helped me develop recommendations.

The ethical considerations necessary to protect participants were discussed in this chapter. To reduce bias, I used the interview protocol to guide the interview sessions, report, and analyze the data as accurately as possible. The interview data were recorded and transcribed prior to data analysis. Then, I coded and categorized the patterned data to develop themes.

In Chapter 4, I explain the steps I took to analyze the data and discuss the interview data from the interview sessions with the participants. I elaborate on the findings and results of participants interviewed. As a public policy tool, analysis of the interview data may assist local policy leaders understand the impact of the territorial

relationship between the United States and AS on the climate change preparations of the territory. The results of the study may be used as a viable tool by local policy leaders to build the adaptive capacity of the territory to adapt to climatic changes. Chapter 5 provides the interpretation of the findings, the study's shortcomings and limitations, recommendations for future studies, implications for positive social change, and the conclusion of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this general qualitative interview-based inquiry was to investigate the current regulatory framework and describe the major factors that influence the policy initiatives of AS on climate change issues. The research question was: What major aspects of the current U.S. regulatory framework impact the action of policy leaders on the issues of climate change in AS? AS's population, infrastructure, health, ecosystems, and environment are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change (IPCC, 2014; IPCC, 2019; Ourbak & Magnan, 2017; Royer et al., 1998), and territory leaders have not developed the capacity to adapt to climatic changes and build the climate change resilience of the island (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016; Wallsgrove & Penn, 2012). A contributing factor to this problem is the governance structure of the territory. The governance structure of AS is a result of its political status. It consists of federal laws overlaid onto local regulations. Researchers have not addressed the issue of limited adaptive capacity of the territory to adapt to climate change (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016). In addition, there is scarce literature on the climate change preparations of extraterritorial jurisdictions of the United States (Schwebel, 2018).

The research process involved an extensive review of literature on the history of the extraterritorial relationship between the United States and AS within the literature of power, discourse, policy, and governance. The historical review revealed the extraterritorial influence on the different aspects of the Samoan way of life (culture, religion, economic, and environment). Such aspects extend to those institutions governing environmental matters in AS. I obtained the data for this study from interviews

I conducted with 11 participants from the policy executive organizations that direct climate change initiatives in AS. Study participants were identified by the participating organizations, and their agreement to participate were noted in consent forms. I used Beunen et al.'s (2015) EGT to guide the analysis of the data.

In Chapter 4, I provide the results of the study and outline the process of arriving at the results. Key sections are devoted to the research setting, demographics of participants, data collection processes, data analysis procedures, evidence of trustworthiness, and results. The chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Setting

I identified 14 executive organizations in AS with policy responsibilities on climate change issues. However, one organization was decommissioned a few years ago. Although 13 executive organizations agreed to participate in the study, one organization withdrew because of an accident that occurred with its staff member, and the other withdrew because at the time of the study, the territory faced a measles outbreak and the respective organization was responsible for developing the island's response plan. The withdrawal of these participants did not influence the interpretation of the study results. Even though the participants had different organizational responsibilities related to climate change, they operated under the same regulatory framework. The participating organizations and their representatives shared similar experiences with policy development and policy decisions. As a result, data saturation was achieved.

The intent of this study was to describe the major aspects of the current regulatory framework that impact policy actions of local policy leaders; hence the necessary

interaction with local policy actors to collect their viewpoints on the aspects of the territorial relationship that affect their ability to promulgate and implement climate change relevant policies. I selected participants based on the following criterion: that individual(s) have the capacity to officially make policy decisions on the various issues of climate change. Upon discussion of the study's purpose, all directors agreed to participate, but some referred me to individuals whom they deemed would provide productive responses. I contacted the referred individuals, and all agreed to participate in the study in lieu of the organization's director. These participants provided meaningful responses to the interview questions and addressed the overarching research question.

I scheduled the interviews based on the participants' availability. Each participant selected a day and time convenient for their schedule. The interviews were conducted over the phone. I initiated the call from my home office where I was free of disturbances and the interviews would not be overheard to ensure confidentiality. To make sure that each interview was accurately captured, I used an application on my phone to record the conversation and had a printed copy of the interview protocol in front of me to take notes on and guide the interview. The participants' locations ranged from private office to their homes. Taking notes aided in focusing on the participant responses and asking follow-up questions. At the end of each interview, I checked to make sure the recording was properly captured and audible.

Demographics

The 11 participants all worked at the ASG organizations with responsibilities related to climate change and have worked on projects that address climate change

impacts. The 11 participants were in positions to develop and implement policies or influence the development of organizational policies. They were all ASG employees and as stated in the IRB and consent forms, I removed all of their identifying markers from the transcripts.

Data Collection

I collected data from 11 participants in the study over the course of 7 weeks in the form of phone interviews. The 11 telephonic-interview sessions totaled 300 minutes. I was the instrument for data collection and interpretation. In my initial phone conversation with the study participants, I discussed the purpose of the study and reviewed the consent form. Prior to the interviews, I delivered the consent forms to the participants to review and indicate their consent to engage in the study. The consent form included information about the purpose of the study and measures taken to protect the identity of the organization and participants. Once I received the signed consent forms from the participants indicating that they agreed to participate in the study, I emailed the participants to schedule telephonic interviews (see Appendix C). I then asked the participants to send me times and days they were available. The interviews were scheduled and subsequently completed via telephone. I recorded all of the interviews using an audio recording application on my telephone. Then, I reviewed the interview recording for each participant for accuracy of their responses. There were no variations in the data collected from the plan in Chapter 3. An unusual circumstance that occurred during data collection was that some participants expressed the uncertainty about the relevance of their work to climate change issues. To address this issue, I decided to start

the interviews by elaborating on the purpose of the study and the relationship of each organization to climate change.

Data Analysis

The goal when using qualitative data is to make sense of the collected data by finding patterns, looking for themes, answering the research questions, and developing results (Patton, 2015). I developed the data analysis process based on the inductive logical process. I used the inductive data analysis process to explore, scrutinize, and examine the interview data. The inductive data analysis process I used is as follows: (a) I examined the responses for each participant, (b) I employed the in vivo coding method to code the data, (c) I patterned the codes based on correspondence relationship with other events/activities into categories, (d) I analyzed patterns using the EGT theoretical constructs for themes, and (e) I developed the written description and analysis of the major factors of the current regulatory framework that impact the policy decisions of local policy leaders on issues of climate change.

I began data analysis by transcribing the audio recordings from each participant's interview and typed my field notes. The process of transcribing each interview and reviewing the audio recordings with the transcripts provided me with an opportunity to explore each individual's response (Tessier, 2012). I used the interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of each participant's descriptions of the factors of the existing framework that influenced their policy decisions on the issues of climate change. I read the transcripts repeatedly for clarity and to familiarize myself with the narratives. I prepared a summary of each interview sent the interview summary and transcriptions to

each participant for review and confirmation. Following the confirmation of responses by the participants, I began coding the data using the in vivo coding method.

According to Elliott (2018), a code is a word or phrase which summarizes the essence of an excerpt from the data. In vivo coding is the practice of assigning a label to a section of data using a word or short phrase taken from that section of the data (Manning, 2017). In vivo codes ensure that the researcher stays as close as possible to research participants' own words because the participants capture a key element of what is being described. Manning (2017) found that in vivo coding method is associated with the earlier stages of coding data when concepts and categories are being developed. As such, I coded the data using the in vivo coding method to highlight the specific words and phrases of the participants to underscore their descriptions of the factors of the current regulatory framework in relation to their policy decisions. For instance, Table 1 shows an example of in vivo codes derived from a participant's response. In the initial round of coding, I coded the entire interview data set which resulted in 292 in vivo codes. I removed repetitive codes and combined codes that were similar. For instance, several participants mentioned in their responses for the third interview question that they can "still receive funding for adaptation projects if the terms climate change were not mentioned in the proposal." In such case, similar codes were collapsed and combined. This process continued for the entire data set and resulted in 139 in vivo codes.

As I coded the raw data using the in vivo coding method, interactions between codes emerged. The interactions between certain codes became patterns that emerged throughout the data set. Saldana (2009) found that patterns are not just stable regularities

Table 1*First Cycle Codes: In Vivo Codes*

Interview question	Participant's response	In vivo code
Considering the other Pacific Island that are not part of the U.S., how are the prohibited policy actions under the current policy regime impeding the efforts of your organization to helping A.S. achieve climate change?	D11: "It's hard for us here because the climate change actions of Federal Government have directs effect on us. But when they don't support climate change actions, then it hinders our ability to adapt to climate change in terms of policies. As a result, we have to resort on being resilient as a community. To adjust and adapt to climate change in our own way."	climate change actions of Federal Government have direct effects on us Federal Government hinders our ability to adapt adjust and adapt in our own way

but exist in varying forms. Patterns can be characterized by similarity, difference, frequency, sequence, correspondence, and causation (Carey et al., 2008). Patterns identified in the data are patterns of codes that occur in relation to other activities or events. As a result, I used the correspondence pattern coding method to pattern the in vivo codes and create categories.

The pattern coding method is inferential. It combines less abstract into more descriptive codes to create concepts (Elliott, 2018). The pattern coding method provides a foundation for the analysis of the relations between the aspects of the regulatory framework and the policy decisions of local policy actors on the issues of climate change. The pattern coding method identified the relationships that exists between the codes and categories to create themes. For instance, Table 2 illustrates how pattern categories were derived from D11’s coded response to Interview Question 5.

Table 2

Second Round Coding: Pattern Codes

Participant’s response	In vivo code	Pattern code
D11: “It’s hard for us here because the climate change actions of states have a direct effect on us. But when they don’t support climate change actions, then it hinders our ability to adapt to climate change in terms of policies. To adjust and adapt to climate change in our own way.”	actions of states have direct effects on us they don’t support climate change hinders our ability to adapt adjust and adapt in our own way	Federal Government effects Federal Government hinders ability to adapt adapt on our own

To generate themes, I analyzed the correspondence patterns that emerged from the in vivo codes and then categorized the correspondence patterns using the theoretical constructs that flow from the EGT. The theoretical constructs are power, knowledge,

actors and institutions. To help me visually deconstruct the raw data and break them down into component parts, I used five different typographical emphases to represent each theoretical construct. These typographical emphases include italics, bold, underlined, capital letters, spacing/indentation, and overlining. Typographical emphasis adds display type to a text document which provides landmarks to direct readers through the content (Dyson & Beier, 2016). Each of the theoretical constructs were assigned an individual typographical emphasis and the overline typographical emphasis feature represented the relationship between the constructs if there was one based on the descriptions provided by the participants. The text was given a specific typographical emphasis if I felt it spoke to any of the theoretical constructs defined by the authors of EGT. During the categorization process, I made sure to keep re-reading the text that was not given a typographical emphasis to examine if they needed to be coded.

To understand the phenomena and address the purpose of the study, I relied on the semistructured interview questions to allow the participants to discuss the aspects of the regulatory framework that affect their policy decisions. I analyzed the interplay of theoretical constructs within the correspondence patterns to understand the relationship between the regulatory framework and the policy actions of policy leaders (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Saldana (2009) found that a pattern can be characterized by correspondence or when something happens in relation to other activities or events. I focused on the patterned relations, examined functionality of the patterned relations, and investigated their role in influencing the policy decisions of local policy leaders on climate change issues. Themes emerged as a result of analyzing the imbrications of

power/knowledge and actors/institutions of the correspondence patterns that were derived from the participants' responses. Table 3 illustrates the process used to inductively move from codes to categories to themes from D11's response to Interview Question 5.

Table 3

In Vivo Codes, Pattern Codes, and Themes

Participant's response	In vivo code	Pattern code	Theme
D11: "It's hard for us here because the climate change actions of states have a direct effect on us. But when they don't support climate change actions, then it hinders our ability to adapt to climate change in terms of policies. To adjust and adapt to climate change in our own way."	actions of states have direct effects on us	Federal Government effects	Federal Government oversight influences territorial organizational policy priorities
	they don't support climate change	Federal	
	hinders our ability to adapt	Government hinders ability to adapt	
	adjust and adapt in our own way	adapt on our own	

I engaged in the process of reviewing the emerged patterns to create the themes and constantly analyzed the themes to ensure their correspondence with the codes and categories. For instance, each participant referred to the federal government as the source

of power that influenced their policy decisions. One thing all participants have in common is that the federal government has oversight on territorial executive organizations. As for the specific effects of the federal government on each organization's operations and policies, that's where the differences and variations occur. As a result, an emerging theme is the oversight of the federal government on the territory which influences the policy priorities of the island. I consistently analyzed the context in which the interactions of power, knowledge, institutions, and actors take place to ensure that the participants responses were truly represented in the analysis process.

Finally, I examined the themes for meaning to describe the phenomena of adaptive capacity and the research question. Subcategories were then analyzed and critically reviewed before being placed into thematic groups showing the relationship between the three themes and patterns established from the coding process. Detailed themes were compared and contrasted in a constant review of logical relationships and patterns as a part of the ongoing analytic process. The themes were linked with the research question. There were no outliers. I identified three themes in the large amounts of data that were collected:

1. Federal funds are a form of power that informs local policy action of local policy leaders.
2. Federal oversight, as a requirement of the island's political status, informs territorial policy priorities, therefore influencing the policy priorities and values of executive organizations thus, impacting the policy actions of local leaders.

