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Gender in a Commodifying World

Recognition, Emotions and Market Women’s Agency in the Goroka Marketplace, Papua New Guinea

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This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the doctoral degree of Anthropology at the University of Auckland, 2018.
Abstract

This thesis examines how food becomes a tradeable commodity, exchanged for money, in the Goroka marketplace and the effect this has on relations between men and women. Food has long had gendered meanings in Goroka, Eastern Highlands, Papua New Guinea (PNG), a context where anthropologists have considered social relations to be highly gendered with strict divisions of labour, particularly relating to the production and transaction of wealth. Through eleven months ethnographic research I have documented the perspectives of women and men in and around the Goroka marketplace. I demonstrate that much of market women’s lives are dedicated to the care of others and that through this they demonstrate agency and gain recognition. Emotional, affective and material care that they provide for others are valued acts transacted within an economy of recognition, a moral economy that encompasses the marketplace. Women are active and agentive in different spheres of the economy – including ceremonial and market transactions – not merely as producers but also transactors. Recognising the efforts and motivations of market women in a complex world of gifts and commodities demonstrates the important role market women have for food security in a post-colonial and rapidly urbanising context. In Goroka’s economy of recognition, emotions are valued and have an economic and political place in ceremonial exchange. By paying attention to how people explain gift exchange practices themselves, the significance of emotional acts and material objects comes into focus for how market women, and men, gain recognition from others, motivating gendered actions.
Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the custodians of the land that the University of Auckland resides upon, Ngāti Whātu. I also acknowledge the mighty Rangitoto and Maungawhau—solid and sturdy mountains that kept me grounded during my stay in Aotearoa.

It would be impossible to name everyone in Goroka and PNG who have enabled me to write this thesis. I am grateful to all of the sellers in the Goroka market for their smiles and welcomes, and for sharing stories and food with me. I am truly grateful to the communities of the Goroka Valley, Asaro, Daulo, Lufa, Unggai-Bena and Okapa, who all welcomed me into their homes and villages and shared their food, wisdom and life stories, and for the many laughs, dances and good times we had together. A special thanks go to George Sari and his welcoming family at Okiyufa including Mark Epa, Rachel and all of the Amos sisters; Jenifer and Atora Kena and family; Iki and Apayeye, Awong and Dorothe Mayupe and family; and Samuel and Apo Eto of Namasearro. Without these friends and family, who adopted me as their own, life in Goroka would have been much harder and less fun. My neighbours in Goroka town and colleagues at the University of Goroka gave me added insights and the space and time to discuss my observations, and the staff at the museum were especially helpful in assisting me with my understanding and settling in to fieldwork. A special thanks goes to Rex Yagi, Martha Tokuyawa, Josie for helping me get on my feet in Goroka and ensuring I was always safe and well. Tru ave! Thanks also go to Edwina Kaupa, who helped me process my survey data and kept me company. Belinda Takendu, Joshua Bal (RIP, dependable, empathetic and kind friend—it will be hard returning to Goroka without you there) and Grace Bal all became dear friends and helped me have freedom and mobility.

Another generous friend in Goroka was Mark Eby. Ivo Syndicus, Fraser MacDonald, Priscila Santos da Costas and Chris Little have been empathetic anthropologists with whom to share the fieldwork experience. To my Auckland wantoks and good friends, Norida and Roger Perry, Lesley Bola, Luke Tiriu, Kayleen, Clint Barry, and Bryan, who all prepared me for my trip with plenty of PNG kaikai and Tok Pisin! I love you all dearly. To Georgia Kaipu at the NRI in Port Moresby for processing my visa and arranging my leaving seminar, and to Briar Sefton at the University of Auckland for making my beautiful maps and putting up with so many emails!

I must acknowledge the deep appreciation and gratitude I have for my primary supervisor, Mark Busse. Without Mark I would never have had such an amazing opportunity, nor begun this incredible journey. I am also grateful to my second supervisor, Cris Shore, for his pastoral and academic support as he has guided me through the thesis process, continuously emphasising what is required to make a thesis. Mark and Cris both offered enduring patience and support as I proceeded through the PhD.

Other appreciation goes to Christine Dureau and Barbara Andersen, who both guided me in significant ways through relevant feminist debates, and spent many hours discussing my research and ideas.
Special thanks also go to good friend and fellow economic anthropologist Jane Horan for her ongoing support, advice, counsel, and continued reassurances. Other fantastic and generous colleagues include Michelle MacCarthy, Fiona McCormack, John Cox, Tim Sharp, Geir Henning Presterudstuen, Chris Little, Tom Strong, Fraser Macdonald, Tom Ryan, Apo Aporosa, Marama Muru-Lanning (and the rest of the team at James Henare Research Centre) and my colleagues at the University of Goroka, particularly Dr Donald Gumbis, and Martha Tokuyawa. Big thanks also to Yvonne Underhill-Sem for discussions about the academy, Pacific feminism and life in PNG. I am endlessly grateful for the many inspiring people I have been fortunate to meet along this journey and the support (and good company) they have all provided.

These sentiments also go out to the postgraduate writing group (which has had many members during my time!) and all of the staff in Anthropology at the University of Auckland. Our writing and reading groups have been great fun and stimulating, and this work would not be what it is without my fellow students (in no particular order, Sally Raudon, Sarah Haggar, Michelle Thorpe, Katie Longmuir, Julie Spray, Pauline Herbst, Faruk Shah, Paul Robertson, Hannah Rossiter, Claire Black and many more). Daniel Hernandez and Andrea Low have both kept me critical and questioning. I am grateful to know and be inspired by you both.

To all those who have provided me with the emotional support, community and joyous times that got me to the end. Particular thanks go to Farzad Zamani; we began this PhD journey together and he has stuck with me throughout. And other supportive and patient friends; Sarbjit Singh, Roja Tafaroji, Shahriah Tehrani, Juan Manuel Castada, Haruka Tschida, Julian Adler, Kirsty Fong, Lillian Hanly, Andrew Douglas, Mike Woffinden, Olivia McGowan (and all the other 19a members over the years), Gabriel Hood, Daniela Reyes, Carmel Skeaff, Jamiliya Jordan, Sawana Fabienne, Madie Aghili, Amir Kayal, Paulette Benton-Greig, Ify Ebele, Seamus Maguire. And to my New Zealand family away from home Kate and Max Matsell, Sara and David Aspin, Sophie Smallman, Norida and Roger Perry, and the Horan family.

Thanks to my grandparents Ruth and Correlli Barnett without whom I may have never dreamt of taking an academic path and Parvin and Cyrus Naghshineh for supporting me from afar. Most importantly, to my parents Clare and Ardeshir – I hope you will forgive me for coming home so much later than I promised. Thank you for all the debate, advice and love.

Committing ourselves to the care of others is one of the most important and basic aspects of being human, and yet motherhood is so often undervalued – to the woman who has never stopped supporting me, my mum Clare, and all the other mothers, fathers and carers who do the same, this thesis is dedicated to you.
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Abbreviations

DPI – Department of Primary Industries
DAL – Department of Agriculture and Livestock
EHP – Eastern Highlands Province
FPDA – Fresh Produce Development Agency
LLG – Local Level Government
MDF – Medium Density Fibreboard
NPK – Nitrogen Phosphate
PNG – Papua New Guinea
PMV – Public Motor Vehicle
SDA – Seventh Day Adventist
TSP – Triple Superphosphate
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tok Pisin Term</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agapa</td>
<td>Special leafy green that is planted alongside &lt;i&gt;ashin&lt;/i&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashin</td>
<td>Winged bean plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baim meri</td>
<td>Bridewealth transactions, either a singular event or the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bratprais</td>
<td>Payment of food, pigs and money made as part of bridewealth transactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daina</td>
<td>Open backed trucks used to transport people and cargo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinau</td>
<td>A loan of money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frend</td>
<td>Usually refers to a cross-sex relationship that is potentially sexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamamas</td>
<td>Joy, happiness, a collective emotion and individual emotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haus kunai</td>
<td>House or shelter made from local materials including grasses, bamboo and &lt;i&gt;pipit&lt;/i&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedpei</td>
<td>Exchange made after the death of a person: a transaction of money, food and pigs to the &lt;i&gt;kandre&lt;/i&gt; or mother’s brothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hevi</td>
<td>Ceremonial exchanges; compensations; problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kandre</td>
<td>Mother’s brothers; refers to the general group who are relate via marriage on the mother’s side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaukau</td>
<td>Generic term for sweet potato (as opposed to specific names for types of sweet potato)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karuka</td>
<td>Pandanus nut: grows in higher areas than red pandanus and is exchanged with red pandanus or sold in the marketplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumu</td>
<td>Generic term for leafy, usually native, greens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makim pei</td>
<td>Establishing the amount desired for a woman’s marriage payment; usually involves the bringing of food from the woman’s family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mama</td>
<td>Mother; used for older women as a sign of respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mareta</strong></td>
<td><strong>Red pandanus</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mumu</strong></td>
<td>Hot stone ovens made in the ground sing banana leaves, bamboo pipes, water and steam to cook food; also refers to a shared eating occasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pasin</strong></td>
<td>Behaviour, manner, moral acts towards others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pupit</strong></td>
<td>Stiff grass used to thatch houses and as stakes in gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lain</strong></td>
<td>Social grouping or clan groups, based on shared obligations and responsibilities, made through kinship relations, shared living space, or alliances made through sharing of resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sore</strong></td>
<td>Grief or sorrow; shared grief or sorrow for others; empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Susa</strong></td>
<td>Sister, used by men and women to refer to women who are close friends or kin of similar age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salim meri</strong></td>
<td>A feast to mark a woman officially settling with her new clan after marriage (usually fresh food taken by her family to the family of her husband, and his clan cook for both sides to consume together)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tambu</strong></td>
<td>In-laws; word used to refer to the group and to individuals rather than invoking specific names, which is a punishable taboo; also refers to taboo or socially prohibited acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tok ples</strong></td>
<td>Local languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tumbuna</strong></td>
<td>Ancestors; recently deceased generations; grandparents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tumbuna pasin</strong></td>
<td>Practices and behaviours of people before European colonisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Valyu</strong></td>
<td>Social importance of an object in ceremonial contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Waitman</strong></td>
<td>Europeans; Australians; Americans; generic term for light-skinned people; specific term for the colonisers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wanbel</strong></td>
<td>Mutual agreement between individuals and groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yungpela</strong></td>
<td>Young; unmarried</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter One. Introduction

My mother was well known in our village for being an *asbin* (winged bean) grower. She would plant ten large rows of *asbin* and then give them to people. These people would then come back to her some weeks later with bags of rice, tinned fish, sugar and tea. People thought of her as a very generous woman.

—Apato, agricultural extension worker named after his mother

As Apato drove me around Goroka, showing me the new foods that have begun to bear fruit as temperatures rise in the Eastern Highlands, he told me stories of *asbin* (winged bean), a food specifically associated with hardworking and skilful women, and once considered the most valuable food gift in Goroka. He explained that women who could grow a lot of *asbin* were recognised by others as accomplished, valuable and generous. His own mother was so renowned for her generosity and strength that he was named after her, an act of pride and recognition of her personhood. Complementary to a woman’s hard work in the gardens, her husband was known for cooking food in an *asbin mumu* (earth oven) successfully and was respected for his strength, sense of timing and patience. Together they were a powerful and influential team, Apato explained, effective in demonstrating their affection and concern for others, through hard work, commitment and sacrifice.

We drove up to the marketplace, pulling over into the potholed, muddy carpark from where pineapple sellers had temporarily been cleared away by the market administration. Through the wire fence, I could see the market was busy, full of sellers sitting in rows along the back edge of the fence and down a deep dip in the ground up to the houses in the distance where
women sold bush greens. The sweet smell of recently dried mud and food debris filled my nose along with the aroma of charred meat that men and women were frying on metal plates nearby. Outside the market, people of various ages sat under umbrellas selling snack size pieces of lamb fat or sausages with bright red skin, both deliciously salty and served with strands of parsley to cut through the grease. Inside people quietly milled around through the small pathways, as sellers sat behind bright green bunches of lettuce and neatly organised rows of dark red tomatoes amongst stacks of oranges, lemons, chillies and ginger. Inside, with her teenage granddaughter alongside her for company, Apato’s elderly mother was selling corn and cucumbers that she had spare in her garden. We went inside to say hello. Apato (the mother), married at fourteen, was an elderly woman who remembers life in her village of Bena as her brothers were still going through initiation rites, when missionaries were only tentatively making grounds in converting people to their faith and bringing these rituals to an end. She was one of the first market women to show me her garden, where neat rows of asbin were growing in close-knit rows in one section and sweet potato mounds were interspersed with tall sugarcane and corn plants in another. Soon she had me digging up yams and planting sweet potato cuttings deep into the sides of piled earth to face the sun. Working alongside her, hands deep in freshly tilled soil, reminded me of the times I planted seedlings with my own grandmother during English spring seasons and the satisfaction of looking back at a well-weeded and newly planted garden. Apato taught me how to pick off the delicate purple flowers of the asbin plants and ordered that I go home and fry them. I dropped half of the harvested flowers off to a friend’s house as a gift. As she excitedly added them to her family’s evening meal, my friend’s mother, in her fifties and the wife of a well-known businessman in Goroka, repeated the same sentiment of Apato’s son: “Only very strong and hardworking women can grow this plant, and we value its tubers more than any other food.
This is a very special food, given by women to those who have helped them through difficult times.”

By spending over eleven months in 2013 and 2014 living and working with ‘producer-sellers’, those who grow food and sell their surplus, in Goroka marketplace (T. S. Epstein 1982: 17), I learnt that women are, and have long been, active agents in different aspects of (public) transactions and ‘produce’ many of the aesthetic, emotional and material elements that make up what is commonly referred to as ‘ceremonial exchange’ in Highlands ethnography. They are responsible for growing food, pigs and people, and earning money through the marketplace, as part of engaging in what I term an economy of recognition. This is an economy where the full social and emotional humanity of others is recognised mutually through the exchange of objects and affects (Robbins 2009; Honneth 2001; 1996; 2003). I also began to understand the complexities of their agency as situated subjects (Mohanty 2013; Mahmood 2005), with multiple obligations, desires and objectives as they navigate the cash economy and their kinship networks in a context of rapid urbanisation.

This thesis offers a perspective on the provisioning of food that is grounded in the everyday experiences of market women in the Goroka fresh produce market, Eastern Highlands Province (EHP), PNG. Examining the lives of these market vendors contributes a local perspective on global issues of food security in a context of climate change and urbanisation, from a specifically gendered perspective. In Goroka, the majority of people selling fresh produce are women, and they also cultivate much of the food themselves. What it means to be a man or a woman is made through divisions of labour within gardens and households, emotional discourses within the contemporary economy and gendered ideas of morality.

Certain kinds of foods are given to mark particular occasions, and the kinds of foods that are gifted can also demonstrate the emotions that are appropriate to the event and relationship
(Feil 1981; Kahn 1986; Salisbury 1962; A. Strathern 1979; 1971). For instance, sugarcane is gifted to guests upon arrival, especially at the start of big life events such as mortuary exchanges. Sugarcane is said to *kulim bel* (cool the stomach). It is given to guests because they might be thirsty after walking long journeys, but also demonstrates a desire for peaceful relationships. Giving the wrong kinds of food can be a serious matter. For instance, when I asked a *mama*\(^1\) in the market why certain kinds of cooking bananas must be given for bridewealth transaction, she explained:

> If you give tapiok\(^2\) [cassava] to the family of the man, then they will think you don’t value your daughter, that you don’t love her, that you don’t care, and then later the relationship will break down and they will not treat her well. When he beats her he will say, “You are a worthless woman, your parents sent you here with tapiok, you are worth nothing, they don’t even care about you”.

The kinds of foods that are exchanged between people can thus symbolise the relationships that they have with each other and the kind of regard that they have for one another. “Food exchange is a kind of language for us”, as local anthropologist from the nearby Wahgi Valley, Joe Mangi explained – “We say things to each other through our food”. This thesis examines the relationships between gender relations, value, emotions and food in the Goroka marketplace. I contend that the marketplace is embedded within an economy of recognition where people are motivated to enact particular kinds of gendered social acts as a result of their desires and expectations of recognition. Value is therefore bestowed upon objects and

\(^{1}\) A gendered female person who takes care of her own household using her gardens and the marketplace, of reproductive age or post-menopausal and usually associated with rural contexts or selling in the markets to provide for others.

\(^{2}\) *Tapiok* is a starchy root crop that is considered to be the least desirable kind of tuber or starchy food in Goroka. It requires being eaten with oil or salt. It is however a key food in times of drought as it can grow with little water. It is ground, pounded and used to make savoury and sweet puddings wrapped in banana leaves.
persons as they gain prestige and influence as a result of different forms of material and non-material transactions (Munn 1986; Graeber 2001; Lambek 2013).

![Map of Papua New Guinea](image)

Figure 1 Map of Papua New Guinea, Copyright University of Auckland

The Highlands region (including Southern, Western, Eastern Highlands see Figure 1) of Papua New Guinea (PNG) has a history of horticulture that spans up to 11,000 years (Bourke and Harwood 2009; West 2016: 2), and one of the shortest histories with European colonialism in the world. Australian gold explorers entered the Eastern Highlands in 1933, and formal colonial administration established itself in the early 1940s. Money was introduced in 1948 and urban markets in the 1950s (Waiko 1993). This historical context makes Goroka a particularly relevant site to examine how food becoming a tradeable commodity and how money now in normal everyday use is affecting gender relations and food security. Recently, the United Nations recorded PNG as having the world’s seventh-fastest urbanising population (UN DESA 2014; Busse 2014). Despite having a significant
proportion of its population considered ‘rural’, PNG’s rates of urbanisation mean increasing numbers of people are buying food rather than growing it themselves.

Women of various ages, education levels, language groups and backgrounds seek an income through the marketplace that is sufficient to pay for store goods such as salt, oil, tea, rice and sugar and for their children’s school fees, and to contribute to the ceremonial exchanges of their kin at major life events. Both their ability to grow particular foods, such as asbin, and to make and save money are respected by others and acknowledged in communal exchange events, including their bridewealth exchanges. However, as food is increasingly traded for money in the marketplace while continuing to be grown for subsistence and ceremonial use, men and women’s relationships with each other, their environments and the urban economy are shifting as local moralities encompass, and are transformed by, new forms of exchange. Offering an examination of how an urban marketplace, a place of commodity transactions, is embedded within the indigenous, moral economy of emotions and recognition. This thesis explores this fast-changing situation.
Situating Goroka and the Marketplace

Goroka town is in the Eastern Highlands, joined to the Western Highlands, Southern Highlands and Chimbu provinces of the Central Highlands Range by the Highlands Highway, which connects the Highlands to Lae and Madang, two major port towns in the north and east (see Fig. 2). The Eastern Highlands has a temperate climate with an average annual temperature of twenty-five degrees centigrade, which makes it an ideal place to grow a huge variety of fruits and vegetables. Goroka is the capital of the Eastern Highlands Province and has been the administrative centre of the Highlands region since the British and then Australian governments created the town as a colonial outpost in the 1940s, not long after the first Australians, the Leahy brothers entered the Highlands looking for gold.3

Figure 2 Map of Eastern Highlands, with Goroka in context, Copyright University of Auckland

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3 See First Contact (1983) documentary for a visual ethnographic description of the moment the first waitman (Europeans) were seen by Eastern Highlanders and the relationships that ensued.
Figure 3 Map of Goroka town, Copyright University of Auckland
Similar to many of the British colonial outposts of the time, Goroka town is organised around a long thin airstrip in the middle which is a short walk from the main marketplace and close to the now Provincial Government buildings. Air transport continues to provide the main connection between Goroka and PNG’s capital city, Port Moresby, because of the rugged landscape that falls between the Highlands and Central Province. However, the Highlands Highway (built largely from labour of Highlands men under Australian instruction) continues to be developed and enhanced as it is the major route for transporting minerals, goods and people between the Highlands region and other parts of PNG. It is this highway that allows many producer-sellers to sell their goods in other markets where they may get a higher price, whilst others send their produce by plane to the capital city, as Benediktsson (2002) has documented well in his account of the sweet potato trade in PNG. Goroka is a stop en route for large, heavy trucks that bring goods up from the ports for the mining and gas industry in the Western and Southern Highlands. Outside the main marketplace is a major transport hub with public motor vehicles (PMVs) and dainas (long, open-backed trucks that people sit down in) that stop to collect passengers and take them to the various hamlets and large villages surrounding Goroka town and to other major towns such as Mt. Hagen, Kainantu, Lae and Madang.

The main market (in red on Figure 3.) is situated at the bottom of a hill, next to the National Park in green, a large open green that forms a social centre for entertainment and public meetings. One of the arterial roads winding northeast of the main market leads to the University of Goroka, a campus university that has over two thousand students and was once the Goroka Teacher’s College, and before that, the initial location of the colonial administration. Goroka has a number of other markets, as indicated on the map in red outlines. Growers sell their own produce and ‘resellers’ sell the product of others (otherwise known as blak maket in Tok Pisin, the lingua franca of PNG) in smaller urban markets. These
*blak maket* sellers trade fresh produce bought directly from the main market and sell it for higher prices per unit, making a profit in the mark-up. Their service provides convenient access to fresh produce for the town’s workers who cannot make it to the market during working hours. These markets also provide producer-sellers with the opportunity to sell in other locations if the main market is too full or inconvenient for them.

There are over twenty-four local languages in the Eastern Highlands throughout the eight districts of the province (see Fig. 4). Tok Pisin, a pidgin English, is the main language used for market transactions and is spoken by most people in Goroka, other than very old women and men who may only speak their *tok ples* (local languages). Most market women I met

![Figure 4 Map of Eastern Highlands Political Districts](image)
could ‘hear’ or understand between three to six different tok ples and speak at least one or two. People living in Goroka town and working in government administration, at the hospital, at the university and in other formal public offices generally speak English, and many market vendors and street sellers who may have completed high-school education could also speak English. However, most communication in the marketplace and daily interactions around Goroka were in Tok Pisin. Younger generations are increasingly unable to speak any tok ples and only communicate in Tok Pisin or English.

People living in and around Goroka may live in a hamlet, a collection of houses within a fence (referred to as banis) or an informal urban settlement (blok). Whilst they may live according to clan affiliations, or sub-clans, migration and movement both in the colonial era and more recently means there can be people who live within a banis who are not from the same language group but nonetheless become part of the clan. In Tok Pisin the word lain can be used to refer to a group of people who are affiliated with one another either through kinship, language and/or demonstration of solidarity. Through neighbouring relationships, church affiliations or the sharing of resources, land and mutual support, people can become more like kin: “participation is a measure of incorporation” (P. Brown and Buchbinder 1976: 6).

The Embedded Marketplace: Economies of Recognition and Women Transactors

The Goroka marketplace is embedded in what Stephen Gudeman (2001) calls the realm of mutuality, which refers to those aspects of economy which are about building relationships, as opposed to the realm of market, which is about furthering individual maximisation and profit. Building on economic historian Karl Polanyi and substantivist economic anthropologists such as Chris Gregory (1982) and Marshall Sahlins (1972), Gudeman (2001;
contended that only through understanding local institutions can the economy be made sense of.

Gudeman (2008: 4) suggests that in economies everywhere there is tension between two domains of value, both of which involve people employing different strategies to provide for themselves and others. He suggests the first is ‘trade’, where goods, services and money are alienated from enduring relationships and people seek to substitute what they have for something else through exchange with others (Gudeman 2008: 4)). These exchanges can be anonymous and competitive, and they can involve middlemen and other mechanisms for allocation. The main objective is not to maintain social relationships but to exchange goods, what Gregory (1982) classifies as the predominant mode of commodity economies. Goods are parted from their holders and impersonally traded with others, and a driving force for efficiency is competition. Then there is the sphere of ‘mutuality’, where in contrast to trade, goods and services are exchanged in a way that creates social links and mediates and maintains relationships between people, and can also involve activities required for self-sufficiency, such as gardening (Gudeman 2008: 5). Gudeman suggests that in every society there are the motivations towards both of these forms of exchange, and people can be pulled in the direction of both at different times depending on what is considered moral for the context.

With this model, Gudeman (2008) attempts a universal abstraction that brings together the theoretical models of economists and the ethnographic findings of economic anthropologists. However, he does not explain how forms of trade come to occur in particular contexts, thus leaving out historicity, a key aspect of a critical political economy analysis (Hart 2017). In Goroka, the distinction between trade and mutuality is blurred in particular moments; yet it is clear that an increasing emphasis on trade has developed since colonisation and with the demands of globalisation. Nonetheless, in Goroka’s main marketplace, where there are a
large number of anonymous exchanges taking place with little prior relationship between
transactors, one might assume trade is the dominant objective. However, there are aspects to
transactions and the marketplace itself that also contribute to building mutuality. Sellers gift
food products to relatives or friends as they pass by, such as young people returning to
university or their sisters living in other villages. They also gift extras to regular customers
who become tied into relationships of mutuality through feeling a sense of obligation to make
market transactions. Thus the marketplace becomes a context of continuing social
relationships and sharing resources within sentimental relationships.

Economy is often defined as the production, distribution and circulation of shelter, food,
water and other such vital resources (Gregory and Altman 1989). In Goroka, I contend that
the economy includes how shelter, food and vital resources such as land are allocated and
circulated, as well as the important matter of how social relations are made and sustained. In
Goroka, the economy is not a structured, abstract phenomenon where finances are calculated
and aggregated (Wilk 2007); instead it involves how the humanity and emotions of
individuals and groups are recognised through words, gestures and objects in ways that relate
to local environments and ecologies.

Writers about women in the Highlands of PNG have debated the extent to which women are
seen as subordinate to men, deemed inferior and exploited in local gender systems (Read
1982; Josephides 1985; M. Strathern 1988). Lisette Josephides argued women are exploited
because they labour to produce the things that men later exchange as a means of gaining
prestige and political influence (Josephides 1985). Strathern (1988) questioned her analytic
standpoint, contesting the assumptions that labour and property can be understood in the
Highlands as they are in Marxist and feminist analyses derived from western contexts. I
discuss these debates further in Chapter Two. Yet, I build on these debates by demonstrating
that women in Goroka also gain recognition for growing and exchanging things of value.
Men and women also both get recognition for acts and practices which are not necessarily material. Furthermore, while there are antagonistic aspects of market women’s relations with husbands, which money and commodification can increase, their social and political positions are also enhanced through their economic activities and contributions to the collective. I demonstrate the complexities, nuances and contradictions of this through my ethnographic descriptions of gender relations in and around the Goroka marketplace. I contend that whilst there tend to be many aspects of gender relations that make women appear subordinate to men, there are many spaces in which women have agency and gain recognition outside of male structures of power, alongside supportive and caring male kin. Furthermore, I demonstrate that gifting in the Highlands is more than a political avenue for men to gain prestige but achieves mutual recognition between individuals and groups.

By framing the economy in Goroka as one of recognition, I highlight the way women’s acts are valued both within the marketplace and the gifting economy, and how women gain self-esteem and respect through these different spheres of transaction, and in the process show care for others. Though various acts, such as looking after pigs that will later be exchanged by men and growing the majority of food that feeds their households and communities, Highlands women, and their labour, may appear subordinate or exploited (Josephides 1985: 98). Counter to this perspective, building on Strathern’s (1988) critique and Holly Wardlow’s (2006a) focus on women’s subjectivity and agency, I argue that women’s productivity in different areas is how they feel valued by others and themselves, gaining recognition in the process. Market women are active agents in an economy that involves the circulation of material items and non-material intentions and emotions. Embodied acts of emotion and aesthetic displays are designed to elicit reactions in others, part of how men and women in Goroka establish connections and disconnections through time and space (Munn 1986; Keane
Emotions also form part of how gendered persons are made and reproduced (West and Zimmerman 1987; Fajans 2006).

A Path from Food Security to Food Sovereignty

I now turn to explain how I came to be in PNG as part of a broader research project into urban food insecurity, outline my research methodology and position myself within this research.

Whilst studying for my masters in development studies in 2012, I became interested in the problems of applying a universal definition of food security to different cultural contexts, where food takes on particular meanings and is produced and consumed within social relations characterised by dynamics of gender, age, geography and so on. Furthermore, I explored the complex and problematic goals for gender equality within development discourses and learnt about the historical and ongoing colonial context in which ‘development’ as a concept and industry emerged (Escobar 1995). My postgraduate research into the food sovereignty movement compelled me to understand the value of agro-ecological approaches for growing food in ways suited to local environments in an era of climate change, and the significance of small-scale producers’ knowledge for global food security. The participation of women as knowledge holders and growers in their economies is given particular importance in the political discourse of food sovereignty (Wittman, Desmarais, and Wiebe 2010). I explored these issues in a context of European colonial histories in West Africa, having spent four months working with a local environmental organisation in Togo and Ghana. The extraction of raw materials, the introduction of plantations of cocoa and coffee, and the rise of mechanised large-scale agriculture in West Africa encouraged the growth of colonial cities, rural-to-urban migration and the trade of food from rural regions to the newly urbanising populations (Guyer 1987). Through the exploration of urbanisation and
food provisioning in West Africa, I came to think about how European colonial interests, agricultural transformations and urbanisation affect men and women’s lives differently and how gender is made in the process, both materially and conceptually, as an intellectual category that emerged in the post-colonial era (1950s) (Amadiume 1987; Oyewumi 2002).

This is the background to my joining the research project “Food Security in a Rapidly Urbanising Country: The Goroka Fresh Food Market, Papua New Guinea”, through a PhD scholarship funded by a Royal Society of New Zealand Marsden Grant. This project, led by Dr Mark Busse, sought to understand the Goroka marketplace from the perspective of those actors most involved in it, including the administrators, the people that transport the food, the food sellers and their families. My part of the project focused in particular on the gender dynamics of growing and selling food in the marketplace and bridged the rural and urban components of the project.

**Research Methodology**

My research has been guided by the following questions:

- How and why is the marketplace gendered, and in what way is gender produced and performed through the marketplace?
- How has the commodification of food affected gender relations and the relationships that growers have with each other and their gardens?
- How do the marketplace and the ceremonial economy shape, constrain and enable market women’s agency in Goroka?
I arrived in Goroka as a newcomer to PNG. I learnt Tok Pisin before arriving, thanks to the help of my supervisor and Papua New Guinean friends living in Auckland. This helped me settle in relatively quickly, making conversation with neighbours on the street and soon joining them to chew betel nut and smoke brus (homegrown tobacco wrapped in newspaper). I had been advised by a student from Henganofi, EHP who was studying in Auckland to “do as the people do and you will be fine”, advice I maintained, as far as possible, throughout my fieldwork.

I conducted what Sharp (2013a) and Pickles (2013a) have referred to as ‘nomadic’ fieldwork in that I moved around from place to place, living in between town, peri-urban settlements in Okiyufa and villages in Lufa, Unggai-Bena, and North Goroka. I also stayed in villages in Daulo, Asaro, Bena and Okapa (see Fig. 4), returning to some communities for longer stints and repeatedly over time. My ethnographic work included eleven months of participant observation, structured and unstructured interviews, life histories interviews with market vendors, market surveys and a lot of ‘deep hanging out’ in the market, gardens, villages and town. Many of market women and me encouraged me to sit and sell produce with them and to grow my own food in the gardens after I had experience working with them in the gardens. This meant I had a viewpoint on the marketplace from the gardens and vice versa.

Aside from those people who were directly growing food for the marketplace, I conducted formal interviews with people focused on gender and food-related issues in development organisations and government offices in Goroka. To gain the perspective of local experts in agriculture and food-related issues, I also interviewed people involved with coffee production, including in trading and policy, as coffee is the other major source of cash.

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4 My first introduction to PNG was through watching Coconut Revolution (2001) [film] (Bougainville: Dom Rotheroea) showing the uprisings in Bougainville against outside mining companies. The second time was in meeting Keiko Ono (whose mother is from Milne Bay and father is from Japan) during my masters degree at SOAS, London, who encouraged me to apply for the PhD position.
income for rural people in the Eastern Highlands. Finding those working in local government offices or development organisations was often through serendipitous meetings on buses in town, or through a snowballing technique of finding people through already established contacts. As some people say, “Goroka is a big village”, which made it reasonably straightforward to find people with expertise and insights on the topics that interested me.

**Building Networks and Eating Methodology**

As I established myself within a network of people who understood my research goals, I was increasingly invited to attend big exchange events or *hevis*, as they are termed in Tok Pisin. These are held at marriages, deaths and girls’ first menstruations, as compensations for fights and quarrels between families and sub-clans, or for other occasions such as church meetings. Food, either cooked in large amounts in an earth oven or heaped carefully into different piles as fresh food, is transacted and given between people of varying degrees of relatedness. I learnt that attendance itself is recognised and thanked by the hosts with food. Sometimes I was told to carry large ceremonial items of food to the events as my interlocutors were keen for me to appear as a participating member of their clan or *lain*, since having a *waitman*\(^5\) incorporated into the clan added to their prestige and recognition. By attending ceremonial exchanges, I pieced together what kinds of foods are considered worthy of being gifted, what kinds are predominantly for direct consumption or subsistence, and what is sold in the marketplace and also appears in ceremonial contexts. I also observed the behaviours of men and women at these events and became part of the emotional acts that some events entailed.

I adopted what could be considered an ‘eating’ methodology, consuming so many different kinds of foods at these events that over time I learnt the subtle differences in flavour and texture of varieties of sweet potato, developing my favourite kinds of *mumu* taro (the purple

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\(^5\) Meaning European and Australian and other light skinned colonisers and missionaries, and those who proceeded them.
ones) and learning which foods should be eaten with what (e.g., ginger with pig fat, salt with greens but not with taro). Understanding the food landscape through taste, as well as what foods are valued ceremonially, contributed to my understanding of what motivates market vendors both in their production and consumption of different food commodities. I also learnt the habit of taking leftovers home with me in a plastic bag to share with my neighbours, as they did with me, as part of forging urban friendship-cum-kinship relations (Hukula 2017).

**Whiteness, Gender and the Politics of Research**

I was a twenty-five-year old at the start of fieldwork, a middle-class, English-Iranian woman who grew up in the UK, which means my positionality was largely as a young, single white woman (of marriageable age). This meant, as Bashkow (2006) has noted, being given special treatment. In the beginning, I was largely referred to as *misus meri* until people got to know my name and relationships formed. This term, while used by women in the market as a compliment between each other, usually refers to white women, an equivalent of the term used to refer to white men, *masta*. I use the term *white* to stand for historical, colonial and racialised power relations and the differentiated positions that people hold depending on their appearance and *habitus* in particular contexts.

Understanding what it means to be a white woman in this context requires acknowledging the historical place that Europeans had in the Highlands. During the 1950s, 1960s and beginning of the 1970s white administration officers were in charge of collecting taxes, ensuring

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6 Being a young woman sometimes meant I was asked if I wanted to marry into a local clan, taken on as a daughter and someone that could become a link with other clans. Through attending the wedding ceremonies of a German tourist with the son of a family I was close with, I witnessed first-hand how a white woman was thought to be the most valuable kind of woman and could lift the clan’s reputation. I was largely unaware of my own presence leading to any kind of recognition for others, but I sensed that this was part of the enthusiasm for wanting me to marry a clan member. Only on one visit to Okapa, to a village quite far away from main roads, did I become ‘a special guest’ who local leaders came to visit. Otherwise, around Goroka town, I soon became generally known and associated with particular villages, and did not feel I was treated with particular deference, despite my whiteness continuously being a point of reference for conversations and comparisons.

7 For example, if a woman felt another woman was nicely dressed or if she was impressed by something another woman has done, she might say *yu missus ye* (you are smart and nice aren’t you!).
villages were cleaned and lawful orders were obeyed, as in other British/Northern European colonies (Wolfers 1975). The colonial government asserted itself in a position of direct control and political power, instituted through threats or direct acts of violence, jail and in extreme cases, death (Stella 2007; LiPuma 2001). PNG Men in particular were at threat of execution or jail sentences if it was suspected that they showed a sexual interest towards white women (Collins 1986; Stella 2007). This is the context in which missus has multiple associations, but mostly demonstrates a polite deference. However, people I met in Goroka had nuanced feelings towards Europeans and varied, with some having respect and others criticism and pity.

My positionality shifted slightly when I shared more of my own narrative, including my mixed cultural heritage. When I explained that my father was from Iran discussions often turned to matters of cultural change, loss of language or values, and change in marriage dynamics including sharing stories of the shift from arranged marriage (my grandparents) to individual choice (my parents). As we shared stories, I was no longer entirely ‘white’ but became slightly more ‘other’. Many assumed that being Middle Eastern meant I understood the importance of caring for family, sharing food and bearing children. I reflected on this with Papua New Guinean friends in Goroka who sympathised with my relatives’ desire for me to be married with children, a moral expectation of women to be productive that resonated with them.

In the final few months of fieldwork I was very at ease in Goroka and was increasingly asked if I had married locally or had a Papua New Guinean parent. I respected local norms for older women, wearing skirts and meriblouses (mother-hubbard style dresses with high round necks, short puffy sleeves, often brightly coloured and patterned, made from cotton or synthetic material). I was generally more tanned by being outside in the sun often and came to speak what I was told was fluent Tok Pisin. This seemed to mean I came to occupy a different
habitus towards the end of my fieldwork compared to that of the beginning. I was no longer stared at when I walked in to town, and comfortably travelled to villages and events out of town with friends and fictive kin making it easy to meet people and witness different aspects of market women’s lives. I socialised with women of varying ages and backgrounds around Goroka town, which gave me an insight into the variety of contexts in which selling in the market factored.

My data is somewhat influenced by the fact that I spent much of my time with older market women. These women readily adopted me and were often able to take care of me in their homes as one of their children. This may be because they were at a stage in their life cycle of having the social position and the confidence to take me under their wing. This means some of my data is shaped by the experience of women who, as Dickerson-Putman (1996) and Sexton (1986) have pointed out, structurally may have more power and influence than younger women, who still have to establish themselves within their families and kin networks. Older women tended to be more vocal and readily wanted to take me in as part of their families and households, possibly a sign of their greater power and agency than younger women or the expectation that they feel to care for others, and adding me to the many people they already cared for. I tried to make sure I was contributing materially in terms of food and money to hevis. Whilst most of the women I spent time with seemed to enjoy having a guest and visitor from overseas, I nonetheless felt regretful that I could not explain how my research would directly benefit them, other than providing insights that may be useful for decision-makers in their country.

**Power Relations of Ethnography**

Bashkow (2006) argues that the power relations inherent in ethnography cannot be avoided, and should not be considered to undermine the quality of ethnography. However, it seems
this misses the point of critiques made of anthropology. Questioning the power relations of research and the place that white researchers in particular have in PNG also means questioning the place of ethnography, the written object, and whether there continues to be, or should be, a place for research that is not directly responsive or shaped around the interests of the communities upon which it is based (Smith 2012). Who the research is for and how theorising benefits research participants are questions currently being asked of anthropology and anthropological theory (Fakouhi 2016). Hence, many indigenous scholars push for research that is more accountable and responsive to the community in question (Denzin, Lincoln, and Smith 2008; Tengan 2005; Diaz and Kauanui 2001; Davis and Craven 2016; Smith 2012).

Some anthropologists see themselves ‘giving voice’ to those who do not ordinarily have opportunities to speak out beyond their lived space and relationships (Stacey 1991). But if the researcher has not been invited by those who supposedly need ‘voice’, then how can they know whether they are ‘giving voice’ and not taking it away? Lengel (1998: 240) asks whether “giving a voice to women who may otherwise remain silent is empowerment or appropriation?” Different people, including Papua New Guinean women, would have different answers to this question. I hope, however, to convey some of the complexity and diversity of market women’s lives in a way that does not reproduce homogenising and static images (Mohanty 1988; Manuelito 2008; Ware 1992), nor depicts them as victims that need saving (Davies 1991; Spivak 2010). Nonetheless, as Lila Abu-Lughod established long ago, telling stories can never be neutral (Abu-Lughod 1991).

Co-writing is one feminist solution to the problem of power relations in the production of ethnography. Whilst I considered including research participants in the writing process, I soon realised this would be difficult as many of the market women I worked with could not read or write. However, many of my closest informants and friends in Goroka have been
involved in the process of forming my arguments throughout the writing-up process, as we have continued discussions through WhatsApp, Skype and telephone calls.

More reflexive, personal and emotional writing has been another approach put forward by feminist anthropologists as a means of addressing the imbalance between those whose lives are revealed and that of the ethnographer’s which remains hidden (Abu-Lughod 1991; 1986; Behar 1996). I include some of my personal story as an attempt to unsettle the projection of an ‘objective’ description or analysis of what I observed in Goroka. However, ‘writing in the self’ is perceived by some to be a form of narcissism, and may mean ethnography becomes another space for those who already have visibility and power (academics) to talk about themselves. But arguably ethnography is always a representation of the self, as it is the ethnographer whose life and positionality forms the basis for comparison and analysis, whether this is made explicit or not. The challenge of writing is to go beyond an “overly self-reflexive concern with the Other… [which] seems more like a concern with the Self” (Lengel 1998: 247) and write in a way that does not distract from the main stories that are being told.

As Chandra Mohanty states, cross-cultural feminist work should be “attentive to the micropolitics of context, subjectivity, and struggle, as well as to the macropolitics of global economic and political systems and processes” (Mohanty cited in Davis and Craven 2016: 26). I hope to strike a balance between telling the stories of market women and men in Goroka, including their voices and explaining how I came to meet them, without revealing the details of their villages, family ties or clan affiliations. I aim to strike a balance between the details of individual subjectivities and general patterns occurring across different people’s lives.
Ethics and ‘Informed Consent’

I received approval from the University of Auckland Human Participant Ethics Committee and from the National Research Institute of Papua New Guinea to carry out this research. I also established a relationship within the Department of Social Sciences at the University of Goroka and the Museum of Papua New Guinea. I use pseudonyms throughout the thesis and try to maintain anonymity of my interlocutors through leaving out key identifiable details. Nonetheless, stories may be recognisable to those I mention themselves. For this reason, I aim to maintain a portrayal that is close to what I observed and experienced, but have omitted some details that may have meant for a richer description but also risked betraying anonymity. Whilst in Goroka, I repeatedly explained I was a student from the UK, studying in New Zealand, and working on a project to research the impact of urbanisation on food production and the relationships between men and women. I tried to make it clear that those people who spoke to me would remain anonymous. I sought informed consent from all of my participants, however it is still a reality that they could not know what they are consenting to, being mostly outside of the academic world, and as I was not clear myself what I would do with their stories. For this reason, despite some women saying they were happy to be named, I have given them pseudonyms.

I took resources such as rice bags, tea, sugar and tinned fish with me whenever I was staying with a family to reciprocate their hospitality and so not to take away the hard-earned resources from market women. I explained that the information people give me would contribute to my writing a thesis, what I likened to a book, and that I would leave a copy of this in the University of Goroka library and the National Research Institute for anyone to read. I am in continuing conversation with Goroka’s Women in Agriculture association about how I can produce something that will have some relevance or use to women’s lives in Goroka and will be accessible for those who cannot read. Whilst I believe that many of my
interlocutors appreciated that an outsider/European was keen to learn about local customs, try new foods and work hard in the gardens with them, the form of recognition I give to them through this thesis is unlikely to be equal to the qualification that I gain as a result. While questions around the ethics and politics of research have consistently been influential on my experience of writing and analysis, how I can reconcile these ethical questions is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Limitations of the Research

As I went to Goroka with preconceived ideas of the extensive knowledge and ability people in the Highlands have for self-sufficiency and existing outside of capitalist relations, I struggled to accept that many of those people I spoke with saw many benefits to money, cash crop production, and waged work. My own romanticisation of their lifestyles (a bourgeois luxury in itself), and what I saw as the damage that colonisation and globalisation had done, was a bias that meant it was difficult to observe and interpret daily uses of money and growers’ desires for more money without a paternalistic cynicism. I was focused on the ways that it seemed the market economy had led to a breakdown in social relations, when in fact there were many ways relationships were being maintained regardless of money, and taking on new forms through other aspects of modernity such as Christianity, high-school education and town life (Bloch and Parry 1989; LiPuma 2001). For instance, I initially perceived the popularity of Christianity (and the many different denominations in Goroka) as a remanence of colonisation, later learning anthropological arguments that Christian beliefs have been syncretised or hybridised with local belief systems. I attended many church gatherings and observed that these were opportunities for market women to see family and friends, build relationships that enabled them to share garden work, travel independently, occupy public spaces *en masse* and provided fun moments to sing and dance. Church gatherings, like the marketplace, offer opportunities for women to get together and socialise. Thus I hope this
limitation has become a strength, as I had to reconcile my own ideas with the complexity and reality of what I observed in Goroka.

Chapter Overview

In this introductory chapter, I have explained the research context and how I came to be conducting this research and briefly stated my key arguments and research methodology. I have demonstrated how this offers a locally grounded and gendered perspective on questions of food security in Papua New Guinea, in wider context of debates about gender relations in the Highlands.

In Chapter Two which follows, I explain how I am defining ‘an economy of recognition’ in more detail and lay out how this relates to the particular debates regarding gender relations I the Highlands and gifts and commodities. I situate my use of the concept of agency and how I incorporate emotions into my analysis of the economy and gender. This chapter outlines my framework for understanding how objects, people and acts are valued within an economy of recognition, that which encompasses the marketplace and influences what is sold, who is selling and why.

In Chapter Three I provide further ethnographic details and historical context of the marketplace and the foods that are sold within it. I demonstrate the way gender is reproduced, performed and transgressed through the selling of food as indigenous ideas of gender intertwine with the colonial processes which relates to objects and their economic positioning. Using the perspectives of both men and women in and around the marketplace I show that there are multiple perspectives on why it is that men do not feel comfortable selling fresh produce. Using the local explanations of why men do not make (to sell in the market), I explore how gender is expressed through an embodied set of ideas about what it means to be a man or woman in this context. Focusing on the emotion of sem (humiliation,
embarrassment or shyness), I argue that emotions form parts of discourse that reproduce gendered categories. I relate this to Butler’s (1988) concepts of performativity and transgression. I give two examples of people that transgress dominant gender norms, and demonstrate the difference between a man who transgresses the gendered boundaries in the marketplace and a woman who transgresses the gendered boundaries in a village. They are not equivalents but exceptions that prove the rule.

In Chapter Four, I focus on the question of market women’s subjectivities and agency, asking, what do women’s positions within the marketplace mean for their marital relations? I outline debates regarding antagonism between genders in the Highlands, explain what it means to be a ‘good’ wife, mother or sister in Goroka today, and examine the importance of pigs, money, perceptions of education/university and housing in the lives of three women who each navigate relationships with their husbands differently. I show that women make different pragmatic decisions for themselves based on their enmeshment within relational networks through which they receive recognition from others, and thus feel valued. Market women’s agency is produced and constrained by their kin networks, which provide them with support whilst obliging them to contribute to ceremonial exchanges. I argue that their agency is relational, building on M.Strathern’s (1988) concept of relational personhood and Mahmood’s (2005; 2009) critique of the liberal humanist subject of western feminisms. The market women included in this chapter experience dilemmas and emotions of anger and disappointment with how their marriage relationships turned out to be. The market as a place enables them to be economic agents motivated to provide for others, and is simultaneously a site of conflict and antagonism with their husbands.

In Chapter Five, I turn from the marketplace to explore issues of value and exchange, focusing on a woman’s gift that is increasingly sold as a commodity. Through examining the indigenous crop of asbin, a much-prized tuber, I illustrate that this crop was, and sometimes
still is, grown by women and exchanged by women to show gratitude within an economy of recognition. Women use this crop to demonstrate love and care and gain recognition themselves. This chapter explores what happens to this crop in a context of commodification, where increasingly ‘things’ cost money and women focus their energies and labour on paid work and the marketplace rather than this prestigious crop. Through telling the story of one couple in Daulo district, I explain the process of what I term ‘degiftification’, where an object stops being used as a gift but the sentiments of gift exchange continue. I propose that as the social and ceremonial value of other objects has gone up, the requirement to grow this crop has diminished, and with it, the respect that women gained from their gardening knowledge. Nonetheless, women are enacting these shifts to suit their personal situations.

In Chapter Six, I consider the morality of exchange in a context of urbanisation and analyse both the shifts in knowledge production around cash crops such as broccoli and in the local concept of pasin. I argue that cash crop production, and the agricultural knowledge required to produce it, have gained popularity with growers for their monetary value, but that how these are shared and with whom depends on pasin. This is a concept of morality that women are judged by in particular, and demonstrates the contradictions that market women face between managing their marital relations, their households’ costs and the ethics of sharing and caring for others. With a focus on broccoli, I argue that the knowledge and inputs required differ from local crops in important ways, but that these differences are nonetheless embedded in the local economy of recognition. I draw on debates regarding gifts and commodities (Gregory 1982; Appadurai 1986; Goddard 2000) to emphasise the importance of production in the commodification of food.

In Chapter Seven, I turn to the issue of money. Cash crop production is in part driven by the requirements of monetary contributions to the ceremonial economy, part of what I have termed an economy of recognition. This is a moment where people’s relationships get made
and displayed, and it is through the performative and aesthetic efforts of a clan in a particular ceremonial exchange that we see how women contribute to producing the social value that money gains as it becomes a ceremonial valuable. Drawing on the perspectives of M. Strathern (2013) and Hirsch (1995) on aesthetics, I consider the affect and aesthetics of this display as eliciting action in others and as recognising previous acts of care. Contestations between men and women play out as women stake their claim in the economy of recognition and display their own desires to maintain relations. Market women are active in different aspects of the event, working in complementary and antagonistic ways alongside men as organisers, orators and transactors.

In Chapter Eight, the final ethnographic chapter, I turn to the question of marriage payments (braidprais), a major financial cost to women in the marketplace, and an important avenue for many women in PNG to feel respected and valued. There has long been a general opinion, first held by missionaries and still held by expatriate development workers today, that the exchange of money and other valuables at marriage implies the objectification of women. M. Strathern’s (1984a; 1988) work has demonstrated why the object-subject distinction implicit in this perspective cannot be readily applied to the context of Highlands PNG, where objects materialise social relations and people objectify relations. How do women think and feel about the issue of braidprais? How do issues of education, urban location, language group, profession and Christian faith intersect with the varieties of perspectives people in Goroka have on marriage exchange? I suggest it is important to listen to the perspectives of women themselves, who see these exchanges as a compensation for the material and emotional losses their families suffer when they lose their daughter and as a moment where the bride is recognised as valuable, thus gaining a sense of self-esteem and respect. I emphasise three aspects of bridewealth exchanges that I observed in Goroka which build on other investigations into bridewealth in contemporary PNG (Macintyre 2011; Spark 2011).
Firstly, women themselves transact objects, and also perform the affective dimensions that express the loss that is experienced as their daughter leaves. Secondly, there are times where women pay their own *bridprais*, thus complicating the idea that they are merely objects to be transacted by men. And thirdly, bridewealth is a means of connecting women to their natal kin and relatives of their husbands in relationships that provide protection. These exchanges are also a time for women to display their own relationships in the exchange of objects.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis by returning to the central arguments that the gifting economy, in which the marketplace is embedded, is an economy of recognition, where the emotions of others are marked through mutual recognition and displayed through exchanges of food, money and pigs. I argue that women’s roles in this economy can be both material and affective. An aspect of the gift exchange that is often overlooked and devalued is the significance of emotions, and the significance of objects for affecting others’ emotions and relations. Objects can elicit action and emotions in others, and further can be the result of others’ actions. It is through these acts that value is produced, not merely through labour or production, but through performances of emotions and acts that demonstrate a concern for others. It is the emotions of others that form the basis of the economy of recognition, expressed both materially and immaterially. Without paying attention to the emotional aspects of gift exchange and the place emotions have in contributing to the categories of gender, the efforts of women are overlooked, as are the processes through which the category of ‘women’ comes to be produced. Market women continue to be the backbone of Goroka’s ceremonial and cash economy and they maintain their gendered, relational and moral personhood in the process.
Chapter Two. Encompassing Gift and Commodity Economies in Recognition

In this thesis I contend that Goroka’s marketplace is embedded within an economy of recognition, where gendered moralities are maintained through everyday acts of material and immaterial transactions. In contention with most common definitions of economy, I include the importance and vitality of care, both in terms of emotional and material care. The importance of words, gestures and affect is registered in the economy within which people in Goroka exist and produce. Previous investigations of gender, power and exchange in the Highlands have all addressed the different ways in which recognition occurs, largely focusing on prestige and how hierarchies between men, and between men and women, form. I am taking this further to include the emotional dimension of relationships, which matter both for the day-to-day maintenance of relationships and in ceremonial, formal exchange contexts. Furthermore, by focusing on recognition I demonstrate that women’s efforts are acknowledged by others in different aspects of this economy of recognition, and the women too are working within models of prestige and hierarchy based on what sorts of reciprocal relationships they want to maintain, and how they are respected within these.

Recognition as a moral concept that motivates human action is relevant to both gifting and commodity economies. I use the term recognition to refer to the way people acknowledge others and are acknowledged by them in the same instance, building on Hegel’s notion of mutual recognition whereby the subject is created through interactions with others. In this context I use it to refer to how people gain a sense of accomplishment in themselves, in comparison to others, and also acknowledge and respect the prestige or social positioning of others. Recognition is a key concept of this thesis to demonstrate how women’s efforts in the
marketplace and in ceremonial exchanges matter for their own sense of self-respect and for their personhood. Recognition is importantly gendered, in that men and women get recognised for doing different acts and can produce things and moments in collaborative and complementary ways. However, the ways in which women seek recognition are largely determined by the expectations of being productive on behalf of their households and kin networks. The economy of recognition is gendered and moral in that the acts for which women are respected directly relate to their place as productive persons situated within relationships of obligation, and this influences their own desires and agency.

Ethnographers of economies and markets (Gudeman 2001; 2008; Benediktsson 1998; Curry 1999) and theorists of economy (Dilley 1992; Rotstein 1970; Maurer 2006; Lapavitsas 2006) demonstrate that there are many ways of analysing relationships that go beyond usual models of economic theory and emphasise the relationships between people, ‘things’ and other people. Within anthropology, many of the discussion regarding economies has been couched in terms of gifts and commodities (Robbins 2009). In the Highlands, gift exchange has largely been examined with a focus on men, whilst women, if acknowledged, appear as those who do the labour required for ceremonial exchanges (Meggitt 1964a; A. Strathern 1971; M. Strathern 1972; Lederman 1986; Gregory 1982). In this chapter, I do not aim to offer an exhaustive review of the literature regarding gifts and commodities, personhood or gender in PNG. Instead, I offer an angle on these debates which elucidates how the marketplace and the exchange of food in Goroka as part of a broader economy of recognition, where money, food and acts are produced and transacted in order to maintain relationships between individuals and groups.

First I situate my discussion within the debates regarding gender in the Highlands of PNG, relating these to economic anthropology’s focus on gifts and commodities. These are both vast areas of literature, and relevant aspects of them feature throughout the ethnographic
chapters of this thesis. However, here I add emotions, recognition and relational agency as aspects of these debates that are often overlooked, and which together add to analyses of value within exchange literature. To this conceptual framework, I add the local concept of *pasin*, which crosses discussions of both women’s agency and relationality and situates the economy of recognition in everyday contexts.

**Gender in the Highlands**

Extensive literature exists on how to understand gender and gender relations in the Highlands spanning symbolic analyses of cosmology, pollution, men’s cult practices, secret languages, division of labour and ownership of land. Here I am most concerned with those dimensions that relate specifically to the economic relations that shape gender relations today in Goroka. Thus, whilst symbolic-structuralist analyses of the past may hold relevance, they are not the focus here. Instead the focus falls on what kinds of activities, objects and practices grant recognition to gendered persons, and how market women demonstrate their agency whilst maintaining a relational (and ethical) personhood.

Women’s first and foremost identity in the Highlands is often as wives, as shown in ethnographic studies of the Western Highlands and Chimbu (M. Strathern 1972; P. Brown and Buchbinder 1976), and demonstrated in the Tok Pisin word *meri* (woman) which refers both to woman and wife. However, early on Elizabeth Faithorn argued that the ethnographic perception of women only as ‘wives’ has meant that Highlands women often appear as unidimensional and socially marginalised people, only existing to serve their husbands and their husbands’ networks (Faithorn 1975: 94). In my study, women are not just wives: they are independent and autonomous persons with their own interests, wishes and desires which are satisfied both with and without husbands. Whether women share the interests of their husbands, resist these interests, or prefer to enact transactions themselves has been central to
debates regarding gift exchange economies and gender relations. Building on earlier research of the ways women assert themselves economically (Sexton 1986; Sai 2007; Dickerson-Putman 1988; Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1997a), I argue that women do not merely feature as ‘producers’ in contexts of exchange, but also as ‘transactors’, both of objects and affects (by which I mean embodied, aesthetic and emotional displays that seek to effect others).

Debates regarding who produces wealth in the Highlands, why various valuable items are exchanged by Highlanders and to whose benefit are relevant this discussion of market women’s income generation in the marketplace. These discussions are also the context in which I consider the differences between types of transaction and the way anthropologists have often emphasised the objects that people transact in the Highlands, rather than the emotions or affects. Through the following examination, I suggest there has been less attention paid to non-material aspects of gift exchange, including affective acts of care, displays of emotion and the importance of aesthetics (and taste), thus limiting the analysis of women’s role in ceremonial exchanges and the value that they produce. I emphasise that women are active in various aspects of ceremonial exchanges as well as in the marketplace.

**Pigs and Power**

In the PNG Highlands, wealth items are exchanged between people to make claims to particular relationships, and *relationships become mediated through such transactions* (M. Strathern 1987a: 4). The nature of pigs as a prestigious object of value in the Highlands led to debate around the observation that women grow the sweet potato to feed the pigs, which they also usually care for and which men later exchange or kill at large-scale ceremonial events to contribute to building their own personal prestige and political influence (Josephides 1985: 98). The distinction between production and exchange, where value is thought to come from
and the purpose that gift exchange systems serve in the Highlands sparked debate about the unequal relationships between groups of men, and between men and women.

Anthropologists have largely classified the Highlands of PNG as egalitarian due to its societies being horticultural ones with ‘small-scale’ local organisation and a cultural life based around exchanges of wealth at major life events (M. Strathern 1987a: 2). Anthropologists deemed (material) wealth exchanges as a distinctive aspect of these societies, but the differentiated participation of men and women in these activities prompted debate about the nature of inequality (M. Strathern 1987a; Godelier and Strathern 1991; A. Strathern 1982a; Modjeska 1982). For anthropologists such as Kenneth Read (1982), gender relations appeared unequal and ‘antagonistic’ due to marital violence, cosmological beliefs around pollution and consequent rituals to cleanse men of women’s contamination, and because of the clear division of labour between who ‘produced’ objects for exchange and who ‘transacted’ these objects, particularly pigs. Marilyn Strathern (1972: 152–155) suggested that in the Western Highlands, amongst Hagen men, the act of exchanging valuables was considered more prestigious than the act of producing them. Hence men’s sphere of transaction is reserved for themselves, whilst women, Strathern argued, are left to partake in what limited ways they can (M. Strathern 1972; Sexton 1986).

When it comes to the relations between men and women, and particularly husbands and wives, the egalitarianism of societies organised around wealth exchange becomes questionable (Josephides 1985; M. Strathern 1987a). Josephides considers the male ideology of equality as in dynamic tension with female subordination (Josephides 1985: 41). Josephides (1985) argued against the idea of Highlands societies as egalitarian, stating that gift exchange may maintain horizontal relations between groups of men but is dependent on the use of women’s labour for which they are not directly accredited – what she considers to be a form of exploitation. In a materialist and feminist move, Josephides brought production
into focus, rather than exchange, and sought to dispel the myth that gifting economies involve
ciprocity and equality. She argued that value (or desirability of goods with political benefit
to those that exchange them) appears to be generated through men’s exchanges but instead is
derived from the efforts of women in production (Josephides 1985; M. Strathern 1988: 145).
Gift exchange brings about qualitative relationships between those parties involved in
transactions and makes them reciprocally dependent on one another (M. Strathern 1988: 145).
Josephides, however, argued that gift exchange serves to disguise “actual inequalities in the
distribution of social, political and economic power” (Josephides 1985: 1), thus obscuring the
“productive base on which men’s prestige-gaining activities rest” (M. Strathern 1988: 146).
Similarly, Leacock (1981: 294) suggested that male dominance in the Highlands emerges out
of the competition between men and women for control over what women produce.

The distribution of prestige between men and their participation in the organisation of events
has been another area of debate regarding male-female relations and wealth exchange in the
Highlands (M. Strathern 1987a: 3). Through everyday behaviours of ‘big-men’, those
charismatic men who acquire political influence through their ability to circulate large
amounts of wealth and persuade others to take part in their plans, covert inequalities are
maintained, especially men’s power over women and other men (Josephides 1985: 2). She
argues that the pig killings which solidify male groups as they compete for prestige are a
smokescreen where the link between labour and production are hidden, and thus the efforts of
wives and women are appropriated and reallocated (Josephides 1985: 11). Using the concepts
of alienation and exploitation, Josephides suggests these processes contribute to the political
and social inequalities between men and women, which allow men to dominate.

The idea that women are exploited by men in the process of rearing pigs is based on Marxian
understandings of labour argues Marilyn Strathern. M. Strathern (1988) has argued that the
Marxian concept is inappropriate in the context of PNG because it is based on a western
notion of property and individual ownership – that individuals should control the products of their embodied efforts. M. Strathern argues that Marxist and feminist analyses such as Josephides’s contains assumptions about the meaning and understanding of property which are projected onto the Papua New Guinean context (M. Strathern 1988: 147). Specifically the concept of labour as something abstract and alienable from a worker has emerged about of the critiques of western capitalism (M. Strathern 1988: 157). This commodity thinking, what she refers to as the ‘commodity root metaphor’ is dependent on the idea of a unitary self, or ‘the possessive individual’ which is central to western philosophies of personhood, rights and law. She argues that to suggest men exploit women in ceremonial exchange contexts assumes that men and women are clearly distinct categories existing as bounded individuals who exist prior to social relations. An assumption that stems from liberal ideas of the person as confined to a single (binary) gendered body with has rights to own property, protected by the state and law.

Instead she suggests that the difference in values of male and female realms in PNG are not based on the idea that difference automatically means hierarchy, or that productive activity is necessarily about producing things of utility (M. Strathern 1987a: 286–290). Strathern deconstructs Josephides’s argument in particular by pointing out assumptions such as that “it is work which is the subject of value conversion” and that “persons ought to own and retain control over what they do” (M. Strathern 1988: 151). Rather, Strathern suggests, it is ‘work’, those activities that are directed towards something, that needs to be considered rather than labour:

To think of the work embodied in the pig is to think of the value husband and wife have for each other. A man takes a fattened animal as a sign of his wife’s care (it is when he does not that conflict arises). Conversely, the wife is not an owner of the pig who can transfer that ownership to
someone else or who has it wrested from her control, because there is no one-to-one relationship between her and her working capacity or between her working capacity and the products of her work. (M. Strathern 1988: 160–161).

She argues analysts should not assume that female productivity is valuable merely for the service of male pursuits. Instead, she suggests that the production of pigs and acts of exchange can both be thought of as “the production of social relations”, and that the pigs which circulate are not merely objects produced by women’s labour but are “multiply authored”, the results of parts of persons that come in to being through exchange (M. Strathern 1988: 160). The Marxian idea of alienation, which Josephides uses, assumes those who produce something should have control over what happens to it and benefit from the value that their part in production generates.

Another take on this matter is how women gain recognition for what they do. Through her ethnographic observations, Dickerson-Putman (1996) suggests that women demonstrated their social commitment through their activities in subsistence production and reproduction; the dedication to growing food in the gardens and looking after pigs is how women gained prestige for themselves (Dickerson-Putman 1996: 51). Similarly looking after children well, and having children in the first place, is a way of demonstrating achievement for women (Dickerson-Putman 1996: 58). Thus what Josephides has deemed exploitation, others have shown is part of how women are acknowledged by others and feel a sense of achievement.

Similarly, Faithorn argued that for Kafe women in Henganofi (see Fig. 2), women are just as concerned with their personal reputations as are big men, and they are actively involved and interested in wider political and social issues (Faithorn 1975: 94). Based on her fieldwork she argues that women are full participants in political issues that transcend the domestic level and are not relegated to a different political sphere by the nature of their gender.
Strathern’s rebuttal to Josephides and other Marxist- and feminist-inspired analyses of inequality and exploitation in non-western contexts took less of an ethnographic approach to providing an alternative perspective, instead using a cultural, symbolic approach to construct a different ontological starting point. For Strathern, persons in PNG⁸ are not individuals but rather ‘dividuals’, a composite site of the relationships that produce them (M. Strathern 1988; Mosko 2013). They are interdependent rather than autonomous, like the liberal subject (Biersack 1991). The person in PNG is continually ‘made’ through substances which are contributed through exchanges, initiations and nurture (Wardlow 2006a: 7). In Strathern’s construction, a person in the Highlands is not an individual with rights and property, protected by the state and free to consume as in the industrialised North-Atlantic context. The person is a composite of the relationships that produce him or her as the end result of the activity of others (M. Strathern 1992); “an agent’s transactable attribute is at once both part of, and separate from, him or her” (M. Strathern 1992: 180). Thus the partibility of a person is dependent on the things which are put into circulation as metonyms for the person and the relationships that make them. Relationships are established and disestablished in the ongoing flow of objects, substances and efforts. The person in PNG, whom M. Strathern argues concepts of ‘exploitation’ and ‘labour’ cannot be applied, is gradually and continually “made” through the various substances contributed to them during conception, initiation and

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⁸ Although Strathern writes about ‘Melanesian’ personhood, I refer to PNG rather than ‘Melanesia’. I recognise that the term ‘Melanesia’ and Melanesian identity is used for solidarity between Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon islands and Fiji and provides grounds upon on which they can organise politically. For example, the Melanesian Spearhead Group is particularly important to the Free West Papua campaign (Lawson 2013). But to me this does not mean the term ‘Melanesian’ can be absolved of its racist origins, particularly when those calling themselves ‘Melanesianists’ are mostly European/American or from settler colonial states. The term Melanesia was originally coined by French invaders Jean-Baptiste Bory de Saint-Vincent and Jules Dumont d’Urville, who saw ‘Melanesians’ as a distinct racial group (Tcherkézoff 2003). Whilst the terms ‘Polynesia’ (many islands) and ‘Micronesia’ (small islands) were coined to refer literally to geographic characteristics, ‘Melanesia’ referred to the inhabitants, at a time when they were also being perceived as having less structure, institutions and governing bodies than the colonisers and other Pacific societies and thus were perceived as less ‘civilised’ (Lawson 2013: 4). Melanesia was termed as it was because “explicit aesthetic, moral and intellectual elements amounting to racial distinctions were made” (Lawson 2013: 4). It is a “historical category which evolved in the nineteenth century from the discoveries made in the Pacific and has been legitimated by use and further research in the region” (Silitoe 1998). For this reason, I prefer not use the term ‘Melanesian’ in the thesis, even though others may consider my research to be ‘Melanesian’ because it is based in PNG.
other ritual events (Knauft 1989). The person is “a living commemoration of the actions which produced it” (M. Strathern 1988: 302) and thus not a single bounded entity, but an agent that is continuously acting out the effects of other people’s actions within different forms of exchange. However, Edward LiPuma (2001: 151) contests there is a risk of relativising metaphors of the ‘Melanesian dividual’ and the ‘western individual’ to the point that the two seem incommensurable. Instead, he argues that everywhere persons have both dividual and individual aspects. Robbins (2007) argues that the ‘relationality’ that is implied in M. Strathern’s text can be thought of as a social value or ethic that exists cross-culturally. I shall return to the idea of relationality as a social value later.

M. Strathern (1988) and Munn (1986) both suggest that it is relations themselves that have value, rather than objects or labour. The valuables of exchange (pigs, pearlshells) merely symbolise those relations and make them visible, hence appearing to be valuable themselves. However, the objects are not merely symbols, Strathern suggests. Instead they are metonyms, indexes of the original acts of work (M. Strathern 1988; Gell 1998). Similarly, Munn (1986) argues it is the continuous acts of hospitality that give shells their value through intersubjective relations, which in turn bestow prestige upon their transactors. For Strathern and Munn it is not (only) labour that creates value but ongoing acts that produce relations, which give things and people value. Furthermore, an emphasis on material items, regardless of whether they are thought to symbolise social relations or be representative of parts of persons, can overlook the importance of immaterial aspects of social relations including emotional acts, words and gestures (Keane 1997; Lambek 2013; Robbins 2009). Strathern suggests that there are also assumptions within western analyses such as Josephides’s that male interests in power have self-evident value and that female productivity is merely to further this goal; their acts are perceived as passive, and without value of their own. As I
show in this thesis, women’s productivity, and how they think about their productivity, has meaning and value beyond its contributions to the ceremonial economy.

Furthermore, debates regarding whether labour theories of value could be applied to non-monetised contexts (Modjeska 1985; Sahlin 1972; M. Strathern 1988; Josephides 1985) shifted to discussions of personhood, agency and sociality (Humphrey and Hugh-Jones 1992; Wardlow 2006a; Munn 1986; M. Strathern 1988). This was in part to draw attention to the perspective of women themselves, rather than assuming they are victims of a ‘false consciousness’ or of gender ideology (Sillitoe 1985; Josephides 1985). This turn toward focusing on women’s agency and particularly their economic activities offered a contemporary insight into how women either resist, subvert or pursue their own interests in structures of male prestige. Nonetheless, the focus on resistance continues to overlook how women feel valued or recognised in these exchanges. Furthermore, the question of what happens to the objects that women produce is different in the contemporary context where much of what women grow is sold⁹ in the marketplace and much of the money made is under their control.

**Women’s Projects**

Women have demonstrated a resistance to, and a consciousness of, their relative political position vis-à-vis men in the Highlands (Sexton 1986; Wardlow 2006a). This has involved economic actions of various guises. Sexton analysed the changing productive role of Eastern Highlands women and how they sought to influence the public arena using their contributions in production. She was surprised to find Chimbu and Daulo women active in direct and collective ways as ‘transactors’ in the *Wok Meri* movement (Sexton 1986: 4), a collective organisation of women in a savings and exchange system during the 1970s whose name she

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⁹ Pigs are not sold in the marketplace but are sold by women to others in their villages as live pigs, and there are a number of larger scale piggeries from which people buy pigs for ceremonies if they do not have their own. Pigs like food have been commodified and continue to have ceremonial value in the gifting economy.
translated from Tok Pisin as ‘women’s work’. During my time in Goroka, *wok meri* was the term used to refer to those women who work in waged or formal employment in town – the change in the use of word since Sexton’s research is evidence of the significant shifts in the economic activities that women take part in, now frequently employed in banks, post offices, hotels and shops as well as running their own transport and property businesses. The *Wok Meri* movement involved groups of up to thirty-five women meeting regularly to save money from activities such as food selling, coffee and sometimes their labour. They were organised around two forms of transaction, one based upon traditional marriage exchanges and the other modelled on western banking practices, where groups lent small loans to one another. Once a group had saved enough for a loan, they would hold a ‘washing hands’ ceremony where they sing and dance as the loan would be exchanged from the sponsor group to the receiving group (Sexton 1980: 244–246). Sexton’s interpretation of this was that women were attempting to establish property rights and take on prestigious status that were usually only accorded to men (Sexton 1986). Sexton argues women forged a rightful claim to having control over money through *Wok Meri* and became business investors and ceremonial transactors. However, as women came to have greater control over cash, men’s unwillingness to accept this meant there were growing tensions between spouses, and money became a major trigger of marital arguments (Sexton 1986: 3); this will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

Holly Wardlow (2006a) explored the ways women in the Southern Highlands disengage their sexuality from the demands of their male kin and found independence through sex work. Following from Strathern (1988), she explains that women’s sexuality is considered an energy or potency that is created by her family and clan and is a “‘partible’ aspect of their identities” (Wardlow 2006a: 15). Considering the expectations that are placed upon women, Wardlow uses the notion of ‘negative agency’, after Corrine Kratz (Kratz 2000). This is a concept that points to the ways women can withdraw their productive and sexual energies and
refuse to allow their bodies to be committed to the “projects of social reproduction” including gardening, childbirth, refusing to speak when addressed or doing housework such as laundry (Wardlow 2006a: 14). Wardlow argues that these acts of negative agency are necessary because women are less able to initiate their own projects than men and are encompassed by the projects of others (ibid). Women demonstrate agency through refusing to comply with what is expected of them, often a reaction to the failure of their husbands or brothers to protect them (Wardlow 2004a; 2006a).

There appear be more avenues and freedom to pursue their own interests and projects for women in the Goroka market, than is available to the Huli women of the Southern Highlands that Wardlow describes. For instance, many of the women I knew were engaged in projects of their own such as running their market stalls and managing sellers of their produce. Others employed people to work in their gardens as they travelled between different markets to sell their goods; some found waged work, educated themselves; and many market women were coming together in women’s groups as part of the Council of Women’s microloan initiatives during my stay. Furthermore, although many suffered the effects of domestic violence or absent husbands, few of the women I met in the marketplace and around Goroka appeared to be subservient or submissive around their husbands or other men in their clan. For this reason I consider aspects of more ‘positive’ forms of agency and include those which fall outside of what appears to be patriarchy or ‘male dominance’. Women’s care for others is the context in which they express desires, make choices and enact their gendered, moral personhood, but their economic activities both support this and transcend it.

**Relational Agency**

I use the concept of relational agency to reconcile both the relationality of market women within the economy of recognition and how they forge unique paths based on their own
wishes, desires and goals that are relevant to, and constructed through, their cultural context (Mahmood 2005; 2009). As Hemmings and Kabesh point out, “feminists have long been suspicious of the use of agency in light of its emphasis on individual rather than collective transformation and capacity rather than compulsion” (2013: 30).