3. The culture of territorialism reinforces the reliance of AS on the United States, therefore moderating the operation of local governance on local issues.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I established trustworthiness of the data collected and analyzed through credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability. Creswell and Miller (2000) found that the alignment of different paradigms within qualitative research depends on meeting these four criteria. I established credibility in the study by identifying themes in the participants' responses to the interview questions. I used the member-checking method with all the participants by sending the transcribed data to each participant for validation. Data analysis did not occur until all participants confirmed their responses. Furthermore, I made sure to become familiar with the background of the participants which allowed me to properly assess how congruent what the participant is saying in the interview session to what is happening in real life. From the interview sessions with participants, new information was discovered however, the new information made sense given my knowledge on the background of the culture. Finally, given that the consent form promised confidentiality, I expected honesty from the participants, and I believe I received it considering the consistency of their responses.

Transferability refers to the level in which individuals have the ability to generalize the results within their own context (Yin, 2012). In qualitative studies, however, transferability is the responsibility of the individual seeking to transfer the findings to a different situation, rather than that of the investigator of the original study.

The findings of this general qualitative interview-based inquiry cannot be generalized to other studies as it is specific to AS.

Following the strategies for both internal and external validity, I developed a two-part strategy for authentication of the findings. Dependability and confirmability of the study results were achieved by employing the first part of the strategy - dependability audit and the second part of the strategy - reflexive journal. For this study, I used the dependability audit to document a chronological index of all of the daily actions I engaged in through the analysis process. The dependability audit was used to note the research decisions during the research process, reflective thoughts, sampling, research materials, and findings to ensure transparency of the research path. Second, the achievement of confirmability and dependability of the study were discovered by the employment of criterion for reflexivity.

The purpose of reflexivity is to lead researchers to reflection through comprehensively, pragmatic, and relative method of qualitative investigation. To accommodate the dependability audit trail, I used a journal to document personal reflections to keep me informed of my position in relation to the topic, justify my research decisions as reflected in the audit trail, and enhance transparency. In being reflexive, I had to acknowledge that I am Samoan and I previously worked in an environmental regulatory agency. There could have been unintended biases as I began to organize, scrutinize, explore, code, analyze, and interpret the collected data. I selected a strategy of documenting the research process, reviewing, auditing, and scrutinizing the collected data. The strategy allowed me the freedom to provide confirmability as it relates

to identifying any findings which may be contradictory. The two-part strategy ensures the dependability of the findings and renders any inconsistencies as it relates to procedures for the study to be reviewed, scrutinized, and examined.

Results

I centered the study on answering the main research question: What major aspects of the current regulatory framework impact the policy actions of local policy leaders on issues of climate change? This section is organized by the themes and supportive quotations derived from the responses of the participants to illuminate the factors of the current regulatory framework that impact their policy actions on climate change issues.

The interview data were transcribed, and initial codes were developed using the in vivo coding method. The repetitive in vivo codes were not used, which narrowed down the codes from 292 to 139 in vivo codes. Relationship and patterns between codes emerged; therefore, the in vivo codes were patterned to develop categories. According to Frels et al. (2016), the pattern coding method is employed to find patterns or relationships among previously generated codes by analyzing commonalities and grouping them by similarities. The categories of patterns were analyzed using the theoretical constructs derived from the EGT.

Briefly, the theoretical constructs used to analyze the categories of patterned data are power, knowledge, actors, and institutions. The EGT points out that power, knowledge, actors, and institutions are elements of governance which interact to constrain the course of governance. As a result of the elemental interaction, governance and its by-products are produced and evolve. As these elements discursively change,

governance is reproduced and evolves, therefore governance by-products such as policies evolve simultaneously. To identify and describe the major factors of the current regulatory framework that impact the policy decisions of local leaders on climate change issues, it is important to understand the different elements and forces that interact within governance that ultimately influence the development of policy decisions of local policy leaders on climate change issues. Describing the major elements of governance, understanding the relationship between these elements, and analyzing the functionality of these dependencies that mark governance evolutions offer a platform to understand the way normalizing institutions evolve which may delineate spaces open for policy experiment.

The concept of power is not wielded by people or groups by way of episodic or sovereign acts of domination or coercion. Foucault (1980) uses the term *power/knowledge* to signify that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge. Power is a result of the interaction between discourse and institutions, and is reinforced and redefined constantly through the flux of political and economic ideologies. In this sense, power is a disciplinary force which can be observed in the administrative systems that influence how people learn to behave and the way that they discipline themselves to act accordingly. As such, knowledge is always an exercise of power and power always a function of knowledge. The EGT also points out that institutions influence actors by defining them, naming them, and providing them with substance, action and intention. In this sense, actors never exist in themselves but draw their agency from institutions. As such, acts performed by actors are given meaning in and by

institutions to which they belong. The power/knowledge and actors/institutions come together in policy-making spaces. As these elements operate in policy-making spaces, they become the primary drivers of governance, policy processes, and policies. Foucault sees these spaces as essential to any exercise of power (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001). In-depth analysis of the patterned data using the theoretical constructs yielded three themes. Table 4 includes a summative coding scheme that I used to develop the themes.

Table 4 illustrates the coding scheme that shows the relationship between the data and the theoretical constructs derived from the EGT. For instance, the data in Table 4 shows that one of the recurring in vivo codes had a pattern of correspondence with other in vivo codes. Specifically, federal fund requirements corresponded with the participating organizations adaptation, mitigation and climate change efforts. In addition, the cap in federal funds corresponded with the ability of participating organizations to pursue or complete adaptation and mitigation projects. The pattern of correspondence between federal funds and climate change adaptation efforts of participating organizations reveal that federal funds institutionalize the policy space where local policy actors operate. Through the lens of EGT, federal funds are a form of power that informs local policy action of local policy leaders. Federal funds emerged as a theme because all participants discussed that it was one of the factors of the current regulatory framework that affected their policy decisions. Table 4 outlines additional in vivo codes that developed into pattern codes, categories, and themes. A more detailed coding scheme is provided in Appendix E. To best show the emergence of the themes, I have organized this section by theme development.

Theme 1: Federal Funds Informs Local Policy Action

The interview questions flowed from the main research question. As a result, the responses of the participants were coded and categorized into predominant themes directly related to the main research question. The interview questions inquired about the relationship between the current regulatory framework and the participants' policy decisions on the issues of climate change. In this study, all the stakeholders posited that federal funds are a mechanism that has different impacts on their policy decisions and actions on climate change issues. Specifically, federal funds are identified by participants as a mechanism that informs the organization's policy priorities and values. In doing so, federal funds directly inform the work of local organizations.

Federal Fund Requirements

First, all respondents posited that federal funds influence the policy direction and goals of local executive organizations. One way federal funds direct the policy direction of local organizations is by providing financial support for territorial policy goals and actions that align with federal laws. As a result, local organizational goals, values, and priorities conform to federal policy priorities. For instance, D4 pointed out that "local organizational priorities mostly have nothing to do with climate change depending on the current federal administration." In addition, D1 mentioned that "we have minimum opportunities for climate change work and policies because our local regulations do not prioritize the issues of climate change." Also, D3 stated that "we can't do most of what other Pacific Islands are doing on climate change issues because we have to stay in line with U.S. federal regulations."

On the other hand, the lack of federal funds available for local executive organizations influences the policy direction of local organizations by limiting their policy efforts and work. Even if local organizations received federal funds, such grants mandate territorial organizations to develop policy efforts that comply with the agendas of the federal grants. Therefore, the agenda of the federal government embedded in the federal grants system influences the policy decisions and actions of local policy leaders. Second, all participants posited that the policy and project requirements of federal funds are a mechanism that influence the policy direction of local executive organizations. Participants posited that compliance with federal fund requirements moderate the development of policy goals in local executive organizations. For instance, participants discuss the submission of capital improvement projects that would address local environmental, social, and economic issues but digress from federal policy priorities. In such cases, the federal government issues the final approval on such projects and if the approval of the federal government is received, the local territorial projects will be funded. D1 states that “our work is funded by the Federal Government and to step out of bounds or not comply will cost us our funding which impacts our efforts in ensuring adaptation.” The objectives and requirements of federal funds institutionalize the environment within territorial government systems which facilitate local policy leaders. Through the objectives and requirements of federal grants, the federal government influences the policy priorities and policy direction of the local executive organizations and in return, the policy decisions of local policy actors.

Table 4

Summative Coding

Participant's excerpt	In vivo coding	Pattern coding	Theoretical construct	Theme
Federal funds require us to focus on creating hazardous plans that are a reaction to natural disasters and aim to recover from hurricanes but not on mitigative and adaptation plans.	federal funds require reaction to and recover from not mitigative and adaptation	Federal fund requires focus on recovery and reaction efforts to disasters Federal fund requires development of mitigative and not adaptation efforts	Federal funds influence the institutions which normalize and develop the knowledge and decisions of policy actors. Federal funds is a form of power.	Federal funds are a form of power that informs local policy action of local policy leaders
We can't focus on climate change efforts because our funds don't allow us to do that. We are limited to what we are allowed for by the U.S. We can't have any climate change funding. It makes the decision to prioritize climate change.	can't focus on climate change funds don't allow us we are limited can't have funding makes prioritization of climate change difficult	No federal funds for climate change efforts therefore, can't prioritize climate change	No federal funds and cap on federal funds influence policy priorities	
Being a part of the U.S hinders us from being involved in international efforts towards CC because we don't qualify for all of those avenues. So we sit quietly at the table when those funds and opportunities come up even if those opportunities would work well for the territory	hinders involvement in international efforts sit quietly even if those opportunities work well for territory	Political status hinders involvement in international efforts Political status hinders involvement in opportunities that may help the territory	Political status influence the international opportunities and alliances of territories which impact the decisions and action of policy actors Political status is a form of power that influences the institutions that govern and influence the knowledge of actors	Federal oversight, as a requirement of the island's political status, informs territorial policy priorities and values of executive of organizations thus, impacting the policy actions of local leaders
We have multiple regulations that we must comply with. When we get grants, we have requirements which non-US islands are not required to adhere to but those islands have a lot of corruption because of the absence of the federal government regulations/standards.	multiple regulations when we get grants we have requirements that non-US don't have corruption because of absence of federal government corruption because of absence of federal regulations	Many regulatory requirements but corruption without Federal regulations and Government	Need for Federal regulations and Federal Government creates a culture that strengthens the reliance of the territory on the U.S. despite the knowledge that there are existing limitations	Culture of territorialism reinforces the reliance of American Samoa on the U.S., therefore moderating the operation of local governance on local issues

Local policy leaders also share the fear of being penalized for using federal funds in a manner that was not approved by federal agencies, therefore further encouraging compliance of local organizations with federal fund requirements. Compliance with federal fund requirements further limits the policy options of territorial executive organizations when developing local laws and implementing policy decisions. As such, when federal fund requirements change as a result of evolving federal policy priorities, local organizational values and priorities are in a flux and are constantly changing to conform to federal fund requirements.

Third, in addition to federal fund requirements, federal grant application qualification requirements influence the policy direction of territorial organizations and policy decisions of local policy leaders. All participants posited that most federal grants disqualify territories from being eligible to apply due to its political status, therefore resulting in scarce financial aid opportunities for territories to support organizational objectives and priorities. While federal funds afford states and territories the opportunity to fund the implementation of policy efforts which may contribute to the economic prosperity, environmental protection, and social welfare of the people, the federal grant application qualifications limit the pool of funding territories eligible for. For instance, D7 states that there are “limited available federal funding for territories which limit our pool of options to decide from when making policies.” In this case, the policy options of territories are limited to those allowed by the specific federal grants received by the territory. As a result, the development and implementation of policy efforts of local

executive organizations are influenced by the availability of federal funding which territories are eligible.

Results from this study show that the participants from the executive organizations with climate change responsibilities believe that the federal government uses different means when it intends to influence local action. Through grants-in-aid, it seeks to induce recipients to spend funds on specified functions and governs how such funds are utilized. As such, the federal government influences the policy direction of local organizations by developing and limiting the policy options available for local leaders to those supported by federal funds. As a result, the development of local organizational goals, values, and priorities reflect federal policy priorities and focus on complying with federal laws. For instance, D6 stated that “financial support of the Federal Government influences the goals of our organization because it is aid that we need but don’t have.” Federal funds, requirements associated with federal funds, and the lack of federal funds available to territories shape territorial policy priorities by limiting the policy options in which local policy actors develop local policies.

Federal Fund Caps

Second, all respondents discussed the impacts of federal fund caps on their policy decisions. Federal funds ensure the policy goals of territories, therefore the cap on federal funds restricts policy efforts of the territory. D5 stated that “the lack of funding means we can’t do what we need to do.” In addition, D8 stated that the “cap on federal funds means that federal funds are limited, so we’re required to implement the goals identified by the federal government through federal fund requirements.” D9 state that “projects that are a

priority are mostly those that are identified by federal regulations and standards.” The policy agenda of the federal government is embedded in federal funds, therefore shaping the policy efforts of territories to mimic such policy agenda. As such, caps on federal funds further limit the policy goals of the territory to conform to the policy agenda of the federal government.

Caps on federal funding limits the policy options of the territory and guides the policy decisions of local policy leaders. D1, D2, D3, D4 and D6 posited that the federal grants aim to address issues that are prevalent in the United States and not in the island settings. In this sense, cap on federal funding limits the policy options of territories by providing financial support for projects that align with the policy agenda of the federal government. For instance, all participants posited that policy options of local executive organizations are limited because there is insufficient federal aid to carry out additional projects, therefore impacting local efforts to address issues prevalent in society. In some cases, only a portion of local projects eligible for federal financial support are funded. For example, D10 mentioned that “federal fund caps mean that we have to look for other funding opportunities to support organizational goals but there are literally limited opportunities and we’ve been applying.”

As such, the cap on federal funds refocuses local efforts on pursuing the objectives of the federal government policy agenda which is embedded in the federal grants system. As the cap in federal funds direct the policy efforts of local organizations and guides the policy decisions of local leaders, it impacts their ability to effectively address local issues. This issue is exacerbated by the limited availability of federal grants

for territories. All of these instances illustrate that local organizational actions and goals are realized and developed to the extent supported by federal funds.

Results from this study show that the participants from the executive organizations with climate change responsibilities believe that federal funds shape the values and priorities of the local government organizations. Moreover, participants believe that cap on federal funding impacts their policy decisions. First, cap on federal funds moderate organizational priorities by supporting policies that align with federal policy goals. Local organizations develop local policy priorities to reflect the policy priorities of the federal government. In doing so, local issues are refocused to prioritize the policy goals of the federal government over the local issues present in society. Second, the cap on federal funding further limits the policy options of local territories. When addressing issues relevant to each participating organization, respective participants have stated that the caps on federal funds directly impact the development of applicable policy solutions. The caps on funding guide the policy decisions and actions of local policy leaders.

Theme 2: Federal Oversight Informs Local Policy Action

In this study, the participants indicate that the federal oversight influences their policy decisions and actions. The political status of the territory subjects the island to the rule of the federal government. Specifically, the participants discussed the subject of the territory to the rule of the U.S. legal and political actors, the political arrangements associated with its political status, and the federal funding allocation system. These subjections to federal oversight inform organizational values and priorities, therefore

impact the work of local organizations and eventually, the policy decisions and actions of local leaders.

Legal Authority of U.S. Policy Actors

The island of AS is an unincorporated and unorganized territory of the United States. As such, the territory in its political role is a constituted subject to governance of the United States (Pacific Islands Report, 2007). As a result, the residents of unincorporated and unorganized territories of the United States are expected to operate under the legal authority of U.S. political actors. The political status of the territory, therefore, contextualizes the legal authority invoked by the U.S. legal and political actors on the inhabitants of its territorial possessions (Laughlin, 1979).

The U.S. policy actors influence the policy decisions of territorial policy leaders. When questioned about the factors that impact the efforts of the local executive organizations to ensure climate change adaptation, all participants posited that local executive organizations are limited in their approach to address climate change impacts under the legal authority of U.S. policy leaders. For instance, D4 stated that “other islands are doing so much that we can’t because we have higher officials that we report to.” D7 stated that “I have to be careful with the things I say or whose toes I don’t want to step on because we are primarily funded or our big brother says, ‘don’t talk about this’ which means that we can’t.” In this sense, the policy decisions and actions of local policy leaders are subject to the rule of U.S. policy actors as constituted by the U.S. territorial laws and Constitution. As such, U.S. policy actors inform local policy processes and policy development, implementation, and enforcement, therefore influence the territories

policy priorities and values. The influence on the territories policy priorities and values impacts the local executive organizations' values and priorities, therefore govern the policy actions of local policy leaders. Evidently, the political status of territories enables the U.S. federal government to select when and how to extend or withhold constitutional provisions including civil rights and privileges to unincorporated territories and its residents.

The doctrine of territorialism has given the United States the power to enable its rule over territories. The power of the Constitutional Law allows the United States to rule acquired territories ("U.S. Territories: American Samoa," 2017). As such, the political status of AS gives the United States the authority to govern the territory's issues as they please. The rule of U.S. policy leaders on the affairs of U.S. territories impacts the policy decisions of local policy leaders in various ways. First, federal grants are a mechanism that impact the policy decisions and actions of territorial leaders. For instance, D9 stated that "we can't talk about climate change in our federal grant proposals." Local policy actors are unable to discuss climate change as an issue that impacts local communities when applying for federal aid or apply for funding to help the territory build its adaptive capacity to climate change.

Second, the rule of the U.S. policy leaders on the affairs of territories is evident in the restrictions it places on its international activities. For instance, D8 stated that "we can't participate in climate change international meetings because we are a U.S. territory." Moreover, D2 stated that "we sit behind the U.S. in international meetings because they represent us." In such position, the territory does not actively participate in

discussions or have a voice in policy development. As a U.S. territory, the island is prohibited from participating in international meetings that may help the island in its policy preparations to address climate change. When participation is allowed, it is in the role of participant/member but not to engage in the role of decision-making. In international alliances in which the territory is a member, D5 stated that a “representative from the U.S. speaks on behalf of territories while the territories sit quiet at roundtable discussions.” This limits the opportunities for AS to engage and interact with islands facing similar issues. More importantly, territories may not be able to voice their opinions on the issues that impact their quality of life.

The territory is also expected to be a part of international alliances that the United States is a participant. As a territorial possession of the U.S., the affairs of AS is governed by the federal government as per the Constitution (Laughlin, 1979). As such, AS is a part of international alliances to the extent the federal government allows. The decision to allow territories membership in international alliances are made by U.S. policy actors. The power of territorialism is exercised by U.S. policy makers through disciplining the territories in the international endeavors territories can be a part of. For example, D6 posited that the withdrawal of the United States from The Paris Agreement “impacted the territory’s efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects.” When questioned about any specific impacts of the withdrawal on the territory, D7 stated that “we lost the support that we would’ve gotten from international countries that would assist us in combating climate change.”

The rule of U.S. policy actors over its territories is constitutional but uninformed on all the issues the island faces. For instance, D7 posited that as an unorganized and unincorporated territory of the U.S., the “Interior Department makes selective decisions when it comes to the issues we face as a society.” This stance is reinforced by the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources (2008, p.22) in their description of the affiliation of the United States in affairs of the territory as “when they feel like getting involved in an insular area issue, they will be involved; otherwise, just let the territories swim on their own. If they can’t make it, that is their tough luck.” In this case, the federal government governs the affairs of its territories, but the exercise of its rule is not uniform on all issues the territory faces. For instance, the federal government’s oversight on the affiliation of local executive organizations in international alliances vary. Specifically, D10 stated that “our organization is allowed by our federal partners to reach out to international partners if an issue occurs within the territory and such assistance is needed” while D2, D3, D4, D5, D6, D7, D8 and D9 discuss the inability of their organizations to reach out to international partners for assistance. Approval from the respective federal partner organizations must be sought and received prior to participation in international alliances. The variance of the federal government’s oversight on the work of territorial organizations prevents the organizations from acquiring the necessary assistance required to effectively carry out their organization’s missions and goals. The doctrine of territorialism has given the United States the power to enable its selective rule over territories thus, resulting in territories treated as separate and unequal constitution

possessions. The power of the Constitutional Law allows the United States to selectively rule acquired territories (“U.S. Territories: Territorial Federalism,” 2017).

The intervention of U.S. policy makers in the affairs of U.S. territories inform the policy direction and policy actions of local government on the issues of climate change. Federal oversight on its territories is a result of the political status of the island. This oversight creates the policy space of territorial governments, therefore structuring policy expectations of the federal government of its territorial possession. Evident in this section are the different ways that U.S. policy makers govern the activities of local territorial government. Territories can’t talk about climate change freely, can’t participate in international meetings focused on climate change, and are expected to be a part of international endeavors as per the determination of the United States. Evidently in the responses of the participants, power is exercised through these interventions.

Land Tenure System

The political arrangements which are bounded to the political status of the territory influence the policy actions and decisions of local territorial leaders. AS is an unincorporated and unorganized territory of the United States. It is unincorporated because not all provisions of the U.S. Constitution apply to the Territory. It is the only territory that remains “unorganized” with its own Constitution but under the direct supervision of the federal government through the U.S. DOI. This unique political status is the result of decisions consciously taken by the AS leaders to keep their traditional land tenure system. As such, the local land tenure system is an indirect result of the island’s political status. While the land tenure system preserves the landownership of Samoans, it

effects the implementation and enforcement of preservation and conservation efforts of government organizations.

The traditional land tenure practices influence the development, implementation, and enforcement of local leaders' policy actions that address climate change issues. For instance, the island's land tenure system ensures that those of Samoan race or ancestry have the right to own or purchase land in the territory. When owning land, Samoans have the right to reject any development proposed by the local government on their private lands. D1, D2, D3, D4, D5, D6, D7 and D8 posited that the landowners reject developments proposed by government organizations to help the community address the impacts of climate change. Unfortunately, nothing can be done to address this issue because land ownership is protected by the island's political status. Therefore, the Indigenous land tenure system complicates the ability of the local government organizations to implement efforts to address climate change issues. The land ownership system is protected by the territory's political status, therefore reinforces the system despite its impacts on the policy actions of local policy leaders.

In addition, the land tenure is tied to the kinship system and any decision on family lands should be by consensus of the assembled descent group. This tiered land tenure system further complicates the work of local government organizations in developing and implementing adaptation efforts. Local government organizations are required to get the approval of families to construct developments on private land. Having gone through the process of seeking approval many times, all participants opine that the land tenure system complicates their efforts to protect the environment because

descent groups have to collaboratively make a decision on whether or not such projects are approved. In most cases, participants have stated that the members of the descent groups do not have a unified voice on the issue, therefore resulting in the rejection of the proposed projects.

On the other hand, when members of the descent groups agree to Government proposed projects, they require Government organizations to provide proper compensation in return. In this case, the participants have stated that the local government and federal government lose out financially through the compensation negotiations with families. For instance, D9 stated that “we negotiate with the families, but it becomes harder because it almost feels like we can’t meet in the middle. There is no compromising between decent compensation and implementation of preservation efforts.” As a result, most government-owned projects, whether local or federal, are discontinued despite the importance of such projects in enhancing the adaptability of the territory to climate change. This land tenure system is protected by its political status’ therefore, discontinuation of important adaptation related projects of the local government may persist.

The territory’s Indigenous land tenure system is protected by the constitution that binds the United States and AS. This means that as long as the island remains an unincorporated and unorganized territory of the United States it will preserve its Indigenous land tenure. The land tenure system moderates the policy options of government organizations by allowing descent groups to govern land use. In addition, the tiered kinship system of descent groups further complicates the work of government

organizations when families impose financial obligations on government organizations who's already operating on scarce financial resources. These factors impact the policy options of the government organizations and implicate the development and implementation of adaptation efforts. As such, government organizations opt out of implementing adaptation efforts that are appropriate to address climate change issues because of land ownership or because the financial obligations required by the families exhaust organization resources. As a result of these implications, government organizations have stated that they shift organizational priorities, therefore impact the policy actions and decisions of local policy leaders.

Federal Funding Allocation System

There are various ways the federal funding allocation system impacts the territorial policy priorities and the local decisions of policy actors. First, the U.S. territories merely qualify for other types of financial assistance because of its political status. As such, the political status of territories impact the availability of federal financial aid which in turn, influences the territorial policy priorities. As an unincorporated/unorganized territory, AS is only eligible for certain financial aid opportunities to accommodate the territory's scarce local financial resources to address local issues. For instance, D9 stated that "when we face local issues that require solutions in which we do not have financial resources allotted for, we resort to applying for financial aid through other grants." D6 stated that one of the difficulties in applying for other grants is that "we do not qualify for most of the grants available because of our

political status.” As such, organizations policy priorities and values shift which influence the policy decisions of local policy leaders.

On the other hand, the federal funding system moderates the financial aid available to territories. The political status of the island affords the United States the ability to influence the eligibility of the territory for financial aid opportunities. For instance, D8 discussed the role of the United States in selecting historical sites to be nominated for further funding. D8 shared the following:

U.S. does not allow AS to be placed on the same list as WS in the National Register of Historic Places for a better chance to get selected for preservation funding. History shows that sites in AS have never been considered.

As a result of the lack of funding, D8 states that “I don’t have to change my priorities and do what I can with the minimal financial aid I have.” The United States influences the policy priorities and values of its territories by governing the availability of financial aid. The availability of aid directly impacts the local organizations’ policy priorities and values, therefore influencing the policy actions of local policy leaders.