The concept of agency has however been fundamental to non-western feminists arguing against western feminists’ fetishisation of ‘others’ as victimised (Madhok et al. 2012). The shift towards an emphasis on agency in international feminist circles such as development practice was a response to Black and Third World feminist critiques of dominant constructions of ‘Third World women’ as passive victims of oppressive cultures (Wilson 2013: 86). These experiences and the resistance they generated were made invisible in colonial discourses, whereby colonised women were frequently perceived as in need of rescue from ‘their’ men and/or ‘backward’ societies (Snyder-Hall 2010). Scholars have insisted on rectifying the passive brown/black/non-western woman, who is drawn in comparison to the active, white, western woman (Syed and Ali 2011; Kapoor 2004; Mohanty 1991; Ortega 2006).

Saba Mahmood’s (2005; 2009) work on Islamic piety in Egypt shows that women can be producing new spaces for themselves that appear to be within patriarchal contexts but in fact are shaped by their own beliefs, desires and needs. Sumi Madhok (2013) argues for moving beyond the ‘action bias’ within feminist work on agency that assumes agency can only be linked to a politics of transformation. Mahmood’s work is exemplary of how there can be forms of agency through attachment to, and a negotiation of, social norms rather than agency being purely visible when it is a form of political resistance. However, Hemmings and Kabesh (2013) note that Mahmood continues to mostly associate agency with individual choice and action. As long as agency is mainly associated with choice then it becomes hard to distinguish between types of agency. A more nuanced account of agency allows for the
reality that people are acting in ways that support regimes of power all the time, and might actively choose to, reinforcing the limitations on their own agency. In this thesis, I do emphasise the choices that women make as aspects of their agency, but contextualise this with regards to how highly they regard their obligations to others. In Goroka, market women place great importance on their relationship to and care for their kin. This is partly the context in which their choices and agency are situated and contained (Wardlow 2006a). Women’s choices involve consideration both of what they desire and what is best for others. In a context where social relations are so central, it is important to conceptualise agency in a way that does not assume a liberal subject that should prioritise itself over others. As Ortner (2006) argues for conceptualising agency generally, social agents are always enmeshed in, and never outside of, a multiplicity of social relations and cultural context matters. Women in Goroka exercise choices that include returning to partners that hurt them physically or leaving families that want to support them. Thus their agency is a complex balance of thinking of themselves in a context where relationality is a key social value.

Robbins (2007: 307) argues for thinking about relationality as a social value based on his work with Urapmin people. Urapmin are a small group of about three hundred and ninety people in the West Sepik region of PNG where the ethic of relationality is maintained despite growing pressure to act as individuals within their Christian worldview. Despite Goroka being a far larger context, with much more diversity, relationality (as a value and an ethical practice) similarly motivates people (men and women) to care for each other within their communities. This provides the context for women’s agency.

Market women’s agency should also be understood in terms of their role within social reproduction: “the ensemble of projects whereby agents contest, transform, and recreate the social and ideological relations within which they carry on both biological reproduction and the production of material existence” (Foster 1990a: 431). However, their role in biological
reproduction of the clan and providing for others materially, women in Goroka also contribute important affective and emotional efforts. According to some feminists, social reproduction refers to “the activities and attitudes, behaviors and emotions, responsibilities and relationships directly involved in the maintenance of life on a daily basis, and intergenerationally” (Laslett and Brenner 1989: 382). It is this broader definition that I maintain is relevant for understanding how women’s actions are valued by others and how they value themselves within Goroka’s economy of recognition. Furthermore, it is in the act of caring for others that relationality is reproduced. Everyday acts of recognition of other’s emotions and material needs are part of a broader gifting economy in which women’s efforts are recognised and valued.

**Gifts, Commodities and Emotions**

Anthropologists have long contrasted the alienated, anonymous transactions typical of a market economy of ‘the west’ with the ongoing social relations created through gift exchange in Pacific economies and specifically PNG, an ideal-type most notably formulated by Marcel Mauss (1967) and developed further by Gregory (1982) and M.Strathern (1988). Whilst these ideal types have faced criticism for essentialising these distinctions and simplifying the nature of social relations within these cultural contexts (Carrier 2005), the models continue to be useful for transactions that can appear to be benefitting trade and mutuality.

Gregory (1982: 71) constructed an ideal-type model which dichotomised gift economies and commodity economies. He modelled gift exchange societies as involving “personal relations of rank, established by the exchange of inalienable objects between transactors who are related” (Gregory 1982: 71). He based this on the kinds of social relations established through production, consumption and exchange in ‘gifting societies’. Commodity exchange relations are in contrast seen as “objective relations of equality established by the exchange of
alienated objects between independent transactors” (Gregory 1982: 71). The key factor in this being that those taking part in commodity transactions are not obliged to maintain ongoing relations with each other. However Gregory (1982) has been heavily criticised for classifying whole societies as either one or the other and suggesting an incommensurability of gift and commodity economies (Godelier 1999; Carrier 2005; LiPuma 2001; Hann 2006). As McCormack and Barclay (2013) show, Pacific economies are mixed with aspects of gifting and commodity transaction, and have been for a long time (Thomas 1991). Gregory (1997) later reformulated his argument to emphasise that there is no such bounded distinction and in any society there can be contexts where people will operate with both social relations and profit interests in mind; his initial model was intended as an heuristic device.

The Goroka marketplace is an example of how gifting and commodity transactions can occur within one single context, with money made in the market circulating both in short-term, anonymous transactions and entering into longer-term transactions and cycles outside of the market in ceremonial contexts (Bloch and Parry 1989: 28–29). Market women are often serving both interests as once, balancing mutuality and trade (Gudeman 2008). Furthermore, Goroka has a multi-layered economy in that there is waged work, private business, subsistence and cash crop production intersecting with local forms of gift exchange. Objects purchased as commodities take on gift status and are attached with new meanings; equally, objects previously produced specifically for gifting are becoming exchanged for the sake of cash generation (see Chapter Five). Money is a significant part of gifting and the market economy, sometimes leading to a confusion of trade and mutuality, and a need to make it particularly clear when money is a ceremonial valuable (see Chapter Seven).

The question of economy and morality is what is at stake with the gift-commodity dichotomy (Robbins 2009: 47) as well as how people value others and feel that others value them. People in Goroka use objects to demonstrate this, the ranking of objects representing their
own rank and the social status of donor and recipient and their relationship to one another. As Sahlins (1972) argued there is a connection between material flows and social relations; whilst friends give gifts, “gifts make friends” (Sahlins 1972: 186). The emotional connection that is established through gift-giving is relevant across cultural and social contexts, as gifts break down the boundaries of self and other (Lévi-Strauss 1969). But much of the anthropological literature regarding gifts and commodities fails to address how people explain their transactions themselves, which in Goroka is often in terms of emotions. Thus the place of emotions in transactions has been underplayed in gift-commodity debates (Robbins 2003). As the power of emotions has been underplayed, so has the place of women in Highlands ceremonial exchange events.

**Emotions in Transactions**

By directing part of my analysis to the emotionality of exchange, I do two things. Firstly, I acknowledge and take seriously local explanations and understandings of gift exchange and social relations: that emotions, care and affection, and how these are demonstrated in embodied ways and through material items (mainly food), are a real, human dimension to economy that is not merely about the relationships established through transactions, but also the feelings contained within them. Secondly, I analyse how gender identities and relations are justified and made through ‘emotion talk’ and practice.

Robbins (2003: 250) argues that whilst the anthropology of PNG has done a lot to contribute to ideas of gift exchange, particularly relating to the structural forms it produces such as kinship, there has not been much consideration of local explanations:

> We know little from our ethnography about… people’s stated motives for engaging in exchange, or what specific exchanges mean to them personally in either conscious or unconscious terms. (Robbins 2003: 250)
Robbins suggests anthropologists consider how people explain their motivations for gift exchange rather abstract “meanings” offered by structural-symbolic analyses\(^\text{10}\) (Robbins 2003: 250). I am similarly concerned with the explanations that my interlocutors give for gift exchange. These explanations add to understanding of the kinds of transactions that market women engage in and why, and show the place women have in a broader version of economy. Although writing about a different ethnographic region, Robbins (2003) has intervened in discussions of gift exchange by showing that Urapmin understand exchange not as about extending social relations or maintaining kinship structures but instead about managing their or others’ emotions, particularly anger and shame. He discusses these in response to three types of exchanges: death payments, brideprice, and between trade partners (Robbins 2009: 51). He shows that brideprice is often about managing the anger of the wife’s family at her loss. Similarly, in Goroka, as I demonstrate in Chapter Eight, many women desire bridewealth transactions to compensate the emotional loss that is felt by their families on these occasions.

As I reflected on my observations of market women’s place within ceremonial exchanges, I realised that women enact different emotional performances and displays to men and that their efforts are publicly recognised, by their hosts, through speeches of gratitude and gifts of food. Within gift exchange in Goroka there are aesthetic, affective and emotional experiences that are transacted like gifts – given, received, and returned. Emotions are key to economies in Goroka, but have had little place in the analyses of economic anthropologists.

Beatty (2005: 2) suggests that emotions are “the elephant in the room” for anthropology, something so critical to human life that they can easily be ignored. Emotions within western

\(^{10}\) E.g. Foster’s analysis of Tangan death payments as compensation for the loss of social substances that make up the deceased person (Foster 1995; Foster 1990a) or Gregory’s suggestion that bridewealth is compensating the loss of women’s productive labour (Gregory 1982: 63).
paradigms of philosophy and psychology have generally been thought of as ‘natural’ and ‘universal’, and not necessarily cultural. Hence there is a debate within social sciences of the extent to which emotions should be regarded ‘universal’, culturally contextual or nurtured (Leavitt 1996: 515). The place emotions have in constructing economies, and how in turn economic systems construct particular kinds of emotions deserve to be taken seriously in anthropological analyses.

Market women and others in Goroka explain gift exchange practices in terms of emotion states or compensation for previous efforts of care. By considering affective acts I incorporate the embodied aspects of emotion that are visible to others and where emotions often register (A. L. Epstein 1992: 250). Emotions can be a visible demonstration of how people feel about particular relationships and people. ‘Emotion talk’ is the product of and reinforces gender identities according to local norms, morality and values. Ultimately, I show that emotions of others are key to the process of recognition, and the intersubjective creation of social bonds and community (McQueen 2015: 5). As White (1994) remarks, “emotions arise in contexts of transaction, marking boundaries between inside and outside, and defining relations between me and you, or we and you-plural.” Emotions can be collective and political.

Mauss’s famous text The Gift was attentive to the obligations of demonstrating emotions in for maintaining respectful relations (Alexeyeff 2004; Mauss 1967; 1921). In his short essay “The Obligatory Expression of Feelings” he refers specifically to “greeting with tears” based on studies of aboriginal funerary rituals in Australia: “One… does more than show one’s feelings [through tears], they are shown to others, because they must be shown to them. They are shown to oneself through expressing them to others and for the other’s account” (Garces and Jones 2009; Mauss 1921).
Mauss was countering the liberal subject and a common assumption – which continues today – that emotions are merely part of individual and internal psychological states (Garces and Jones 2009). Similarly, Mauss argued that it was the ‘good feelings’ established between gifting tribes that motivated the economy. It is then, partly, the good feelings that are created when objects pass between people, breaking down the distance between self and other that is crucial to a gift exchange, beyond the actual material items exchanged. As Mauss pointed out in *The Gift*, gifting can be done both for the sake of making others feel good in the process of making social relations, and at the same time be part of gaining recognition and prestige from others. Within an economy of recognition these both matter. Recognising another’s feelings and gifting something demonstrate that it is necessary to maintaining harmonious relations and to demonstrating the power and prestige of the giver. Considering this, rather than seeing emotions as psychological dispositions, it is possible to see how they work in concrete and particular ways, mediating relationships between the individual and collective (Ahmed 2014). In Goroka, this takes place in the context of socio-historical and political conditions of a contested, contradictory and fragmented modernity (LiPuma 2001: 300).

There have been varying degrees of interest in emotions in PNG since the 1960s (A. L. Epstein 1984; A.Strathern 1993; M.Strathern 1968; Rumsey 2008). In Hemer’s study of personhood in Lihir, PNG she uses emotions to explore the boundaries between what is personalised and what is the responsibility of clans or lineages. She explains that even if an emotion such as guilt or shame is thought to be personal, clans may still seek compensation for the aggrieved person (Hemer 2013: 288). Her analysis involves balancing the responsibilities of relationality with varied individual experiences and sense of self in Lihir, another way of complicating the difference between M.Strathern’s (1988) ‘dividual’ and ‘individual’.
Stewart and A. Strathern (2002a), Schieffelin (1990) and Feld (2012) have explored the sentimental and emotional aspects of gender relations in communities on the fringe of the Highlands. Amongst Kaluli people living in the Southern Highlands, Feld’s work explored the way particular songs could move people to tears, and highlighted gendered stereotypes of men who are considered temperamental with more irrational, unpredictable and moody behaviours than women, who are generally deemed steady and constant (Feld 2012: 262). Kulick (1998) similarly shows that linguistic practices are used to create the boundaries between male and female domains, through stereotyping the emotions of men and women. Schieffelin (1990) also examined the way emotional dispositions are socialised in children from a young age. Taken together, these works suggest there is a valuing of different kinds of emotional dispositions that relate to how gender systems take shape in PNG. I shall explore this matter further in Chapter Three as I relate emotions to how the Goroka marketplace and the cash economy become gendered.

However, few studies have specifically focused upon emotions in gift exchange with the exception of Maschio (1998) and Nihill (2000) who have both included descriptions of emotional displays and sentiments in ceremonial transactions. I am not able to offer a local theory of emotions in Goroka, as I did not set out to examine emotions as my primary investigation. I have instead integrated some aspects of the emotional dimensions to everyday gender relations and ceremonial contexts, with an awareness that this comes with risk of projection. Nonetheless, I posit that the emotionality of exchange and the recognition

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11 Hemer (2013; 2016) and Epstein (1984; 1992) both offer in-depth ethnographic analyses of emotions in PNG.

12 A. L. Epstein (1992: 250–255) notes the researcher’s perspective is likely to affect the encounter with emotions in the field, which is a hazard of ethnographic analysis of emotions.
of caring acts\textsuperscript{13} form an economy of recognition in which the marketplace is encompassed and which gives shape to the different forms that market women’s agency takes.

**Broadening Definitions of Economy to Recognition**

So far I have discussed how gendered acts and the important place of emotions in transactions can be understood through the concept of an economy of recognition, where sharing and caring for others and how this is part of social reproduction. The ideas of Hegel, Honneth, Robbins and McQueen contribute to the model of an economy of recognition that I build in order to argue that the Goroka marketplace is embedded within the gendered, moral economy.

Robbins (2009: 45) proposes anthropologists set aside problems of alienation, exploitation, domination or individualism within debates of gifts and commodities usually used in critiques of capitalist economies to focus instead on a problem of mutual recognition. The idea that recognition is central to social life comes from Hegel, who lays out that to be a self-conscious subject you must recognise the other, the other must acknowledge your recognition, and you must recognise them in return (Robbins 2009: 45). McQueen (2015) argues that gender is critical to such processes of recognition as gender is often the primary way in which people are recognised or made intelligible to others. Hegel proposed that the drive to recognise others and be recognised in return is the most fundamental source of people’s motivations for action (Hegel 1979; Honneth 1996). Mauss (1967) and M. Strathern (1988) both build on Hegel’s position within philosophy of understanding the person as coming into being through, and not prior to, relationships with others. Honneth (1996) continues Hegel’s

\textsuperscript{13} Care has been extensively discussed in philosophy but only recently become a topic for anthropology, and largely in relation to medical anthropology (Park and Fitzgerald 2011). In English the word care carries with it connotations of both concern (caring about) and practice (caring for), and the belief is often that caring actions are motivated by caring feelings. Whether these moral understandings can be extended to non-English-speaking contexts and cultures is an empirical question (Buch 2015: 279).
discussion of mutual recognition as crucial to human well-being by emphasising the psychological and emotional consequences of misrecognition or disrespect.

Mauss’s theory of reciprocity follows a three-part system, as does mutual recognition, suggests Robbins (2009: 46). In the gifting of something to another, it must be received (acknowledging the worthiness of the receiver as a subject) and then matched in some form of return (recognising the worthiness of the giver as a subject). In both Mauss’s gifting and Hegel’s recognition, both parties must play all three roles of ‘giver,’ ‘receiver’ and ‘reciprocator’ in order for the relationship to end well. Both theories also counter the Hobbesian idea that humans selfishly struggle for their individual survival. Hegel instead argued that social relations and mutuality precede selfhood and that the drive for sociality is the primary human drive (Robbins 2009: 46). Furthermore, like Mauss, Hegel sees the exchange of property as the most basic way in which mutual recognition is accomplished (Robbins 2009: 46). For Urapmin people in PNG, Robbins argues it is through the exchange of things that communicates recognition as well as the acknowledgement of the other parties’ emotions.

The recognition of others’ emotional states is fundamental to the formalised gifting economy and everyday acts of gifting in Goroka, as part of a general intention of establishing respectful, emotional relationships. As I observed in Goroka, and as Robbins notes for Urapmin, emotions of others are one of the main local explanations used to explain different forms of transaction. Honneth (Fraser and Honneth 2003; Honneth 1996) tries to theorise a philosophical and historically grounded concept of ethics for society through the Hegelian concept of mutual recognition. As his translator, Joe Anderson explains,

The possibility for sensing, interpreting, and realizing one’s needs and desires as a fully autonomous and individuated person – in short, the very
possibility of identity-formation – depends crucially on the development of self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. These three modes of relating practically to oneself can only be acquired and maintained intersubjectively, through being granted recognition by others whom one also recognises. (Anderson 1996: xi)

Honneth argues that the way to improve (western, capitalist) society is to secure mutual patterns of recognition between individuals as well as ensuring forms of appropriate institutional recognition. He bases this on the social psychologist Mead to argue that what we all desire is self-esteem and that this comes in part from the positive assessment of others (McQueen 2015). Robbins (2003; 2009) demonstrates that daily, interpersonal and intersubjective aspects of recognition are incorporated into economies and moralities in PNG, as his work with Urapmin has shown.

Honneth focuses his conceptualisation of recognition around issues of “self-respect, self-esteem and self-confidence”: “the experience of being socially esteemed is accompanied by a felt confidence that one’s achievements or abilities will be recognized as ‘valuable’ by other members of society” (1996: 128). Market women gain a sense of self-respect through having productive gardens, contributing food to feasts and feeding their households. Honneth in conversation with Nancy Fraser, argues forms of disrespect that humans may face have emotional consequences, and that economies as institutions can be organised in such a way as to ensure all people are recognised and feel valued (Fraser and Honneth 2003: 38). He suggests acceptance and encouragement leads to a positive attitude towards oneself and an internal trust in one’s own abilities, and that this is required for self-respect. Some younger market women aspire to work in formal waged work or complete university degrees, thus gaining qualifications that will mark them as apart from others, a differentiation which is then ‘displayed’ in bridewealth transactions. Thus, recognition in Goroka today can include both
the valuation women make of themselves and that others make of them, according to their productive personhood and their achievements in the ‘modern’ schemas of recognition. However, Honneth assumes that self-respect is of primary importance, whilst maintaining that it can only be achieved through the recognition of others. He assumes an individual with a sovereign body that should have rights accorded to it, protected by legal frameworks (Honneth 2001). This may not easily translate to those cultural contexts where a person can stand for multiple relations. Such a conceptualisation of the person – and how the person relates to others, including non-human others – can be problematic when applied to cultural contexts where responsibility and effects are distributed between people and things (Street and Copeman 2014; M. Strathern 1988), and collectives can act as a singular body rather than individuals (Wardlow 2006a: 70). Nonetheless, critical social theorists such as Judith Butler share his understanding of recognition focusing upon the intersubjective nature of human well-being and sense of self, created through relations with others. As Stark (2014: 95) comments, “We are inextricably embedded in, and constituted by, our relations to others…therefore [Butler] offers a model of personhood extricated from that of the liberal individual”.

This understanding of the self makes sense in contexts where relationships are of primary importance. Market women in Goroka grow food that has monetary value in the marketplace as well as at times having value in ceremonial exchange, through which market women and others gain prestige. They both gain recognition in the process and demonstrate recognition of others. However, it is not only in the ceremonial context that recognition is achieved; it is the everyday acts that people perform in order to offer care and provision for others which are later recognised through exchanges and ceremonial events. I now turn to a local concept that nuances my understanding of recognition within this particular cultural context, bearing in mind women’s personhood and the gifting economy.
Pasin: Everyday Acts of Recognition

As I began to develop a social life in Goroka, some people began to tell me I had good *pasin*. At first, I was not sure what this meant, and as time went on I began to take note of how it was used in other contexts. Despite its various and common usage in PNG, *pasin* has been under-theorised compared to other notions such as *kastom* (Andersen 2017: 241). Barbara Andersen defines *pasin* as a word that describes different kinds of doings, “ranging from the habitual to the traditional to the idiosyncratic” (ibid). In the context of nursing education in Goroka, which she investigates, *pasin* refers to ‘traditional’ beliefs and practices, also known as *pasin tumbuna*, and is thus a term that refers to “activities or practices that fall outside of cosmopolitan norms” (Andersen 2017: 242). *Pasin* has multiple meanings, and as with many Tok Pisin words, the context of how it is used matters. *Pasin* can refer to an individual person’s behaviours and character traits. For instance, with the people I came to know best and spend the most time with, I would be referred to as *meri bilong toktok* (a woman that talks a lot) and *meri bilong kaikai* (a woman that eats a lot), often followed by *em pasin bilong em* (it is her character, her way). *Pasin* is then a concept that refers both to the variation in individual traits and characteristics and to displays of a person’s morality in day-to-day interactions. Furthermore, *em pasin bilong mipela* (it is our way) is a phrase used to indicate how people in PNG differentiate their ideas of transaction and obligations to others as different to those they associate with the *waitman*. Papua New Guineans use the concept of *pasin* to distinguish what they deem moral behaviour from that they associate with the more discrete, individualised and alienated behaviours that have come with colonial structures such as the state, the market and the *habitus* of ideal-type Europeans. Whilst some anthropologists I have spoken with state the word *pasin* comes from the English word ‘fashion’, others have interpreted it as deriving from ‘passion’ (Pickles 2013a).
The context of how pasin is used indicates its moral weighting. My research fell between the urban context and the rural, and pasin often referred to those practices associated with the less anonymous context of a village or rural setting but were nonetheless critical to social relations in town also. The contexts that I am most concerned with here is those where pasin\(^{14}\) refers to showing good moral conduct towards others, which includes everyday acts of recognition such as sharing food, drinks, betel nut, cigarettes, greeting people and engaging others in conversation\(^{15}\).

For instance, a Papua New Guinean friend living in Goroka town advised me that the best way to keep myself safe was to buy betel nut for ‘street boys’\(^{16}\) and say hello to people as I walked around. To not show pasin, or to demonstrate pasin nogut (bad behaviours), is to fail to demonstrate recognition for other’s human existence, and this can be a serious matter. For instance, some of my friends in Goroka would use pasin to explain why some people (usually those ‘middle classes’\(^ {17}\) who are known to have money and resources) suffer break-ins, car hijackings or other criminal injuries. Those who ‘kept themselves to themselves’, did not socialise and moved around town in a way that appeared ‘above’ others had social repercussions. In this sense, sharing or showing mutual recognition of others is an equalising practice that also maintains personal security. Similarly, Baskhow refers to an interpersonal economy of sight where “in the act of seeing another person, an Orokaiva seeing subject identifies, if only momentarily, with the seen other. As a result of this identification, sight

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\(^{14}\) *Pasin nogut* can refer to a range of behaviours deemed immoral, and are potentially punishable in village courts if serious.

\(^{15}\) The equivalent of having good *pasin* in the UK might be having ‘good manners’, a set of practices and norms that show respect for others according to the customs of the context (although this is closely associated with class hierarchies in England).

\(^{16}\) Thus ensuring I was known to and perceived in a positive way by these young men who socialise in public urban spaces, rather than keeping myself alienated from them.

\(^{17}\) Class in the Marxist sense is not a term that fits easily in the Papua New Guinean context, and I am conscious that some of my colleagues from PNG find this a problematic idea to import. However, in this case I think the Bourdeauian notion of class is applicable however, as some urban, university-educated Papua New Guineans living in Goroka as professionals have a different *habitut* in their dress, tastes and behaviours to those who live in more rural areas. Nonetheless, neither class nor rural/urban divides can be laid down entirely because kin networks and acts of mutual recognition cross these differences.
often creates situations where inequality between people is perceived” (2006: 123). In such circumstances, Orokaiva people transact a gift to rectify these social inequalities.

There is some correlation between *pasin* and how Read (1955) understood the Gahuku-Gama’s use of ‘skin’:

The word “skin” is used in a wide variety of contexts to convey information and to express ideas about others. A man may be said to have “good” or “bad” skin, the word in this sense referring to his moral character… [Meeting obligations, giving gifts, making compensations]...

“makes good the skin” of those to whom one is obliged (Read 1955: 266).

*Pasin*, like skin (although I was not aware of people referring to ‘skin’ in this way in Goroka), is also a matter of how people, especially women, are evaluated by others and it is in part this process of ‘valuation’ that leads to assessments of what kinds of people are deserving of relationships and being treated well. *Pasin* is a means of ensuring good social conduct and involves daily acts of mutual recognition. Strathern explains that a child that brings home firewood or water for their sisters or parents is thought to have *noman* (a Melpa term) because they have thought of their relatives and fulfilled their obligations (M. Strathern 1968: 555). *Noman*, as Strathern describes it, is also close to some uses of the term *pasin*. It is the notion of *pasin* as referring to someone’s demonstration of morality that is an element of the economy of recognition that encompasses the marketplace in Goroka. Daily acts of demonstrating concern for another’s material and emotional well-being is a way of showing *pasin*. These acts relate to how people and objects are valued, and influence the actions that people make in their day-to-day lives and in ceremonial contexts.

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18 The *noman* is where emotions can be changed or effected, whereas organs are where individuals locate their own experiences and emotions. *Noman* is then the “operator to convey transactions regarding emotions”. Andrew Strathern suggests that the difference between emotions described in terms of organs and those described in terms of *noman* is that the former is regarding the experience of the individual and the latter is the experience of the socially acting and acted-upon person (A. Strathern 1993: 11).
**Value as Acts**

Value matters in Goroka, for some objects are valued higher than others, in different spheres of transaction and circulation. Furthermore, some people, and their acts, are also valued in hierarchical ways. How commodities become part of these hierarchies of value is relevant to understanding how the commodification of food affects gender relations. Value also relates to recognition in that people want to be recognised and deemed valuable according to their acts. Here I consider how certain acts, especially ethical acts, are part of the moral system in which the marketplace is embedded and through which sellers both deem themselves and others recognisable, or valuable, to others.

Acts of recognition relate to how value is produced and maintained in the Goroka economy, both in relation to objects and people. In Goroka, it is not just objects that have value, but the performance of particular acts such as speeches, displays of emotion, attending exchanges and contributing food or money; these are all acts that demonstrate recognition of another’s personhood and emotions.

Anthropologists have long sought to understand the nature of value, where it comes from, and why humans have the propensity to value some things, people and actions more than others, but never coming to agreement on a unitary theory of value, or exactly what the word refers to itself (Angosto-Ferrández 2016). If we consider the economy of recognition in Goroka as an economy where people and objects are differentiated from one another in hierarchies of value, then it is necessary to consider both what kinds of objects and acts gain value and how they do so. Value can be defined as “the differential regard, importance and worth attributed to something” (Hermkens and Lepani 2017: 4), or in other words the varying conceptions of what is desirable in a given social context (Kluckhohn 1951).
Michael Lambek (2013: 154) has suggested value comes down to acknowledging shared human existence itself, and not merely the labour expended but the recognition of equivalence between acts and objects. This can be seen in the importance that is put on *pasin* in everyday intersubjective relations in Goroka. Lambek defines acts as those “activities whose primary outcomes are not products (objects) but consequences” (Lambek 2013: 145). Lambek (2013) contends that acts are different to labour, and rather than being reducible to economics are grounded in ethics. By ethics, he refers to “incommensurable values” as opposed to commensurable values of the market where things gain a price and a quality is turned into a quantity (Lambek 2013). Lambek refers to everyday ordinary acts, such as saying thank you, or calling someone by their appropriate name or title, as acts that are conventional but ethical and like objects in a gifting economy, acts circulate and produce social value. This correlates to the context in Goroka where to share betel nut, food or drink is not just a matter of making social relations through gifting but an ethical act that leads to positive consequences and a person being considered as having good *pasin*.

Within an economy of recognition there are acts, objects and persons who are valued more highly than others, and it is the performance of particular acts that contribute to how individuals increase their own social standing through the recognition that they hope to elicit from others. As Webb Keane explains, recognition means people depend on their actions to be recognised by others as being particular types of action: “It is subject to the playing out of the interaction *between* us and thus begins to take on a more dialectical and potentially power-laden quality” (1997: 15). Moral obligations are different depending on the social positioning of individuals with respect to each other (Read 1955: 260). For instance, the materiality of a house is not just significant for the kinds of weather it can protect its residents from, nor is it merely the difference between a house that stands for a period of twenty years versus a house that lasts a lifetime. Within an urban economy that is integrated with global
economies, ‘modern’ and more resilient materials come to stand for ‘progress’ and accumulation of monetary wealth. The aesthetics are both symbolic and material in their significance. Some people in Goroka perceive a permanent house as better than a bush-material house. Further, its residents may also consider themselves more accomplished than those who live in bush-material houses; the house indicates their progress within the market economy. As David Graeber has explained, value is the way people represent the importance of their own actions to themselves (Graeber 2001: 45; Munn 1986), but this can only happen through the importance of an act, or object, being recognised by someone else. The fact that someone else views one’s ownership of a house, or other material items such as a coffee processing machine or car as important, is what matters. Hence, it is the social recognition from others that makes aesthetics important for value.

Nancy Munn (1986) also emphasises the importance of actions that people in Gawa, Trobiand islands, take when making relationships that contribute to the objects appearing to have value, and these moral actions further motivate the movement and exchange of valuable things. Building on this, Graeber (2001: 259–260) argues that value is the distribution of that which takes an investment of human time and energy, intelligence and concern, executed for the sake of maintaining social relations and for the sake of producing things/commodities (Graeber 2001: 45). He contends that value is the result of creative, meaningful action. Graeber draws on Turner (2008), who remained a firm proponent of the Marxian labour theory of value, but broadened it to apply to non-industrial, non-western contexts. In his model, actions are forms of ‘labour’ if they are productive of something, but the something does not have to be material. Much like Strathern’s definition of ‘work’ (as mentioned earlier), what matters is how an action has an effect or is hoped to have an effect. This conceptualisation of value helps to understand how introduced food crops and money become incorporated into local gifting economies, and how the marketplace is embedded within
gendered moralities where men and women gain recognition in different and sometimes conflicting ways.

**Conclusion**

I have broadened the concept of economy to include the production and transaction of acts and gestures, as well as objects, and argued that these are a crucial part of demonstrating mutual recognition. In Goroka, emotions are a gendered element of transactions in both the marketplace and the ceremonial economy. Recognition matters both for how people feel about themselves and others in particular contexts; to be recognised by others in Goroka is to be valued. In the next chapter, I delve into the ethnographic context of the marketplace, a public space where food objects are traded for money, but specifically associated either with men or women. I demonstrate that how different food commodities come to be gendered relates to processes of economic transformation and local ideas of gender. How the marketplace is a gendered space also relates to how women gain recognition and how men seek to avoid misrecognition or lose self-respect. In the following chapters, themes of recognition, gender, relational agency and value are woven together to bring out the affective and aesthetic aspects of economy in the Highlands.
Chapter Three: Gendering the Marketplace: Performativity and Emotions in Goroka

Work hard in your garden so you can go to Goroka market. You must save up so you can contribute to *hevis* (collective exchanges such as bridewealth or compensations) and pay for your children’s school fees. You can start by selling greens, fruits and then sweet potato, and eventually you can try carrots.

—Leader in Lufa addressing a young bride on the eve of her bridewealth exchange

As I sat drinking tea in a round house at the top of a mountain range in Lufa district on the eve of a young woman’s wedding, I heard a member of her future husband’s clan giving teachings about how to be a good wife. Songs were sung by people, men on the left women on the right, squeezed into what seemed like a small *kunai* (grass and other natural materials) house from the outside but was expansive on the inside, holding what felt like over fifty people. Some of the songs were in Tok Pisin and some in Lufa *tok ples*, and I was told by one of the mamas next to whom I squeezed in that they were all songs telling stories about women in their gardens. In between songs, the young woman was given advice in Tok Pisin, which I have translated and used to open this chapter.

Upon hearing these lines in what was explained to me as being the rites women go through prior to marriage, it struck me that market trading is not just a means for women to earn a living in the Eastern Highlands; it is also part of what makes a ‘good woman’[^19]; growing food, selling it and budgeting well to provide for her household and wider kin relations.

[^19]: C.f. Bettina Beer (2008: 109-111) for comment on how this can change when young women from the Highlands go to markets elsewhere in Lae and become labelled as morally and medically dangerous.
Meanwhile fresh produce trading is not expected of men in Goroka, and many I spoke with said they feel too *sem* (Tok Pisin: shy, embarrassed) to do so. I wondered how this gendered division came to be explained through a feeling and what this phrase meant in the context of local moralities and gender relations. Why would *sem* be associated with selling fresh produce when so many people depend on the marketplace? In this chapter I question what this emotion might indicate about other aspects of gender, where *sem* has come from and why some men sell in the market regardless.

Alexeyeff and Besnier (2014: 9) call for a shift in focus towards what people ‘do’ and away from any essential idea of what people ‘are’ when thinking about sexuality, gender and sex identities. They argue that categories of people can never be stable, absolute, or universal across social and cultural contexts. Gendered identities are constituted through doing things, performed in daily life, transformed through events and movements, and generating history whilst also being the product of it (Alexeyeff and Besnier 2014: 10). Selling in the marketplace has become something that some rural women ‘do’ as part of their usual weekly activities, as do also some urban migrants, men and women. In PNG, selling fresh produce has become a major part of being a *mama*, a productive woman that provides for her household and kinship networks. I consider the form gender relations take in the marketplace and shape the marketplace itself as a space of economic activities carried out by actors with particular dispositions and emotions. Here I ask how has the Goroka marketplace become gendered? How does it fit with other aspects of gender ideologies? In what ways do people ‘do’ gender (West and Zimmerman 1987)? Moreover, how do different actors themselves account for differences in the way they act, explain the actions of others and respond to social norms and expectations in gendered ways?

In this chapter, I make two main points. The first begins a thread that is discussed throughout
the thesis: gender is formed and performed through embodied, emotional practice and in relationship to objects, in this case certain foods in the marketplace. Selling has become a naturalised and embodied part of the identities of women in the Eastern Highlands as producers and providers. However, gender identities in Goroka are contested, shifting and multiple, constructed with local and colonial histories (Besnier 2007) and open to transformations and transgressions (Butler 1988). Secondly, I demonstrate how the ‘emotion talk’ of filim sem (feeling shy, embarrassed or ashamed) is one way in which these gendered practices, repetitive stylised series of acts through time (Butler 1988), are both represented and created as a social reality (White 1990: 47). Sem in this context specifically relates to the market as a public place, a space where supposedly anonymous commodity transactions are in fact embedded in the obligations toward and assessments of others, and people come into contact with the material and ideological constraints of an urban economy encompassed by gendered moralities. To sell in the marketplace for men would be to receive negative recognition from others and to act outside of gendered norms. Yet for women whose lives are located mostly within the village, growing and selling fresh produce is required to be recognised by others as generous, hardworking and contributing to the collective. Men and women gain recognition in different ways, but these ways matter for gender relations and how gender is made.

The marketplace is a space where people of different ages, ethnicities, language types, urban or rural origins, migration statuses and relationships to commercial interests overlap. It is where rural and urban socio-economic environments intersect as objects and people pass through and engage one another in commodity exchanges (Seligmann 1989: 656). This chapter speaks to matters of value as crops associated with gifting become commodities, and commodities are gendered in nuanced ways in the marketplace.
To understand commodity relations and market transactions in different cultural settings, it is important to pay attention to materiality (as the meaning and associations attached to different objects and bodies) and how people feel about, and do, transactions. Maclean’s (1989) study of a Saturday market in the Western Highlands showed how local political and social ideologies were major drivers for people selling food, how they did so and to whom. He argued that the significant symbolic importance of food to social structure meant that the marketplace was not merely a space of income generation. Similarly, I show that the symbolic importance of food means that the marketplace is not just where people make money but also where they make themselves, or refuse to do so, in gendered ways. Many commentators on how marketplaces in PNG have become gendered have assumed that they are an extension of women’s place as providers (D’Souza and Bourke 1986; Hide 1993; A. Strathern 1969; Sexton 1984) and that the work is un-prestigious and thus undesirable to men (Warry 1986). But men and women in Goroka explain the gender division in terms of dispositions, sensibilities and affects. The growing and selling of fresh produce has also been incorporated into local ideas of prestige as it is a way in which women gain notoriety and recognition from their communities and kin.