Second, federal funds are apportioned for territorial projects which reflect the policy goals of the United States. When using federal funds, island territories must adhere to federal regulations and standards associated with such funds. For instance, D6 stated that “the U.S. affords us their support not only financially but in engineering and consulting services with the general goal of developing projects that uphold federal standards.” Adherence to federal standards as a contingent part of utilizing federal funds is a mechanism that imposes federal policy priorities onto the local government. D11

stated that “our federal partners approve the projects that we wish to implement and if they don’t support climate change actions, then it hinders our ability to adapt to climate change.” Federal grants are a vehicle for federal priorities to be implemented in territories. These examples illustrate the impact of the territory’s political status on the policy decisions and actions of local policy leaders.

Adherence to federal standards as a contingent part of utilizing federal funds is an exercise of power by the federal government on its territorial possessions. When federal policy priorities are imposed on territories, local policy actors have to shift organizational priorities simultaneously. D1 stated that “our organization’s work is funded by the Federal Government and non-compliant efforts will cost us our funding.” D3 mentioned that “the policy priorities of the Federal Government are funneled down to states and territories and it becomes our job to implement these priorities.” If the National Conference of State Legislatures (2014) reveals health and economy prosperity as the current policy priorities of the federal government, the United States will allocate funding for states and territories accordingly. This means that the policy priorities of the territory will shift its focus to economic and health issues simultaneously and not environmental issues.

Federal funds are apportioned to states and territories to support the policy goals of the United States. This influences the policy direction and focus of territories which impacts the policy decisions and actions of local leaders. The way in which federal funds are allocated impact the policy decisions of local policy leaders. The U.S. territories merely qualify for other types of financial assistance because of its political status. As

such, the political status of territories impacts the financial aid available to the territories. With scarce federal funds, territories shift policy priorities to meet the policy goals associated with available federal funds. The shift in territorial policy goals influence the goals of executive organizations that impact the policy actions and decisions of local policy leaders.

Federal Policies on Territories

In U.S. territorial law, the status of the legal subject (territory) within the state is mediated by the constitutional status of the territory. As such, the territory's policy actions are subject to the rule of the United States. The participants illustrate the different ways in which the federal policies related to specific executive organizations mediate the ability of those organizations to address climate change issues.

First, the content of federal policies determines the work of territorial executive organizations by requiring local territories to achieve selected policy goals and uphold federal standards in their operations. These boundaries develop and refine the work of local organizations. For instance, D7 posited that the "In my line of work, the jurisdiction of my organization is restricted to ensuring that federal organizations are in compliance with the laws that we enforce. This jurisdiction extends only to federal organizations but not local organizations." The content of federal policies governs the jurisdiction and policy actions of local policy leaders. For instance, D4 shared the following:

We had to change our priorities because they weren't in alignment with those of the federal policy priorities, but our priorities were to preserve our natural

resources. Because we can't do that, we now have to shift our focus on educating the public on the importance of natural resource protection.

Evidently, the scope of work for local organizations is determined and refined by the federal policies. The work of local organizations influences the policy actions and decisions of local policy leaders.

The adaptive capacity of federal policy standards influence the adaptive capacity of territorial regulations. The content of federal policies determines the adaptive capacity of local policies. For instance, D9 stated that "our organization receives federal funds to focus on projects that need to be rebuilt and recover from the impacts of climate change." To rebuild and recover infrastructure indicates that federal policy priorities/standards are focused on mitigation of climate change impacts and not necessarily on adaptation efforts to impacts of climate change. In this case, if federal policies take a mitigative approach on climate change issues, the states and territories will adopt the same approach as the operations of territories are mediated by federal policy priorities and federal funding.

Second, the content of federal policies does not acknowledge the unique situations and issues of territories. For instance, while participants witness and experience the impacts of climate change, D1 mentioned that "we cannot prioritize climate change in our organizations because we do not have the funds to support climate change efforts." The content of federal policies determines the pursuit of adaptation efforts of territories. For instance, D11 states that "federal policies don't favor climate change and if the U.S. does not support climate change, then so can't we." Climate change is not a federal policy priority; therefore, the local government priorities do not emphasize the importance of

climate change work in its organizations. For instance, D1 stated that “there are a few organizational works on climate change and if there are more, each organization is working alone.” In addition, all of the participating organizations did not identify climate change as a policy priority within their organizations. For instance, D5 stated that “although our new pursuit of sustainable operations contributes to the climate change resiliency of the territory, climate change adaptation was not the initial intention of our endeavors.” The inability of federal policy priorities to acknowledge the unique issues of territories impacts the ability of the territory to address climate change issues.

Third, the contents of federal policies do not acknowledge the issue of climate change as a policy priority. The territory’s policy efforts to address climate change is a reflection of the policy efforts of the federal government. D11 stated that “I think when we have an administration that does not support climate change, coming from the Trump administration, it does have an impact on the policies we develop as an island territory.” All participants labeled the issue of climate change as a new topic in which their respective organizations have not discussed. More importantly, all participants claimed that the issue of climate change was recently introduced to their organizations through federal grants issued by the U.S. DOI. D6 stated that “climate change wasn’t brought to the attention of my organization as an issue until 2016 when the Office of Insular Affairs awarded a federal grant to address issues related to climate change.” Moreover, D7 stated that “until recently, climate change is a new topic for our organization so there is a need for a territorial strategic plan on how government organizations should address climate change issues.” The contents of federal policies influence the prioritization of the issue of

climate change in territorial policies, therefore impacting the policy actions of local leaders.

In summary, federal policies are applied and enforced within territories because of its political status and as a result, territorial rules, and regulations reflect federal laws. The content of federal policies determine the scope of work and authority jurisdictions of territorial executive organizations. Federal policies impose regulation requirements that govern the operations, work and priorities of the territorial government. As such, federal laws institutionalize policy space in which local government agencies operate. The contents of federal policies do not acknowledge the issue of climate change as a policy priority. In addition, the contents of federal policies do not acknowledge the unique situations and issues of territories, therefore local and federal governments do not prioritize local issues. As an unincorporated and unorganized territory of the U.S., federal regulations and laws guide the development of territorial policies and influence the policy actions of local policy leaders.

Theme 3: Culture of Territorialism

In this study, participants posited that the needs of the territory and the legitimacy of the United States are reasons behind its reliance on the United States despite their knowledge of the impact of the current regulatory framework on their policy decisions and actions on climate change issues. One of the prevailing themes of this study is the territorial relationship between AS and the United States. Specifically, the federal government places regulatory requirements on the territorial government which change with growth and industrialization. The role of the United States in the affairs of the

territorial government have a profound impact on the appearance and lifestyle in AS. The role of the territories as dependents of the United States creates the culture of territorialism that normalize the territorial relationship and forms the basis for the identity of the territory.

The culture of territorialism renders territories vulnerable to the authority of the sovereign states. AS has unique financial and technical needs because of its remote geographical location and distinct political status. As the United States continues to provide the necessary aid to enable the territory to address their needs, the island will continue to choose federal oversight on local government operations despite their knowledge of the impact of federal laws on their policy decisions. For instance, D2 shared the following:

As a territory and in international meetings, we sit behind the U.S. Again, this setting does not prohibit us from voicing our political opinions thus, achieving resilience. It's just another layer we have to go through to get our voice out.

D4 stated that "I don't think that we are prohibited from achieving resilience with our current regulatory framework. We just have limitations on the funding level. It has nothing to do with being resilient to climate change." The concept of territory is the most powerful and easiest way for the federal government to obtain the island's loyalty, which in turn renders federal government institutions legitimate. The culture of the existing territorial relationship subjects the island territory to the rule of the United States. As a result, the policy priorities of the territory will be guided by federal legislation simultaneously, therefore impact the policy actions and decisions of local policy leaders.

Territorial Needs

The needs of the territory encourage the reliance of territories on the United States. Interviews with policy actors reveal that the financial and technical needs of local organizations reinforce the reliance of the territory on the United States. The needs of the territory are continuously provided by the U.S., therefore reinforces the reliance of the territory on the United States and encourages the territory to maintain its political status. By maintaining its political status, federal laws will continue to take impact the policy actions of local leaders on issues of climate change.

The U.S. federal government provides the majority of the territory's revenue but also imposes regulatory requirements that require financial and technical resources not available to the territory. As a result, local organizations require financial and technical aid to address local issues and comply with federal legislation. However, the territory's ability to attain the required financial and technical assistance is exacerbated by its remote geographical location and its political status. As the United States unceasingly provides financial and technical assistance to the territory to address their needs, the territory may continue to rely on the United States and opt to maintain its current political status. Therefore, the federal laws will continue to impact and guide the policy direction of the territorial government. Ultimately, the federal legislation will continue to influence the policy decisions and actions of local policy leaders on climate change issues.

Local Need for Financial and Technical Assistance. There is a need for financial and technical assistance in territorial islands. All participants in the study alluded to the need for financial aid and technical assistance of local governmental

organizations when facing public policy issues such as healthcare, environment, economic planning, education and much more. For instance, D6 stated that “I can’t focus on adaptation and resilience work because of the scarce resources and money.” D12 stated that “local revenues and monies are not allotted to our organizations to support the work that we do and because of that, I rely on federal dollars.” D9 stated shared the following about local funding:

Not support the goals that our organization has that are not part of the policy goals associated with our existing federal funds. Our work contributes to building resiliency, but our Government does not support our work because there’s no funding allotted for us. So, I need financial assistance to implement resilience work.

When local financial aid is scarce, local government organizations rely on federal grants. When territorial organizations rely on federal financial aid, they are required to comply with the standards and requirements of such funds. This is problematic for territories because compliance with federal fund conditions requires technical and financial aid that the territories do not have.

As financial assistance from the United States continues to help the territory address its needs, the local government may continue to rely on federal funds. For instance, D2 stated that “federal funding we operate with enable us to help the ecosystem better respond to climate change impacts, so we need federal funds.” In addition, D6 stated that “the services and funding afforded to us by our federal partners help us achieve our goals.” Lastly, D4 shared the following:

Collaboration with off-island organizations and institutions for technical expertise and institutional capacity building to pursue research in support of identifying better ways to grow crops is provided by the financial assistance we receive. So, the federal funds we receive helps us a lot.

In light of these benefits made possible by the affiliation of the territory with the U.S., the territory has opted to remain with the status quo (Aga, 2017).

Local Need for Federal Oversight. All participants of the study emphasized the importance of federal oversight over the territory's government activities. For instance, D6 stated that there is a need to "affiliate with a major country to ensure responsible infrastructure development." In this territorial relationship, the U.S. oversight enables the territory to address its needs, therefore reinforces the territory's relationship with the United States. In addition, D10 stated that "federal oversight ensure that funds are utilized properly within our government." The responses of the participants indicate that there is a continuous need for federal oversight on the activities of the local government. As a result, the territory's policy leaders will continuously require federal oversight, therefore reinforce its relationship with the governing elite and carry on with its reliance on the U.S.

Territories are geographically, socially, economically and politically structured in a way which renders federal oversight necessary. For instance, D3 states that the "Federal Government provides technical assistance, expert advice, funding, and different avenues to help fight health issues, so we need the U.S." The island territory has unique social, economic and environmental needs due to its remote geographical location, social-

cultural setting and political structure. The territory is unable to address these issues without the assistance of the United States. For instance, D8 shared the following:

The financial support received from the Federal Government are vital to our efforts in rebuilding and recovering from changes brought forth by climate change. These forms of aid aren't available locally but are needed to aid our territory in these endeavors.

As a U.S. territory, the island receives aid from the United States to support local efforts in addressing local issues. The way in which the territory is politically structured reinforces its reliance on the United States for assistance to address its unique needs and encourages the territory's need for federal oversight on local issues. As a result of such continuous reliance on the U.S., federal policy priorities will always be imposed on local government policy priorities.

Local Need for Knowledge on Climate Change. While the participants discuss the different ways in which the territorial relationship impacts the development of local regulations on climate change issues, there is a disconnect between the work of responsible executive organizations and the issue of climate change. This disconnect occurs for two reasons.

First, the federal laws govern the policy direction of local executive organizations. As a result, the policy priorities of the United States are imposed on the territory. For instance, D11 stated that "we can't react locally to climate change if Federal doesn't support climate change." As such, the territory's regulations and policy priorities reflect those of the federal government. If the issues of climate change are not a policy priority

for the federal government, then it is not reflected in the policy regulations of the territory. D6 mentioned that “our organization really doesn’t address climate change specifically therefore our work is not really tied to climate change” but also specified that the responsibility of their organization is to design protective measures to ensure structures are properly built. In addition, D3 stated that “I am not sure how we address climate change issues” but discusses the goal of their organization is to address local health issues. On the other hand, participants have identified the issue of climate change as one which is new and was not introduced into the local government until recently as federal grants became available to support local adaptation policies. For instance, D11 stated that “climate change is a new topic and so organizations don’t really recognize it thus, we can’t really connect their organization’s work with the issue of climate change.” The political structure of territories authorizes federal legislature to take precedence over local regulations, therefore creating the policy space in which local policy actors operate. This policy space plays a key role in regulating the decisions and actions of policy actors.

Second, the disconnect between the issue of climate change and organizational work is caused by the barriers of policy actors in understanding the issues of climate change. For instance, while most participants express their lack of experiences with climate change issues, participants also resort to the delayed occurrence of climate change impacts. D9 stated that “if the climate changes at all, it evolves so slow that the difference cannot be seen in a human lifetime.” Catastrophes usually bring to mind phenomena like tsunamis that are over in an instant and have immediate evident dire consequences. The changes in Earth’s climate do not seem to fit this mold because they

take a century or more for their consequences to fully manifest. The problem of long-term consequences is compounded by the long lead time for the changes in the climate to overtake, therefore causes participants to have limited experience with climate change and associated impact. As such, the limited experiences of policy actors with the long-term changes of the climate and manifestations of climate change impacts impact their decisions and actions on policies relevant to climate change issues.

In summary, AS is geographically located remotely from the United States. In addition, the territory is socially, economically, and politically structured in a way which renders federal oversight necessary. The way in which the territory is politically structured reinforces its reliance on the United States for assistance to address its unique needs and encourages the territory's need for federal oversight on local issues. Federal policy priorities will always be imposed on local government policy priorities as long as the island remains a U.S. territory. Operating in such policy space, participants discuss the disconnect between the work of their organizations and the issue of climate change. In addition, the limited experiences of policy actors with climate change and its impact cause barriers for policy actors in understanding and addressing the issues of climate change. The needs of the territory in terms of financial and technical assistance, federal oversight on the work of local government organizations and the state of knowledge of local policy actors on the issues of climate change are factors which are moderated and influenced by the political status of the island. More importantly, these needs impact the policy decisions and actions of local policy leaders on issues of climate change.

Legitimacy of Territorialism

The relationship of the territory and the federal government is governed by the U.S. Constitution. The federal government is delegated enumerated powers to include governing the regulatory structure of the territory. AS's legal and regulatory structure is fundamentally different from other U.S. territories because of its unincorporated and unorganized territorial status. The current regulatory structure of the territory consists of less adaptive federal regulations mapped onto less comprehensive territorial law and policy. Federal regulations guide the policy direction of territorial law on issues such as climate change, therefore govern the discourse of policy actors on the issues of climate change.

Operating in a policy space which is governed by the federal government affords the territory the necessary financial and technical support to address economic, environmental and social issues, but it also influences the development of local policies and the policy decisions of local leaders on climate change issues which impact the adaptive capacity of the territory. There is a general consensus among some participants on the existence of climate change and the awareness of its impacts on the local communities. For instance, D3 stated that "bigger public health threats appear in our island because of tropical diseases that are in areas not usually found in because of the changing climate." In addition, "D1 stated that "we have a bigger problem with our reefs as they have bleached more than they ever have in the past because of climate change." There is also an understanding of the effects of federal laws on their policy actions and decisions. For instance, D16 stated that "we experience similar climate change impacts,

but we cannot embrace the climate change movement like the other non-territory pacific islands do because we are a territory.” In addition, D11 stated that “we follow the Federal Government on the issue of climate change, but we are truly being left out of the international discussions on climate change because we are a part of the U.S.”

Despite the participants’ understanding of the impacts of federal laws on territorial policies on the issues of climate change, participants mentioned the need to comply with federal regulations to ensure environmental protection and natural resource conservation. For instance, D10 shared the following:

I think we have an extra layer of limitations that limit us from getting access to the help we need as we face climate change due to our political status, but such limitations aren’t a big deal because we receive financial support to enable vulnerability assessments which impact our quality of life.

In addition, D5 shared,

I believe compliance with federal regulations is cumbersome but necessary because it helps us protect the environment. Compliance with federal regulations costs us but it positions us ahead of other non-territory pacific islands in our efforts to protect and conserve the environment and natural resources.

The ability of the United States to extend its lawful powers across its geography to relentlessly provide technical and financial support to its territorial possessions encourage the continued reliance of the territory on the U.S., therefore illustrates that the territory identifies the federal government as legitimate.

In summary, the territory is loyal to its political status which implies that federal legislation will continue to take precedence over local laws, therefore influencing the policy priorities of the local government and the policy decisions of local policy leaders. There is a general consensus among participants that climate change exists, and local policy actors are aware of the impacts of the current regulatory framework on their policy decisions on the issues of climate change however, the territory perceived the U.S. institutions as legitimate. As a result, the territory relies on the United States which reinforces its current political status and the authority of the United States. This implies that federal legislation will continue to guide the policy direction of territorial regulations, influence the policy decisions and actions of local policy leaders, and ultimately determine the adaptive capacity of the territory to climate change.

Summary

This chapter focused on the results from the transcribed interviews with the 11 participants. The research findings were presented based on each factor of the current regulatory framework that affect the policy decisions and actions of local policy leaders on the issues of climate change. To improve the adaptive capacity of the territory to climate change, analysis of the governance structure of the territory was necessary. Specifically, there was a need to focus on the current regulatory framework and describe the major factors that influence the policy decisions of local leaders. There is a general consensus among the participants that climate change exists however, the federal funds, federal oversight, and the culture of territorialism impact their policy actions and decisions on climate change issues. These aspects institutionalize the policy space that

policy actors operate and moderate the forms of power and knowledge that develop governance, therefore affect the policy decisions of local policy leaders on climate change issues.

One of the major challenges that contribute to the development of effective climate change policy actions stem from the territory's governance system. The territory's governance system is highly influenced by the federal-territorial relationship. Understanding these challenges may assist local policy leaders enhance local policies to effectively address the climate change predicament facing the island. Building upon the findings of this study, I present recommendations that may assist policy makers make decisions that would enhance the adaptive capacity of the territory to climate change issues and make suggestions for future studies in Chapter 5. The chapter concludes by presenting the overtones for positive social change and research conclusions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current regulatory framework and describe the major factors that impact the policy actions of local AS policy leaders on the issues of climate change. In the face of a changing climate, the territory's infrastructure, health, environment, ecosystems, and population are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Territory leaders have not developed the adaptive capacity required to build and maintain climate change resiliency. Weak governance systems are a contributing factor to the issue of low adaptive capacity (Adger et al., 2009; Amundsen et al., 2010), especially in settings with a complex governance structure like AS's. The current governance structure of AS consists of federal legislation overlaid onto local regulations. Researchers have yet to explore and describe the extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change policy actions of its territories or possessions (Schwebel, 2018). Scarce literature has addressed the issue of limited adaptive capacity in the territory (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016).

The research findings showed that federal funds, federal oversight, and the culture of territorialism are mechanisms that influence the policy actions and decisions of local policy leaders on climate change issues. Federal grants have been the primary means through which the federal government has pursued its domestic policy objectives, therefore influencing the policy objectives of territorial leaders on issues such as climate change. First, federal financial aid is transferred to territories for a specific purpose and subject recipients to substantive and procedural conditions found in the authorizing legislation. Federal financial aid requirements include eligible uses of funds, matching

requirements, maintenance of prior spending levels, and the procedure by which grant funds are to be expended. As a result, federal grants influence the policy actions of local policy leaders by imposing funding requirements that influence the development of local policies. Second, caps on federal funds influence the policy actions of the local policy leaders by supporting specific policy priorities identified by the federal government.

The territory is subject to the oversight of the federal government, which influences the policy actions and decisions of local policy leaders on climate change issues. The territory is subject to the authority of U.S. political actors and the political arrangements bounded with the territory's political status such as the land tenure system, the federal funding allocation system, and federal legislations. First, U.S. policy leaders develop policy objectives that are imposed on its territories. The U.S. policy leaders have developed federal policy objectives that do not acknowledge the unique sustainability needs and issues of the territories or recognize the issue of climate change, which influence the policy direction of local organizations on local issues and on the matter of climate change (McGuire, 2017; Mueller, 2012; Park & Samples; 2017). Second, the political arrangement bounded to the territory's political status, such as the preservation of the Indigenous land tenure system influences the development, implementation, and enforcement of policy actions of local territorial leaders. Landowners are able to reject development project proposals, which may help the territory adapt to climate change impacts (Schwebel, 2018b). However, preservation of the Indigenous land tenure system is protected by the deed of cession between the United States and AS (Fakhruddin et al., 2015; Faleomavaega, 1994). This government setup directly impacts the policy decisions

of local policy leaders on climate change issues. Third, the allocation of federal financial aid influences local spending; specifically, the amount and type of services provided by the local territorial government affect the organizational structure and decision-making processes of the local territorial government. Because of its political status, the territory merely qualifies for other types of financial assistance, which impacts the amount of financial aid available to the territory to develop and implement policies. With scarce federal funds available to the territory, territory leaders often shift policy priorities in accordance with the policy priorities and requirements of such federal funds (Environmental Law Institute, 2013). Climate change issues represent one of these areas of shifting priority. Federal funds are apportioned and allocated to the territories by the federal government for certain policy priorities, which influences the policy decisions and actions of local leaders.

The culture of territorialism reinforces the territorial relationship despite general consensus among participants on the impacts of federal legislation on their policy decisions on the issues of climate change. Island territories are geographically, economically, culturally, socially, and environmentally designed to have unique needs that differ from developed states (Tegart et al., 1990). The unique needs of island territories are met by sovereign states. First, the territory has existing unique financial and technical needs, which are exacerbated by the requirements of federal financial aid. Scarce local financial aid and limited opportunities for financial assistance causes the heavy reliance of the territory on federal funds and the technical assistance of the federal government (Torruella, 2013; Weaver, 2008). However, in doing so, local territories are

required to comply with the standards associated with federal funds and the appropriate requirements imposed by the federal government (U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, 2020; U.S. GAO, 2002; U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources, 2008). Compliance with such standards and requirements require additional financial and technical assistance unavailable in territories (Weaver, 2008). Although financial and technical assistance from the United States helps the territory address some of its issues, compliance with financial legislation and financial aid requirements also requires resources that are unavailable to the island. In addition, the way in which the island is economically, environmentally, and socially structured reinforces its reliance on the United States for assistance to address its unique needs, which encourages the territory's need for federal oversight on local issues (Stayman, 2009). The continued reliance of the territory on the oversight of the United States reinforces the culture of territorialism, thus maintaining the current functionality of the federal and territorial relationship.

Furthermore, operating in the policy space managed by federal oversight spurred discussion by the participants about the disconnection between their organizations and the issue of climate change. This discussion is counter to the literature on the climate change-related responsibilities of organizations (Nunn et al., 2014; Spooner et al., 2017). The participants also discussed their limited experiences with climate change impacts, which caused a barrier to understanding and addressing climate change issues within their organizations. Ultimately, the needs of AS (financial/technical, and federal oversight on the work of local organizations and the state of knowledge of local policy actors on the issues of climate change) influence the policy decisions and actions of local policy

leaders on climate change issues. Second, although participants understood the influence of federal funds and federal legislation on their policy decisions and actions, they perceived federal institutions as legitimate. This perception reinforces the territory's continuing reliance on the United States.

Interpretation of Findings

The research findings showed that federal funds, federal oversight on the operations of territorial government, and the culture of territorialism impact the policy direction of the territory and the policy decisions and actions of local policy leaders on climate change issues. The literature reviewed in this study revealed the history of Samoa's encounter with the United States and the interlinkages of power, knowledge, actors, and institutions in creating the culture, religion, economy, and political systems of the island (Betzold, 2015; Bolton et al., 2020; Butt, 2013; Catarci, 2001; Davidson, 1969). These aspects of the Samoan way of life extend to those institutions that governed environmental matters. Findings of this study validate the continued impact of the United States on the natural resource management of the territory. The findings of this study reveal that the federal funds, federal oversight, and the culture of territorialism are the major aspects of the current regulatory framework, which create and manage the policy space in which the territory's policies are created, implemented, and enforced; therefore, influencing the island's policy direction on issues such as climate change. These aspects directly influence the policy decisions of local leaders on climate change issues that influence the adaptive capacity and resilience of the territory.

This study was informed by Van Assche, Beunen and Duineveld's (2017) EGT. EGT offers a framework for understanding governance in a community. EGT provides a structure which shows and describes the interactions of the different elements of governance, which include its actors, subjects, objects, formal and informal institutions, power and knowledge, and how different dependencies develop and constrain the course of governance. Everything in governance including policies and laws, are the result of the interaction between actors, institutions, organizations, and discourses (Van Assche et al., 2017). In this sense, governance should be understood as a set of nested processes, in which institutions, actors, power and knowledge, discourses, and ideologies transform each other constantly (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001). The coevolution of actor/institution and power/knowledge produces governance paths (Beunen et al., 2015). Analyzing the policy space in which policy development, actions, and decisions of the territory's executive organizations are conducted to show the elements of extraterritorial governance which impact the policy decisions of territorial leaders on climate change issues.

Findings of this study illustrate the interworking of power and knowledge within the policy space which the territory operates. As the territory's policy operations are vested in the policy space that is governed by the federal government, the institutions of this territorial relationship coordinate the policy actors, therefore influence their knowledge and discourse on the issues of climate change and impact their policy decisions and actions. The findings of this study identify and validate that federal funds, federal oversight, and the culture of territorialism are the major factors of the current regulatory framework that impact the policy decisions of local leaders and adaptive

capacity of the island on climate change. Federal funds, federal oversight, and the culture of territorialism are effects of power (federalism) which constitute the leadership that governs the affairs of the territory. This leadership does not prioritize the issue of climate change in its legislation or grant aid funding, therefore influences the policy direction of the territory on the issue of climate change and impacts the policy decisions of the policy actors. This speaks to the need for improved awareness efforts to inform the local policy actors on the impacts of climate change and the major factors of the current regulatory framework which impacts their policy decisions on climate change issues.