To begin, I offer an overview of market trading in PNG and how marketplaces in the Highlands became associated with women. Then I turn to a description of the Goroka marketplace in terms of the foods that are sold there, how they are sold and who they are sold by. I carried out surveys to find out what kinds of food products men and women sell and to glean whether some foods are more associated with gender than others. I follow this discussion of my survey data with some explanations of how food has been gendered in different ways, building on previous ethnographic studies of crops (Meigs 1984; Sillitoe 2001). Then I give examples of the ways people in Goroka themselves explain the gender division of selling in the market and suggest that gendered practices become naturalised over
time through local ideas of performativity, historically contingent constructs and emotional discourses. In the final section I conceptualise ‘filim sem’ as an emotion talk that suggests men would suffer the wrong kind of recognition were they to be seen selling in the market (White 1990; Lutz and White 1986). As White (1990: 47) argues, “culturally defined emotions are embedded in complex understandings about identities and scenarios of action, especially concerning the sorts of event that evoke it, the relations it is appropriate to, and the responses expected to follow from it”. They are also, importantly, embroiled in moral evaluations about what sorts of actions are deemed appropriate or desirable.

As Butler (1988) and Besnier (2007) have pointed out, there are always those who transgress and challenge boundaries of gender norms, creating new identities in the process. I show that transgressions of gender continue to be embedded within the values and practices of relationality and the ethic of caring for others, or pasin as defined in this thesis.

**Markets and Trading in PNG**

In this section, I provide some ethnographic context to the phenomenon of market women in PNG. Marketplaces where food was sold for cash money were a new concept when they opened in PNG in the 1950s. There had been, however, other forms of trading in PNG with similarities to monetised marketplaces in their temporality and spatiality, such as fish-for-starch barter markets where fishing communities linked with vegetable producers and exchanged their wares on particular days (Gewertz 1978; Hide 1993). Furthermore, in Goroka, according to market vendors I spoke with there was trading of foods across the valley, sometimes referred to as bata sistem, a Tok Pisin term taken from the English ‘barter system’. The English term barter is used to explain the origins of monetary exchange, as money is believed to have evolved out of direct trade because it is more ‘efficient’. Barter implies a direct trade of equivalence where the objective is for two parties to gain something
that they need from trading with each other. However, the kind of exchange that bata refers to in Goroka involved that of foods between clans who lived in different ecological zones, where foods had different seasons. While the marketplace similarly brings people together in a public space, its main form of transaction is not one of delayed reciprocity but instant monetary exchange. From the beginning, these exchanges have predominantly been carried out by women rather than men. Epstein’s report on surveys of the Goroka market carried out in 1967 noted a high number of women sellers at 75%, which has increased to an average of 90% today (T. S. Epstein 1982: 21; Busse 2014).

Historical accounts show that whilst women were the initial sellers of foodstuffs in the Highlands, they have not always constituted such a significant majority of the sellers (Brookfield 1969: 7; Sexton 1986: 65). A decade after Epstein’s research, Jackson noted a shift in a marketplace in Mt Hagen (a large town in the Western Highlands): “the marketplace has become more and more dominated by women” (Jackson 1976). Earlier this trend was not so marked. In 1967, 47% of sellers at Mt Hagen were men, as were 31% of sellers at the longer-established Goroka market (ibid.). These proportions diminished to 22% and 8% respectively in surveys conducted by Jackson only six years later (ibid.). According to Dickerson-Putman (1988) men did trade in the market but were quickly replaced by women by 1957.

Since the 1970s, women have make up the majority of sellers in most markets in the Highlands. Hide (1975) recorded mostly women sellers in Koge market in Chimbu province in 1972–73. Warry (1987) similarly showed that sellers in rural markets in Chuave district were usually women. In the Western Highlands, 75% of sellers were women in 1967, rising to 94% by 1973 (Jackson and Kolta 1974). Finney (1969; 1973) and Epstein (1982) noted the market in Goroka featured mostly women sellers also.
**Why Mostly Women?**

Some commentators have explained this shift towards more women selling as a result of coffee becoming increasingly lucrative with expanding export opportunities for small-scale producers and growers (Sharp 2012a; Finney 1973: 67). Men came to own coffee trees because they are planted on land they controlled as members of corporate patrilineal descent groups. Colonial administrators, missionaries and Department of Agriculture, Stock and Fisheries (what later became the Department of Agriculture and Livestock, DAL) staff distributed seedlings and instructions regarding coffee growing (Sexton 1986: 43). The 1960s was deemed “the period of greatest growth” for coffee in Goroka Valley, which continued on this trajectory through the 1970s (Sexton 1986: 20), around the same time that women became the majority traders in fresh produce. Australians steering agricultural development policy in the post-war period envisaged the ‘smallholder’ as male (Benediktsson 2002: 41), and coffee was pushed as ‘male and modern’ (Overfield 1998: 53). Yet women have ended up doing much of the labour required for coffee production (A.Strathern 1979: 536; Overfield 1998; West 2012) despite the fact coffee remains a commodity largely traded by men.

In Goroka, the colonial authorities and missionaries (a group referred to locally as waitman) first encouraged the selling of food, including coffee, in markets and the use of money for exchange. Missionaries trained local women in how to grow European foods and taught them how to price and sell these foods, whilst men concentrated on coffee (Sexton 1986).

Nonetheless, customary land tenure means women are considered to have only secondary rights to land as women’s access is primarily gained through marriage (Overfield 1998: 56; Sexton 1986; Nihill 1991). Outside of marriage their access depends on their relations to fathers and brothers (O’Brien and Tiffany 1984). However, as I show in the following chapter (Four), the alienation of land affords women opportunities to purchase or rent land outside of their kinship relations.
It has been well documented that in the Highlands, women assume a critical role in food production and meeting the household’s economic and political needs, whilst men predominantly lead in public oratory, exchange, and in previous times, warfare (Josephides 1985; Maclean 1989: 93; Sexton 1986: 135). Hence Scarlett Epstein (1982), amongst others, suggested that the marketplace is a natural extension of women’s established role as provider (Benediktsson 2002: 40–43). This is partly reflected in the difference between what men and women sell in the marketplace, with women selling subsistence items as well as cash crops and men mainly selling cash crops (if they are selling fresh produce at all).

Understanding how and why commodities are gendered matters for thinking about how resources are distributed within and between households, as shown in Overfield’s (1998) household surveys in Bena Bena. In Goroka, goods which are clearly commodities, rather than subsistence foods, such as coffee, betel nut and some commercial fresh produce are comfortable and socially recognised as acceptable for men to sell (Benediktsson 2002: 41; Finney 1973; Sexton 1986: 43; Sharp 2012; 2013; West 2012). Overfield shows that women in the Highlands have greater control over the money they make, and that a greater share of their money goes to the household than money made from coffee. This is despite the fact, as shown by his findings, that coffee has higher returns to labour than fresh produce (Overfield 1998: 60).

A. Strathern (1979) has argued that women’s accumulation of money from fresh produce is partly why the big men of Mt Hagen, Western Highlands, began to incorporate money into ceremonial exchange. He suggests that women’s increasing control over money as a resource perturbed the men that held political control, and therefore to regain control over women’s productive labour, they positioned money alongside shell money as a valuable that could be circulated as ceremonial wealth. As I show in Chapter Seven, money has been firmly incorporated into the ceremonial economy in Goroka also, and women’s productive efforts in
the marketplace are fundamental to the amounts a clan can amass for public displays. Women’s money, although regarded as the women’s own, is largely shared with others, and refusal to share with kin can lead to conflict (Overfield 1998; Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1998). When and how women share their money is part of how they reproduce their relational personhood, and simultaneously how they enact multiple forms of agency. The ability for women to make money in the marketplace gives them some opportunities and choices over how to direct their resources, although this can bring about conflicts and tensions (see Chapter Four). Thus how women make money in the marketplace, and why the marketplace is gendered, matters for understanding gendered agencies, forms of social recognition in interpersonal and public ceremonial contexts, and the complexities of women’s relational agency.

**Engendering the Goroka Marketplace**

The market has two official gates where payment is taken from market sellers upon entry by men employed by the Goroka Urban Local Level Government (LLG). Local-level councils were responsible for establishing marketplaces in the 1950s and controlling food prices and fees for sellers (T. S. Epstein 1982; Maclean 1989). The local council continues to manage Goroka market today as the LLG, working alongside the member of Parliament for Goroka and the provincial governor on issues of market redevelopment, with varying degrees of cooperation.

Sellers thus pass through the gate with their *bilums* (string bags) full of produce to pay the gate fee, taken by LLG-employed men. Some women try to charm a cheaper entry and may be allowed in free or at a reduced rate if they have travelled long distances. The fee, charged per *bilum*, depends on what kind of food is being brought in. Gate men make sure they receive the correct fee for the produce and quantity, and sellers check they receive the correct
change. Each seller receives a proof-of-payment ticket. I was told by one of the market managers that with so many sellers (often six to seven hundred and sometimes eight hundred) it is not clear how much money should be collected daily, as rates differ with type of produce brought in for sale. Contestation over who owns the land which the market is on creates added complexities as unofficial fee collectors claim they are customary land owners and make added, sometimes aggressive, demands for fees from the market women.

The majority of sellers sit on the floor in the market, cross-legged, sometimes with children perched on top. Most sellers lay out a piece of blue or white tarpaulin, bought from a local hardware store, or a potato sack torn open to find a new life as a blanket. Makeshift plastic ‘tables’ may be set up on which the sellers arrange their produce and attempt to protect it from splashing mud. Some sellers have another piece of tarpaulin to lay on top during rain showers while others collect up their produce and flee. In the rainy season (January to March), most afternoons include a heavy downpour, and the market can become deep mud underfoot. In drier months, mud gives way to dust, and the ground cracks as it dries into hard, sweet-smelling earth mixed with decomposing food debris.
Fig. 5 shows a rough sketch map of the market at one particular moment, a day where I had been surveying and wanted to capture the spatial division in the market by food type. These categories are not strict as some vendors sell multiple types of goods. Nonetheless, I have divided the spaces according to introduced (European) foods, ‘local’ subsistence foods and non-local Highlands foods (those brought from the coast or Markham). From this it can be observed that the predominantly introduced European foods are closest to the main market gates on the north side of the map, and the subsistence foods such as local leafy greens, bamboo tubes for steaming or cooking food over fire, and yams, sweet potato and bush cabbages (a native variety of cabbage) are sold further away from the gate, to the west of the main entrance or far south. These areas tend to have more women sellers and are less frequented by expatriate customers. These are also areas where, from my observation, sellers from further out of Goroka come to sell; these sellers are also more likely to be ‘producer-
sellers’, selling surplus subsistence foods for a relatively small amount of around 20 kina per day (approx. 6 USD) (T. S. Epstein 1982). Meanwhile sellers of carrots, cabbages, lettuce or tomatoes in the red sections might be better termed ‘market gardeners’ or farmers, having grown these crops specifically for the market as cash crops, and can make up to 1,000 kina (309 USD) over the course of five or six days of selling.

Figure 6 Photograph of people selling carrots in the Goroka Main Market

There are three ‘houses’ in the market, covered open structures with red rooftops that get used for selling fresh produce. These have concrete bases and posts that hold up the rooftops, some with the word ‘Digicel’20 painted on top to advertise the telephone provider. These inside areas are superior to the ones outside as the concrete floor withstands the rain and the roof provides cover, although partial, from rain and sun. Whilst these areas are good for ensuring fresh produce is protected, the concrete nonetheless seems to become harder the longer you sit on it, as I learnt from experience.

20 Digicel is one of the largest telecommunication providers in PNG and throughout the Pacific.
One of the gate men told me that each type of produce has a mandatory area for selling, but I witnessed people subverting this many times. For instance, the second house in from the main gate is supposed to be for onions, garlic and fruits and broccoli is sold in the first house or outside. However, as broccoli was becoming an increasingly popular crop to sell and it easily dries out in the sun, sellers tried to sneak their broccoli into this house, sitting on the concrete under shelter considered superior to selling outside. The broccoli sellers I spent time with sold in the sought after first house, as relatives and kin from their part of the valley would arrive early and helped each other find space to sell.

**Surveying the Market: Gender and Food Types**

*Table 1 Food in the Marketplace and Gender of Sellers: Averages of Seven Surveys Carried out in September 2014*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Produce Type</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total sellers:</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional starchy staples: Sweet potato, taro, yams, winged bean</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduced starchy staples: potatoes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional vegetables and greens: Greens, corn, sugarcane, pumpkin</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduced vegetables and greens: Lettuce, carrots, cabbage, broccoli, Pak choy, Chinese cabbage, tomatoes, capsicum, eggplant</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit: Citrus fruit, pawpaw, sweet bananas, bush fruits (<em>sugafruit</em>, passion fruit), strawberries</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuts: Peanuts, <em>karuka</em> nuts</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other goods: e.g. Coconuts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows the average number of sellers by gender for different produce types from...
surveys I carried out in September 2014. Categories of produce types reflect groups of produce that are often sold together in the market. I borrow some of these categories from Benediktsson (2002: 141) and Bourke (2009).

I carried out two sets of surveys, one in February and another in September. I tried to carry out the surveys around the same time each day, between 11 and 1 pm, and they would usually take one to two hours, sometimes longer depending on whether I got into conversations or bumped into people I knew. Some days it was so hot that I had to take a break. My objective was to gather data on each weekday, but for two weeks in September I could only survey on alternate days. Thus the surveys do not capture changes between days within the same week but rather over the course of two weeks. I wanted to know the difference in quantity and gender of sellers between different days of the week and across food types to see if there were any particular temporal dynamics in the relationship between food produce and gender of seller.

There is a noticeable dip in the number of sellers on one particular Saturday in the September survey, and especially a dip in men. There are always fewer sellers on Saturdays, possibly because many of the sellers are Seventh-day Adventists (SDA) and worship on a Saturday. SDA is a popular church in Bena and in Lufa, both areas from which many producer-sellers come to sell in the market. The other potential explanation is that Saturdays are a good day for ceremonial events and village court cases because those who are in waged work Monday-Friday can attend and Sundays are then left free from worship for those in Pentecostal, Catholic and other Sunday worship congregations. Lastly, the other possible factor is that Saturdays are known for having fewer customers and therefore as being less lucrative for sellers. This means some sellers decide it is not worth paying the costs to travel on a Saturday. None of these explain specifically why men are so much fewer in numbers on a
Saturday, though men are more likely to be involved in village matters. Without further weekday data it is difficult to prove this is an overall trend and not just a one-off.

I surveyed in two different parts of the year to capture seasonal shifts in foods on offer. This was not sufficient to capture all the changes in the market. Neither survey captured the season for mangoes from the Markham Valley, for instance, which means I could not pinpoint how many mango sellers are men or women. Thus some important moments in the market’s dynamics missed in these surveys were only captured less formally in my daily journaling of my observations (and what I ate each day).

Another limitation of this data is that the first round of surveys, carried out in February (specifically February 11th, 25th, 26th and 27th), were somewhat haphazard as I was also attending meetings with women’s groups and farmers’ cooperatives and making village visits. I was working around other people’s commitments and could not get to the market as systematically as I would have liked. The result of this is that I do not have data for a Saturday or Sunday in the month of February. This means I cannot compare a whole set of weekly data between the two seasons. Nevertheless, my surveys show some useful patterns. Firstly, there are about eleven women to every man selling in the market. This is in line with the 90% of women observed by both Benediktsson (2002) and Busse (2014).

In general, the more processed a food is, or the newer it is to the Highlands, the greater the chance that men can be found selling it. My surveys show that products most frequently sold by men were onions, pineapples and potatoes, whilst those by women were greens and sweet potatoes.
A handful of the men to whom I spoke with brought food from their own gardens, including tomatoes, capsicum and potatoes or nearby bush fruits such as passionfruit, a tree fruit introduced as an alternative cash crop to coffee in the early colonial era (Finney 1973: 59–60). But many were reselling produce from elsewhere, such as onions (grown in the higher, cooler region of Gembok) and coconuts (grown in lowland tropical areas near Madang and Lae). By the time I left Goroka, there were increasing numbers of men selling sweet potatoes, a trend of sweet potato becoming a more lucrative commodity (Benediktsson 2002: 160).

From this chart it is clear that although the numbers of people selling potatoes and coconuts are not as high as for other crops, men account for almost half of them.
At the time of these surveys (February) it was pineapple season, and many of those who had travelled from Bena to sell their pineapples were women, but there were also more men selling pineapples than other crops. Potatoes are the second most commonly sold crop amongst men, a typical cash crop that requires inputs such as fertilisers, pesticides and spray tanks. Whilst crops are gendered as commodities, they have previously been gendered in other ways, as I now turn to explain.

**Gender of Crops**

I understand food crops in Goroka, and elsewhere in PNG, as gendered in three ways. The first, as documented by Sillitoe (1983) and Meigs (1984) is where the crops themselves have a gender, seen as male or female (Kahn and Sexton 1988: 9). The second is that they are produced and looked after by either men or women, relate to particular gendered rituals and/or are gifted by either men or women (Gewertz 1983: 86; Sillitoe 1983; 2001). The third is the contemporary division of food found in the market today where what men and women sell differs. Crops most often sold by men are those with a higher price per unit,
‘introduced\(^{21}\)’ or have travelled from other parts of the country; they can also be those that have a higher social value (Maclean 1989).

As Hide (1993) and Maclean (1989) concluded, men generally sell products that have high monetary or ceremonial value. Hide (1993) also suggested that there appears to be a widespread pattern of introduced ‘European’ foods being more generally sold by men across different markets in PNG. Maclean’s study (1989) of the Kwima market in the Jimi Valley of the Western Highlands during 1979–80 showed some correlation between the gender of crops in terms of who they are grown by and that of sellers, as well as the size of units sold and prices. He observed that men sold items in units of 1 kina or more whilst women sold in 10 toya and 20 toya\(^{22}\) bunches. Plus men would not sell female crops whilst women would sometimes sell male crops but in portions rather than whole bunches (Maclean 1989).

**Monetary Value: Gendering Crops**

Whilst there is substantial literature regarding the symbolism of food, gardens and plants in PNG (MacDonald 2000; Lemonnier 1996; Young 1971; Bell 1947), I am more concerned with how these different foods relate to gender relations in the context of Goroka’s political economy and local ceremonial exchange.

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\(^{21}\) Meaning introduced after or with colonization, often purposefully introduced by the government or missionaries for the sake of sale.

\(^{22}\) Toya is the smaller denominations of money, 100 toya make up one kina.
There is a clear correlation between the crops which were introduced by Europeans (such as potatoes, carrots, onions) and/or are in consistent demand with a high per-unit value (such as passionfruit, sweet potatoes and pineapples) and men selling. Whereas greens, citrus fruits or flavour foods such as chillies and ginger were rarely sold by men, if at all. Wild greens are also very rarely sold by men, apart from watercress, which is more recently introduced and not indigenous to the Highlands like other greens such as opena and agapa. These latter are major subsistence crops and, like sweet potato, continue to be associated with women and their gardens. They are also sold for small amounts of money at 20 toea, 30 toea, and 40 toea a bunch.
Tumbuna kaikai (Ancestral food) refers to those foods used as gifts at ceremonial or socio-political events and referred to as having valyu (value) in Tok Pisin (e.g., taro, sugarcane, asbin). I have included foods – such as traditional, indigenous greens and sweet potatoes – that are not formally gifted as a valuable but are cooked in the earth oven for special events. Whilst sweet potato cannot be gifted as an object, significant amounts of sweet potato – especially large ones – are added to piles of ceremonial foods.

The Waitman Kaikai (European food) category refers to those foods which do not have ceremonial value as formal gifts although they are sometimes used as decoration (see Figure 7). These categories overlap with how market vendors divided tumbuna (ancestral, precolonial) foods from waitman foods, a divide which is symbolic but also relates to the political economy of the different realms of value within which these foods exist. For instance, sugarcane and taro have specific ceremonial purposes whilst carrots, although lucrative, do not. However, some foods do not fit easily into these categories. For instance, although I have included all bananas within the ceremonial category, some ‘sweet’ bananas
were more recently introduced and are consumed only as snacks, as opposed to ceremonial bananas, of which there are numerous varieties. Furthermore, pineapples are usually considered a *waitman* food even though they may have been introduced prior to European colonisation. Nonetheless, as the averages show for both months, the numbers of men selling introduced, *waitman* foods as compared to traditional, *tumbuna* foods is over double.

Ceremonial garden foods of sugarcane, ceremonial bananas, *asbin* and taro are not sold in large quantities in the Goroka market. This is quite a noticeable difference compared to the Mt Hagen market, which I visited on a day trip and where I noted that taro and sugarcane especially were sold in large bunches by a number of sellers, including a lot of men. Mt Hagen has similar (but not identical) ceremonial transactions to the Eastern Highlands, but foods have similar kinds of purposes in ceremonial realms today. The visibly higher number of people selling these foods in the Hagen market compared to Goroka suggests to me that these social and ceremonial objects may have become more readily commodified in Hagen than they have in the Eastern Highlands, potentially suggesting there are greater numbers of people buying ceremonial goods for feasts than growing their own. In Goroka, these items largely remain outside of the market; for instance, it is possible to buy single sugarcane stalks but not ceremonial bundles of them. In Hagen, these ceremonial objects have a commodity value with a price tag. These are used as gifts as after being purchased in the market; the objects changes status from gift to commodity as the relations of exchange differ (Kopytoff 1986; Appadurai 1986).

Objects and their movements can delineate social orders and give them meaning through symbolic power (Keane 2003); in this case gender is closely correlated with processes of

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23 Personal communications with Michael Bourke indicate that studies into this are presently underway.
production and crops as material and symbolic objects. Despite the exceptions of particular vegetables that are deemed socially acceptable to sell by ten percent of male sellers, the overall local assessment is that selling fresh produce is the responsibility of women. This belief reinforces a local idea of binary gender. I now turn to the gender division of labour in the gardens, which is how anthropologists have mostly explained the close association of fresh-produce market trading with women.

**Transaction and Production: Gender Relations and Food Production**

The gender division in the marketplace may have origins in historical conditions. In Goroka, like in Hagen’s *moka* (large-scale pig killings and distributions) – what M. Strathern (1972) has termed ‘transaction’ – were organised and carried out by men, whilst women organised ‘production’ in looking after the pigs that were to be killed. This distinction between who grows/produces and who publicly transacts exists around Goroka also. Men are the main orators and recipients of large-scale wealth payments even though women do much of the growing and selling required to contribute money and foods for these occasions. M. Strathern (1972: 133) specifically uses the terms ‘transactor’ and ‘producer’ to demonstrate a difference within Hagen views, values and attitudes towards the two genders, or ‘inter-sexual relations’, that she observed with regards to exchange. Although her writings about Mt Hagen society date to almost fifty years ago, her analysis remains relevant here. What M. Strathern categorises as ‘transaction’ Brookfield considers social production to involve producing goods which have a primarily social purpose including giving to others, ceremonies and rituals (Brookfield 1972: 37–39; see also Feil 1987; M. Strathern 1972). M. Strathern (1972) highlights that the realm of formal transaction, where big-men politics is negotiated and male renown is made, is valued higher than women’s efforts in production (M. Strathern 1972: 145). Men saw themselves as the owners of land and resources, but their prestige and
notoriety came about through making moka, i.e., circulating and transacting pigs (M. Strathern 1972: 133–137).

However, she also points out how women’s responsibility for the gardens and growing food brought them notoriety and acknowledgement as generous people. Furthermore, she shows that women’s place as producers did enable them to effect or influence the transactions even though their efforts were generally recognised as less important than men’s (M. Strathern 1972: 136). Despite being ideologically divided in their actions, and despite women’s efforts being devalued by men, women’s role as producers nonetheless gave them recognition and influence.

Keane (2008a) has highlighted problems with separating market-based transactions from ceremonial exchanges, considering the various ways market transactions also require speech acts and public performances of relationships between traders and customers. I would add that ceremonial exchanges, like the marketplace, also require aesthetic efforts. Furthermore, market transactions are not without their moral obligations. For instance, my colleagues at the University of Goroka expressed a strong sense of obligation to return to the same vendors each time they visited the market, demonstrating social relationships that were ongoing through time, although with semi-anonymous market traders. Such obligations develop through the gifting of extras in the market. Market vendors often gave me extra items beyond what I had paid for, sometimes when our transaction had already ended, making the act of calling me back to receive my gift particularly public and visible.

Based on these ways of looking at exchanges in the Highlands, I consider transactions that are ceremonial as those that occur between people with varying kinds of kin-based relationships in contexts where the purpose of exchange is primarily social rather than
utilitarian or market-based. Brookfield (1972) has opposed these kinds of exchange to those of subsistence. He drew a distinction between subsistence in the Highlands being largely associated with women and social production (ceremonial exchanges) largely with men. Gardner (2001), however, has argued that this distinction is artificial as the flow of objects through different situations and contexts makes the difference between different kinds of production much less clear in reality.\textsuperscript{25}

Today, the situation in the Eastern Highlands has continuities with the past, with some significant changes. Women do much of the cooking, cleaning, gardening and general provisioning and complain that men are doing little to help, focusing on their own income-generating activities instead. The marketplace has undoubtedly shifted the dynamics of gender in ways that both accentuate women’s agency and enhance others’ expectations on their time and resources. How and why the selling of fresh produce is primarily associated with women is the main discussion topic of this chapter, a topic to which I now turn through the perspective of market vendors themselves. I also asked questions to older and younger men in villages, town and the university to gauge a breadth of explanations.

Many of the explanations amongst people in Goroka suggest innate traits, behaviours, emotions and practices which are different between men and women and therefore make them more or less suited to selling in the market. It is the emotional, affective and economic valuations that are made which add an extra dimension to already-established explanations for the gendering of market trading in PNG.

\textsuperscript{25} Lederman (1986b) also discussed this point in her work in the Southern Highlands.
Making Gender: The Performativity of Gender and Emotional Discourses

Gendered Dispositions

Local explanations for why men do not sell in the market are noticeably performative and embodied, and relate to gendered ideas about knowledge, practice and emotions. For example, as one market mama named Sandy explained,

Men find it hard to arrange things and put them nicely in the market, like tying up bundles of greens, picking off the leaves and laying them down properly – they get it wrong. Us women, we know how to do these things.

When I asked how women learn to do this, another mama, Julie, explained, “We watched our mothers do it.” However, when I asked if their sons could learn it also, she did not have a response. This was just what women do. This typical response shows the ease with which market mamas explained that fresh produce selling was a learnt behaviour. Yet the suggestion that their sons could learn it too was met with blank expressions – much like many people in the UK take it for granted that women wear make-up and men do not. Gendered habits and practices can be both simple and yet difficult to explain as they stem from a range of deeply embedded cultural patterns, norms and structures. Other women had answers suggesting that innate dispositions differ. For instance, both men and women often cited to me men’s impatience as a reason for their inability to market.

Julie explained women’s superior abilities for patience:

Us women can sit down for a long time and wait for money to come. But men want to make it quickly; they don’t want to sit down and wait.

The idea that women are patient, and men are not, was sometimes justified as being a result of previous gender roles. I was frequently told by older men that before the waitman came,
men were warriors, and this explains their reluctance to sit in one place for a long time. As Robert, a local community leader from Kabiyufa in his mid-forties, explained,  

They [men] are impatient, always waiting for the next fight, so they don’t sit down for long. We are also very superstitious people, so a warrior is always paranoid, and therefore it is hard to sit down in one place for a long time.

In this instance, men are cast as warriors with a role of protecting others, and at the same time fiercely paranoid and concerned for their own health and well-being. Being ready for a fight yet unable to sit in the marketplace for too long seems like a contradiction, yet makes sense taking into consideration a pre-colonial era when men spent most of their time in the safety of their age-mates’ company and were under threat from rival clans (Read 1965: 141). Whilst men were also trained as house-builders, hunters, fence-builders and gardeners, their main daily tasks involved training and planning for warfare or organising large-scale feasts and ceremonial exchanges (Read 1965; 1982a; Langness and Hays 1987). These activities also take patience and organisation, yet men perceive the patience required to sit in the market in different terms to that required to carefully stalk a bird whilst hunting or weave intricate materials in the process of building a house. Ceremonial exchanges also take extensive organisation and careful planning. Thus these narratives around men’s reluctance to sell are countered by other examples of patience and similarly conscientious abilities.

**Health Risks**

Another local explanation for why men do not sell in the marketplace was the argument that they avoid public places due to the risk of *sanguma* and *poison* (termed ‘witchcraft and sorcery’ by anthropologists). Men often argued they are at more risk from these than women,
yet the fears of these exist amongst men and women, and the only death I witnessed that was suspected as *poison* was that of a young mother of two who had been in her gardens alone. As with many unfortunate incidents, the cause was attributed to jealousy, as her father-in-law continued to amass wealth in their small hamlet while other surrounding villages did not. There is little reason to think men are any more victims of these concerns in the marketplace than women are. However, pollution, as an idea relating to health and the body, is specifically gendered, with men worrying about consuming items that have been stepped over by women or contaminated by them during menstruation (Sillitoe 1979; Meigs 1984).

The threat women are seen to pose to male virility is well documented in the Highlands (Herdt and Poole 1982; Meigs 1984; Sillitoe 1979a; Wardlow 2006a). and cosmological beliefs around food and bodily substances have been a significant dimension of anthropological analyses of gender in the Highlands (Meggitt 1964; Langness 1974; Bamford 2004). However, the ontology of taboos appears to be waning in the marketplace amongst younger generations, who dismissed ideas of pollution as *tumbuna pasin* (ancestral beliefs/practices). As one young woman in the market explained, “Market food isn’t too special, though, so you can step over it.” She suggests it is the nature of the food itself, as cash crops, which does not hold the potential to be polluting or polluted. I noticed women in the market were mostly careful to move food aside as they passed through market stalls, though younger sellers were less concerned. For instance, as I carefully stepped through her rows of tomatoes to join her on the ground, a mother of three in her thirties said cheekily, “Don’t worry, we step over food all the time, just make sure there are no men watching!”
Money Practice and Perceptions

Another common explanation of why men do not sell in the market is their capabilities of looking after money. Julie, a market mama I sat with multiple times during fieldwork, repeated a refrain I heard often from women:

They [men] don’t look after money well. We know how to look after money.

It was commonly acknowledged that women are better than men at looking after money than their husbands, some of whom admitted they fritter away money if they sell in the market. One broccoli seller’s husband reflected on this, “I buy sugary drinks and snacks if I sit in the market”, his wife agreed, “When I go I do not buy any extras for myself. I take all the money home for the children”. For many of my interlocutors, the most common arrangement was that money made by women was for the household and money made by men (mainly through selling coffee or some cash crops or engaging in waged work) was largely their own, though with some contributing major food items such as rice. Daily household goods were almost always purchased by the women, whether the money itself had been earned by their husband or from their own market selling. This is part of their place as household managers, as Zimmer-Tamakoshi (1998) has described of Gende women living in Goroka’s settlements, and earns them influence and status within their communities. Market women also said men make less money if they sell in the market. When I gave a presentation at the University of Goroka about my research, one member of staff stood up, a man in his mid-fifties in the social sciences department. He shared a story of his sister selling carrots in Gordons market in Port Moresby. He told us she became sick and asked him to go sell her produce for her in the market.
As I sat there, I became very tired and very bored. I wanted to leave quickly, so I lowered all the prices of the food so that it went by lunch time and then went home. My sister was not pleased and said she would not send me again. I felt how hard it was to sit for a long time.

He was confirming the observations of my interlocutors: if men sell produce, they lower the prices quickly to try and leave, whereas mamas sit for a long time and try to get as much money for their produce as they can.

Another explanation given for the lack of men in the market was about social status. One man working an office job explained,

Marketing is seen as lower-class work. Men do not want to be seen doing this. They feel superior to this work, so they let women do it and they do nothing and then use the money.

He implied that selling fresh produce suggests poverty or a lack of wealth and status. Robert, an elder in Bena, a village overlooking the market, had another economic explanation quite different to this.

Before, money was for just little things. It was the public servants that used it mainly, only a small number of people. Mamas would go to the market, sell small fruits and sweet potato, and buy some tinned fish and rice. But us papas were not bothered by this. Then the waitman [Europeans] gave women seeds for tomatoes, lettuce and suchlike so that they would grow food that the Europeans wanted. The market was initially just to feed the white people and civil servants in town.
Robert shows that whilst money has value today, at the time of its initial introduction (1948) it was not automatically valued according to local standards, and this meant men did not see the market as worthy of their time. Today money has gained ceremonial value as a gift, and selling fresh produce, along with coffee, is one of the main ways people acquire money necessary for ceremonial exchanges. Originally pigs, bird-of-paradise feathers and adornments had such value. Since the displacement of these and the increase in valyu (use for social recognition) of money, being seen to lack money has become more meaningful. For instance, a regular tomato seller, Elisa, explained how she discusses this with her brothers:

If men are seen selling in the market, they think people will assume they don’t have money, so they feel sem [embarrassed, shy]. They are worried about girlfriends seeing them. “Oh, he’s a market man”, they will say. But I tell them [her brothers], you guys don’t work and you don’t go to school so you should market.

Older women in the market largely explain men’s lack of interest or embarrassment as a reflection of men’s inabilities and lack of capacities. They see themselves as superior in the dispositions and knowledge that are required and therefore are the majority of sellers. However, younger generations of men perceive selling in the market as shameful because it suggests a lack of wealth or income. Both of these perspectives naturalise gender differences and demonstrate a different valuation of what is generally deemed acceptable for women as opposed to men. Selling in the marketplace is not a ‘traditional’ practice as it was established only in the 1950s, yet the way its gendering is explained revolves around historical male roles (as warriors), ideas of health taboos, and abilities or qualities deemed innate to women but not to men. These discourses and ideas create notions of gender differences as natural, innate and ‘traditional’.
Based on this review, it can be concluded that the marketplace may be associated with ‘production’ as an ideological category whereby women gain notoriety and prestige for their ability to work hard and feed others through their market selling whereas men see selling as a source of embarrassment. To be able to attract wealth and distribute it is what brings men notoriety, yet as I have shown here, they see selling in the market as indicative of a lack of wealth or means, despite the fact that market women often make more in a week than men in formal waged jobs (up to 1,000 kina). The perceptions of the marketplace, and the kinds of transactions that are taking place there, are gendered and have different meanings for men and women.

Butler (1988) argues that that gender is an imitation of an ideal or norm and that gender identities are performed or enacted, naturalising the notion of gender in the process. Gender is not a stable identity or a “locus of agency from which various acts proceed” (Butler 1988: 519). Instead it is the “mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self”, instituted, she argues, through a *stylised repetition of acts*. How people talk about men’s and women’s bodies is different to what they actually do with them. Men do actually bundle foods and tie and organise produce, but only certain kinds of produce, such as peanuts and passionfruit. Similarly, men often explained that they do the ‘heavy’ work such as building houses, making fences or clearing the bush for gardens, but from my observations women actually do significant amounts of heavy lifting, carrying large amounts of food from the gardens back to the house and to the marketplace. Butler’s suggestion is that the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised and consolidated through time (Butler 1988). However, discourses are also powerful in reproducing gender ideologies that run counter to realities of everyday life. Trangressions of these ideologies can have social
consequences. For instance, Sillitoe (1985) explained that masculine identities are maintained in the Highlands through social pressure:

The principal sanction against transgressions, which significantly concerns men more than women, is ridicule and embarrassment. The heavy exertion of some men’s work deters women, but any woman who has a go at such work may be spoken of as strong (although men may belittle her efforts compared to their own) whereas, while no physiological constraints prevent men doing things that customarily fall to women, any man attempting such work would be a figure of amusement and pity. (Sillitoe 1985: 496)

I shall return to the point of transgressions later in the chapter, but importantly here, Sillitoe points out that whilst women’s work is defined by its lower physiological effort, women can still enact some men’s work and be respected for it. The reverse more seriously attracts contempt as men’s abilities to carry out women’s tasks are not met with social recognition and in fact result in disrespect and misrecognition, what Honneth considers a severe consequence for human well-being (Honneth 1996).

In this section I have suggested that the explanations given suggest that over time, there have been stylised repetitions of acts that have produced ideas of ‘man’ and ‘woman’, which include behaving, acting and knowing in different naturalised ways. Through the market, and its colonial history, gender has been constructed in such a way that includes indigenous concepts of gender in interactions within the cash economy and colonialism.

Butler argues that to say gender is socially and culturally constructed, the result of acts and practices, implies neither determinism of culture nor that people have full agency in how they
perform their gender: “Just as bodily surfaces are enacted as the natural, so these surfaces can become the site of a dissonant and denaturalized performance that reveals the performative status of the natural itself” (Butler 1990: 146).

Reflections on how money and the marketplace have been perceived by men differently through time shows how unstable these identities are. As I mentioned earlier, prior to the coffee boom, more men were selling in marketplaces. Today, as coffee becomes less lucrative and food crops are thriving commercially, more men are focusing on fresh produce. But the practice of selling itself is still deemed embarrassing or shameful for men, an activity that most do not want to be recognised doing and feel would harm their self-respect. This notion of selling fresh produce as being a morally unviable practice for most men and yet expected of women is maintained through the discourse of shame. Emotion talk circulates in a way that both describes and maintains the gendered divisions in the marketplace. *Sem* is a moral idiom that suggests what is acceptable and expected of women but not of men. The following section examines specifically the role that some emotions play in maintaining a gendered economy of recognition.

**Emotional Discourse and Dispositions: *Sem***

White argues that emotions are cultural and social constructs: “Culturally defined emotions are embedded in complex understandings about identities and scenarios of action, especially concerning the sorts of event that evoke it, the relations it is appropriate to, and the responses expected to follow from it” (White 1990: 47). Emotional discourses can form part of the practices, behaviours and dispositions that construct gender when they are understood as “as pragmatic acts and communicative performances” (Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990: 11). Lutz and Abu-Lughod (ibid.) argue for interpreting talk about emotion “as in and about social life rather than... some internal state”. In the context of Goroka, *sem*, that emotion which men are
said to feel if they sell in the marketplace, is not just an individual emotional reaction in a moment but a reaction to a public activity. Emotional discourses influence actions and maintain gendered divisions in Goroka; speech actions become productive of experience.

The *sem* that men experience is out of concern for what others who saw them are imagined to think and demonstrates how the marketplace is embedded in an everyday economy of recognition where gendered identities get made. Although not writing about PNG, social theorist Sara Ahmed (2014) builds on Silvan Tomkins and theorises shame as an invisible social contract or ideal type, only visible or sensed by the individual when there are public reactions to this contract being broken (Ahmed 2014: 103). Similarly, in the Western Highlands, A. Strathern (1975) explained that shame is thought to be on the skin because skin is the outer self. His interlocutor, Ongka, explains:

> It is when people see us, it is not that there is anything inside, it is outside only; it is when people see us doing these things that we feel *pipil*, when they see our skin, and we feel *pipil* on the skin. (A. Strathern 1975: 349)

Ongka explained that the *pipil* (shame in Melpa *tok ples*) of which he talks is triggered by the social disapproval of others, a sensation or feeling that comes about through an external contact (A. Strathern 1975: 351). Shame, *pipil* was not like anger, *popokl*, which could cause sickness as it was deep inside; *pipil* was only ‘skin deep’. Whilst I was not told that *sem* resided on the skin, it was nonetheless the emotion that specifically described how men would feel were they to sell fresh produce in the marketplace. As M. Strathern clarifies, “the skin is the point of contact between the person and the world. Thus shame is concerned with an individual’s enmeshment in social relationships, and shame comes on the skin” (M. Strathern 1979: 250).

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26 Similarly, Read (1955: 266) describes how “skin” is referred to when Gahuku-Gama judge the moral character of a person.
Although writing about East New Britain and not the Highlands, Jane Fajans suggests “shame results when a set of relations normally opposed or separated is contradicted by relations or actions that deny that separation or collapse the opposition” (1983: 175). She argues that “shame is a disorder of the margins”, implying that it occurs when what is taken for granted as morally acceptable is tested (Fajans 1983: 174). Fajans does not discuss how shame specifically relates to gender or how it is an affect relating to modernity. More recently, however, Wardlow (2005) and Robbins (2005) have examined the place of anger, jealousy and humiliation in contexts of conflicting interstices of capitalist modernities as they apply Sahlins’s model of humiliation as part of cultural transformation, which I have applied to conflicting ideas of masculinity (Barnett-Naghshineh forthcoming). In Goroka, sem directly relates to an economic activity perceived to be ‘belonging’ to, or expected of, women. Sem is also an emotion experienced by men and women in other situations. For instance, one mama explained that she could not attend a ceremonial event as she felt she did not have enough money to buy a chicken as contribution, she explained that attendance is appreciated but she would rather not go at all to ‘save face’, “it is good to go even if you have nothing to contribute, but you will feel sem”.

Sem is, therefore, like shame and humiliation in English, an emotion that specifically relates to the perception of one by others, and how people are recognised by others in a context of social relations. To feel sem is to internalise the potential assessments or moral valuations of others. It is a moral discourse that effects what men and women do and how they are ‘made’ as gendered subjects through acts and practices.

Despite moral discourses of sem that prevent men from selling in the marketplace and the way sem reproduces ideas of masculinity, some men do sell in the market. These men tend to be younger, and sometimes migrants from other parts of the Highlands (most often Southern Highlands). They sell objects that are not grown in their gardens, are associated with
subsistence but are processed. Some walk around selling fried fish, flour balls, batteries, sponges and other such household items, or stand behind small trade-store tables selling plastic bags and Maggi-brand stock cubes. The fact that they stand up and move, compared to women who sit on the ground for long periods of time, correlates to ideological distinctions made in other parts of the Highlands where men are thought to be active and on the move, and women stationary (apart from when they leave their natal kin for marriage) (Lederman 1986; Wardlow 2006a). These objects may also be perceived as less embarrassing for men because they are not strongly associated with women’s productive role. Some men do sell fresh produce, however, and remain stationary in the market regardless of ideas of pollution, *sanguma* or *sem*.

**Transgressions**

In this final section, I turn to two examples of transgressions of gendered norms: a man who sells his own food in the marketplace and a woman who carries out what are thought of as men’s tasks including building fences and cutting down bush. I show that whilst these people enact embodied, material and affective behaviours not expected of their socially assigned gender, thus challenging the dominant norms, overall they still act according to expectations of a moral person where sharing and caring are required to achieve social recognition and acceptance of others. The fact that some men and women do overcome local binary oppositions by contradicting the discursive constructions of gender shows that definitions of the gendered person are not insurmountable and can be adapted and altered (Fajans 1983: 178), but in this case within a remit of the Highlands person as one that provides for others.

**Gabriel Selling Waitman Food**

Gabriel was a committed fresh produce vendor and had a neatly presented and colourful section in the market. He positioned himself close to the gate and sold introduced food crops
known locally as *waitman kaikai* (European foods), such as tomatoes, capsicum, chilli and asparagus, attracting many urban workers and the expatriate community as his customers. I asked Gabriel why he sold food in the market. He explained that he wanted to save up and return to university to complete his studies in IT, but that his main reasons were to buy household necessities such as protein and to contribute to *hevis* (customary obligations and ceremonial exchange). He explained,

> I must have money to contribute to these events. I contribute on behalf of my household, my wife and my child. We help others and then they will help us if something comes up. This is the understanding we have in the Highlands: to help one another.

Gabriel did not appear to be embarrassed to sell in the marketplace. He even stationed himself close to the entrance where he was very visible. Yet the type of crops Gabriel sold are noteworthy. Some of Gabriel’s produce is new to Goroka, such as asparagus, celery and eggplant, which are not often consumed, and many of my friends in Goroka had not cooked these before including Gabriel himself.

Gabriel knows some English and speaks to expatriate customers, successfully selling these vegetables that are not locally popular and giving the buyers extras (staff at the NGOs Oxfam and Care both told me of their regular visits to Gabriel and appreciated his gifts). These are not crops exchanged in ceremonial contexts, and they do not have social value in terms of social production or ‘transaction’ (Brookfield 1972; M. Strathern 1972). They are also not associated with ‘production’ as they are not daily household staples for Goroka’s indigenous population.

Gabriel is navigating his way in the marketplace through objects that have associations with ‘modernity’ with the intention of using his profits to further his personal goals and contribute
to his kinship networks. He came across humble but proud of his achievements and happily showed me the number of different foods he grows in his garden in the wide, flat plains of Daulo. Gabriel’s wife left him because she did not want to work in the garden or sell in the market, whereas Gabriel was happy to do this in the hope of continuing his education. When I asked him if he felt *sem* in the market he replied: “Forget about *sem* – having a good life is very important” (*lus tingting long *sem* - gutpela *sidaun* em *bikpela samting.*). I interpret the Tok Pisin phrase *gutpela *sidaun* to refer both to a material and symbolic status of having a secure and stable livelihood within the cash economy; it is part of the aspiration that motivates many of those living around Goroka to engage in cash-generating activities that can secure the future of their families through education and permanent housing. Gabriel stated that he was not concerned with what other’s thought, yet he was not selling traditionally ‘women’s crops’.

**‘Boyman’**

When I heard stories of women being ‘like’ men, it tended to be when they contributed to collective exchanges, spoke publicly with wisdom and intelligence, or built fences and houses and lived on their own. For example, I came across two different women nicknamed ‘Boyman’. I got to know one of them on a stay with sellers in Lufa district.

The first thing I was told about Boyman by the other men and women in her family was that she did not ‘have a man’. Then I was told she is called Boyman because she does all the things a man might do. She builds her own fences, built her own house and cuts her own wood. However, Boyman was also providing for others. She told me she has various nieces and *tambus* (in-laws) come to her bush garden and get *kumu* (greens), which I witnessed happen. She told me a story that illustrates her generosity:
I cook five sweet potatoes every morning – two for me and three for the man who lives by the bus stop. He doesn’t have a wife and has two children. I have been giving them food for years. One time his daughter came back to the village from town and brought me some clothes to say thank you.

Boyman also told me about how she made a contribution to a brideprice for an uncle’s daughter up in another village (*hauslain*), and the man said, “You are a good godly person”, to which she replied, “No, I’m not! I drink and I smoke!” But still, she said, they gave her a significant cut of pig – an enactment of their respect for her and their relationship. She explained how she then turned this into further gifts for others, demonstrating her giving and caring enactment of the giving and caring for others that is expected of women with good moral personhood. “I cut it up into small pieces and shared it with my neighbours. These women said I have good *pasin* because I shared it with them.”

Boyman was tough, muscular and walked around wearing a Bob Marley Rasta hat with fake dreads whilst rolling up cigarettes. She referred to herself as *yungpela*, which women of all ages used to mean unmarried and ‘free’. She didn’t mention children until later into our relationship when I found out she had a child who lived elsewhere with the father’s family. I warmed to Boyman as she seemed to achieve what was expected of women and men, usually wearing shorts and a t-shirt rather than a *meriblouse* and wandering around the bush whilst also caring for her elderly parents. She was proud of her sugarcane, taro, yams and bananas, all of which are traditionally men’s crops, which she had planted herself. After living with a string of violent husbands Boyman had chosen to return home to her brothers and parents. She was given a piece of land by her brothers, cleared the bush on it herself and made a strong wooden fence (see Fig. 10) to demarcate her space.
Through her hard work and selling sweet potato in the market Boyman earned money and contributed to brideprices and other hevis that came up in her community. I met a number of women nicknamed ‘Boyman’ in different villages. Another nickname given to women who performed traditionally male practices was ‘Papa’. Giving wise advice, talking in public and/or making fences, houses and exchanging pigs were all acts that could lead to an unmarried woman being given a man’s title. The social actions of Boyman building fences, contributing to major exchanges and gifting large amounts meant that despite being called sister (susa), she was recognised as having the strength of a man. She was agile and strong, like the younger men she hung around with and evident in her clean movements felling trees. Her behaviours were a transgression of gendered norms, much like those of Gabriel’s, who neatly arranged his produce and sat patiently for hours on end in the marketplace.
These transgressions show two things. Firstly, what is deemed natural according to local narratives can be performed by people who in other ways do not fit the binary gendered categories, e.g., a woman in a cross-sex sibling relationship acting like a brother rather than a sister in exchanges. Secondly, as Butler (1990: 147) states, to understand identity as an effect, produced and generated, rather than as a naturalised category means we can see the agency of actors who challenge what is given as natural or normal. I have argued that sem as an ‘emotion talk’ keeps this ‘natural’ order in place but is subverted by men who want to provide for their families.

**Conclusion**

In Goroka, some ‘traditional’ aspects of masculinity have been marginalised. Men are no longer warriors, they rarely build houses from local materials, and they seek work in the urban waged economy instead of carrying out their tasks in the garden. Although women are left with significant amounts of physical labour and responsibility, this positions them in a much clearer gendered role within the contemporary cash economy as provider. It also creates new value structures. Whilst the ideological value of selling fresh produce is low, in reality the value that women generate both for the ceremonial economy and the urban cash economy in monetary terms is high, and they are respected by their husband and his family if they are active producer-sellers. The marketplace, as a place of contemporary transactions and objects, echoes previous analytic categories of women as producers and men as transactors. Yet in reality women are both producing and transacting. Furthermore, whilst appearing to be a space of ‘modernity’ where monetary transactions take place and flows of rural people and materials intersect with those of town residents, the marketplace is thoroughly embedded within local social institutions and encompassed by the indigenous economy of recognition.
In this chapter, I have shown that one single phrase, *man save filim sem* (men feel embarrassed or shy), is an emotional explanation for why selling fresh produce is an economic activity largely associated with women. Within this there are a number of gendered ideas of practice, knowledge, sensibilities and dispositions. These are rooted in historical divisions between genders, which earlier ethnographic accounts of the Highlands have seen as suggesting power differentials, subordination and cultural systems of classification (Gillison 1993; Meigs 1984; Read 1965; Kahn 1988; Sexton 1986).

Whilst it could be argued that men’s embarrassment or shame at the idea of selling in the marketplace indicates a low value attached to this practice, I contend that women do not perceive the division in this way. Instead, they see this shyness as resulting from men’s lack of the necessary disposition or knowledge. As I show throughout the thesis, selling in the marketplace is one way in which women gain recognition from others and use their resources for extending their own and their families’ social relations. But for men, to sell in the marketplace is an act that would mean them suffering a misrecognition or feeling of disrespect from others, as expressed in the discourse of *sem*.

Meanwhile transgressions of these gender boundaries do occur; the exceptions that prove the rule betray the arbitrary nature of these constructions. Nonetheless, how gender is constructed matters in Goroka, as elsewhere, both to how people make money and what they do with it. In the next chapter, I look more closely at the kinds of relationships men and women have in and outside of the marketplace as spouses. I examine how anger manifests itself within intimate relations between married couples and between women. This develops the thesis that gender relations are fraught with tensions around money and access to resources as *maket mamas* have a considerable stake in the urban economy, whilst the gendered identities of some men are less stable in the cash economy (Zimmer-Tamakoshi 2012). Furthermore, people like Gabriel and Boyman overcome the binaries by making sense of their actions.
within the encompassing moral framework of sharing and caring, and by engaging in ‘transactions’ of social reproduction.
Chapter Four. Money, Marriage and Gendered Agencies: Part One

I got rid of them [men]. They weren’t useful for anything. I just wanted the children, so I told them they could get the fuck out of my life!

—Beth, onion seller in Goroka market

Beth was a single mother of three children, all under ten years old. She was selling onions in the ‘second house’ of the market when we met on a quiet Sunday. I was surprised to see her selling as I had met her working in one of the banks in town. “Aiyoo, you have a job and you market?” I said. “That’s right – I use all my time to make money!” She knew I was doing research about women in the marketplace and explained that she sells onions on her days off. Beth was in her mid-thirties, and unlike most of the mamas in the market, she wore a t-shirt and trousers rather than a meriblouse (‘mother hubbard’-style dress). She told me her mother was at home looking after her children, and when I asked if she was married, she explained she had never gotten married because did not want any of the men with whom she had fallen pregnant, giggling, “Three men, three children!”

I asked if she thought she would have had to stay with one of the fathers had she not had the market as an option. She responded,

I have been marketing since I was a girl. It is a part of me. I have always marketed, so I know how to do it. So without men I can survive; with men too I can survive.

Beth’s response echoes the experiences of the other women that feature in this chapter. It shows the place that fresh-produce market trading has in her life as a source of survival both
in and out of marriage relations. Beth had a strong sense of her own abilities and did not feel she needed to be married in order to be supported.

Selling in the marketplace is not just a matter of financial security for Beth: to be a seller in the market is both part of her identity as a productive and independent woman and a positioning that has allowed her mobility. She had a formal job and was also supporting herself with further income from the marketplace, a move that enabled her to put three children through school and pay the rent. She was educated to a university level, allowing her to find a full-time job and earn a good income in town. Beth demonstrated a sentiment common to many of the women I met in the market: that having children was the most significant part of her life and that she made her decisions in terms of them. Numerous market women told me that they were glad to be single as they had their children but no longer had to deal with ‘drunk’ or ‘jealous’ husbands. They were yungpela again, a term that directly translates to young but is also a humorous and ironic reference to freedom associated with pre-marriage youth (Lepani 2015). Beth was an assertive young woman and talked defiantly about her choice not to have a husband, although she told me she had frends – a term used to refer to casual romantic relations, or boyfriends, where the relationships are not publicly recognised and the men involved have significantly less claim over women’s resources.

In this chapter I seek to demonstrate the multiple agencies of market women in Goroka in a way that further develops a shift beyond dualistic categories of individual autonomy or acts of resistance to patriarchal structures (Mahmood 2005). Instead, building on M.Strathern (1988), Mahmood (2005; 2009) and Dunn (2017), I suggest that market women’s ability to contribute to their households and care for others matters for their sense of self, and their relationships with others provides them with support and recognition. Ortner (2006) argued that agency is always contingent on relations and that there can be no individual acting
outside of their context. However, the kinds of relationships and contexts that agents navigate are contextual and cultural. In Goroka, marriage is one of the major rites of a woman’s life, a moment where she gains full social personhood. Afterwards she has to maintain this personhood through her economic and affective efforts to care for her household and relatives. Marriage is what gives women social recognition (Fraser and Honneth 2003), is part of how they are valued by others and can be what creates challenges and obstacles for them. The rest of this chapter focuses on women who were married and had children. I ask, what forms does market women’s agency take? As Beth demonstrates, money made in the marketplace support her life as a waged worker. For many other sellers, without the opportunities provided by formal education, the marketplace is their sole source of income, and access to land for gardens is the most important factor in their livelihood. This chapter develops the central thesis questions: how has the commodification of food affected gender relations, and how does the marketplace shape, constrain and enable market women’s agencies in Goroka today?

This chapter builds on the various studies that have examined sexual antagonism in the Highlands and considers how women deal with the antagonistic elements of their marriage relationships in the contemporary era (Langness 1967; Herdt and Poole 1982; Taylor 2008; Silberschmidt 1999; Wardlow 2004; 2006). Money is perceived by some market women to be the cause of their marriage problems as they believe it changes the behaviours of men, particularly increasing their desire for more sexual partners, wives and alcohol. In this chapter, I emphasise that whilst money and the marketplace have given women the ability to survive outside of marital relations, they perceive money and other women as the cause and site of conflicts. Furthermore, whilst women enact their relational personhood as provider and carer for others through access to their husband’s land, their kin and friends are critical for offering alternative options. Whilst the women who feature in this chapter show a strong
sense of self and will, their agency is enabled through the options that the marketplace and their social networks offer them.

The women I discuss here demonstrate forms of positive agency, where they see options for themselves outside of the marital relationship and draw on their brothers and brothers-in-law for positive support. This differs to the negative agency that Wardlow (2006a) describes of Huli women, whose lives are constrained to a great extent by the expectations of their brothers and fathers in terms of their sexual relations. She explains how some Huli women become sex workers (*pasinja meris*) not out of economic need, but out of anger and resentment towards brothers, fathers and husbands who have failed to defend their interests or maintain what the women expect is fair of these kinship relationships (Wardlow 2004b; 2006a). In Goroka, many of the women I knew had brothers who provided them with safety and emotional support. Some women also had hard working and supportive husbands. During periods where husbands were thought to be absent or too aggressive however, brothers and brother-in-laws were reliable and important allies to market women. Thus the nature of relations between genders – as shown by women’s stories of aggressive husbands and the support brothers - demonstrates the importance of noting the particularities of relations for analysing local gender relations.

Development initiatives on behalf of women have long focused on the ways financial independence can provide them with the necessary means to have more agency in their personal relationships and to improve the living standards of their households. Market women’s financial independence and access to money has often been touted by development agencies as a means of ‘empowering’ women (Rooney 2015; 2016). Yet such perspectives fail to pay attention to the way that money is thought to change people’s behaviours in gendered ways. Money is not the same in every locale, and in this context local perspectives imply that ‘having money’ has effects on men, changing their desires and behaviours.
I first focus on the idea of gender antagonisms in PNG and the contemporary issues that married couples face as the social pressures of men’s prestige and recognition run counter to women’s interests as performing their role as good wives, mothers and relatives. I discuss gender-based violence in PNG and the different reactions of market women to their social and economic contexts. My second section focuses on the variety of choices women make in their lives, demonstrating the complexity of what can be considered ‘agency’ and suggesting that the social processes most often associated with ‘development’ and improving lives can contribute to conflicts and tensions. I argue that women’s ability to contest their circumstances necessarily involves mobilising their productive economic resources and social relations, i.e., kinship networks, including supportive brothers. This is within a context of the rise of a contested, competitive monetised economy that changes the way gendered acts (e.g., growing coffee, drinking alcohol, selling food in the market) are valued. The experience of these changes is emotional, embodied and complex, differing with positionality within urbanising or village contexts and with proximity and access to supportive kin. In order to understand these dynamics, it is necessary to give some explanation of what it means to be a ‘good’ woman in Goroka and the nature of kinship there.

**Being a ‘Good’ Mother**

A major factor in how women and men judge what makes ‘a good woman’ is being a good mother. To be caring of others and to nurture people are valued assets within this system of social relations, where reproducing relations through affective efforts is one of the performative acts that produces value (Lambek 2013). However, it is my impression that this was often more of a concern to women than it was to men. It is critical to a woman’s personhood that she both have the opportunity to enact motherhood and is perceived by others to be doing so.
In Goroka motherhood is not necessarily about biological reproduction. Adopting children and bringing them up as one’s own was very common amongst the market women that I knew. Over time I came to realise that many of those who call themselves ‘mothers’ may not have been the biological mothers of the children they were taking care of, nor indeed of any children at all. The act of feeding, looking after and financing a child’s daily needs creates the mother-child relationship, as discussed in depth for elsewhere in PNG (Kahn 1986; Macintyre 1987). It is partly this relationship, constructed through social action that shapes women’s personhood as specifically relational in local moral frameworks.

**Being a ‘Good’ Wife**

Formally, women must marry in order to gain access to land, and the general norm in Goroka is that a woman should be willing to contribute money and food to the family of her husband. A woman should work hard in the gardens and distribute some of the proceeds from her marketing amongst her relatives in ceremonial exchanges. Despite the many changes that have occurred in Goroka, this dynamic has not changed much from what anthropologists documented some thirty or forty years ago. For instance, Faithorn had similar findings from her work in Henganofi:

> Successful gardens not only produce food. They also contribute to an individual’s personal prestige and social standing in the community. A woman gains prestige by having well-tended and extensive gardens, keeping her family supplied with a variety of foods, and being generous with her harvest. (1976: 89)

Pigs were a fundamental part of this aspect of the garden. As Mika, a man from Bena in his fifties, explained during a feast,
Before, if a woman didn’t look after pigs then the husband would get rid of her. A woman had to look after pigs. But this has changed now.

His wife nodded and added,

Now women must look after money.

Together they pointed out a continuity between pigs and money in the context of social reproduction.

He continued,

Through the market especially it is very important. Women must look after money and support her husband. With money you can make everything happen. If you have money you can buy pigs. For example, if you want to organise a party and the leader says, ‘Who will kill a pig?’ And your friend put up his hand, and says he has a pig he can contribute, and you don’t put up your hand, that’s it. He has won now. And you will feel *sem*. The community is proud to have a pig to kill, the man is proud and the woman has helped him raise his name.

Mika explains how men’s recognition was directly tied to women’s contributions through pigs. Money has replaced other valuables to some extent, including pigs, but has similar connotations as an object that is exchanged to demonstrate power and prestige as well as materialising social relations. Mika’s comments suggest that in Goroka, a woman’s place as contributor of pigs is important for increasing the social standing of her husband and to feel better than others in his clan or *hauslain*. He recognises that money has replaced pigs in this role partly because money can be used for many other kinds of needs while pigs cannot. It

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A settlement, village or hamlet, defined as a collection of families living together, usually from the same clan or sub-clan or families that maintain solidarities, otherwise referred to as *lairn*. 
was sometimes insinuated that women who did not contribute food or pigs to exchanges were ‘bad’ women, although the term was not used explicitly. Some of these women were professionals with well-paid jobs but were still said not to have good *pasin* because they did not share their resources, kept to themselves or failed to demonstrate care for others.

Similarly, to wives and mothers, sisters are expected to help their brothers materially and emotionally, defending them in moments of conflict and contributing to ceremonial exchanges. It is through constant social interaction and material support that the brother and sister relationship is maintained, and this can be fundamental to women’s safety and security in moments of marital tension.

**Gendered Tensions in the Highlands**

The patrilocal system where men remain on their land and women leave to join enemy clans was seen by anthropologists of the Highlands as the origin of tension in marital relations (Read 1982; Langness and Hays 1987; Herdt and Poole 1982). Anthropological analyses of gender in the Highlands show how marriage primarily links men, as husbands and brothers, through women as wives and sisters, creating a structural tension. M.Strathern’s (1972) work in Mt Hagen showed that the wife leaves her clan to join her husband’s clan, and that marriage was for the purpose of joining rival clans. Wives were thus viewed as coming from the enemy side and at risk of bringing harm to her husband and making him sick (by purposefully polluting him for example by cooking whilst menstruating or poisoning him).

For Kewa in the Southern Highlands, Josephides argues this meant women have a less stable relationship to land and to the identity of the landowning group (Josephides 1985: 65). Deemed ‘sojourners’ amongst Kewa men, women remain peripheral to group politics and subordinate to men politically, claims Josephides (1985: 66).
Models of patrilocal residence as described by anthropologists (Sillitoe 1998; 2001) are in reality not necessarily this strict, however. For instance, when one older market mama, Susie, and I discussed what a wife can do when she is fed up with her husband’s behaviour, she explained the following:

If he gets cross too often and they are living on his land, then she can leave and go back to her own village. Sometimes the husband will follow her and if she refused to return with him then she can stay in her own village.

I asked, ‘But how do they have land then to make gardens?’ Her response:

Women can have land too. She is allowed to use some land in her village.

If the father and brothers give her land, then she has land. My children have grown up in Kotoni but they can use land in Sama too.

Susie shows that women do not leave their natal family completely behind and are able to return home, sometimes permanently if they need to, as has been shown in previous ethnographies of Highlands women (Reay [1965] 2014; Faithorn 1975). They can have access to land both for themselves and their children. However, this not as guaranteed as it is formally their brother’s land within the descent system; nor can the land be inherited by their children. Often women’s access to land is contingent on the quality of the relationship they have with, and to some extent the generosity of, their brothers. However, this relationship is enhanced when sisters are active in helping their brothers in exchanges.

28 The Tok Pisin terms for brother, brata, and sister, susa/sista, do not necessarily refer to sibling relations in a biological sense; they can refer to being brought up in the same household and cared for by the same parents. They can also be used to refer to kinship relations established by birth and through transactions (emotional and material), to demonstrate a friendly relationship between men and women in everyday interaction and to clarify that a relationship is not sexual. They are terms of endearment and mutual respect. Brata can also refer to a
Older men and women saw the increase in relations between men and women outside of bridewealth transactions as contributing to a demise in the quality and loyalty of marital relations. How women’s agency manifests within these exchanges is discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight. However, the dynamics of marriage between groups is relevant here for contextualising women’s concerns and antagonisms within relations. Writing about women in Daulo province of EHP, Dickerson-Putman explains that exchanges of wealth legitimises a marriage and strengthens the claims of a woman who wants to take legal action against her husband and count on the support of both her own kin in conflicts and those who become her in-laws or tambu, a relationship that is respected highly between clans or sub-clans (Dickerson-Putman 1996; Brown and Buchbinder 1976: 7). Older men expressed anxiety that increasingly members of younger generations are living together and having sexual relations (and children) outside of these bridewealth exchanges, which are supposed to formalise and legitimise marriage relations. However, previous ethnographies, including those of M. Strathern (1972) and Read (1955; 1965), demonstrate that marital discord and infidelity are not new to the Highlands (nor anywhere).

However, the dynamics of marriage are influenced by changes in contemporary models of masculinity. Formal gendered divisions were significantly affected by the decline of warfare with pacification, the outlawing of men’s houses and secret cults and the introduction and proliferation of Christian missions (Langness 1967: 175). Whether these changes are positive or negative is a matter of perspective. Some anthropologists have suggested these led to reduced sexual antagonisms (Herdt and Poole 1982), whilst some older men I spoke with

‘cousin-brother’, i.e., someone who is in the same sub-clan or family but does not technically share the same mother.

29 Tambu is the term used in daily communication to refer to in-laws. It is an offense to use a first name within this relationship and doing so can call for compensation in village courts, demonstrating how significant the marriage exchanges are for bringing together whole groups of people who are then related to one another as in-laws/tambus.

30 In Chapter Eight I discuss the contemporary complexities around bridewealth exchanges and the contested discourses between individual choice over marriage and the paying of bridewealth.
mourned the loss of men’s houses and thought this was the reason young men were becoming *raskols*31 (criminals) or *drugbodies* (young men drinking or smoking cannabis). For some men, the establishment of a state meant that they gained access to education and then employment in formal jobs, often to a greater extent than women, as observed in other parts of the postcolonial world (Boserup 1970; Jolly, Stewart, and Brewer 2012; Zimmer-Tamakoshi 2012).

Jolly and Macintyre (1989; see also Jolly, Stewart, and Brewer 2012) have suggested that contemporary antagonistic gender relations relate just as much to modern tensions as to previous traditional gender ideologies. Such antagonisms have been the concern of international development organisations and NGOs focused on gender-based violence (Amnesty International 2006). In PNG, what some organisations observe as rising violence levels (but as Biersack et al. (2016) have contested this is difficult to measure) are often attributed to ‘lost traditions’, alcohol consumption and marijuana use (Hukula 2012; Jolly, Stewart, and Brewer 2012).

Fiona Hukula’s research with men who are convicted of gender-based violence demonstrates a range of different explanations, some of which suggests a lack of control over their emotions and a fragile resentment towards women within male sexuality in contemporary PNG (Hukula 2012: 207; Wardlow 2007). However, Zimmer-Tamakoshi (2012) argues that violence against women is not entirely a new phenomenon as there women who were deemed unfaithful wives or suspected witches amongst Gende people in the Eastern Highlands were tortured and punished before colonisation, showing a continuation of male dominance over women into the contemporary era. Others have attributed men’s violence to a perceived decline in men’s control over women compared to their fathers and grandfathers, men’s

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31 Chris Little’s (2016) thesis has explored the discourses around young, uneducated men who have been posed as a looming social problem “emblematic of the decline of the village and traditional culture” (Little 2016: 96). It analyses the economic marginalisation of men of all ages, not just youth.
generally diminished power in the world at large, and the values of modernity and Christianity overtaking what were previously certain norms of ancestral gender hierarchies and male cults (Eves 2012; Gibbs 2016; Jolly, Stewart, and Brewer 2012).

Hukula posits another perspective, however, suggesting an understanding of power that is grounded in social relations: “Perceiving male power and domination over women as the sole cause does not adequately take into account the social contexts within which these acts take place – the broader realm of Melanesian sociality” (2012: 209). Actions are not the result of merely one man or woman but rather of broader social contexts and motivations. However, she also recognises that there are more generalised acts of aggression directed towards women (Hukula 2012: 209).

Although masculine violence has been under intense scrutiny from scholars, international agencies and activists (Banks 1993; 2000; Eves 2010; Zimmer-Tamakoshi 2012), a contextualised and historical understanding of violence shows that violent behaviour in a marital relationship can be a complex symptom of wider socio-political transformations in local ideas of morality. Furthermore, what may appear to be violence in one context might be considered a legitimate form of emotional expression or symptomatic of a failure to maintain proper social relations (M. Strathern 1988: 272). It is not within the scope of my thesis to provide cultural and contextual definitions of violence; nor is there sufficient space to discuss the complexities of western academic and institutional interests in what is often perceived as the particularly violent behaviour of PNG men.  

Instead, I am interested in the ways women discuss men’s behaviours and in their responses to marital discord.

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32 For a deeper discussion of male violence in PNG see (Macintyre 2008; Zimmer-Tamakoshi 2012; Eves 2010; Biersack, Jolly, and Macintyre 2016), and in relation to urban masculinities, Chris Little’s thesis (2016). It is worth noting that high rates of domestic violence occur across the world, including in Australia and New Zealand, where NGOs that focus on PNG are often based. Furthermore, the question of whether violence and behaviours in relationships in PNG can or should be understood by outsiders is a complex question that goes to the heart of the tension between western feminisms and anthropology’s moral relativism (M. Strathern 1987b).
Whether the acts of ‘violence’ are themselves deemed immoral varies widely, and largely depends on the social relations of the specific context in question. For instance, some women believed it was understandable for husbands to beat their wives in particular circumstances, and many men saw it as within their right to discipline their wives. Yet often when I spoke with women who explained their experiences of violent husbands, the incidents related to alcohol or infidelity rather than ‘discipline’. Public acts of violence periodically occur between rival wives and girlfriends in the marketplace. The often-public nature of violence, particularly between wives and their husband’s girlfriends, is worth noting.

Most market women aspired to be good wives and mothers, which they were determined to achieve with or without husbands. Nonetheless, conflicts with husbands caused them distress and threatened their livelihoods. A common explanation amongst market women for behaviours that they disliked in their husbands referred to nem, or how men gain social recognition from others.

**Male Prestige, Money and Nem: Conflict and Desire**

The power or influence men gain within the contemporary economy of recognition is often accompanied by behaviours that frustrate or antagonise relations with their wives. Stewart & Strathern examine how the prestige system in the Western Highlands has altered with new forms of political and social capital emerging from a state which relies mostly on “democracy as patronage” and a cash economy based around “cash-cropping plus consumerism” (1998: 133). They argue that these modern forms of social organisation mean that prior forms of leadership and the big man status have been swiftly transformed, changing men’s desires and behaviours. Today, new forms of social and symbolic capital include ownership of particular goods such as cars, ‘permanent’ houses (the materiality and symbolism of which I discuss later), coffee-processing machines, formal qualifications and political positions such as
village councillors and members of Parliament. Men’s status or leadership positions can come about through education, business activities or employment as policemen, doctors and in other respected public roles (Stewart and Strathern 1998; Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1997b).

Infidelity or polygyny is a common cause of tension in marriage for market women and of divorce. There were generalised tropes (repeated by both men and women), and from my observations seemed to be true, that men with access to substantial monetary capital often have more than one wife or use their money to entice women outside of marriage, whilst men without capital or land can struggle to find a wife (Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1997b; 2016).

Anthropologists have debated the extent to which women are in agreement with men having multiple wives and have generally understood polygyny in the context of men’s need for large gardens and numbers of pigs for the sake of achieving recognition in ceremonial exchanges (Feil 1987; Josephides 1985; M. Strathern 1972). Within the logic of patrilineal descent and a prestige system based on pig exchanges it made sense for men with lots of land to have more than one wife (Brown 1978; Sillitoe 2001). Maintaining ownership over land was in part assured through people (women) working in the gardens (Feil 1987; Sillitoe 2001), and public status was gained through looking after a large number of pigs. More wives meant more pigs that could be exchanged at ceremonial events. Today, this imperative does not seem to exist. Pigs are now sold at a price, and money can be used as a gift at ceremonial events.

In the contemporary context, the reasons for and feelings towards polygyny seems to have changed. Men having more than one wife was a complaint I heard often amongst women of all ages, and it is a common cause of men and women separating despite marriage exchanges having taken place and a couple having had children together. For instance, as I sat with a woman selling sweet potato one day, I explained to her that I was interested in the relationships between men and women and how they organise money in the household. She
immediately began talking about the behaviour of men as becoming increasingly worse as they gain more money. Then she quietly told me about her own husband. I asked her if she was still with her husband, as market women I met were so often living separately from the father of their children. She said yes, but whispered,

He has another woman and I’m sick of it, so I left him. Now I am on my family’s land and grow food there. My brothers gave me a small area to grow food on. My husband already had a wife but then brought me as his second wife. Now he has gone back to his first wife. I don’t like this behaviour, but I don’t want to be cross or angry, so I just left and took our child with me.

This market woman chose to leave, and considering she was the second wife, she had some freedom to do so. Like many I met, she had returned to her own family and was sharing the land of her brothers. This movement between their natal and affine land was common amongst market women, many of who referred to themselves yungpela (such as Boyman in the previous chapter) to humourlessly imply that they are ‘free’ and single.

I was told frequently by men and women in Goroka that it is not just men with lots of land who are finding second or third wives today as previously; this can also happen with a man with very little land and just enough money to show interest in another woman, what is known as to grisim meri (to woo, flirt with or entice women). This form of social interaction between men and women was thought to threaten an ideal type of marriage. As one of my adoptive fathers, who was married with five children, explained,

Relationship breakdowns have become more common, especially when men get a good job and are paid a lot – they are unsure how to spend their money and end up spending it on bad food, beer, and other women. Then
their wives get angry at them as their husband’s behaviour changes and they aren’t at home helping anymore.

This increase in polygyny is a complex phenomenon that can be partly explained by the increased mobility of men in town and the breakdown in traditional structures of Big man leadership. These are two separate but connected issues. Whilst some men are seeking multiple wives, which contributes to their own social standing and recognition, others are merely seeking multiple sex partners. Both of these cause stress for women, but the extent to which these acts are deemed unethical depends on how this is conducted.