The federal government has a large presence in territorial policy activities including climate change. First, that presence is demonstrated by federal funds. Federal grant programs which are subsidies to territorial governments are accompanied by federal top-down regulation requirements. The Congressional Research Service (2019) found that federal funds are a mechanism used by the federal government to pursue its domestic policy objectives in its extraterritorial jurisdictions by transferring funds that are accompanied by top-down regulations. Top-down regulations impose regulatory requirements on territories that guide the policy direction of the territory on policy issues such as climate change. The issues of climate change are not a policy priority in the current federal legislation and as a result, territories have minimum opportunities for climate change work and policies (De Pryck & Gemenne, 2017; Dilger, 2015; Fredrickson et al., 2018; McGuire, 2017; Schwebel, 2018). This influences the policy actions of local leaders on climate change issues. The lack of federal funding opportunities available to the territory because of its political status also impact the policy

direction of the territory on policy issues. In addition, the cap on federal funds enables support for specific policy priorities of the federal government.

Foucault (1980) attributed power to people or organizations, to their particular strategies, to institutional configurations, and to social structures through which people make sense of their environment and argues that the discourse of policy actors are linked with systems of power. These forms of power develop the beliefs, values, and systems of representation that discourse embodies (Hall, 2001; Mills, 1997). The discourses of policy actors encode different representations of experience. Jeremy (1998) found that the source of such representations is the communicative context within which the discourse is embedded. Mills (1997) argues that institutions and social contexts are responsible for the formulation and promulgation of discourses. In this case, federal funds are a source of power which institutionalize the knowledge base of local policy leaders on climate change issues, therefore influence their policy decisions and actions. Federal policy and project requirements, federal grant application qualification requirements, and the cap on federal funds are the effects of power (federal funds) which manage the policy space in which the territory's policy processes and policies are developed. Policy actors enter into such policy spaces, which in turn coordinate them, define them, name them, and provide them with substance and intention which influences their actions and decisions (Ritzer, 2004).

Second, the oversight of the federal government on the territory directly impacts the policy decisions and actions of local policy leaders on the issues of climate change. The oversight of the federal government on territories is the source of power that also

governs the policy space in which territories operate. The policy space in which the territory's political identity is invested is governed by the oversight of the federal government. The effects of this form of power includes the subjection of territorial governance to the authority of the U.S. political leaders, the federal funding allocation system, federal legislation, and the political arrangement bounded to the territory's political status like its land tenure system.

U.S. political actors develop federal legislation which are imposed on the territories, therefore authorize the development of local regulations (Mueller, 2012; The Review, 2017). Policy leaders opine that the federal legislations created and authorized by U.S. policy actors have several impacts on their policy decisions on the issues of climate change. The territory's climate change activities are restricted by the limitations the U.S. political actors place on the participation of the territories in international climate change meetings. In doing so, territories do not have the opportunity to voice concerns and contribute to discussions within multi-jurisdictional meetings on the issues of climate change which have direct impacts on the quality of life of its population (McAdam, 2010).

In addition, the federal legislations that guide the development of territorial policies do not acknowledge the unique issues of the territories which are a result of its economic, environmental, geographical, and social-cultural settings (Roman, 2015; Veenema, 2019). More importantly, the participants opine that the federal legislations do not acknowledge the issue of climate change, therefore local territorial regulations follow suit (Hawksley, 2009; Schwebel, 2018). The policy space in which the territory operates

is governed by overarching federal legislation which do not prioritize climate change issues, therefore influences the policy direction of the territory on climate change issues (Jasanoff, 2008). Foucault (1991) found that power relations are exercised through an organization working as a chain and permeates every class of the society either individually or the population as a whole.

Moreover, the authority of the U.S. policy actors on the territory's climate change preparations is evident in the role they play within the current regulatory framework as the major country in which the territory relies. In this role, the United States creates and imposes regulations which influence the institutions which govern the natural resource management of the island. The policy direction of the territory on climate change issues influences the policy actions and decisions of local policy actors on climate change issues which impact the adaptive capacity of the territory's policy framework.

Also, the federal funding allocation system is a mechanism used by the federal government to ensure the policy priorities of the territorial government. The discretion of federal grant recipients over the use of federal funds is minimal (Congressional Research Service, 2019; U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, 2020), therefore the federal funding allocation system gives the federal government power to pursue its domestic policy objectives through the territory. The participants opine that the federal funds they receive permit services and activities confined to a specific substantive policy area and the focus areas do not include the issues of climate change. This influences the policy actions of local policy leaders on climate change issues because such policy area

and the services and activities to address the issues of climate change are not supported by federal aid programs (De Pryck & Gemenne, 2017; McGuire, 2017).

Moreover, the participants posited that the topic of climate change was not a policy priority until it was recently introduced by their federal partners, therefore they posited the topic of climate change as new (Schwebel, 2018; Taglioni, 2011). The federal funding allocation system is an effect of the power of the federal government over its territorial possessions. This effect of power governs the discourse of local policy actors on the issues of climate change. Foucault (1980) found that power has directing and normalizing characteristics. The federal funding allocation system is an instrument of control which directs and normalizes the policy space in which the territory operates (Julca & Paddison, 2010; Ostrom, 2009), therefore moderates the discourses of policy actors on climate change issues and governs their policy actions and decisions.

Lastly, the Indigenous land tenure system of the territory affects the policy efforts of the territorial government to address climate change impacts. The Indigenous land tenure system is protected by the constitution between the territory and the U.S., therefore discarding the Indigenous land tenure system is futile (Schwebel, 2018). The participants posited that the Indigenous land tenure system complicates the implementation of adaptation efforts because of the authority of families over their lands. Through the land tenure system, families may reject proposed government projects on their land. The complexity of the land tenure system further complicates the territory's adaptation efforts because approval of the government's conservation and preservation projects on communal lands can be financially negotiated with the families. Participants posited that

the rights of the family to reject adaptation projects and the ability of the families to freely negotiate the financial arrangements of the proposed projects either hinders or entirely eliminates the development and implementation of preservation, conservation, and adaptation efforts.

The land tenure system is the effect of power which is protected and conserved by the Constitution (power) which binds the United States and AS, impacts the policy decisions and actions of local policy leaders on climate change issues, therefore influencing the adaptive capacity of the territory to climate change issues. The federal oversight on the territory as demonstrated by the legal authority of the U.S. policy actors on the affairs of the territory, the allocation of federal funds to the territory, the application of federal policies on the territory and the enforcement of the Indigenous land tenure system, despite its impacts on the development and implementation of adaptation efforts, create the institutions and social contexts which are responsible for the formulation and promulgation of local policy actors discourses. In Foucault's view, the knowledge and discourse of policy actors is always a form of power that is deployed to regulate practices (Hall, 1997).

Third, the culture of territorialism positions the territory to rely on the oversight of its federal counterparts, therefore reinforcing the territorial relationship which influences the policy direction and policy priorities of the territory. Ritzer (2004) found that actors enter into networked associations, which in turn define them and provide them with substance. This aligns with Foucault's (1991) view that policy actors never exist in themselves but draw their agency from networks. The territory operates in a policy space

that is governed by the authority of the U.S., therefore creating a culture that positions the territory to require the guidance of the United States in how it governs its local matters. The participants identified the need for federal oversight on local government operations when they discussed the position of the territory in multijurisdictional meetings but contend that sitting behind the United States does not prohibit Indigenous policy makers from voicing their opinions on the issues which impact the local population or when limitations on how and what federal funds can be used on is not perceived as a barrier which prohibits the territory from achieving resilience. The policy space created by the culture of territorialism coordinate policy actors, therefore the acts performed by the actors are given meaning in and by the networks to which they belong.

The policy space in which local policy leaders operate is managed by the culture of territorialism. The culture of territorialism, through its directing and normalizing nature, is an instrument of control that moderate the discourses and knowledge of policy actors on climate change issues, therefore influence their policy actions and decisions on the issues of climate change (Beland, 2009; Hancock, 2018; Turkel, 1990; Winkel, 2012;). Schwebel (2018) found that the current regulatory framework of the territory that manages natural resources consists of less adaptive federal regulations overlaid onto local laws. Foucault (1980) found that policy spaces play a key role in regulating the behavior and thoughts of actors. As a result of operating within such policy space, the discourse of some local policy leaders labels the issues of climate change as new while some opined that their organizational work did not relate to climate change although the literature stated that the participating organizations had climate change related responsibilities and

jurisdictions (Schwebel, 2018; Taglioni, 2011). For instance, those representing educational entities posited that their responsibilities are solely to develop curriculum and teach students, therefore their work has no relation to the issues of climate change. The lack of knowledge on the importance of climate change issues is an effect of power that results in the exclusion of climate change issues in the curriculum, therefore unable to educate and prepare the youth of the territory on the issues of climate change (Becken, 2005). The lack of knowledge and awareness of the youth on climate change issues impact the policy decisions and actions of the future leaders of the territory on the issues of climate change. Furthermore, the participants perceive U.S. institutions as legitimate, therefore require federal oversight which will influence the policy decisions and actions of local policy leaders on the issues of climate change (Schwebel, 2018; Ostrom, 1990; Julca & Paddison, 2010).

Limitations of the Study

One limitation that impacted the general qualitative interview-based inquiry is the relatively small sample size of 11 participants. While I had planned to interview 14 participants, only 11 were able to participate. One organization was dismantled a few years ago by the territory's government and two organizations initially agreed to participate but withdrew from the study because of their role in developing the territory's response to the measles outbreak which took place in the island in the early months of 2020 and an accident. While their withdrawal had potential impacts on data collection and analysis, data saturation was reached with 7 participants when no new information emerged from the remaining interviews. While two participants were self-excluded due to

the measles outbreak and an accident, the study still covered all of the major entities that had leadership authority for integrating climate change into policy. The small sample size did not impact the transferability the study's results because the findings of this general qualitative interview-based inquiry research were specific to AS and its territorial relationship to the U.S. federal government.

Recommendations

This general qualitative interview-based inquiry resulted in descriptions of major factors of the current regulatory framework which ultimately influence the adaptive capacity of the territory. First, this study can be expanded for future causal research to explain why the adaptive capacity of the territory exists in the way that it does. The allocation and distribution of federal funds, the oversight of the federal government and the culture of territorialism organize the policy space of the territorial leaders, therefore influencing their policy decisions on climate change issues. Federal funding processes come with top-down regulations that administer and manage funding expenditure for states and territories, therefore guide the policy actions of local policy leaders on social issues. The oversight of the United States on the territory subjects the territory to the authority of U.S. policy makers, manage the adaptation efforts of the territory by authorizing the Indigenous land tenure system despite its impact on the development and enforcement of adaptation efforts, control the policy priorities of territories and states by allocating funding to the territories and states, and authorizes the development of local policies and policy processes by imposing federal legislation and legislation requirements on the territory. The culture of territorialism reinforces the position of territories to rely

on federal legislation and financial contributions in spite of the impact of these factors on the policy efforts of the territory. The political status of the island subjects the development and enforcement of policies and policy processes to the control and jurisdiction of the U.S., therefore influencing the policy direction of the territory on policy areas and the policy decisions of local policy leaders on issues such as climate change which directly impact the quality of life of all Samoans. An explanatory study of the adaptive capacity of the territory might aim to understand why policy actors opt for the territory to maintain its political status despite their knowledge of the impact of the island's territorial status on the policy direction of the territory on climate change issues.

Second, the findings of this study can also be used to investigate relationships between policy activities and adaptive capacity. The findings of this study described the major factors of the current regulatory framework that impacted the climate change policy direction, actions, and decisions of local policy leaders to address climate change issues. The literature reviewed in this dissertation illustrates the lack of adaptive capacity of the current regulatory framework to address climate change issues. There is no study that measures the adaptive capacity of the territory to address climate change issues. One way to measure the adaptive capacity of the territory is to develop a study that quantifies the local actions and policy activities of territorial executive organizations.

Lastly, the results of this study are not generalized to other pacific U.S. territories because of the unique political status of AS as an unorganized and unincorporated territory. However, given the geographical and political similarities of the U.S. island territories, the similar climate change issues they face, and the inability of each island to

adapt to the changing climate, other U.S. territories should conduct similar studies to identify where they can improve their own governance structures for adaptive capacity development.

Implications

Positive Social Change

As climate trends continue to change resulting in extreme weather events, AS's environment, population health, ecosystems and infrastructure remain vulnerable because the island does not have the capacity to adapt to these changes. The current regulatory framework of the territory is a contributing factor to the lack of adaptive capacity of the territory. As such, the goal of this study was to describe the major factors of the current regulatory framework which impact the policy actions of local leaders on the issues of climate change.