The requirement for extensive sweet potato gardens and pigs is no longer as strong, yet the notion that men have a right to more than one wife persists. In this way, the marketplace merely facilitates a different version of the social reproduction that women have always been responsible for. However, unlike pigs or sweet potato, money has the ability to be exchanged for many things (Wardlow 2006b: 121), and it is in part this fungibility that effects gender dynamics. However, according to older market women not just men’s behaviour changes around money. Older market women also considered young women to be ‘excited’ by money and said to follow and flirt with men who they thought had spare cash, the assumption being, according to the market women, that they would not have to work hard in the gardens themselves.

For example, one older woman, Janet, in her sixties, told me how her partner of twenty years left her for a younger woman after he became a bus driver. Janet explained that he received constant attention from younger women as they knew he had money. Eventually he left her and married another woman. She felt becoming a driver had threatened their marriage. Others in her community said the breakdown was due to Janet’s *pasin* – they said she was not an active woman and did not do much for others or her husband. They used the morality of her
behaviour, what they perceived as her failure to demonstrate recognition in daily interactions with her husband and his kin, to explain his actions. Those outsiders commenting on their relationship did not position money as the foremost issue. Yet Janet felt it was other women’s lust for his money that meant he had left her, as she explained, feeling belhevi stret (very sad and depressed).

**Gendered Monies**

As in much of the world, what happens to money within households in Goroka is one of the main causes of conflict and tension in marriage (Eves and Titus 2017). Men and women in the Goroka market largely see their money as separate. For most couples it was clear that the husband’s money from coffee was his and the wife’s money from fresh produce trading was hers: an extension of the idea that food grown by women belongs to them (Sexton 1986: 24; A. Strathern 1979: 238; Strathern 1988: 165). However, the money made by women in the marketplace can be contested and cause conflict depending on the attitude of particular husbands; as the landowners men still maintain ultimate rights (A. Strathern 1979). Women in Goroka manage and control much of the money they made in the market but have to contend with demands from husbands and children that are not always in the household’s long-term interests, hence Laura Zimmer-Tamakoshi refers to migrant Gende women in Goroka as ‘household managers’ (Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1998). Much to their wives’ dismay, some men spent money on alcohol, gambling and smoking. Potoura, an education specialist in PNG, refers to the “homebrew, alcoholic lost generation” of men who “are like spoilt brats who think that the world revolves around them” (Potoura 2017: 237). She refers specifically to men who do not contribute to their households whilst their wives sell food to put their children through school. Potoura (2017: 238) explains there are “so many wonderful husbands, fathers, brothers and uncles” who do work hard to contribute to their families, but
says that there are others who have good incomes and “use that as an excuse to terrorise their wives and children” (ibid.). How money made in the market enhances or hinders women’s agency is a topic I turn to now, framing this within debates regarding liberal feminist ideals of autonomy and agency and how these apply to the Highlands context.

**Women’s Agency and Autonomy**

The usefulness of the term ‘agency’ comes down to whether ‘persons’ can be abstracted from relations in the depictions people have of themselves (M. Strathern 1987a: 25). Similarly to Strathern, Saba Mahmood, an anthropologist studying Muslim women in Egypt, challenges the notion that there is a universal human subject that desires freedom and autonomy, a notion which she suggests is at the core of feminist movements and intellectual projects (Mahmood 2009). Mahmood argues the freedom that western feminisms aspire to is rooted in liberal thought, and she criticises this for failing to accommodate experiences or ideas of freedom that emerge from different social and cultural circumstances, particularly to those of middle-class white women who apply their perspective universally. For instance, some mainstream western feminist perspectives in the US consider the nuclear family as constraining for women. But Crenshaw (1991) and others have argued that for African-American women, the capacity to care for their family free of oppression is a considerable concern, showing that ideas of autonomy or freedom are not the same for all women (Lorde 1984; Mahmood 2005; Davis 1998; Crenshaw 1991).

Based on her work with the women’s Mosque movement in Egypt, Mahmood argues for honouring the decisions and choices women make based on what matters to them in their own lives (Mahmood 2005: 35). She insists on seeing agency in practices that are embodied and experienced and that exist beyond mere reference to the ‘hegemonic’ power in question. This means going beyond the liberal assumption of a self-authored subject with entirely free
choice, or a subject whose agency is only visible when it resists or subverts power structures, to an understanding of agency that lies beyond either resistance or individual choice (Mahmood 2009; Madhok 2013). This is a pragmatic approach that takes the conditions of patriarchy into account but also recognises the decisions of the oppressed as agentive choices.

Mahmood’s version of agency expands to include “motivations, desires and goals” which are not singularly in reference to structures of male domination and can be deeply felt (Mahmood 2005: 20). I draw on this for different but equivalent situations of women in Goroka, who make pragmatic choices about what they value for their own lives and for that of others, including their children. This opens up other ways of thinking about agency that acknowledge the importance of relationships. Registering these acts as agentive does not have to involve evidence of resistance or collective action, but as M.Strathern (1987a; 1988) suggests, requires understanding of how actors themselves perceive and understand the obstacles in their lives and find their own solutions. Furthermore, this version of agency leaves space for actions that are not merely responding to systems of oppression but can be acts of joy and caring for others.

Wardlow (2006a: 12) suggests that female agency in the Highlands can be seen as gendered modes of action that come from specific locally constructed ideas of personhood that are both ‘dividual’ and ‘individual’. In the context of Huli in Southern Highlands, women are said to be “under the legs of men” and needing to be “fenced in”. Like Read observed of Gahuku (1965), men have a strong ideology that women need ‘disciplining’ and require what Wardlow refers to as “protective male dominance” (2006a: 12). However, I do not understand women’s emotional and material lives to be ‘encompassed’ by men’s transactions in Goroka, for there are multiple spaces and modes in which women demonstrate positive agency and seek recognition for doing so. For example, in Goroka, the gifting of food, or money, to relatives, friends and kin is an element of women’s relational personhood that is
not formed in relation to an overarching structure of male dominance. Rather it is part of a general ethic of care and concern for others. This ethic is not strictly gendered as men also engage in daily acts of gifting and ‘mutual recognition’ (Robbins 2009). However, these everyday acts of gifting allow women to forge their own networks of social relations and provide moments for socialising, sharing stories and furthering their own name and gaining recognition from others. Anthropologists have often considered women’s networks less extensive or political than men’s, hence these acts have been devalued in anthropological analyses. I deem these acts worth paying attention to because it is through these that women themselves experience recognition. In PNG power is “acted out through engagement with a wider field of social relations and not that of an isolated individual” (Hukula 2012: 209). Thus concepts of agency benefit from including the ability of women to make choices about how they act within their relational networks.

As Rooney (2017: 183) points out, “narratives of ‘women’s empowerment’” can diminish the relationships that women draw on for mutual support by overemphasising their financial independence. Some of these relationships can be with men as brothers and in-laws. To return to the central theme of how market women navigate the marketplace and their marital relations, I now turn to focus on how women exert agency based in relationships with men (as husbands, brothers and in-laws) who can be supportive, aggressive and, at times, both. How the contemporary economy influences different forms of recognition and gendered moralities is the context for many women’s stories in Goroka. As everywhere, market women’s relationships are complex and emotional; they use their personal, financial and social resources to navigate these and emphasise their children’s well-being as their priority.
Market Women’s Relational Agency

In this section, I provide three examples of market women who reconcile aspects of their marital relationships that have caused them upset, particularly in relation to how they distribute resources within their households. They each demonstrate their own approach to some of the problems I outlined above: multiple wives, violence, alcoholism and conflicts over money. As with many market women in Goroka, these women seek solace in their relatives and choose to leave or stay in marital relations based on their personal evaluations of the situation. They all maintain pursuit of their own goals and desires through the marketplace and act as relational agents (Mahmood 2009; M. Strathern 1988; LiPuma 2001).

Elsee: Counting Chickens

Elsee was a regular seller of tomatoes and a migrant from Daulo to Goroka town. She was outgoing and knew many people in the market, often leaving her stall to chat and socialise in a nearby coffee house. She was one of the first women I came to know well in the market. After I explained that I was there to conduct research about how the growth of Goroka town means more people depend on the marketplace and market women for food, she took to telling me stories about her and her friends. We tended to talk whilst polishing tomatoes on our meriblouses and arranging them carefully in neat rows on the tarpaulin laid out on the concrete in front of us.

One day I asked why she did not sit with her husband, who also sold tomatoes in the market. She explained that some years prior to our meeting, she and her husband had been struggling to make enough money from selling garden food, so they bought chickens. They looked after them from chicks, and then once they were big enough, killed them, cooked them with greens in coconut milk and sold them in small pieces in the market. This processing of the food meant they made 190 kina profit from just two chickens (usually bought for 30 kina each at
the Kakaruk maket (chicken market). Elsee was proud of her budgeting of this money, recollecting how she kept her cash in a suitcase in the house and carefully calculated how much profit they would make from each chicken. Her financial prudence was directly in order to provide for her children attending school. However, her husband apparently used that money to entice another woman, an issue about which many women expressed anger and sadness.

Speaking fast, her voice rising to a high pitch in moments of outrage, Elsee explained how her husband and his girlfriend undermined her careful saving:

I learned how to budget and saved enough money to pay for all the children’s school fees and still have some left over. My husband took this money and used it to seduce another woman. Then one day this other woman came to the market and started taunting me. “You sit down there in the market whilst I enjoy your money from the hand of your husband! Now I am eating your money!”

Whilst Elsee was angry with her husband for this, as with many of the relationship conflicts that become public in the marketplace, the anger and resentment she felt was toward the other woman and not just her husband. This could be because women are expected to gain access to land via their marriage relations and had become rivals for the resources, but also because first wives deem it immoral of other women to encroach on their relationships. Yet the taunting of the second woman suggested that she did not perceive her actions as immoral, professing pleasure at not having to work as a result of Elsee’s efforts in the market. This fits into one of the discourses women and men have about other women: that some are attracted to men with money so they do not have to ‘work’ themselves. This was a moral discourse that
implied such women are lazy; yet men were rarely accused of being lazy for being dependent on their wives.

As I mentioned earlier, whilst polygamy is socially accepted, how it is conducted matters, and lack of consultation of the first wife or careful equal distribution of resources leads to violence and emotional upset between women. Elsee said she did not want to fight in public, and so she ignored this woman and continued to sell, but she shouted at her husband and fought with him when she returned home. When he continued to see the other woman, Elsee decided to leave him and take the children with her.

Eventually Elsee enthusiastically introduced me to her husband. He was a quiet man with a long beard and slim face. I thought Elsee’s story would mean I would never see them together again, but by the time I left Goroka I noticed they were selling tomatoes together. When I managed to have a quiet moment with her, I asked if they were back together. Elsee explained,

I stay in town and he stays in his village. I have told him I refuse to go back there even though he keeps asking me to go. But he has two wives now, and so the other one stays there. I stay in town with my people and do what I like.

Elsee’s familial networks in Goroka meant she could choose not to live with her husband and his second wife. She was able to make this decision because of her own economic activities and because of her support network in town. She demonstrated a sense of her own agency and desire to live in town rather than with him and appeared confident in her decision.

Had it not been for her hard work and initiative, her husband would have struggled to find enough resources to have a second wife. Elsee continued to make her own income and live
independently of her husband, reselling vegetables sold by others instead of growing her own. Her financial literacy and initiative helped her to live away from her husband, and her kin in town provided her with an alternative place to stay.

**Jackie’s Ice Pops**

Many young women believe their lives will be better if they marry an educated man who might have a future in business or politics. One such example was Jackie, who had grown up in one of Goroka’s settlements and wanted to marry a university graduate. When we met, through my regular visits to one of the supermarkets she worked in, Jackie was in her mid-thirties. We became friends and used to walk around town together and the market. One day we sat under a tree in the centre of town and began discussing how she had come to work at the supermarket. She explained she had been selling vegetables in the main market before this and doing street sales before that. She knew about my research and asked me to take note of her story. She explained that her married life had been difficult and disappointing;

> My husband was much older than me and went to university. I thought because he was educated he would be a good person to marry. So when I met him and he liked me, I agreed to marry him. I thought we would budget as a family as he would have a good job. He worked as a public servant, so we had a house. But I never knew how much he earned. Every now and then he would give me 200 kina, about every two weeks. Then he started drinking and playing pokies [gambling machines]. His character changed. When I asked him for money for the children’s school fees he would rarely give me anything. So then I went back to work in a store, but my husband said he didn’t want me working – he wanted me at home with the children. I stopped but he still didn’t give me enough money. I decided
to sell ice pops and do street sales [selling items on street corners]. But he kept refusing to give me any money and was beating me a lot when I asked. We kept arguing, so eventually I decided to leave him. He said it was not good for the children if we lived in separate houses. And I agreed. But I had to leave to save my own life and to look after my children.

Jackie demonstrates how she assumed the status of her husband as an educated man with a full-time job meant they would have a good life, but too much money had changed his behaviour. Eventually, Jackie escaped to live with a friend in town. Later, a cousin of hers invited her to grow sweet potato on her land, and eventually Jackie bought a section of land next door and decided to live there with her brothers’ support.

As Stephanie Lusby (2017) shows, men in PNG often perceive violence against women as not right even if they may enact it. The behaviour of her husband was surprising to Jackie’s brothers, three of whom I met as they stayed with her ensuring her and her children were safe. The brothers, all of who had not completed education beyond Grade Four, told me they assumed that because he had finished university and had a good job, their brother-in-law would treat their sister well. Their assumptions demonstrate the symbolic association of waged work and education with good moral behaviour and that they did not deem his violent behaviour acceptable. I failed to ask them how they would treat their own wives or witness this myself. Other men I spoke with stated they thought wives need disciplining, which included physically beating them. Yet these men were supportive and defended their sister, as Jackie explains,

My brothers came and built a house for me. I knew my husband would not like this, but he could not do anything. He knew my brothers would fight him if he came and disturbed me. So I concentrated on growing food and
selling different things in the market. I decided to try and get a store job as it is better to have regular income whilst the children are at school.

The sale or renting of peri-urban land, sold or leased by customary landowners to those wanting to live near town or grow food, means women like Jackie can buy land to grow food even if they do not have access to land via kinship relations. However, in order to carry out Jackie required the support of her brothers.

Jackie was a charismatic seller, confident and always smiling, which she felt meant she did well in street sales: “I’m a woman that talks a lot, and talks nicely to people”. Her affect and pasin meant she was profitable in this kind of marketing, which involves more social engagement compared to in the Goroka marketplace, where women are usually quiet and subdued. Through this and her store job she was able to save up for her own house. One day Jackie took me to her house, a ‘semi-permanent’ structure with wooden beams and a thatched roof. She showed me her rows of sweet potatoes and explained that she plans to sell them in the market on her days off.

Jackie used her education and market sales to earn money and provide for her children in a safe environment. Her safety was guaranteed by her brothers, who also built her house: they provided protection and physical labour, as well as moral and emotional support. Through the support of her brothers, she said, “I found strength to refuse to go back to my husband”.

Now I turn to a final example, a woman who, similar to Jackie, had built her own house. She chose to stay with her husband despite similarly suffering from his drinking and periodic violent outbursts. Her choice to stay also depended on what she felt was best for her children, as well as a Christian ethic that says that to remain within a marriage is best. Her use of the marketplace and of her kinship networks contributes to her demonstration of relational agency.
**Turia’s House**

I met Turia through one of my close fictive fathers Papa Kay in Goroka town. I dropped in to say hello to him and he ushered me through his house to a grassy clearing where two men in their middle ages and a woman, in her thirties or so, were sitting on white plastic chairs chatting. Behind them was a half-ploughed field that a woman was getting ready to make into a sweet potato garden. I sat on an upturned bucket and Papa Kay introduced me to the group. Opposite me in a pale blue *meriblouse* and neatly cropped hair was Turia. Papa Kay had told me about this ‘farmer’ as he called her, referring to her commercial accomplishments (rather than the usual *maket mama*). He said she was always going to the market and selling lots of different kinds of vegetables, and was well known for her big gardens; in discussing Turia’s achievements, he furthered her *nem* (name) and recognition (Munn 1986).

As I explained my research to her, she burst into a description of what she grows and how,

> I grow food that is fast money: cabbage, broccoli, carrots – it is fast and big. But it is more work. Recently I have been growing cabbages and selling them in Lae and Goroka market. I also have carrots, sweet potato, sugarcane, beans, cucumbers and corn.

I asked what she does with the money she makes,

> Well, because of my children, I made a rent house that students could stay in. After a trip to Madang market with my cabbages, I bought roofing irons and had the house made. I thought this would bring in the extra money I needed to pay for the children to go to school, and their clothes and food.

Her enterprising attitude and determination to maximise her income were shown respect by the men sitting around us as they nodded their heads in approval and recognition of her
ingenuity. For Turia, her motivations were clearly to provide for her children. She was confident and calm in the way she spoke, speaking slowly and with a slight smile. She had travelled extensively between the major towns of Lae, Madang and Goroka selling her wares, and she was clear about her projects. Her market trading appeared to have contributed to her sense of self-esteem and self-respect.

Turia invited me to visit her house and gardens. We met a number of times following this initial meeting. She had an impressive house by local standards and was known for her profitable food selling. The house was semi-permanent but almost permanent, raised up off the ground with strong wooden foundations, four rooms and electricity. It is rare to find electricity in many of the villages I stayed in, and a generator requires enough income to buy kerosene to fill it up. But Turia lived close enough to town that she could request mains electricity to be installed, bargaining with electricians and offering a small bribe: “I gave them some coins for their lunch and they agreed to install it for me”.

Although she certainly demonstrated dedication, Turia had access to resources that other women may not have. The wood for the house came from trees on her husband’s extensive land. The floors were made from leftover lino she received from a friend working at the hospital. She collected stones and pebbles from a local river to mix with cement that she bought. The house was held together by nails and screws left over from her the construction of her father-in-law’s permanent house, the first to be built in the area. Other bits and pieces were gifted from her sister’s husband, who lived close by. Her maintenance of a relational personhood was a major contributing factor to enabling the house to be built. She explained her motivations for the house, which has both practical use and material, symbolic capital.

I built it so that my children could sleep in a good house, but also so that when I am old I do not need my house replaced or fixed by others.
Her house had made her and her husband renowned in the village as it was indicative of their advancement over other family members and neighbours. ‘Permanent houses’ are symbolic of both ‘progress’ and social status, and they require more resources to build than semi-permanent houses or *haus kunai* (bush materials house). Semi-permanent housing usually means the roofing is metal/iron and the walls are blinds woven from local grasses. A permanent house is completely made out of MDF (medium-density fibreboard), chipboard and wood. Often only elderly mamas live in the traditional bush house, *haus kunai*, on a permanent basis, and their houses often form a central social space for other relatives. Houses become a visual and material sign of the place a family has within the new monetised economy. They are part of what gives someone *nem* or *luksave* (social prestige). Many people living in villages around Goroka prefer to have semi-permanent or permanent houses if they can afford the materials, and such houses become a symbolic indication of wealth in local hierarchies of value (Dumont 2013; Graeber 2001).

Permanent and semi-permanent houses are valued for their practical utility, lasting longer than ones made of local bush materials, which need replacing after some years once the thatch rots away. Metal wire, iron roofing and other materials have durability, but they cannot be sourced from the natural environment and are only purchasable within the cash economy by those with enough money. Using these materials cuts down the labour time of men and means housebuilding work does not have to be done repeatedly. Men once earned prestige and recognition through their ability to build their own house and to do it well, using local materials and sophisticated methods of weaving. Building houses from local materials is decreasing now as only some in younger generations still retain this knowledge and the materials are less available close to town. As the shift from local to modern materials decreases physical labour and time spent on house maintenance, it also changes the gendered nature of work. Turia sees her house as a result of her own hard work, the culmination of her
market trading and pursuit of her own desires and goals for improving the materiality of her life. Turia described her house as an example of how hard she works compared to other women in her family, “None of my husband’s brothers live in a house like this, and none of their wives work as hard as me. There are lots of lazy people around here”.

Turia’s husband sold coffee and worked part-time as a security guard. Her income was separate to her husband’s, and she told me some women were surprised she did not demand more of his fortnightly wage. Turia explained that others know he depends on her, and sometimes when he tries to speak in public other men will say, “You talk on the back of your wife’s hard work but you’re only talking because your wife looks after pigs and sells a lot in the market”. She told me with a smile that his response is, “Yeah, you’re right – because I made a good choice in a wife”.

The people questioning Turia’s husband’s authority to speak were doing so based on the traditional idea that men who speak as leaders should be hard workers. This is counter to another aspect of Highlands ideology where women are expected to do productive work and men circulate the objects women produce to gain (M. Strathern 1972; Josephides 1985). In this instance the men claimed that Turia’s husband did not work hard and therefore did not deserve to speak. Her husband’s response reasserts his position of power through demonstrating that he actively chose Turia as his wife for this reason, nonchalantly dismissing their comments as stating the obvious. The men speaking within this context may consider Turia’s garden work as superior to her husband’s work, embedded as he is within the urban cash economy. Working in security is considered low-value work, whilst working in gardens is still honoured as ‘real work’.

In telling this story, Turia reveals her awareness that others perceive her as hardworking and her husband not, and that others outside of their relationship recognise that he is dependent on
her. However, she also insisted that he acknowledges her hard work and states it in public. Turia felt as though he valued her efforts and the material life she has provided for them. She defended him, stating she knows he depends on her and that she is “a good, hard-working wife”, *mi gutpela had wok meri*, a self-evaluation grounded in her material efforts.

She also evaluated that overall, his contributions are good enough and that this is what is most important to her. Yet in the same instance, she regrets his drinking and his demands for money.

He is a good man. He buys rice for the children. Sometimes he spends all of his wages on alcohol and then comes asking me for more. Sometimes he comes home drunk and asks me to give him some coins to drink Live Lave (fruit wine made in Goroka) with his friends. I generally say yes because it is easier than refusing. If I say no or I make some kind of mistake he will get angry and hit me. But he always says sorry the next day and feels bad. If I weren’t a religious person, maybe I would leave him. But he is a good man mostly, and he knows that he needs me. He depends on my strength.

Her choice to stay with her husband could be viewed as one of subordination if the episodes of violence are given precedence as a marker of male domination. However, from Turia’s perspective this is not the case. She could leave him, but chooses not to.

Turia’s success and determination had led to jealousy, she said, on the part of her husband’s family. On one occasion, Turia did decide to leave because his brothers accused her of stealing money from her elderly father-in-law whilst she cared for him. When they did this,

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33 This is a problem for many women who are perceived as prospering in the cash economy (Jolly and Macintyre 1989).
her husband did not defend her. She was so angry about his betrayal and fed up with his brothers’ jealousy that she left to stay with her sister who lived nearby.

In this episode, she demonstrated a strong sense of her own value and regard. She knew that she worked hard and had earned others’ respect, and she was not going to allow her husband’s brothers’ jealousy undermine her hard work caring for her father-in-law or children. Leaving the household was possible because she lived close to her sister and brother-in-law. Her brother-in-law arranged a court case in order for Turia to be properly compensated for the insult that her husband and his brothers enacted by falsely accusing her. After a few weeks, she eventually returned to her husband. She told me this was because she missed her gardens, and because she could tell he was sorry as he had come many times asking her to come back to their house.

By looking at the materiality of Turia’s house, her intimate relationships with in-laws and her own family network, we can see the way women use both their social networks and their capacity to accumulate money in the market to provide for the futures of their children and themselves. They also gain status and respect from others in their communities in the process. Yet such audacity can be met with contempt. For this reason, women have to manage their relationships carefully, particularly if their husbands or kin feel easily threatened. Others in her community considered Turia a *fit meri* (an active, accomplished woman). She exemplified proficiency in both market and community realms of value (Gudeman 2001), accumulating capital to improve the material aspects of her household as well as maintaining moral personhood by looking after pigs and gardens, contributing to feasts and taking care of her elderly father-in-law. Women such as Turia demonstrate their careful negotiation of marital relations through caring for others in a context where the ceremonial and commodity economies overlap. Her agency was partly influenced by her relationships and the actions of
others. Furthermore, the support of other kin enabled her to demonstrate her anger when she needed to.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have explored some of the issues that money raises in women’s lives, particularly relating to their marital relations and the place of kinship relations in providing support. I have shown some of the ways women use both money and their position as market vendors to maintain their moral, relational personhood and enact what makes a ‘good wife’ and mother. This illustrates how money is important to the choices they are able to make in their lives, yet may sometimes cause conflicts. Women’s agency is relational in that the support of their brothers, friends and other kin can be necessary in times of need, and that their demonstration of care for others leads to the respect and support of others.

Women selling in the Goroka market demonstrate agency within their marital relationships through different means: sometimes through leaving, sometimes through fighting back, sometimes through public emotional outbursts, and sometimes refusing to get married at all. They are able make choices about what kinds of relationships they feel are worth being in and make calculated decisions about what would be gained without them.

However, women rarely focus only on themselves and are often thinking of others, maintaining relations through material and immaterial gifting (pigs, food, time, care). This can be part of what keeps them safe and gives them opportunities for manoeuvre or protection. Women have to navigate these relations, maintaining contacts with brothers, in-laws and other kin through offering material and immaterial support in the understanding that this will later be reciprocated. Market women’s priority is providing for their children and having what they deem a ‘good’ quality of life, a house with durable materials, rice and other store foods, and money for school fees. Market trading also provides a slippery resource
(money) that can be appropriated by others and co-opted for other interests, to which some women react with rage, anger and violence and others by quietly withdrawing or leaving altogether. Women can only leave if they have the necessary support of relatives, including male kin, or have demonstrated their worth in such a way that their husbands would struggle to find an equally productive wife.

Market women also enjoy themselves and make decisions that are personally satisfying and give them independence: living in their own house, travelling to different markets and living without husbands if they can afford to. I knew market women that had multiple boyfriends and were happy to be free of controlling (and sometimes drunken) husbands and to live alone with their children. Access to money and land enables more choices for women, while being at a distance from relatives, especially brothers, can leave them vulnerable to spouses’ violent or controlling behaviour. Women who do not have a husband or are left by them suffer judgement from other women and men. There is then a tension between women’s desire for autonomy and independence and their need to become a full social person through marriage. As with Boyman in the previous chapter, to maintain a good nem and achieve recognition from others, women have to work extra-hard in making contributions, demonstrating moral and relational personhood, and being perceived as having good pasin. The economy of recognition, through which women’s personhood is realised, depends on their ability to act relationally, and being married is a primary valued act.

As I have demonstrated, many men and women in Goroka believe having money changes the nature of gendered behaviours. Previously multiple wives were important for working in expansive gardens, but today men feel that having more than one wife adds to their nem or prestige as a valued act in itself, and not just for the purpose of using women’s labour to produce more pigs.
The cash economy, and women’s place as food producers within it, means women play a continued role as provider for others. Their gendered role has largely remained the same. Men’s roles, although talked about as being ‘above’ women, seem to be lacking clear definition compared to the earlier colonial period, prior to pacification (Biersack 2016). This resentment may be playing out in marital conflict. Rather than looking after pigs, women now sell in the market, make a name for themselves and save up to purchase much-needed resources and commodities for their households. Meanwhile men gain money from coffee production (for which women do much of the labour) but otherwise have less interest than in earlier times in building houses, working in the gardens or carrying out other traditionally male activities such as building fences or digging drains. Some men’s wages get spent on alcohol, gambling and other women much to the dismay of their wives (Eves and Titus 2017b). However, as everywhere, relationships in PNG are emotional and complex. Many market women also had committed hard-working husbands that supported them in the gardens and in the marketplace. However, complementary aspects of garden work and social reproduction through food exchange can exist alongside the day-to-day antagonisms of marital relations, as I explore in the next chapter.
Chapter Five. *Asbin*: A Has-Been of Gift Exchange?

If a woman is pregnant and finds it hard to go to the garden, fetch water or wood, then her neighbours can bring her food, water and wood. She will remember the people who helped her, and once she has given birth she will plant asbin. Nine months later the asbin will be ready and she will invite those who helped her to attend a mumu where she will give asbin to them to say thank you. They will be very grateful for this.

—Mama Joy, market seller from Ungaii, Bena

The previous chapter discussed the nature of money within interpersonal marriage relationships and the effect it has on men’s behaviour and women’s relationships. I argued that women enact relational agency and autonomy, where relationships with kin and their ability to provide for others are key to their sense of self and personhood. This chapter looks in more depth at how women make and maintain relationships through the gifting of a particular food object, and how this dynamic changes with commoditisation, defined by Foster as the “process by which a society dominated by the production of use-values… becomes over time increasingly constituted by relations of commodity production and exchange” (Foster 1995). Women around Goroka now sell *asbin*, once said to be the most highly valued food-gift to use in various ceremonial exchanges, in the marketplace. In this chapter, I examine why this crop is increasingly becoming a commodity. Tracing the social life of *asbin*, a ceremonial food, offers a means of understanding social change from a local perspective; like yams, *asbin* are ‘good to think’ and ‘good to act’ with, particularly as this is a plant with which people have material and affective relationships (c.f. Mosko 2009; M. Strathern 2017; Battaglia 2017). Through a focus on this food-object and its exchange, this
chapter makes three key points. Firstly, the value of this crop is closely related to the world of women and how they are valued within the local economy of recognition. Women are active agents in gift exchange, not just as producers of objects of value but also as active participants in exchange (transactors) (M. Strathern 1972; Weiner 1976). Secondly, and as evidenced by this first point, gifting is a way of showing care for others and appreciation of others’ efforts; the value of this gift is made through the emotions and intentions of women. Through gifting food, women forge emotional and affective relationships with friends and family while increasing their own personal prestige. And lastly, following the explanations provided by a variety of people of different genders, age and education levels, I suggest that this indigenous food crop is losing its place as a ceremonial gift because of changes in gender relations, environmental changes such as climate change, and the ever-growing importance of money. Market women use money and other opportunities provided by modernity such as formal education and waged labour to provide for others and continue their social relations. Furthermore, acquiring new kinds of knowledge and production is how women are recognised by others in the urbanising and commoditising context. In much of the literature regarding gift exchange in the Highlands, women are cast as the producers of objects of value and men the ‘transactors’ who gain the prestige and power that comes with gift exchange (Josephides 1985; Lederman 1986a; A. Strathern 1971; 1979; M. Strathern 1972). However, other than debates regarding the extent of women’s exploitation in the production of pigs, there has been little focus on how women themselves make and maintain relationships in the Highlands through the gifting of material objects (c.f.Lederman 1986). Mackenzie’s (1991) work on string bags is one exception, which focused on the interweaving of men and women’s efforts in the co-construction of these valuables and simultaneously acknowledges the significance and essence of women’s fertility within a gifted, material object. Her work supports that of previous scholars who have suggested that gender relations in the Highlands
are more complementary than antagonistic and that men and women work together for the shared goals of the household, even if communications and customs seem to belittle and undermine the place of women in society (Feil 1987; M. Strathern 1988; Gillison 1993). In the case of asbin, both the efforts of men and women are necessary for its production, and the contemporary nature of marriage relations and the increasing value of commodities and money in comparison with that of knowledge and labour in the gardens contribute to threaten the use of this form of ‘women’s wealth’ in ceremonial contexts (Hermkens and Lepani 2017; Weiner 1976). Furthermore, Herdt and Poole (1982) state that whilst there has been substantial analysis of the political sphere of gender and the differences in prestige realms, there has been less focus on the day-to-day lives or interactions between men and women in the Highlands, though there are glimpses of this in the work of Lederman (1980; 1986a), Zimmer-Tamakoshi (1997a; 1998), Gillison (1993) and West (2012). I contribute to this in providing a sense of the daily interactions between Joy and Neil, a market woman and her husband who navigate each other’s expectations and obligations to others on an everyday basis.

The chapter shall proceed as follows. Firstly, I introduce the concept of value in the sense that I shall be using it and contextualise the importance of this debate within a context of commoditisation. Then I introduce asbin, the crop in the spotlight, outlining why it is said by many in Goroka to be the most valuable of food gifts – emphasising notions of ‘hard work’ and its taste, resistance to spoilage and satiating characteristics – and demonstrating that asbin has both material and semiotic qualities that mean it continues to have valyu in the minds of Eastern Highlanders despite it no longer being a main valuable in large-scale wealth payments, as I was told it had been in previous times. It is through the embodied, sensory and emotional recollections about asbin and the acts that it represents (Lambek 2013; Munn 1986) that its value remains in the urban context. However, asbin continues to do ‘work’ as a
gift that materialises social relations, whilst also being an ‘expensive’ market commodity. I
give an example of how this little crop traverses a social life of both gift and commodity in a
matter of days and features in a market woman’s relationships ranging from
complementarity, conflicting and contradicting relations with her husband (common of
gender relations in Goroka today), and love and affection with her sisters and nieces. Finally,
I outline some of the main reasons why asbin is no longer grown on the scale it once was. I
contend that women demonstrate positive agency in how they make choices about where to
invest their time and energy, but that these decisions are influenced by the increasing social
value placed upon formalised paid work rather than the garden work required to grow this
highly nutritious crop (which has the added benefit of improving local soil fertility). The
increasingly erratic seasons caused by climate change add to the difficulty of growing this
crop. This chapter brings together ideas of how emotions and relations get materialised in
gendered ways, and how this shifts in a context of urban and environmental change.

**Value, Values and Valyu**

How to understand value anthropologically has been the subject of much academic discussion
since the beginning of economic anthropology, often in response to Marx’s labour theory of
value, which was a critique of political economists who Marx argued did not include the
relations of production in calculations of why objects had value or were priced at a certain
level. Mauss (1967) also attempted to explain the value of objects as the result of exchange
and, to an extent, of the magical qualities imbued in an object.

Graeber (2001: 1) identifies three main ways in which social scientists have conceptualised
value: sociologically, economically and linguistically. He states the first regards values in
terms of what is considered morally good and desirable in life – ‘values’. The second
understanding of value refers to the degree to which an object is desired and how much others
are willing to give up in order to acquire that object. The last approach comes from the structural distinctions made between things, i.e., a Saussurean approach to language as constituting the relationship between things and their relative difference. However, as he concludes, objects and persons must be valued in relation to other persons and objects, what Gregory (1982: 48–49) refers to as ‘rank’, in order to be recognised as valuable. This also relates to what are considered more or less desirable traits in a moral sense. In the end, Graeber argues that objects which are valued, i.e., valuables, are always linked to the morals and traits that are also valued in persons in a given context. Whilst who gets to shape these is a matter of power it is also a matter of recognition, meaning that those people producing objects of value also gain recognition for their acts when those things become valuables. *Asbin* does the work of both recognising the prior acts of others and materialising the acts of its grower (Lambek 2013).

Graeber (2001) has argued that value is about meaning-making. Addo (2013) has further developed this, stating that emotions and things are part of value-making. *Asbin* brings together both the emotions and experiences of gifting and consumption in its value as a gift and a commodity. Much like Kuehling (2017) shows for kula in the Massim, both the purpose of exchange, the value held within the object and the meaning it has comes down to the emotions and relationships that it materialises. However, whilst Graeber explores the various permutations of valuables and the different contexts of power relations that surround their exchange, he fails to consider the particularly perishable and temporary nature of food as a valuable. The ways in which food plays into our relationships with each other, with the environment and with the bigger social and economic structures within which we exist matters for how we think about value, especially when food as particular kinds of sentimental value. For instance, Malinowski (1922) famously showed how yams were left to rot after the achievement of growing them had meant their growers achieved the desired status and
prestige. In the act of letting them rot, food became something used for its display, and not for its use value or sustenance. Nevertheless, this act of letting food go to waste was in itself productive in the broader scheme of value and an economy of recognition as it added to the prestige of those who grew the yams. As I mentioned previously, value can be defined as “the differential regard, importance and worth attributed to something” (Hermkens and Lepani 2017: 4). This regard is what links persons to things in continuous chains of movement and affect as things circulate to make statements about the giver, the receiver and the relationship between them (Gregory 1982; M. Strathern 1988; Mauss 1967). How things and persons continue to be valued through shifts in economies and their increasing interconnectedness is a question anthropologists are continually grappling with (Sykes 2013; Tsing 2003; Gregory 2014; Maclean 2010).

Who gets to shape what is valued, and for what reason, is a matter of power (Graeber 2001). However, there are also material aspects to objects and their production such as required physical labour or raw materials that factor into what kinds of value they have and why. To produce objects of value there is often some kind of effort. Asbin, like pig meat, gives people energy and sustenance, known for its ability to keep people full for a long time. In Goroka, the energy required to produce asbin – a combination of both men and women’s physical efforts and actions – and the energy it provides are both crucial to its value (as well as its taste). However, it is the memory of social relations and the emotion of gratitude that maintain asbin’s value in the context of the urban, cash economy. Furthermore, its value can be thought of as the objectification of performative acts, including processes of growing, cooking and giving bunches of its delicious tubers (Lambek 2013). Asbin materialises the acts that are required for it to exist, and contributes to the ongoing relationality of persons and things. It is more than ‘meaning-making’ because at the foundation of its value is its materiality. In order to understand how and why the significance of asbin - in terms of value,
emotions and social recognition - is changing as a result of the marketplace, the context of economic change must also be understood.