With these descriptions, the study brings to light several factors (federal funds, political status of the territory and the culture of territorialism) of the current regulatory framework which compound the policy efforts of the local policy leaders on the issues of climate change. In describing these factors, I observed the discursive workings of actors and institutions and the co-creation of power and knowledge in the local policy system but most especially, the understanding of the interrelated ways these forms of power affect the collaborative system which govern the policy actions of local policy leaders on the issues of climate change. The federal funds, political status of the territory, and the culture of territorialism institutionalize the knowledge base of local policy leaders which influence their policy decisions and actions on climate change issues. With such

understanding, this study speaks to the importance of attaining and maintaining the capacity to adapt to climate change by improving climate change policy efforts. Globally, territorial policy processes and policies can be improved to achieve SDGs designed to achieve a better and sustainable future by the year of 2030. Some of the cardinal principles of the SDGs are to ensure sustainable cities and communities, take urgent action to combat climate change, conserve oceans, promote peaceful societies, provide access to justice for all, and build effective institutions at all levels, therefore contributing to the resiliency and sustainability of the territory (United Nations, 2015).

From a public administration perspective, this study offers valuable alternatives for the territory's government to address the lack of capacity to adapt to climate change. The results of the study provide the policy actors with information concerning the factors that influence their policy decisions on climate change. In doing so, policy actors become aware of the factors that institutionalize their knowledge base and transform their identities and discourses on the topic of climate change, therefore impacting their policy decisions on such issues and ultimately influencing the adaptive capacity of the territory. The results of this study may be used to improve their efforts to make policy decisions on the issues of climate change thus, improving the adaptive capacity of the territory. Local policy leaders may use the findings of the study to improve the policy efforts of the territory to ensure sustainable communities, combat climate change impacts, conserve and sustainably use the oceans and seas, and promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

Second, the results of this study increase the transparency of the discursive dynamics of governance within the territorial relationship between the United States and AS. Descriptions of the policy space in which the territory operates were compiled and analyzed, therefore improving the knowledge on the influence of extraterritorial governance of the United States on its territorial possessions. The descriptions of the policy space reveal that AS policy leaders do not have a direct voice on the issues which affect the quality of life of its people because of its political status. The results of this study provide a platform in which Indigenous peoples are afforded the opportunity to have a greater voice in decisions directly affecting their lives thus, encouraging, securing, and strengthening their rights. In doing so, enactment and inclusion of diversity in efforts of reconciliation which will ensure that prosperity in economic, environment, and public health is truly for all.

Third, the results of the study showed that the federal government was constituted to authorize the policy space in which the territory's policy conduct is invested, therefore institutionalizes the knowledge base of local policy actors and influence their discourse on the issues of climate change. This study brings to light the serious democratic deficiencies concerning the relationship between United States and its territories. With this information, policy actors are equipped with knowledge which may be used to reshape discursive configurations of the current governance system. In doing so, the interpretation and position of certain expert knowledges may be reframed, therefore offering spaces for new linkages between discourses, ideologies, narratives, and concepts.

Improved policies may help the territory ensure the capacity to adapt to climate change impacts and achieve sustainable developmental goals.

Recommendations for Practice

The people, infrastructure, health, environment, and ecosystems of AS remain highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and have not developed the adaptive capacity required to build and maintain climate change resilience. No research has yet to explore and describe the extraterritorial influence of the United States on the climate change policy actions of its territories or possessions (Schwebel, 2018). In addition, scarce literature has addressed the issue of limited adaptive capacity in the territory (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016). A contributing factor to this problem is the territory's governance structure. The purpose of this study was to investigate the current regulatory framework to identify and uncover the major factors in the current regulatory framework which impact climate change policy decisions of local leaders on climate change issues. To improve the capacity of the territory to adapt to climate change, this study provided descriptions of the relations of U.S. federal policies to AS as a territory. The findings of this study reveal that the allocation and distribution of federal funds, oversight of the federal government, and the culture of territorialism assist and challenge the territory's policy efforts on the issues of climate change, therefore impacting the adaptive capacity of the island in the face of climate change. These aspects develop and organize the policy space in which the policy actions and decisions of territorial leaders are invested, therefore influence the policy direction of the territory on climate change issues.

In light of these findings, the adaptive capacity of the territory may be improved if policy actors become aware of the influence of its political status on the functionality of its local governance, on its policy direction on the issues which are prevalent in the local communities, and on the territory's ability to speak about the issues which directly impact the quality of life for its population on multi-jurisdictional meetings. A platform that will help local policy makers structure policy processes and decisions which build the necessary adaptive capacity of the territory to solve climate change issues, build resiliency, and improve the environmental regulatory framework of the territory is required. This speaks to the need for improved awareness campaigns on extraterritorial governance and climate change issues in AS. As such, the following recommendations may spur discussions by the local government on ways to restructure the current regulatory framework to ensure the adaptive capacity of the territory in the face of a changing climate.

Climate Change Education for Policy Leaders

More than half of the participants inquired if I experienced climate change impacts in my lifetime. In addition, D3, D4, D6, D8, D9, D10, and D11, could not relate their organization's work to climate change impacts without my assistance despite being identified by the literature as executive organizations which have responsibilities in addressing the different issues associated with climate change. These responses and reactions indicate that while there is knowledge about the impacts of climate change to the territory, there is a lack of knowledge on the discursive nature of these changes, the

severity of these changes as the climate continues to change, and the role their respective organizations play in addressing these issues.

The lack of understanding the severity of climate change and the relationship between the work of organizations and the issue of climate change are factors which hinder the approach of local executive organizations in addressing vulnerabilities to climate change. To bridge this gap in knowledge, there is a need for educational outreach focused on climate change, climate change impacts, the role of each organization in addressing these impacts and on the concept of climate change adaptation. With this knowledge, policy actors may create and empower a resilience working group composed of executive organizations with climate change responsibilities. In addition, policy actors will become educated on climate science, define the role of their organizations in addressing the impacts of climate change, adopt climate change policies which identify plausible scenarios for projected climate change conditions as the basis for planning initiatives, create mandates that require centralized approval for all AS executive agency planning initiatives, and establish policies to encourage cross-agency planning which minimizes isolated efforts.

Moreover, policy leaders that are aware of climate change impacts and understand the role of their respective organizations in addressing climate change issues may re-prioritize and realign their organization's policy priorities to improve the adaptive capacity of the territory. Specifically, local organizations with climate change responsibilities may begin to develop, fund, and implement climate change-related policies and programs. In the case where there is no funding available to support

adaptation policy efforts, policy leaders that understand the severity of climate change impacts on the territory may apply for funding opportunities and utilize such monies to develop policies, programs, and projects that address the issues that impact their adaptation efforts. Policy leaders may even influence the awareness of the members of their organizations on the issues of climate change. Without such dedication in local executive organizations, available funds to improve the local communities are missed or only pursued opportunistically without clear connection to larger planning trajectories and development goals. By developing competent staff and agency capacity in this manner, AS can effectively compete for federal funds to implement projects which increase resilience and the adaptive capacity of the island and utilize available funds to pursue and improve adaptation policy priorities. This initiative should engage local policy leaders in research, education, and community action to increase environmental awareness and action through experiential learning activities.

Governance Education for Policy Leaders

The participants of the study provided descriptions of the various factors of the current regulatory framework which impact their policy actions on issues of climate change. While all participants identified negative impacts of these factors in their descriptions, most of them quickly reverted back to describing the positive aspects of such factors. Such responses indicate that there is a need for local policy leaders to understand the functionality of extraterritorial governance and its influence on the policy decisions of territories. When policy leaders understand the science of climate, they may become educated on climate change issues.

Although local policy leaders may be educated on climate change, if they live and operate within the culture of territorialism, the ability of the territory to adapt to climate change issues may not be successful because of the lack of knowledge of local policy leaders on territorialism and the influence of the island's political status on the policy direction and decisions of the territory (Wallsgrove, 2016). There is a need to promote awareness within local executive agencies about extraterritorial governance specifically, the relationship between the U.S. governance and AS and the issues of climate change. Specifically, there is a need to educate the local policy leaders on the impacts of the current regulatory framework on their policy actions which are blinded by culture of territorialism. This educational initiative should discuss the influence of the federal fund processes and federal funding allocation system on the policy priorities and decisions of the territory. Knowledge on the influence of federal fund processes on the territory will spur discussions on the status of the oversight of the federal government on the territory.

Moreover, there is a need for territorial organizations to conduct a comprehensive review and evaluation of all current organizational regulations for conformance with principles of adaptive capacity such as: forward-looking which focuses on long-range planning and preference for crisis avoidance over crisis mitigation, flexibility which acknowledges a lack of complete understanding of the resource being managed, integrated which favors integrated solutions and policies over piecemeal ones, and iterative starts with ongoing monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the resources being managed (Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016). In doing so, local policy leaders will have an improved understanding of the current status of adaptive capacity of its organizations'

regulations and find ways to improve local policies and policy processes, therefore enhance the adaptive capacity of the territory on climate change issues. In addition, the revision of regulations, permitting processes, and land use planning (line of work of the current participating organizations) to align well with adaptive capacity principles may ensure the resiliency work of organizations. It is especially important that the policies of the territory meet the demands of new climate change developments.

Without informed political leadership, government agencies lack directives to ensure the resilience of the territory under a range of possible climate scenarios. A community that is knowledgeable about the effects of the territorial relationship on their adaptation efforts may be able to reform policy processes and policies to address the needs of the territory, and enhance the adaptive capacity of the island to climate change impacts. All of these educational efforts should focus on the impacts of climate change instead of causes of climate vulnerability to provide a constructive political middle-ground that can enable long-term impact responsive planning the face of a changing climate.

Conclusion

“A ua sala uta, ia tonu tai” is what grandma would always say when a situation is identified and addressed by setting things right. In English, the verse is translated as follows: when a mistake has been made inland, it should be rectified at the seaside. There are two parts of the proverb. First, “a ua sala uta” refers to a mistake which is made and identified during an ordeal. The literature revealed that the existing regulatory framework consists of less adaptive federal laws mapped on to fewer comprehensive regulations

(Wallsgrove & Grecni, 2016). The findings of the study identified the major aspects of the current regulatory framework which impact the policy decisions of local policy leaders on climate change issues. The mistake is the low adaptive capacity of the territory to adapt to climatic changes.

In the context of this study, I investigated the territorial relationship between the United States and AS to understand the policy direction of the territory and policy actions of local leaders on the issues of climate change. The results of this study provided descriptions of the major factors of the current regulatory framework which impact the policy actions of local policy leaders. The findings of the study illuminated the territorial relationship and the workings of actors and institutions as moderated by discourse in the form of power and knowledge. These dynamics discursively coordinate decision-making of territorial leaders on climate change issues. This study acknowledges that the current regulatory framework of the territory lacks the adaptive capacity to address climate change impacts which directly impact the quality of life of its population. Considering the impacts of the current regulatory framework on the adaptive capacity of the territory, there is a need to consider whether or not the continuing reliance of the territory on the policy guidance of the United States on the issues of climate change is a mistake.

Second, “ia tonu tai” refers to how the mistake can be reversed. The analysis and results of this study provides local policy actors with an opportunity to understand the influence of the territorial relationship on their policy decisions on climate change issues. The results of this study may be used by the participants to expand their knowledge on the influence of the current regulatory framework and the island’s political status on the

policy direction of the territory and on their policy actions on climate change issues. Such knowledge may be used to spur discussions to revisit and possibly restructure the territorial relationship between the United States and the island to improve local policy processes and policies on climate change issues, therefore enhance the adaptive capacity of the territory to climate change.

The findings of this study reveal that the current regulatory framework influence the policy actions and decisions of local policy leaders on climate change issues. As a result, there is a need to revisit the Constitution which binds AS to the United States to address the democratic deficiencies of the relationship to ensure that the island is able to address all of the local prevalent issues and afford Indigenous people the opportunity to speak on the issues which impact their quality of life and make policy choices on their own. The inability of Indigenous people to speak up and elevate their voices alongside the superior party in the territorial relationship means that the Indigenous people are colonized and suppressed. Today, AS does not have a voice on the issues which directly impact its population because local policy leaders do not fully understand the impacts of the territorial relationship and the consequences of such relationship on their ability to address local issues. Therefore, there is a need for educational awareness campaigns to educate the local policy leaders on the impacts of the territorial status, the climate science and on the concept of adaptation which should bridge organizational work to the different aspects of climate change.

Equipped with such knowledge, the local policy leaders have a foundation which provide them with tools to revamp the policy space in which they operate. As a result, the

Indigenous people may have a voice on the issues which directly affect their quality of life. While significant discussions are taking place on whether AS should remain a U.S territory because of strong influence of Congressional power on the territory's affairs, many still opt for the status quo. I conclude this study by restating the need to educate our local communities on the territorial relationship between the United States and AS and its impacts on climate change issues as well as the economic, social and environmental issues to ensure that understand the consequences associated with such relationship and make informed decisions for the betterment of all Samoans.

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Appendix A: American Samoa Government Executive Organizations That Focus on
Climate Change

American Samoa Office of the Governor (ASG)

Has the authority to issue executive orders related to climate change matters to include setting up working groups or task forces. Executive orders (EO) is a type of political power in which the office of the Governor uses extensively in recent years to address climate change issues such as the EO 004-2010, EC 002-2011, and EO 009-2013.

American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (ASDMWR)

This office is the primary steward for natural resources in AS. Its mission is to preserve, perpetuate and protect natural resources. While its mission does not directly reference climate change, this office possesses the authority to address its impact on marine, freshwater and terrestrial resources. However, not all natural resource management responsibilities rest with this office. The oversight of climate change impacts to coral reefs is divided between this office and its Coral Reef Advisory Group (CRAG) and the AS Department of Commerce.

American Samoa Natural Resources Commission (ASNRC)

Is responsible for the management of formally listed threatened and endangered species in the territory. Its authorizing statute also does not contain reference to climate change but has implicit authority to factor climate change impacts into the management of listed species in AS.

American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency (ASEPA)

Its mandates are specifically focused on air and water pollution making it a key player in regulating greenhouse gases in the territory. Contains a certain degree of influence over policy regarding natural resources management. A member of the Interagency Project Notification and Review System (PNRS) Board which reviews all development proposals to ensure environmental standards.

American Samoa Department of Parks and Recreation (ASDPR)

ASDPR mainly focuses on sports but has certain resource management responsibilities to preserve natural resources that lie within park systems.

American Samoa Department of Commerce (ASDOC)

ASDOC contains several bodies whose authorities have a nexus to both climate change adaptation and natural resource management. This department manages land use management which administers the Territorial Planning Commission to guide all aspects of infrastructure siting and development; the Zoning Board of AS which approves zoning decisions; and the PNRS Board which oversees land-use decisions specifically, the preservation of coastal zones and wetlands. ASDOC has responsibilities associated with the Coastal Management Program which is responsible for reviewing and planning of land-use activities in the coastal zone. It works with the NOAA to ensure that the marine sanctuaries of the territory are managed and well kept. Finally, this department has responsibility for production and updating the Hazard Mitigation Plan for the territory which specifically includes assessments of risks related to climate change. The resource management authorities of this department overlap with those of DMWR which make

this partnership an important one in regard to climate change adaptation in coastal and marine zones.

American Samoa Department of Agriculture (ASDOA)

In collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, ASDOA manages local subsistence farmers and work with them to prepare them for the potential climate change impacts.

American Samoa Power Authority (ASPA)

ASPA is a legally mandated public utility overseen by the Office of the Governor. They are responsible for providing electricity, water and waste-handling services and for major efforts to implement alternative and renewable energy sources.

American Samoa Department of Public Work (ASDPW)

ASDPW is responsible for road construction and infrastructure development, maintenance of public buildings and infrastructure, and siting of future roads.

American Samoa Department of Health (ASDOH)

This department does not have any statutory mandates specifically related to climate change. However, it does have responsibility for population health and responding to any diseases outbreak that might occur as a result of climate-mediated expansion of potential vectors.

American Samoa Coral Reef Advisory Group (ASCRAAG)

ASCRAAG coordinates coral reef management and conservation efforts of the territory, including education and outreach, policy and enforcement and scientific research and monitoring. This group coordinates a collaboration of local agencies to

include DMWR, ASDOC, AS-EPA and ASCC and the National Park Services, in the territory's efforts to protect and conserve reefs.

Appendix B: Request for Participation Letter for Directors

Director's Name
Agency
Agency Address

Talofa Mr/Ms/Mrs,

My name is Casuallen Atuatasi and I am a doctoral candidate with Walden University. I am currently pursuing my doctoral degree in Public Administration with a focus on Local Government Management and Sustainable Development and am working on my doctoral dissertation.

This letter is to invite you to participate in a research study that aims to explore the current regulatory framework that governs the territory's response to the impacts of climate change. The impacts of climate change have impacted the quality of life for our islands and will continue to do so in the future as sea levels continue to rise and greenhouse gases increase. To ensure resiliency in the face of a changing climate, there is a need to strengthen policies and regulations to ensure the adaptive capacity of our islands. Participating in this study will provide an understanding of the challenges and issues we face in effectively addressing the diverse impacts of climate change through our local policies and regulations.

If you agree to participate in this study, I will conduct an interview with you. The interview will include questions about the policies within your organization and the policy processes associated with developing climate change related policies within your department. The interview will take about 30-45 minutes to complete. With your permission, I would also tape-record the interview.

There is a risk that you may find some of the questions about your job to be sensitive. The benefit of the study is to identify new ways to develop decisions that will more appropriately further the resilience of the territory in the face of extreme climate changes. There is no compensation earned from taking part in this study.

The records of this study will be kept in private. In any sort of report I make public, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only I will have access to the records. I will destroy the tape after the interview has been transcribed.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any question(s) that you do not want to answer. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time. Attached to this letter, you will find a consent form. If you would like to participate, please document consent.

Appendix C: Follow-Up Email to Schedule a Semistructured Interview

Talofa Director,

I hope this email finds you in great health. I have received your consent to participate in the study. The purpose of this email is to schedule a date, time and a telephone number for our interview session. I have assigned a coding representation for you using the notation of *D1*, *D2*, ... *D9*. This code of representation is for use on all data collected that relates to you and any communication from hereon to include the practice of member checking.

Member checking will be practiced in our study to attain maximum benefit for credibility and confirmability of the study results. As the researcher, I will review and interpret the interview data. I will write each interview question, followed by a succinct synthesis of the interpretation I will provide a saved copy of the synthesis to you by e-mail for your review and response within 14 business days. I will ask you if the synthesis truly represents your answer or if there is additional information you may wish to provide for the study. I will continue the member checking process until there is no new data to collect.

Please indicate three options of your availability for a telephone interview below from Monday to Friday between 9:00 am to 5:00 am AS time within 7 business days of receiving this email.

	Date	Start Time	End Time	Phone
Number				
Option 1	_____	_____	_____	_____
Option 2	_____	_____	_____	_____
Option 3	_____	_____	_____	_____

Your information will remain private and confidential.

Thank you,
Casualen I. Atuatasi

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Participate Code _____

Date _____

Start Time _____

End Time _____

Location _____

Talofa,

I am Casuallen Atuatasi from Walden University. I appreciate your willingness to participate in this study and interview. As you know, my research interest is on the influence of external institutions, by way of the current regulatory framework in which the U.S. federal laws have precedence on local laws, on the development of climate change policies in American Samoa. Through this meeting, I would like to know your experiences of policy development and policy processes relevant to climate change issues during your tenure as department Director.

The proposed research is a component of the dissertation for the Doctorate of Public Policy and Administration. Please feel free to ask if you have any questions during our interview. I would like to remind you that this interview will be recorded.

Let's start:

- What climate change issue(s) does your organization address?
- Is achieving climate change adaptation a priority for your organization? If so, how is climate change adaptation achieved within the current policies of your organization?
- Describe how federal directives and regulations applicable to your organization or received by your organization effect climate change preparation in your organization?
 - What policy actions are *prohibited* under the federal directives received by your organization related to climate change issues?
 - What policy actions are *allowed* under federal directives received by your organization related to climate change issues?
- Considering the other Pacific Islands that are not part of the U.S., how are the policy decisions allowed under this framework sufficient to achieve climate change resiliency?

- Considering the other Pacific Islands that are not part of the U.S., how are the prohibited policy actions under the current policy regime impeding the efforts of your organization to helping A.S achieve climate change resilience?
- Do you think that being part of the greater network of the U.S. is an asset to your organization in preparing for climate change?
 - If yes, in what ways is it? If no, in what ways is it not?

Other question: What additional information would you like to add that is related to the U.S. regulatory framework and your policy actions on climate change issues?

Appendix E: Coding Scheme

In vivo codes	Pattern coding/categories	Description	Theme
<p>Organization work funded by federal government; Non-compliance with federal fund requirements will cost funding; Lost of funding will impact adaptation efforts; Our policy actions are affected by trying to stay in compliance with federal regulations because local health issues occur quickly and require actions that are not always in compliance with federal standards; Policy actions are scaled back because of the federal regulations and standards which hinders adaptation to CC causing health issues; React to health issues but has nothing planned ahead of time; Abiding by and adapting to federal requirements stifle and delay major projects that protect us from SLR; Federal policies provide limitations to developments; federal funds have caps which are only able to fund projects on capital improvement lists or grantor approved; federal grants require focus on reaction to and recover from; Not prioritizing CC is due to cap in funding; Cap in funding, competitive opportunities and lack of opportunities available for territories to protect historical remnants from CC is the reason behind inability to</p>	<p>Federal funds influence the policy direction and goals of local executive organizations</p> <p>Policy and project requirements of federal funds are a mechanism that influence the policy direction of local executive organizations</p> <p>Federal grant application qualification requirements influence the policy direction of territorial organizations and policy decisions of local policy leaders</p> <p>Federal funds ensure the policy goals of territories, therefore the cap on federal funds restricts policy efforts of the territory</p>	<p>Policy actions of local leaders are effects generated by the interaction of power relations. Power are strategies which are produced through the concatenation of the power relations that exist throughout society. Federal funds, federal policy and project requirements, federal grant application and qualification requirements influence others, therefore they are forms of power. The social effects of the influence of these forms of power produce strategies that have a kind of life of their own. These forms of power permeate society and influence the actions and eventually, the knowledge and discourse of policy actors on the topic of climate change.</p>	<p>Federal funds are a form of power that informs local policy action of local policy leaders</p>

In vivo codes	Pattern coding/categories	Description	Theme
<p>protect historical remnants from CC; Federal decisions on how much is allotted for preservation acts, how much is allotted for territories in their grant monies, what projects can be funded and how their grants are structured (competitive applications) places limitations on how AS can use the limited monies they receive</p>			
<p>Difficult to achieve adaptation because we can't talk about it; We experience similar impacts but cannot embrace the movement like they do; Limited in what we can say, whose toes we don't want to step on because of funding; We can't do as much like other islands because we have higher officials; Want more local engagement but cannot because climate change isn't a priority locally; We can't do most of what other islands are doing because we have to stay in line with U.S.; Political barriers stop adaptation climate change efforts; Can't participate in meetings with other countries; Hinders involvement in international efforts; Sit quietly even if those opportunities work well for territory; Extra layer of limitations with the current regulatory framework; Because we are a territory, we can't achieve the drug and use</p>	<p>Legal authority of U.S. Policy Actors impact the policy decisions of territorial policy leaders</p> <p>Land Tenure System is politically bounded to political status of the territory which influence the policy decisions of local policy leaders</p> <p>Federal Funding Allocation System allocates funds and the availability of funds based on political status of territory which influences the policy priorities of the territory</p>	<p>Legal authority of U.S. policy actors, the land tenure system and the federal fund allocation systems are people and institutional configurations that influence the process of decision-making and the decisions they make which, eventually, impact how they make sense of their environment and their discourse on the topic of climate change.</p> <p>Power is connected with structures which people understand, create and organize the world as they know it. Federal oversight is a form of power.</p>	<p>Federal oversight, as a requirement of the island's political status, informs territorial policy priorities and values of executive of organizations thus, impacting the policy actions of local leaders</p>

In vivo codes	Pattern coding/categories	Description	Theme
it easily because it's not approved for use in the U.S.; actions not allowed by federal protocol hinders our ability to address diseases mediated by CC; CC wasn't brought to our attention until federal grant targeted issues related to CC; Political status doesn't qualify us for most federal grants because we aren't a state; Difficult to protect historical sites/remnants because land tenure system; many federal mandates/regulations but not sufficient support/funding to uphold standards;	Federal Policies on Territories determine the work of territorial executive organizations which impact the policy decisions of policy leaders		
Political status limits access but that isn't big deal; Limitations of funding opportunities have nothing to do with being resilience to CC; Sit behind the U.S. in international meetings but does not prohibit us from voicing political opinions; Need financial resources; CC is a new topic; Didn't know what the impacts were called until Federal Government allowed us to pursue it; lack knowledge, resources and implementation/development of strategies which limits us from achieving resilience; No goals to achieve resilience and no planning focused on resiliency to CC; Our work is not directly tied to CC; without affiliation to major country will	<p>Territorial Needs for technical/financial support, federal oversight and knowledge on climate change issues are continuously influenced and provided by the U.S.</p> <p>Legitimacy of Territorialism is perceived and believed by territorial leaders because of needs being satisfied by U.S. reinforces reliance on the U.S.</p>	The needs of the territory, perception that territorialism is legit are community, culture, values and power relations that are forms of power that create discourse which influence the identity of climate change to policy actors. The exercise of power puts pressure on the definitions and understandings of the topic of climate change and all other related elements of the topic which influence the knowledge of policy actors	Culture of territorialism reinforces the reliance of American Samoa on the U.S., therefore moderating the operation of local governance on local issues

In vivo codes	Pattern coding/categories	Description	Theme
not sustain due to lack of oversight; One reason we can't adapt is it's too expensive for us		and influence the way in which they organize and understand the nature of their relationship to the U.S.	