**Commoditisation and Commodification**

Foster (1995) considers immediate consumption, long-distance trade and ceremonial exchange as ‘use-values’ different from exchange values that come with commoditisation. Bernstein (1979: 425), an Africanist theorist of agrarian change, cited in Foster (1995: 26) explains that the process of commoditisation means that commodity production becomes increasingly necessary in order to acquire “elements of necessary consumption”, including food, clothing, building materials, domestic utensils and items required for productive consumption such as seeds, tools and fertilisers. Commodification, however, refers to the process of things becoming exchangeable for money, or gaining a value that is universally equivalent to other items (Kopytoff 1986: 69). When this means gaining a monetary value within a system of equivalence, i.e., a price, then the commoditisation of social life that Foster (1995) refers to becomes the context for the commodification of an object. The marketplace is the main space in which objects gain a value of equivalence; it is also where growers turn their own labour into objects that can be exchanged for money, allowing the purchase of other aspects of necessary consumption.

For Kopytoff (1986: 68) a commodity is a thing that is exchanged for something else, of equivalent value, in a discrete transaction. By discrete, he means a transaction that is made not in order to open up possibilities of future transactions but rather for the purpose of acquiring things of equivalent value only. The ‘something else’ is also a commodity in the same instance – an equivalence is made through the act of exchange. “Anything that can be bought for money is at that point a commodity”, he states (Kopytoff 1986: 68). For instance, anything purchased in a trade store is a commodity; if it is then gifted, it goes through
‘decommoditisation’. This understanding of (de)commoditisation is contingent on the moment of exchange of a particular object. However, what happens when a modality of exchange continues to exist, but the objects of value change? The objects that are left out similarly experience a process of ‘degiftification’. This process is not necessarily because the object becomes a commodity, nor is it being held out of exchange for other purposes (what Kopytoff refers to as singularisation). Instead, this object falls out of the modality of exchange within which it was located (for example, in a break from the past bird of paradise feathers are rarely used in bridewealth transactions around Goroka today). I use the term degiftification to explore the social processes that lead to an object no longer being exchanged for forming ongoing social relations. Shell money similarly went through a process of degiftification, though this was partly due to colonial administrators importing vast amounts of them to the Highlands to initially pay wages and trade with locals, leading an inflation of shells, diminishing their rarity and prestige (A. Strathern 1979). Degiftification can occur as a result of broader social and environmental processes. In the inverse, ‘giftification’ can be used to refer to the introduction of new objects into an existing modality of exchange. New objects take on the status of a valuable and materialise similar intentions to those of traditional valuables, acts and relationships, e.g., the use of live chickens and boxes of lamb flaps into bridewealth transactions (in the last two decades) maintains the place of ‘protein’ food-gifts in ceremonial contexts, equivalent to pigs and asbin (which was considered similar as filling as pig meat). These terms ‘degiftification’ and ‘giftification’, although my own invention, make a useful intervention into debates around gifts and commodities in contexts of flux. This is part of tracing the ‘biography of things’.

Kopytoff (1986: 66–68) suggested that treating objects as things with a biography much like a person, with a life story and narrative, can mean that the significance of a thing and its changing use, purpose or position in relation to other things becomes apparent. Including
economic, social and technical factors, a biography of things should be pre-eminently cultural: “a culturally informed economic biography of an object would look at it as a culturally constructed entity, endowed with culturally specific meanings, and classified and reclassified into culturally constituted categories” (Kopytoff 1986: 68). Through this, he argues, we can understand commoditisation as a process. It is this process that I illustrate here through *asbin*.

![Figure 11 Photograph of asbin being sold in the market](image)

**Getting to Know Asbin (Winged Bean)**

As it grows, *asbin* looks like any normal bean plant growing up stakes in rows separated by neat drains, sometimes bearing fruit or flowers. The scientific name for *asbin* is *Psophocarpus Tetragonolobus*. It is commonly cultivated in parts of Southeast Asia where protein is not in abundance (Khan 1976). It only develops its edible tubers at altitudes between 1,300 m and 1,850 m as visible in the orange and dark purple areas of this altitude map (see Figure 13).
The Eastern Highlands, ranging from 1,500 m to 2,000 m above sea level, and Goroka, located in a valley at about 1,700 m, are thus ideal areas for the cultivation of *asbin*.

Production is seasonal, meaning it is only harvested once in an annual agricultural cycle. It has a nine-month gestation period and is generally planted in the driest months. To a non-Highlander, *asbin* may seem insignificant: small, brown and dirty after being cooked in the *mumu* (earth oven). Peeling off the skin reveals its ivory-coloured, hard and nutty inside. Once I tried it, I too found *asbin* moreish and filling. *Asbin’s* multiple edible parts set it apart from other foods in the garden. Whilst there are many indigenous edible greens and starches, there are no other plants that have edible leaves, flowers and starches which also include protein (Claydon 1978). It is also a nitrogen-fixing plant, thus enhancing the fertility of the soil. As one *mama* explained, “If we plant sweet potato after *asbin*, they grow big and lots of them!”
Anthropologists have long shown the significance of food gifts for displays of prestige, generating social recognition and social relationships (Malinowski 1922; 1935; Young 1971b; Fajans 1988; Lemonnier 1996). *Asbin* is considered a very special crop in the Eastern Highlands, parts of its neighbouring Wahgi Valley and the Western Highlands. *Asbin*’s high sociocultural value meant it was a significant part of collective social exchanges before money entered people’s ceremonial and material lives. Owing to its distinct seasonality, *asbin* was planted and harvested collectively for pre-organised ceremonial exchanges. Collected in village piles, the tubers were distributed to people from visiting communities by leaders of the village, and the giving community was thought of as strong and productive as a result. It was also a crop grown individually by women and given between them. This made *asbin* an important social crop for conveying certain messages and maintaining a variety of relationships. It contributed to the reputation of the growers as being capable, talented and generous.
There were many things people told me about *asbin* to express how much they loved it. The following sentiment from Jeni, a woman selling in the market, is one I heard a number of times from growers:

> Oooh, *asbin* is one special food. It’s not like all the other beans. You can eat its leaf, its flowers and the beans. When the plant is all dried up, you know it’s ready to dig up the tubers.

Not only are its leaves, flowers and beans all edible, these have to be picked at the right time in order to guarantee that the most valuable part of the plant, the tubers, will grow big. She went on to explain,

> Another thing is that *asbin* takes a lot of hard work. You have to look after it very well. You must plant the seeds one by one – only one at a time. And then you must stand them up with *pitpit* (thick grass) and make sure each plant has enough space to grow. Then regardless of how many rows of beans you have, you have to keep cleaning them of weeds. It’s not like sweet potato – *asbin* is a lot of work. And it takes nine months to grow, so it comes once a year only.

The concept of ‘work’ or *wok* in the context of *asbin* has a twofold meaning in Goroka. It both requires physical labour or energy to grow *asbin*, and it also does a lot of ‘work’ in terms of the role it plays in multiplying social relations. People said *em gat planti wok bilong em* (it has many uses), referring to the various situations or moments where it could be exchanged. They were referring to the multiple social purposes it has due to its high value and esteem. *Asbin* was previously (within the past two generations) used for conflict resolution, and through exchange it created peaceful and ongoing connections between groups and individuals. Both the energy required to grow *asbin* and the connections it created
between people were its *wok*. Growing *asbin* is a matter of skill, a creative act combining a good sense of timing with patience and knowledge. In the process of making this object, its maker accrues prestige and recognition. There is physical pain, exertion and a sacrifice of time and pleasure required to produce it. Thus this food-gift implicitly acknowledges the people that will eventually derive pleasure or sustenance from it through consumption.

Furthermore, the nine-month gestation period of *asbin* (what some referred to as a year) is metonymic of the nine-month gestation required for growing a person. As women grow *asbin*, they also grow themselves and others (M. Strathern 1988: 187). Through its value *asbin* makes women’s actions meaningful.

Growing *asbin* was described as ‘a gift that only some people have’, a kind of art that takes skill, technique and patience. Not just anyone can grow this plant, only those who have the knowledge and practice. Like the designers and weavers of Persian carpets, where only some have the ability to combine patterns and materials to make such a refined and desired object – and thus gain recognition for this skill – *asbin* similarly takes skill and practice. This once included using a digging stick infused with magic, rubbing a particular leaf, singing songs to the *asbin* to make its tubers grow large and assessing the seasons (through observing the stars and moon) to determine when is the best time to plant and harvest it.

I was repeatedly told how hard it is to grow *asbin* because of the physicality of the work; ‘only the strong can grow this plant’ was a common phrase in any conversation regarding *asbin*. For instance, the *pitpit* this seller referred to is a strong and stiff kind of grass that has to be cut down from wild bushy areas and then dried and used as stakes to support the bean plant. Men complained that this is painful as the *pitpit* cuts their skin. Finding the *pitpit* is part of the men’s work in growing *asbin*, whilst tending to the plant is the role of women. The embodied sacrifice of pain and hard work required to grow this plant is appreciated in its value.
It is not just labour that gives *asbin* its value but also attention, awareness and patience. As a broccoli seller that had grown *asbin* earlier in his life explained,

> Asbin is a rare food. Not everyone can grow it as it is very difficult to grow. It depends on the seasons as it only grows once a year. So people have to know when is the right time to grow it according to where the sun is coming up over the mountains. Harvesting asbin is very difficult. It is easy to cut the skin of the tubers and you have to take a lot of care when pulling them out of the soil.

Growing this special food is specifically associated with the emotion of gratitude. Some women still grow *asbin*, although less so than before, for the purpose of thanking others for the care they have enacted at times when a person needs help. A pregnant woman lacking in energy and mobility depends on the aid of others. Similar to the nurturance and care that others give to her, and her to the future child, *asbin* is cared for with patience, nurturance and tenderness. *Asbin* both requires and symbolises deep and long-term relationships between growers and their gardens. It is tended to and cared for with love and sensitivity, and also associated with hard physical work and pain.

Once the plant has been successfully grown, the final part of the process is to harvest its tubers. These tubers are attached by a thin root to the bean plant. Not only must this rope remain attached, the skin of the tuber must not be harmed. These tubers are only gifted as cooked food, and tied together by their string, will later become bundles cooked on hot stones under the earth.

**The Love and Valyu of Asbin**

The cooking process is another element of acclaim that *asbin* givers receive. As Mama Joy, a market woman I developed a close relationship with and who will be a focus of this chapter,
explained to me in her asbin garden, the men who cook asbin are also well respected because of how difficult it is to cook,

It’s not like any other earth oven, not like the ones we make for pigs or sweet potato, no. It needs a very, very big fire. The men have to go and find very thick wood and very big stones so they can make a huge earth oven with a huge fire. They will make a very big earth oven pit also. Asbin is too tough a food to cook – we have to cook it with a very big fire.

All of this hard work pays off once the food is consumed. Joy went on with enthusiasm,

People here love asbin more than any other food. It fills us up for a long time. Once you have eaten asbin you don’t need to eat again for the rest of the day. Sometimes if you eat asbin in the afternoon you will go to sleep that night without needing a meal. And all the other foods cooked with asbin take on its flavour too. Sweet potato, taro, cassava, they all take the flavour of asbin when they are cooked together. Asbin is a number one food. It can be kept for weeks after it is cooked. All you have to do is leave it in the house above the fire and warm it up again. It lasts for a long time.

The hard work required to grow this crop, and its capacity to make people feel full for a long time, are major factors in why it is appreciated so much. The winged beans and tubers both contain high levels of protein (Axelson 1982). They provide energy that is long lasting, appreciated in a context where eating is tied to extensive physical exertion in gardens. A local archaeologist and grower of asbin, Joe Mangi, thought it was likely asbin was grown in the Highlands prior to the Ipomoean revolution that geared the exchange system around pigs and sweet potato (Sillitoe 2013). Mangi thought that asbin’s high protein content might be one
explanation for why some people consider it to have even greater ceremonial value than pigs. This is a revelation for the Highlands, where the value and importance of pigs has been well documented (Rappaport 1968; A. Strathern 1971; Sillitoe 2001). Cooking asbin, like pig, is something only highly skilled men are able to do, and is an activity tambu (restricted, taboo) for women (as is all cooking using earth ovens). Men have to learn how to cook a mumu from other men, usually elders, and not everyone is given this knowledge. Whilst cooking for ceremonial exchange is closely associated with men, growing asbin has a particularly embodied, emotional and sensory relationship to women as shall be discussed in the following section.

Gardens and Emotions

Upon my first visit to an asbin garden at the beginning of my fieldwork I was told the mamas will not go to the garden if they are in a bad mood, as doing so is thought to affect the progress of the bean plant and can lead to its tubers growing sores or being small. As my guide, Susan from Women in Agriculture, explained to me in her mother’s asbin garden that day,

If you are in a bad mood and go to the garden, the asbin will know, and it will not grow well. It will sense it, so when we are not feeling good we do not go to the gardens.

This relationship between women’s moods and plants was significant not only for asbin but for other crops in the gardens. Throughout the course of my research, I heard other women explain if they are not feeling good, they do not go to harvest sweet potato as it ‘won’t let you find it’ – they will send someone else from their household instead. The relationship between the personal and internal state of these women is thought to have an effect on the plants’ growth and may even mean the plants themselves refuse to be found. In both instances, plants
such as *asbin* are attributed with agency to react to the women’s dispositions, bodily practices and moods (West 2012). Following the vein of nurturance, *asbin* is shown to reject those who come with bad ‘energies’ and respond to those who come with love and joy. As one *mama* said, *mipela mas hamamas na raun lo gaden* (we must be joyful in the gardens).

Another aspect of the close relationship between women and *asbin* relates to their bodies. As Mama Joy explained:

> This is a rare food, so we have to respect it. Once it is planted, we cannot come into the garden whenever we want. As my mother taught me, if you have been close to your husband (or had sex with him) then you cannot come to the *asbin* garden for some days. You also must not come when you have your period. If you come at this time, then the *asbin* tubers will have many sores and they will not grow big.

Joy’s caution suggested a theory of bodily substance and its effect on the world that was held by many in the gardens of special ceremonial foods such as taro, yams and *asbin*. This theory corresponds with the significance of food restrictions of Hua and other groups in PNG (Meigs 1984; 1987; MacDonald 2000; Fajans 1988). As the work of Meigs (1984) and Marilyn Strathern’s later arguments of (1988) have suggested, parts of persons are thought to be detachable in the Highlands and to circulate, affecting the well-being and health of people and plants. Meigs (1984) used the local concept of *nu* to explain this amongst Hua in the Lufa region of the Eastern Highlands. *Nu* is a vital essence that both men and women contain and can be increased or diminished through the consumption of certain foods and bodily substances. With *asbin*, unlike carrots, potatoes or broccoli, such bodily behaviours are controlled. ‘New’ foods are not treated with the same caution.
Close embodied relationships between *asbin* and women exist in other ways, including in the realm of skills. For instance, one older woman who lives in Goroka town and is the wife of a local business-man explained,

> We believe that eating *asbin* can make us better at doing many tasks all at the same time because it has different parts that can all be eaten. When people eat it, it also makes them able to do many different things at once. This is something some of us believe, anyway.

This woman’s explanation implied that the nature of *asbin* as a plant that has multiple edible parts can enable women to be similarly productive in multiple ways at once. As in the English phrase ‘You are what you eat’, some growers in Goroka have strong ideas as to the kinds of effects foods they consume have on their bodily growth and habits, similarly to what Bashkow describes of how eating pig adds to Orokaiva people’s quality of being “full of motion” (2006: 150). For instance, a younger migrant to Goroka town explained she felt the overconsumption of *waitman* foods such as crackers and bread were stunting children’s growth and making them soft (Bashkow 2006).

For women growers of *asbin* in Goroka, they do not perceive there to be a strict boundary between their bodies and the plants, nor do they conceive of their emotions as confined to their minds within their bodies. Plants are able to ‘sense’ women’s moods and react to them. In turn, consuming the plant can have an effect on the bodies of the growers in ways more than nourishment. What is ‘self’ and what is not ‘self’ is blurred for women who grow *asbin*. Their energies and *nem* are materialised through this crop, especially when it is gifted. But they also have their own personal relationship with it. In the process of growing and exchanging *asbin*, they come into being as relational persons (West 2012).
Gifts for the Stomach: Value, Prestige and Acts of Gratitude

Despite the emphasis on men’s gifting in PNG, anthropologists have demonstrated that women are also active in exchanging wealth in PNG whilst also gaining prestige through production. Weiner’s (1976) work on banana-leaf bundles and skirts in the Trobriand Islands was groundbreaking for showing the way women ceremonially exchange wealth to compete for prestige and power separately – although connected – to men’s exchanges. In Henganofi, Eastern Highlands, Faithorn argued that Kafe women are just as concerned with their personal reputations as big-men and are actively involved in wider political and social issues (Faithorn 1975: 94). Later, Dickerson-Putman showed that women in Daulo gain prestige for themselves through subsistence and social reproduction, growing food in the gardens and looking after pigs (Dickerson-Putman 1996: 51). This had the added benefit of meaning those women deemed active and productive by others in their community were better able to negotiate with their husbands and have a greater say in decisions over household resource allocation. However, this is not to say the promulgation and exchange of asbin is only for self-interest, as a formalist economist (who believes all economic behaviour is in the end about self-interested maximisation) might assume (Graeber 2001: 8; Wilk 2007).

The gifting of asbin is a way for women to thank others who have helped them at difficult times, such as in pregnancy, where without others taking the initiative to help a woman with daily tasks, the woman may struggle to survive. Asbin is a way for women to show recognition for the help others have given them and in the same instance be recognised for their own hard work and generosity. This is a continuation of showing pasin, concern for others, and a key value materialised in this crop and in the praxis of gifting it.

By demonstrating gratitude in the act of growing and gifting asbin, women are considered generous, another quality necessary for being held in high regard by others and themselves.
Younger generations of women are aware of the prestige that came with *asbin* production but rather pursue formal education and paid work instead. For instance, Grace, a university student in her mid-twenties, told me about her grandmother growing *asbin* in Henganofi,

If you are a person who can cook it well and distribute it to lots of people you earn respect and gain status. It is mostly women who plant and cook *asbin* and then get the *nem* [prestige and recognition] from distributing it. It has to be cooked, and cooked well – then she is recognised as a *fit meri* (capable woman). Because in one plant there could be three of four tubers, if you can feed lots of people then this shows that you work hard in the garden and everyone will think you are a highly capable woman. My grandmother was known for cooking *asbin* really well and feeding lots of people. She was known for always giving. And her husband, my grandfather, used to look after a lot of pigs. Together they had a good name. He fed so many people all over Henganofi with his pigs. He always gave a lot of food to people when he had a *mumu* (earth oven).

In Grace’s explanation of her grandparents’ gifting practices, she emphasises how others thought of them positively as a result of their generosity. The relationship between producing and circulating pigs and prestige has been well documented for the Highlands (A. Strathern 1971; Lederman 1986; Feil 1987; Howlett 1962; Strathern and Stewart 2005). In this instance, the combination of producing pigs and *asbin* meant her grandparents had a good ‘name’. The act of gifting these food objects is tied directly to the recognition they gain from others for their generosity (Robbins 2009; Honneth 2001). Within this local economy and prestige system, the gifting of food leads to mutual recognition between those who receive *asbin* and those that gift it.
The recognition of others’ efforts was a key explanation for why women engage in the gifting of *asbin*. Women use *asbin* to materialise the gratitude they feel and in turn hope the recipients will appreciate their gesture. As local anthropologist, Kevin Poke, explained – and many women confirmed – a woman remembers her obligations within various reciprocal relations established through acts and objects, including help fetching water, firewood and harvesting food. He explained,

Each mama will think, who does she need to finish her debts with? Who has helped her that needs repaying? She will say thank you to them, you helped me in this way, you gave me food. *Asbin* is this kind of thing. Pig is similar, but people prefer *asbin*.

The importance of gratitude and recognition of others’ help, and the translation Poke makes of this into the word ‘debt’, suggests *asbin* is part of a chain of reciprocity which compels people to give things to each other. They are not merely “giving for the sake of giving” (Malinowski 1922: 175); they are giving from a sense of gratitude and also an obligation to reciprocate time and energy.

Simmel refers to gratitude as fostering the continuity of social life. He argues that gratitude smoothens interpersonal relationships and maintains social order: “gratitude, as it were, is the moral memory of mankind” (1950: 388). However, as with any affect, gratitude manifests differently across cultural contexts. For people in Goroka to *tok tenk yu* (say thank you), a common description of *asbin*’s purpose, is expressed both in words and through food, particularly in public and collective contexts. That people have given up their time to attend exchanges and brought food, money, pigs and emotions such as *sore* (grief/empathy) is all acknowledged through the words *tenk yu* (and lengthier speeches of gratitude) and through the gifting of food to materialise these intentions.
Gratitude and saying thank you is a key part of local values and a continuation of an ethic of relationality (Robbins 1994; 2003), an ethic which underpins everyday acts of gifting in Goroka and is materialised in the value of asbin. Asbin was a food-gift presented between groups and shared between individuals. Similar acts of generosity continue to occur in urban contexts today with the sharing of betel nut, snacks, drinks and food cooked at earth oven feasts, distributed amongst neighbours (Hukula 2017). However, asbin was particular in that it was not merely the sharing that was significant but also the acts it was repaying.

There is social pressure on women to enact gratitude: indeed, failing to do so shows a lack of pasin or moral character. Dumont, a renowned theorist of value within anthropology, argued that values are culturally given judgements about what is most important in life and what people’s actions should struggle to produce or reproduce (Dumont 2013; Robbins and Siikala 2014). Asbin materialises the values of generosity, thinking of others and hard work that are considered most important in Goroka’s day-to-day social life. Asbin continues to be held in higher regard than other ceremonial crops or pig. However, in the context of an expanding influence of capitalism and money, the value and values materialised in asbin are being challenged as its status as a ceremonial gift.

It is the conflicting values held in the local social, political and economic context of Goroka that means I can simultaneously be told that asbin has the highest valyu at the same time as I observe it to be in decline as a gift, shifting to being grown as a commodity instead. Some explained this to me as because ‘selfish pasin is increasing’, referring to the decline in sharing food and the increased focus on individual households’ money and resources. There is more pressure to provide formal education for children, improve the quality of housing and buying store foods, meaning money is in greater demand, and meanwhile the prestige that comes with growing asbin is in decline.
In the following section I discuss how *asbin* can be both a gift and a commodity during its lifetime, including in commodity transactions that are not between alienated transactors in a marketplace but between known loved ones. This narrative also shows the conflicted nature of gender relations and how some women imagine their worth in the eyes of others. Growing *asbin* is one way in which hard-working women gain respect and recognition from others and a sense of self-esteem.

*Asbin Goes to Market: Joy’s Gardens and Kin*

In this section I change to a more personal tone of writing as I delve into the day-to-day interactions of a man and woman living together in a village far from Goroka’s town centre.

As Herdt and Poole (1982) expound, there was debate as to whether relations are antagonistic or complementary in the Highlands. Here I describe the complementary nature of *asbin* production amongst the day-to-day antagonisms of ‘married life’ by providing a partial insight into a relationship between a couple that I stayed with regularly. I adopted a position that I was familiar with in my own family, listening to their complaints about one another and trying to understand both perspectives. Like many of the marriage dynamics I witnessed in Goroka, there were both antagonistic and complementary elements. *Asbin* production ideologically brings men and women together in complementary ways through the teamwork of hospitality, even though other aspects of relationships can be tense and discordant.

Neil and Joy live together in a hamlet of about ten houses in a semi-permanent house that Neil built overlooking extensive forest. Joy has made gardens in parts of this forest that belong to Neil. Despite bridewealth payments not having been made for Joy, they nonetheless refer to themselves as being married to each other. Both had been married to others previously and had borne children in those prior relationships.
Neil seemed almost constantly irritated by Joy. Joy talked a lot, was highly expressive and, as her name implied, was full of energy and love for life and people. Neil on the other hand was contemplative, liked to be on his own, and only seemed to speak when he deemed it necessary. He was not a natural orator, and despite being one of the eldest brothers and presiding over a large amount of land in their village, he rarely took the lead when there were public discussions or large events such as marriages or deaths. Nonetheless, I was told by others that Neil was one of their village leaders.

I came to know Joy and Neil when I accompanied an American friend installing a water tank for them. During this initial meeting Joy was friendly but unwell. As we sat on a grassy verge overlooking the stunning landscape at the top of a ridge overlooking the whole Goroka Valley, I offered her some paracetamol, which she accepted, and soon an animated discussion began about the marketplace and the different kinds of foods that she grew. Despite being weaker than usual, Joy was still open and effusive, as she continued to be for the year that I visited her. Joy’s village is on a mountain ridge between Chimbu province and the Eastern Highlands, too steep to grow European vegetables in large amounts but high enough for crops like asbin and red pandanus to grow. After visiting this village over the course of the year, helping in the gardens and taking food to the market for sale with Joy, I started asking about asbin. Mama Joy considered herself an active and accomplished woman for her age (like many older women, she was not sure of her exact age but she guessed somewhere between forty and fifty) and declared that she is a keen asbin grower. She insisted that I harvest asbin she had planted earlier that year with her and take them to sell in the market.

Joy asked Neil to help her with various tasks in the garden, which frustrated her when he did not oblige, though she did not express this with a temper like Neil had. What she presented as helpful reminders annoyed him as intrusions and orders. Yet Joy appeared to be endlessly working on behalf of them both, carrying the heaviest bags whenever we walked to the bus
stop, which I thought remarkable considering men often claim they do the ‘heavy’ work.

After spending long days in the gardens, she prepared the evening meals and did much of the washing up of their plastic plates and bowls. However, Joy differed to other market mamas in that she nevertheless hoped Neil would prepare food or wash up which he did occasionally. There was a level of reciprocal care that she expected of him, and she was disappointed when he did not follow through. But he did maintain the fires for cooking and rebuild their houses when they moved location or needed repairs. When it came to cooking asbin, Neil was also ready to do his part.

The morning of the cooking, I pushed back my sleeping bag and scuffled around in the dark of their house to find my walking boots. I had asked Neil to wake me when he started the process. I stepped out of the house onto the hard mud ground, careful not to trip over the wooden doorframe. It was a beautiful, still moonlit night on top of a steep ridge where their village is spread. I left Mama Joy sleeping inside alongside two girls they were taking care of along with the youngest son of Neil’s brother, the adopted children that brought Joy and Neil together as an appropriately nurturing household.

Papa Neil was stoking the fire a few metres away. He sat on his haunches wearing his usual red cap and was prepared for the cold night’s work wrapped up in a lumberjack fleece. I stood nearby observing, cautious not to approach the earth oven, but Neil beckoned me over to sit closer to the fire and warm up. Papa Neil and I sat contently in each other’s company for an hour or so as I watched him shift the hot stones around the fire between two large tree branches like chopsticks. He talked freely when we were alone, reflecting on his life, his previous wives, his children and the changes he sees happening in their village. Mama Joy came up behind us and grumbled, “Why didn’t you wake me up, Papa Neil? I would have helped you.” Immediately Neil got up and walked away mumbling something under his
breath. Joy and I exchanged a look that I interpreted to mean we both knew she had irritated him again.

Neil had spent the day before transporting huge amounts of firewood from the steep hillside with a young man who lived next door in the village. He put the stones on the fire, then lay the asbin, banana leaves and other foods onto the hot stones before covering it all with earth, timing everything so that all the food was covered and cooking gently by the time the sun came up. Later, as the sun came up, Neil returned to diligently pour water down chopped lengths of bamboo into the earth oven to ensure the tubers were cooked but not overdone.

When Neil uncovered the earth oven around 9 am, it had been cooking for almost five hours. Neil had no watch, sitting with it patiently until he felt the asbin were cooked. Undercooked asbin is a source of great anger to the mamas that have worked hard growing the tubers and it is considered a bad omen to the community. On this occasion, the asbin had been cooked perfectly.34 An older leader in the community commented on Neil’s knowledge and said he was well known for his asbin cooking.

Once the food was lifted out, Joy took over responsibility for organising which asbin would go to market and which would be distributed amongst their kin and neighbours sitting around the earth oven. In preparing the asbin for the earth oven she had marked each bunch of tubers, twisted together by their roots, with different leaves and knots so that she knew which were for the market and which were for distribution as gifts. These bunches were much larger than those I had seen in the marketplace, where they are sold in bunches of four or five. Here there were up to thirty tubers all tied together and being handed to different households. Joy

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34 I was told afterwards that the mumu had been asked whether I would return to the village. Mama Joy explained if they did not cook it meant I would not return, and that the community were pleased to see that the mumu had indicated I would visit them again.
and I sat in the garden the day before tying together tubers of similar shape and sizes ready to be placed into the earth oven.

Joy confidently called out the names of those who had helped with harvesting and collecting firewood for the earth oven, loudly praising those who came up to receive their gifts. The young man who helped with firewood received his own bunch of long, skinny tubers. Smaller, misshapen ones were handed to children and teenagers. Medium-sized or odd-shaped ones were distributed amongst the adults. The bigger and wider ones, which in the past would have been given to important recipients such as a leader or big-man as a sign of respect and of their social position, were kept aside in bunches for the marketplace. As the asbin was distributed, I saw how Joy and Neil made a good team. Joy remarked on the help each recipient of asbin had contributed to something Neil and she needed, such as money for the marriage of Neil’s nephew, and said thank you. A vocal and intelligent woman, Joy knew exactly which bunches of asbin were for whom based on their size and shape and on the status or prestige of the recipient. The size of asbin spoke volumes about the esteem that Neil and Joy held for the recipient and constituted public displays of how they perceived the recipient’s status in their eyes.

The biggest bundles of tubers were packed up into bilums ready for us to take to the market later that day. On the bus to town, Joy told me that she thinks Neil likes her because she is good at taking care of people and is very strong for an old mama: “He likes me more than his previous wives because I am friendly to people and good at talking, but I am also strong for growing lots of food in the garden”. In this Joy emphasised the affective aspects of her personhood that she sees as valuable: being sociable and able to talk to lots of people, feeding others and being productive. She emphasised her skills in multiplying social relations through the various means of immaterial acts and material objects and felt this was recognised in the appreciation Neil’s relatives expressed of her.
I witnessed Neil appear angry quite frequently with Joy, telling her off for talking too much or asking him too many questions. Sometimes Joy admitted she had considered leaving him as he did not seem to appreciate all her hard work, but Neil’s brother reassured her that she was valued by the family and insisted she stay. Despite their bickering and arguments, when it came to cooking and distributing asbin, Mama Joy and Papa Neil worked effectively as a team and were praised by their relatives and neighbours.

Through Neil, Joy had access to land and gardens through which she could produce what they needed. Together they produced commodities which provided for their household income and foods for ceremonial exchanges (bananas, sugarcane), and they invested their time and energy in younger people who they hoped would take care of them in old age. Neil has an adult son from a previous marriage who lives in Madang but rarely made contact. Joy has two daughters who live in a nearby village and who visited her with their own husbands and children. Joy also has sisters and brothers living in town whom she visited often, staying with them when she went to sell in the market. Neil was noticeably less sociable than Joy and often disappeared around town on his own when she visited family. On this occasion of taking asbin to market, Joy and I set out on our own and Neil stayed in the village.

My goal of following asbin to the market was scuppered. No buses came for hours, and once we finally got a bus, a severe storm hit and many of the roads were washed away. Mama Joy insisted we spend the night with her relatives on the outskirts of Goroka and go to the market the next day. That night, as we sat around drying off and drinking tea, her niece, a teacher and mother of three, suggested she buy all of the asbin from us: “We love them so much and are already eating them all, so why not! This way you and Olivia don’t have to sit in the mud tomorrow selling in the market!” The previous year Joy had given her nieces a big bunch of asbin each. This year they knew she intended to sell them and agreed to buy the asbin at
what they estimated was market price of PGK 30 per bundle (approx. 9 USD). Such bundles were usually broken down and sold as small snacks of three or four tubers for 1 or 2 kina.

**Degiftification and Commodification**

Selling ceremonial foods such as *asbin* in the market is not looked down upon, nor is there shame associated with alienating an object so closely associated with prestige (Addo and Besnier 2008). However, I was told by a number of elders that in the earlier years of selling in the marketplace, only *waitman* foods were sold there since *tumbuna* (ancestral, precolonial) foods such as pandanus, taro and *asbin* were socially prohibited (*tambu*) for this purpose.

Today, *asbin* vacillates between being a gift and a commodity and is grown for the purposes of both, as well as subsistence. As an older *mama* from a village closer to Goroka explained, “Now people are planting to give, to sell and to eat themselves with their families”. In the case of Mama Joy, it was grown for some gifting and some selling, and became a commodity purchased by extended family for their nourishment; the practice of growing *asbin* is not purely for subsistence nor as a cash crop but contributes through both of these to social reproduction. Although it is not common for growers to sell their produce to their closest relatives, the fact that Joy’s nieces agreed on a price that everyone felt was market price demonstrates that *asbin* can be comfortably exchanged for money even between loved ones. However, this exchange for money does not mean that the transaction is one that alienates people from each other or from the object being exchanged. Joy’s nieces bought the *asbin* so that their aunty would not have to sit in the market and wait for customers to buy them and so that neither of us would have to wake up early the next day to get a space in the market, thus adding an affective dimension to this transaction. Their transaction was done with care and affection for their aunty and concern for her livelihood. It was also conducted with love for
the taste of *asbin*. Although this transaction did not contain any obligations to reciprocate, within these close kinship relations it took place in the context of a continuous exchange of food, time and affection. Through the course of this *asbin*’s social life, Mama Joy gifted food to her neighbours and friends in her village that had helped her and Neil on previous occasions, and she also made the money she had hoped to make in the market. The value of *asbin* as a desired food object, and the recognition of Joy as a hardworking and generous woman, were perpetuated despite the *asbin* mainly having been grown for market transactions in this instance.

Joy’s production of *asbin* was significantly smaller in quantity than what she remembers her mother growing, and many of her peers and other women younger than her have given up growing *asbin* all together. I now turn to some of the explanations given for *asbin*’s decline in the current era of Goroka’s urban food economy.

**Asbin: A Has-Been of Social Exchange?**

Women’s productive capacities still contribute to how they are seen in the eyes of others, but growing *asbin* is no longer the most prestigious activity women can do. For example, as Kuna, a market seller, explained to me:

> You will get a good name from growing *asbin*, but if you are an educated woman, that is better than being a good village woman. Growing *asbin* is something village women do. A *save meri* is someone that is educated, a woman that goes to university or finishes school. Lots of women finish Grade 10 but they are not *save meri* like the ones that go to university. The women who work at trade stores in town, they aren’t *save meris*. It is the same for men, but there are lots of educated men in the village.
Her use of *save* here, although it means knowledge or know-how, is actually a reference to a particular kind of knowledge, that of a formal (and western education): this is the knowledge that is valued today and is recognised in terms of people’s public status, employment and general command of respect. It is not necessarily the content of this knowledge that is valued but rather the status of having been to school or university, what Bourdieu would refer to as its ‘symbolic capital’ (Bourdieu 1984), and the kinds of employment that may be available to women with such qualifications. The knowledge of how to grow *asbin*, although still respected, is not recognised as being equal to that provided by a school education. Being a *ples meri* (a village woman), is considered lesser than a woman that has been educated in town and has a job.

Not having a husband and the decline in the teamwork between husbands and wives was another explanation people in Goroka often gave for why people are no longer growing *asbin*. For example, Sara, an elementary school teacher, explained that she stopped growing *asbin* when her husband left her for another woman. She told me her mother had said, “You won’t grow *asbin* anymore”, because, she said, a man has to do the ‘heavy’ labour required for cooking this crop.

One day Sara invited me to a feast for an aunt thanking her for her support of Sara’s daughter. She told me, “Before I would have used *asbin* to say thank you; instead I bought mattresses, pots and pans and cooked some chicken and lamb flaps”. In this case, the aunty had contributed the school fees and the feast held for Sara’s daughter’s first menses, as the father and his brothers were absent. Sara was thanking the aunty some years later by giving her cooked food. What would have been *asbin* in previous times was now chickens, lamb flaps and mass-produced pots and pans. In putting on this feast, Sara was showing gratitude and recognition of the aunty’s efforts. At the same time, she was ensuring that the connection between her and the aunty, and between her daughter and the aunty, would continue. As
Mauss claimed, gift-giving is a powerful way of creating social bonds because gifts always carry something of the giver’s self (Mauss 1967; Graeber 2001: 93). In this case, the self may be contained through memory or emotions towards Sara and her daughter on the side of the aunty. This aunty would also receive part of the bride price for Sara’s daughter in the future. This is just one example of many where women exchange gifts for the sake of maintaining their own relationships, and in the process maintaining a moral personhood. Although giving asbin may have granted Sara much respect and praise for her ability to grow such a food, the giving of chickens and lamb flaps was also appreciated.

What is notable, however, is that within this exchange, from one adult woman to another – to acknowledge contributions for menstruation rites and school fees – money was not used. Whilst the items Sara gave are technically commodities, purchased in the marketplace and trade stores, she did not directly present money to this woman. Money has not become an acceptable valuable in this modality of exchange. Money cannot be cooked, nor is it specifically associated with the realm of women and households. Instead, Sara presented foods that have prestige status as ‘proteins’ – lamb flaps and chicken – and items specifically associated with a woman’s life situated within a household: pots, pans, mattresses. These objects have a specific association with the care that women provide for others and how they maintain a house that has all the necessary items.

The use of mass-produced items by women for exchange in the place of objects produced locally is occurring throughout PNG and the Pacific (Bonshek 2017; Horan 2017). The value of these objects continues to be rooted in the meanings produced through the gendered nature of exchange rather than the work and effort put into the object itself (Horan 2017). The modality of exchange has not changed as the intentions and morality of gifting to show recognition and gratitude remains (Bohannan 1959; Akin and Robbins 1999; Goddard 2000). The objects of the exchange have changed, but the relationships and the modality have not.
Overall, then, the sphere of exchange for which *asbin* was once the main medium – that of women making and maintaining their own relationships and gaining prestige in the process – remains constant.

I was told women are happy with useful objects for the house such as pots and pans, made in China and bought in local trade stores. Women who give these objects are thought to have a good character, or *pasin*. Some market-selling activities are also recognised for their importance, another extension of what is expected of a woman that ‘works hard’ and provides for others. The physical act of ‘working’ in the gardens, transporting food to the market and selling it is acknowledged. On the other hand, the prestige associated with growing *asbin* is different to that of having a paid job or university degree. Those women who have paid jobs and do not actively work in the garden are criticised if they are living in villages to only ‘sit at a desk’ and not properly fulfilling their obligations to ‘work’.

I asked Sara if women still get recognised for their strength by selling introduced crops such as broccoli, which she now grew and sold at the weekend.

Yes, if you grow lots of broccoli and make good money and contribute that to someone’s brideprice or some other kind of *hevi*, people will look at you and think, ‘Ah, she is a *fit meri* (capable woman)’, and they will come and help you some other time. If you don’t do much to contribute, people will say, ‘Leave her, she doesn’t help or share with people, don’t help her’.

In this sense, the nature of the objects that people produce, may have changed, but the spirit in which people give things and help each other continues; commodities become embedded within the local gendered economy of recognition and reciprocal gifting. Being a woman with a formal education and a fortnightly wage means Sara earns prestige and respect from others.
in her community, greater than an uneducated village woman does. Yet her ability to work hard in the garden is still important for being respected by others and considered a ‘good woman’.

Another factor in why asbin is no longer being grown by women on the same scale as it once was according to living memories of people in Goroka relates to changes in the environment. When I spoke to a middle-aged local agricultural extension worker from the Department of Agriculture and Livestock (DAL) about asbin, he reminisced about the days when he was a boy and all of the mamas would go to the gardens to plant asbin at the same time and nine months later harvest together (Barnett-Naghshineh 2015). When I asked why this does not happen anymore he said,

People are finding it difficult to know when to act out each particular task required for it to grow well. The location of the sun and the moon in the sky are no longer corresponding to weather patterns and seasons. Due to seasonal variability, winged bean now grows at different times and speeds.

Only a few women still plant it, and they now do so on their own time schedules, no longer in tandem with others. This concurs with what the few women who sold asbin in the market told me – the tubers are still given to people to show thanks, but often the best ones are saved to be sold. In places close to Goroka town, it is rare for asbin tubers to be given as collective payments between communities. Seeds are also becoming harder to find as fewer mamas are saving the seeds for the following season. The seeds are now sold in little piles for 2 kina in the market rather than being gifted between older women to younger women when they get married as I was told occurred before. The DAL agricultural adviser also told me that pitpit, used to support the bean plant, is being used in greater quantities for the houses people are
building in the bush as Goroka town encroaches on its surrounding land, making this plant an increasingly scarce resource.

Money has also become more valuable in the realm of collective ceremonial exchanges; this incentivises growing crops that are more lucrative and not such hard work. It is easier to give money or buy commodities, and money is what people desire more today. _Asbin_ cannot be used for anything other than direct consumption and establishing good social relations, both of which have different importance in the urban context. “It is too hard work and painful” was a common explanation for why growers choose plants that grow quickly and are easy to sell as commodities over local crops that take longer to mature and require more physical labour. The growing of _asbin_ is highly labour intensive, and many women told me that while they knew how to grow it, it had become inconvenient to do so.

**Conclusion**

_Asbin_ marries sentiment with utility, individual prestige with communal benefits and material pleasure with immaterial joy. It is, I suggest, the perfect gift in an economy of recognition where emotions are considered important to how things and people are valued. But in a context of significant economic and social change, this modality of exchange has remained the same while the objects are different, replaced due to the quick and easy satisfaction of commodities and money. These still take hard work to acquire, and it is for other reasons that _mamas_ are making this choice.

In this chapter, I have explained that value in the Highlands is the result of a combination of factors including physical effort, scarcity, protein, utility, taste and the senses. This crop’s value is also associated with clearly gendered labour inputs, distinctive from one another ideologically in terms of time, disposition and practice. Men and women require patience, sensitivity, talent, knowledge and energy to grow _asbin_. For this, those who grow and
exchange it are rewarded with recognition and prestige. Returning to theme of emotion, *asbin* is deeply invested with emotional meaning as it is grown, produced and given at particular times to demonstrate recognition and affection. In women’s lives, this crop marks the life cycle and is a sign of appreciation for the efforts of others when a woman is incapacitated by pregnancy.

According to women and men’s reflections in Goroka, there has been a decline in the complementarity of men and women’s work, as women now grow things mostly on their own and men focus on coffee or waged work. As Salisbury (1962) and A. Strathern (1979) showed, the introduction of new tools and money massively reduced the amount of time men spend on subsistence or garden activities compared to women. Many men I knew complained that they found garden work boring, and *asbin* in particular required knowledge and dedication, with which many of them were not engaged. However, the values of gratitude and sharing which had been materialised in *asbin* continue to be manifested through commodities, albeit with different relations of production.

The arguments of this chapter contribute to the overall thesis by showing that women are active agents with positive agency and transactors of objects with affect, a situation that continues despite the context and consequences of commoditisation. However, whilst I have shown that this special food is no longer being grown specifically as a ceremonial gift, it is still necessary to explore why foods that are largely not consumed by their growers nor gifted ceremonially are increasingly popular to grow. In the following chapter, I compare the production and circulation of ceremonial crops such as *asbin* with introduced crops such as broccoli. Whilst the circulation of commodities as gifts, and gifts as commodities, may not have changed the sentiment of gifting in some cases, the production of these *waitman* foods can shift the boundaries of morality whilst simultaneously being embedded within them. This can have the consequence of devaluing some of the knowledge and practices associated with
some women’s crops, as other forms of knowledge and prestige gain place in the economy of recognition. These shifts can also change the way growers relate to each other – and their gardens – as I demonstrate in the following chapter.
Chapter Six. Embedding Broccoli in *Pasin*: *Waitman Foods, Commodities and Knowledge*

Broccoli is easy to plant compared to asbin, but asbin is a *tumbuna kaikai* (traditional food), so *ol big lain* (urban elites) doesn’t eat it much. *Asbin* takes very hard work to grow and cook. Lazy people won’t do it. Broccoli is similar. Only smart people can do this work, and they will make a lot of money. I first saw some other mamas growing it and asked them to teach me. We also had a man from DAL [Department of Agriculture and Livestock] come and teach us in the village.

—Magaret, broccoli grower from Goroka

In the previous chapter, I discussed why the women’s ceremonial crop *asbin* is not being grown by women in Goroka for the purpose of collective and individual ceremonial exchanges to the extent it once was. I also discussed the intersection of changing prestige structures, women’s education and the gifting of commodities as explanations for what I have termed degiftification. I focused on *asbin* as a crop with distinctive emotional value to women and men in Goroka, associated with sociality, women’s prestige and a landscape punctuated with distinctive smells from the earth oven of this gift of gratitude. I now turn to broccoli, a cash crop grown for money and a quintessential example of an introduced crop grown for urban consumption.

Whilst it can be gifted in everyday acts of care from market women to loved ones and is sometimes exchanged for other vegetables at the end of the day in the marketplace, broccoli does not have the ceremonial status or special value of indigenous crops, known as *asples*.
(from that place) or *tumbuna* (ancestral or precolonial). Broccoli is grown not to be gifted but for its market value as a commodity. Broccoli does not have the same kind of sentimental or emotional value as ceremonial goods that are given at major life exchanges. It did not seem apparent to me that broccoli is seen as responsive to the bodily substances of producers either in the way *asbin* or taro is said to be. Unlike taro, sweet potatoes or greens, there was little idea of broccoli adding anything to the body, or how in turn bodily behaviours add or detract from broccoli’s growth. Broccoli does however have associations with urban life, middle-class professionals and expatriates. The consumers of broccoli are as symbolic of modernity as the object itself.

In this chapter, I explore the possibility of applying both the ideas of Appadurai (1986) and Goddard (2000) in analyses of the intentions of exchanges, but suggest it is not just the nature of exchange that matters in the analysis of objects and economies: it can be the materiality of things themselves that shift the nature of social relations (Kipnis 2015; Latour 1996; Gell 1998; Feil 1981b). Whilst I seek neither to move past the human entirely nor focus solely on the social life of the object (Appadurai 1986), I nonetheless want to examine the difference between plant crops in Goroka and how their cultivation (in a context of commodity relations) matters for how social relations and knowledge are reproduced. Foods and ingestion have been analysed in PNG with regards to substances that contribute to how gender is made, what kinds of relationships are established between people and especially how growth is thought helped or hindered through the ingestion of bodily substances or foods that resemble them (Stoller and Herdt 1982; M. Strathern 1999; Meigs 1987; Bashkow 2006; Bamford 2004). In this case, however I am concerned with the kinds of substances that have been introduced to make cash crops grow, and the political economy that surrounds cash crop production.
Firstly, I discuss why broccoli can be considered a commodity, and use it as an example of the differences between local indigenous foods and those crops that have been introduced by colonial actors and promoted by state institutions. The knowledge and practices required for growing broccoli leads to changes in social relations and ways of being in the gardens, but the process of commodity production is embedded within local gendered moralities. In the second part of the chapter, I show that producer-sellers desire more support for commodity production as they seek greater integration into global and national economies beyond the scope of the Goroka marketplace. This is partly because money enables the continuation of reciprocal care relationships amongst generations of Goroka’s village residents and partly because of aspirations to improve their lives.

**Broccoli: The Commodity**

Market vendors grow broccoli specifically to be a commodity in the marketplace, for short-term relationships and transactions in Goroka. The marketplace can also provide a context for interested exchange, where the gifting of free or extra products to customers and kin maintains relations with customers, as happens with broccoli. Broccoli has some aesthetic value in ceremonial contexts. However, what makes broccoli distinctive from other gifted foods in Goroka such as *asbin* is that women grow it mainly for the sake of earning a monetary income.

Goddard (2000) and Appadurai (1986) both signify the social contexts in which items are exchanged as most important for understanding their nature, through variations on object-centred analyses. I maintain that it is not merely the praxis or the commodity potential that is relevant but also the way that objects come to exist. Through understanding production in various forms we can see the impacts of new ‘things’ entering the world of exchange in Goroka.
According to Appadurai (1986), all objects that are exchanged can be considered commodities, but what is more important, he argues, is the social and cultural context of these exchanges. Following the object itself can give us a range of insights regarding what people value and how they make relationships. Yet in the nature of how an object is read as an object, and the kinds of economies that it ties producers into and creates, there is more to broccoli’s difference from ceremonial crops like asbin than just exchange. In fact, it can be exchanged as a gift, and it is used aesthetically as decoration in ceremonial prestations. Nonetheless, its place in the social landscape is, I argue, meaningfully different to that of indigenous crops. Goddard (2000) and Graeber (2001) have criticised Appadurai’s focus on the object, both cautious of what they perceive as his lack of analysis of the broader social contexts which create commodities.

Goddard (2000) responds to the approach of Appadurai (1986) that suggests that all things have the potential to be commodities and that there is a distinction between a gift and a commodity, rather than this distinction merely being an anthropological invention that has the effect of reifying interested or disinterested exchange. He argues for the usefulness of Gregory’s (1982) heuristic dichotomy of a distinction between the kinds of intentions and relations made through gift exchange and economies where commodity relations are dominant. Goddard (2000) uses the example of a failed gift, where as he arrived at his field site in the Highlands of PNG, a man sprang out from a crowd and offered him two cabbages. Goddard failed to recognise the man again, and none of his friends had seen who the man was. Only at the very end of his stay did the man come to see him and make himself known as the cabbage giver in an attempt at forming a relationship. To ease the man’s feelings of rejection, Goddard offered the man some clothing, but this attempt at reciprocal exchange came too late as an ongoing relationship was no longer possible and despite the quantitative equivalent value, the clothing was not adequate for the spirit in which the cabbages had been
given on his first day. Through this narrative, Goddard shows that it is the intention, and the praxis, of how gifting is carried out, particularly the timing, that makes it different to a commodity transaction. He insists commodities are different to gifts for they contain alienated labour. Furthermore, it is the way in which a desire for relationships is enacted that matters.

Advancing Goddard’s (2000) argument that there are real differences between gifts and commodities that relate to praxis and production, I explore the significance of broccoli production for understanding the impact that commodities have on producer-sellers’ social lives. I highlight that there are meaningful differences between cash crops and gifted food crops in Goroka, and that this is exemplified in the comparison of asbin and broccoli. By considering the epistemological and ontological distinctions between cash crops like broccoli and ceremonial foods such as asbin or taro grown specifically to support multiple social relations, it is clear that growers in Goroka are positioned in complex, interconnecting worlds where local understandings of bodily substance and growth exist alongside introductions of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Local relational ethics of reciprocity and recognition encompass the commodity economy, as expensive inputs such as seeds and fertilisers may or may not be shared depending on someone’s performance of a relational personhood. As producer-sellers strive to generate a sufficient income to pay for school fees, household needs and customary obligations, commodity relations come in between relatives and kin.

Gift exchange economies are defined by Gregory as those where what the “gift transactor desires is the personal relationships that the exchange of gifts creates, and not the things themselves” (Gregory 1982: 19). He builds on the cases of Mauss (1967), who argued that ‘archaic’ societies including āotearoa New Zealand and Papua New Guinea were different to industrial capitalist societies which are marked by a moral code “dominated by the market and profit” and instead were marked by “a moral code dominated by gift-giving” (Godelier
Commodity exchange, according to Gregory, is thus “an exchange of alienable things between transactors who are in a state of reciprocal independence” as, that is, there are no ongoing social relationships expected or obligated from the exchange of commodities.

Broccoli and other cash crops such as cabbage and carrots are examples of objects circulating within a commodity economy, where the purpose of exchange is to acquire objects, as opposed to a gift economy where the purpose of exchange is to acquire social relations (Gregory 1982). Foods such as broccoli, carrots, cabbages and potatoes are (mostly) transacted in the marketplace between anonymous parties for monetary gain rather than to extend one’s social relations, name or prestige. A range of customers, including hotel and restaurant managers and waged workers living in town, buy broccoli. Growers only eat those that are damaged, unsellable or left behind from the market. Broccoli is exemplary of an object that circulates within the model that Gregory (1982: 71) suggests of a commodity economy.

Goddard (2000: 143) argues that through the layers of Marx’s definition of alienation commodities can be distinguished from other objects that may appear similar in their form of exchange. It is the way in which the subject becomes alienated from its object thus breaking the connection between the conscious subject and the object of its labour that matters, argued Marx (1967).

Goddard (2000) explains that when the object is removed from the producer it is no longer recognisable as having intrinsic qualities. For example, when broccoli is shipped to Port Moresby, the hotel chef that receives it may have little to no idea of who grew it or where it came from. The chef may have an idea that someone grew it and they will bring their own knowledge to the broccoli, but the grower’s identity or how it was grown is not of primary importance – a different situation from being given ceremonial bananas at a feast where the
origins of the bananas are known and part of how the giver is evaluated and recognised by others.

The memories and recollections that connect objects and people even after they are separated is in part what intrigued Mauss and underpinned his argument for the spirit of the gift. A gift is inalienable because a spiritual or emotional connection between the giver and the object remain even when they are physically separated. The keeping and giving of such objects also speaks to the making of individual and group identities and prestige (Weiner 1992).

Alienation is crucial to our understanding of what makes commodities distinct from gifts (Gregory 1982; Goddard 2000; Graeber 2001). According to Marx’s original intention, alienation should be considered the process by which people become detached from themselves, from others and from their environment physically, spiritually and emotionally (Wallimann 1981). Here I suggest a number of ways growers are alienated in the process of broccoli production. I use the experience and insight I gained from one of my sets of fictive parents in Goroka, Josie and Moses, as the basis for thinking through this. Through getting to know them and their community (many of whom are broccoli producer-sellers) and living with them over the course of four months, I was able to follow broccoli from its production to its exchange in the marketplace as a commodity sold for money or to its being as given as a gift.

Josie and Moses are both in their late forties. They have with four children and look after a number of young grandchildren. They are originally from regions outside of EHP and have been adopted into local clan groups through church connections and other alliances. They are members of the local Pentecostal church, worshipping on Sundays. Living within a close community outside of Goroka, they are thoroughly embedded in local practices of exchange and food marketing. Josie is responsible for the money they make in the marketplace and
budgets in order to pay for daily needs of food, gas and transport as well as major expenses of school fees and university costs for their children. Moses is an active support in the gardens and in taking food to the market, but does not sell it himself. They work hard together in the gardens to support their family and contribute to collective exchanges of food, pigs and money on behalf of those living in their hamlet. Josie explained that she and Moses were the first to start growing broccoli in their village, almost ten years ago, after which more people became involved because of its profitability. The remainder of this chapter is an analysis of the production and exchange of broccoli by Josie and Moses, and how communities influence their position as commodity producer-sellers.

**Taking Broccoli to Market**

I developed the habit of going to the gardens with Josie and Moses and cutting broccoli, packing it into big *bilums* and carrying this heavy load on our heads up the steep, muddy pathways, through tall trees and bushy grass to the back end of the village. It took approximately 30 minutes on foot to reach their house from the gardens. Harvesting was always done the day before going to the market because broccoli, unlike carrots or potatoes, remains fresh only for one night.

One particular day, Josie lined the broccoli heads up in the back of a disused open backed van outside the house and drizzled them with water to stop them from drying out. The next morning, we got up before sunrise and got ourselves ready for the market. Moses left the house earlier than us, the tinny alarm of his old Nokia cell-phone going off at around 4am. He carried a big blue tarpaulin with him to lay down on the concrete floor of the first covered house in the market and reserved us a space. Josie and I got up before sunrise, around 6.30am, and got dressed. This entailed Josie combing her hair, finding her special black cap and donning a fresh *meriblouse* (long patterned dress with sleeves): as she told me, “We have
to wash and look nice when we sell – then the customers will buy more”. I packed my *bilum* with my notebook, a cap to protect me from the sun, a small purse with coins for the market fee and a large black pen and cardboard handed to me by Josie. These would be used for pricing the broccoli. I was also armed with my own small knife, a must-have in any woman’s *bilum* for tidying up the food before selling.

Then Josie and I mounted the large *bilums* of broccoli on our heads, the knot of the string bag nesting on a folded cloth on her head and on top of my headscarf. This eased the pain of the tightly woven fibres digging into our skin. We carefully stepped down the mud track from their village to the main road. It had rained the night before so the compacted ground was slippery in parts, only the protruding rocks and potholes providing some grip for our feet. At the bottom of the track were a number of other women from different villages waiting patiently for the bus to arrive. Eventually Josie and Moses’s adopted son came by with his open-back truck to transport us all. Once we reached the market, we paid 2 kina each for the ride. We found Moses in the market and deposited the bags, along with a bucket of water to keep the broccoli cool.

The aesthetics of the market matters, both the sellers and the food should look good. Women around me were all unpacking their *bilums*, stacking potatoes, twisting bundles of peanuts to make buyable bunches or scraping the sides of ginger with their knives. Presentation is important and involves meticulously washing and arranging the produce to look appealing to customers. Selling requires constant monitoring, wetting leaves to keep them looking fresh and rearranging the produce once something has been bought.

We spent the first hour or so cleaning the broccoli and lining them up in neat rows, grouping them into similar sizes and pricing them accordingly. The small ones would go for 50 toya,
sometimes less if they were small. Then up from this would be 1 kina, 2 kina and 3 kina, and if they were big they could get to 5 kina.

As we sat there, Josie engaged older children of relatives and friends who passed by in conversation and handed them one or two broccoli heads as gifts. They quietly accepted these and said thank you. Despite coming to the market to make an income for their family, Josie and Moses often demonstrated their generosity and care for others through giving some of these commodities away. In one instance, a friend of Josie’s son was returning to university, so she insisted he take two broccoli heads with him. This young man sometimes stayed with Josie and Moses and they called him their adopted son. Moses and Josie enjoyed looking after people, and were always hospitable and generous with those they included in their extended household. In this instance, giving broccoli in the market continued these relationships of care and made sense within the relationship of adoption they were establishing. As has been shown for elsewhere in PNG, sharing food is used to create social bonds, in particular those between parent and child, and between groups (Fajans 1988; 1997; M. Strathern 1988; Young 1971b; Kahn 1986; Lipset 2000).

However, women do not grow broccoli primarily for gifting, and the main aim of market vendors was to sell their entire stock. How vendors choose to do this, however, can vary. For example, that morning we sat opposite a seller with a large white bag full of cauliflower next to her and some laid out in front of her. I took the opportunity during a quiet period to ask her why she grew cauliflower, a relatively rare crop to find in the market, rather the other more common crops such as broccoli or pak choy. She explained that she liked cauliflower because she did not have to sell it all in one day. A hardier type of brassica than broccoli, and protected by its leaves, cauliflower could be harvested and last a number of days before being consumed. Plus, she added, it is popular with restaurants and canteens. Both the materiality of cauliflower and its popularity meant this seller considered the benefits of selling it in the
market over selling it wholesale to a single buyer for a restaurant or mess hall. On that day she would sell in two different places,

I will probably head up to the university this afternoon, but I will see how it goes in the market, and if the weather is good I will then head back to the garden. When I sell cauliflower to the mess at the university I get a standard price of 2.50 kina (4 USD) per kilogram. There is usually about 6 or 7 kg in a bag. When I sell in the market I can sell one at 5–6 kina (5 USD) if there are not many people selling them. Cauliflower can last for three days without rotting, unlike broccoli, which has to be refrigerated or eaten the same day we bring it to market.

Cauliflower spoils less quickly than broccoli and this, added to the fact that not many people grow it, makes it a more lucrative crop. Moses later explained he thought cauliflower is harder to grow than broccoli and for this reason fewer people sell it, thus increasing its market price. In this brief conversation with the cauliflower seller it was clear that she had flexibility about who to sell to and where. Making a one-off sale meant she could return home and do more garden work. For the flexibility that she wanted, cauliflower was a better option than broccoli. Reducing the time spent selling commodities means more time to garden, and having a buyer to whom they could sell all stock was a common demand of producer-sellers.

Market women choose what to grow, and where to sell what they grow, in terms of what they feel is the best use of their time and energy. Like other commodities, growing broccoli can allow women to generate an income to use to support their children through school and contribute to ceremonial exchanges with their affinal and conjugal relatives.
**Local Knowledge and Practices**

Knowledge of growing food once passed down between kin had secret and magical components (M. Strathern 1988). The knowledge needed to grow broccoli is in contrast learnt from agricultural agencies and pamphlets. Market women and men continue to pass on garden knowledge to younger generations, but not through magic or songs as it with ancestral crops. Some of those who already have the knowledge and experience of using fertilisers and pesticides pass this on to others in their communities who grow introduced crops, otherwise growers have to seek out agricultural extension workers from the Department of Agriculture and Livestock (DAL) (now called the Department for Primary Industries (DPI)).

However, it is not just the knowledge of how to cultivate a crop that differs between introduced and local crops; it is also how people understand what enables a crop to grow successfully or not, and why. In other words, the commodification of food, in part through the introduction of European crops and the marketplace, has contributed to epistemological (how people come to know) and ontological (how people come to be) shifts.

Having the knowledge of how to grow different crops and doing so successfully are also an integral part of creating identities – particularly, in Goroka, gendered identities and personhood (West 2012: 112; Gillison 1993). For example, there are secret stories, spells and songs that women once used to enable their crops to grow well (Gillison 1993). The connection women had with their gardens is documented as one of cosmological depth (Meigs 1984; Gillison 1993). Gillison described this for Gimi, in the Lufa region of EHP as follows:

> A woman’s success as gardener and pig herder depends upon the constancy and quality of her intimacy, upon her ability to ‘join her auna’
with the auna of each plant or pig by convincing it of her exclusive attachment. (1993: 167)

*Auna* refers to the life force of the plants and animals, which is tied to the life force of the grower. This relationship means the grower is able to give the growing plants energy with the attention she shows them. West (2012) shows that people in Gimi do not ‘make themselves’ through commodity production such as coffee as they do through the other kinds of planting. Their *auna* is not reproduced in coffee as it is in sweet potato, and hence they do not sing to it, whisper incantations to it or visit it. As one of her interlocutors told her, “Coffee seedlings are strong without me. They are from somewhere else, Australia at first, I think, they don’t need me as much as sweet potato or taro. They grow tall and straight without my words” (West 2012: 121).

As I have explained in the previous chapter, in Goroka, similar to other parts of PNG, people attempt to control their behaviours and practices around certain foods as human conduct can affect food crop growth with strengthening as well as detrimental outcomes. Some crops respond to the moods and attitudes of growers (Gillison 1993; Meigs 1984; West 2012); crops such as taro must be visited and spoken to with affection, and will respond with liveliness to a positive gardener (Crook 1999: 229; Malinowski 1922). Women plant particular flowers and leafy plants in proximity to special foods such as taro and *asbin*. *Agapa*, for instance, an edible green with soft, small yellow and green patterned leaves (eaten with ginger, salt, pig meat or chicken steam cooked inside bamboo rich in taste similar to Italien basil pesto) is planted alongside *asbin*. *Agapa* is said to please *asbin* and helps it grow.

In contrast to songs and magical practices, the knowledge of how to grow broccoli has come via the state and agricultural development organisations, initially part of ‘self-help’ colonial development schemes and now continued by the Fresh Produce Development Agency
(FPDA), a governmental institution partly funded by New Zealand Aid. In some senses this garden knowledge is democratised compared to that of previous crops, which was segregated by gender and age and, as elsewhere in PNG, could be secret until passed on at ritual moments (Crook 1999). In contrast, access to information from agricultural agencies can depend on issues of accessibility both in terms of distance to travel and ability to read (West 2012: 112).

Many of the women I spoke with said they learnt how to grow broccoli by attending workshops or having didimen (agricultural extension workers) come to their village and give training. When I asked growers how they learnt to grow waitman (European) foods some of them mentioned Kabiyufa school, where the first market gardens were established. I asked the farmer manager about the school’s history. He explained,

Introduced crops were first grown directly in Ifiufa and Kabiyufa, the area surrounding the school. Missionaries taught people to use fertiliser and pesticides, and many people came to school here from around the Eastern Highlands. Some students came and then went back to their villages to teach people. Kabiyufa was the first farm to grow food commercially in the country, and food was flown from here to all parts of Papua New Guinea. Now the save (know-how) of how to grow these foods has expanded and people everywhere do it. Originally the save came from Kabiyufa school.

Originally missionaries, administrators and the colonial government distributed seeds and taught people how to grow, sell, cook and harvest, as well as the ways of the market, including how to price things and determine good quality. At the school’s farm, they had a large nursery for
introduced foods, used fertilisers and conducted disease control. An Australian man in the 1960s established this. He was an SDA missionary and a farmer.

The farm manager gives the impression of a clear process through which local growers were enculturated into growing food as a commodity, gaining the knowledge and practice, or expertise, from the school and then returning to their villages. However, the story of individual crops varies with different items introduced at different times. For instance, Read (1965: 244) documents the introduction of passionfruit vines for a jam factory. The colonial administrators thought passionfruit might have quicker returns than coffee trees, which take years to mature, and grow easily alongside native crops. Jolly argues Christian missionisation and the commodity economy are the “twin agents of modernity” (Jolly 2015: 66). In this instance, there is a clear connection between the missionary school and food marketing.

Broccoli requires a different approach to knowing and practicing growing techniques in the gardens. Moses explained this when we were discussing the argument of this chapter,

Traditional foods you will know from your ancestors and your parents, such as yams in the coastal areas. They all have their own different ways of growing their yams and making them grow big. The way people know about growing broccoli is very different to traditional foods. There is no magic or knowledge you can get from the elders on this – you have to go to the DPI or some kind of agricultural place to ask for help.

Moses went on to explain that with traditional foods such as banana or taro, if they grow really big or there are a lot of them, people may think the grower is using some kind of black power or giving the food ‘some kind of talk’ referring to garden magic. He went on to explain the ontological difference,
But if you have success with broccoli, they won’t think this. They will just think you know how to use the chemicals right. Broccoli is an introduced food, something white people brought in, so we don’t think you can use traditional magic or practices to make it grow well – it is just in how you use the chemicals and fertilisers.

There is a degree of estrangement between the kinds of knowledge required for growing introduced crops compared to local crops, which, in the latter case, was handed down through known relatives within ongoing social relationships. When a woman is handed the shoots of sweet potato plants at marriage, it is through her cultivating these plants in her new gardens that she becomes a woman and continues her relationship with those women (aunties and in-laws) that gave her the shoots. Crops like broccoli are agents of modernity, in that food growers are required to engage with the state, global commodity chains and new knowledge practices and technologies in order to grow them. This can leave growers vulnerable, without the support of garden magic or local knowledge holders.

In the process of commodity production, chemicals and fertilisers are expected to be key to producing large yields for the marketplace. When this fails, growers are at the behest of agricultural experts, if and when they can get access to them. Clubroot, a common disease of brassica, is a growing problem. Moses explained,

When there is a sickness with broccoli, then there is a problem because it is hard to know what to do. Sometimes whatever combination of chemicals we use, the sickness doesn’t go away. Clubroot is like that. It is already affecting our broccoli, and there is nothing we can do about it. It is very bad. We try to fix it but we can’t. We have to try go to DAL or find the answer in the pamphlets from FPDA. That is the only way.
Knowledge and practices of food growing have a long history in the Highlands, and today farmers continue to adapt to new demands and opportunities (Bourke, Allen, and Salisbury 2000). However, turning to such introduced crops can make the growers vulnerable and dependent on agencies that are not always available. Returning to the original point, if we consider broccoli’s commodity status only at the point when it is exchanged, as Appadurai (1986) suggests, the ways in which broccoli cultivation affects growers would not be clear. Furthermore, through examining processes of production, it becomes apparent that growers do not use magic or knowledge that has been embedded in the landscape and handed down through stories when they grow waitman foods. The production of broccoli also has indirect and potentially long-term negative impacts upon the lives of growers and their environments.

**Broccoli Production: Temporalities and Economies**

In this section I explain the process of growing broccoli before offering an analysis of how this differs from other local crops. Through analysing the promulgation of broccoli, I demonstrate how growers become consumers at the margins of a global trade of seeds and fertilisers which have effects on local practices of growing food and sharing resources. In Goroka, some foods are an extension of the grower’s physical, spiritual and emotional being. In comparison to asbin, taro or yams, where there were once songs, magic and incantations used to help these prestigious crops grow well, cabbage, broccoli and pak choy require NPK (nitrogen phosphate and potassium), urea and pesticide sprays imported from abroad. Consumption and circulation of these inputs is embedded within local moral economies of pasin.

Broccoli nursery beds can be seen outside people’s houses in the valleys north of Goroka town. Made from bamboo, they consist of tall tables with tarpaulin coverings which keep the
seeds warm as they germinate. As Josie and I made our way to one of their broccoli gardens she explained the process of ‘nursery-ing’ (a Tok Pisin adaption) broccoli,

We mix a thin layer of soil with NPK and space the seeds out. We cover them up with banana leaves and hide them, putting bags on top. After a week you take the leaves off and make a shade. Then after three weeks, when three or four leaves have developed, we spray Karate medicine that kills insects and pests so that the broccoli will grow well. After about four weeks there will be six leaves, and they are ready to transplant.

The full production cycle of broccoli spans between three and four months, a third of the time needed to grow asbin, taro and most varieties of sweet potato. However, as Josie explained to me, various fertilisers and pesticides are required to support the growth of broccoli both in the seed tables and once transplanted into the gardens. These are used again when the seedlings are transplanted. Broccoli pamphlets explain that growers should use three parts of NPK to two parts of TSP (triple superphosphate), both fertilisers, and mix them together in a match box as a kind of measuring spoon and mixer: “When you transplant the broccoli you empty the match box of fertiliser mix in the hole”, explained Moses. Moses explained they spend 100–200 kina on fertilisers for every 1,000 seeds of broccoli they buy.

Moses taught me to make holes with a digging stick a few inches apart from one another and put the mix of fertiliser in each hole. We then filled these holes with the little broccoli seedlings that had been placed in a plastic bag and brought from the broccoli nursery bed by Josie. Unlike a subsistence food garden which may involve planting corn, cucumber, beans and sugarcane alongside one another in rows, broccoli seedlings are planted individually and independently of other crops.
Broccoli is a brassica that can go to seed and ordinarily could be replanted, but the seeds that growers buy in Goroka are produced by large seed companies, including Yates of New Zealand, and growers state they do not regrow. Growers such as Moses have some suspicions about the position they occupy in this international seed commodity chain.

The thing about this crop is that we cannot replant it. Every time we have to go and buy new seeds. Some of us wonder if we have been tricked or something. Even when we try to let the broccoli go to seed and replant it, it doesn’t grow again. So it’s not like *tumbuna kaikai* [ancestral, local food] where we can grow it again and again. No, with broccoli we have to go back to the shops and buy the seeds again.

Moses’s reflection on broccoli indicates a sense of his own lack of control over the seeds they acquire and the manipulation in which companies providing the seeds may engage. Moses told me that FPDA or other agricultural extension organisations that he had dealt with did not tell him that broccoli could not be reseeded.

However, the inability for this broccoli to go to seed and produce again in Goroka did not surprise me. It sounded similar to the criticisms I have heard made of Monsanto’s seeds sold in India. Monsanto is another large seed company like Yates, and some environmental activists have argued this multinational corporation has done harm to farmers who are caught in a cycle of purchasing seeds that can only be used once, losing their own seed varieties and diversity in the process (Castree 2001; Shiva 2016). Single-harvest seeds, commonly referred to as ‘terminator technology’, are an agricultural biotechnology product. Shiva refers to this as turning pea pods, tomatoes, peppers and broccoli heads into “seed morgues” (Shiva 2016: 81). As seeds become redundant, farmers are forced to buy new seeds every year, which not
only threatens their independence but also the food security of over 1 billion farmers throughout the world (Shiva 2016: 82).

Seed companies make a profit from growers rebuying seeds each time (Holt-Gimenez 2009), and this has become the accepted model for the production of introduced crops in Goroka, and the opposite to most local foods, where one generation of plants spawns the next. For instance, the Highlands staple of sweet potato is replanted through the shoots taken from sweet potato plants before the tubers are harvested. Yams are cut into sections and replanted, and taro is also replanted from ‘suckers’ or shoots from a mother plant.

The requirement to buy new seeds for carrots, pak choy, broccoli, cabbages and other recently introduced waitman foods and the inability to manage crop growth without the use of purchased chemicals means growers need money to purchase commodities (seeds, fertilisers) in order to produce more commodities (broccoli): commodities make more commodities (Marx 1967). For instance, Josie and Moses buy 10,000 broccoli seeds at 195 kina from a local hardware store in town. They do constant rounds of planting broccoli until the 10,000 seeds are finished and hope to make at least 1,000 k in returns. Moses explained they rarely succeed in making the full amount because of crop failures and daily gifting of their produce to friends and family in the market. Josie also purchases household essentials of soap, oil, kerosene, rice and tinned fish daily.

Broccoli relies on the chemical inputs of urea and NPK, both of which are purchased in hardware stores and imported from abroad. Other market crops such as cabbage, potatoes and cauliflower are difficult to grow successfully, if not impossible, without these inputs due to pests, locally known as binutan. Round Up (glyphosate), a weed killer manufactured by Monsanto, is also popular around Goroka as it decreases the physical labour required to weed gardens. The health consequences of using this chemical are as yet unconfirmed, but the
World Health Organisation has found that glyphosate may lead to chromosomal damage and increases health risks including that of cancer (WHO 2015).

Despite these aspects of introduced seeds and fertilisers, growers continue to purchase these commodities as this is part of how they make a life for themselves that they deem ‘worth living’ (Narotzky and Besnier 2014). A reliable year-round income is more likely to come from garden foods such as broccoli, cabbage and carrots rather than coffee or sweet potatoes, the other major cash crops of the Highlands (Benediktsson 2002). For instance, Josie explained how their son Alphonse wants to study auto electrical engineering in Port Moresby. He needed his parents to contribute half of the fees, so Josie and Moses decided to plant an extra broccoli garden to for this purpose. Moses explained that he would make a big space in the garden for the broccoli, remove some of his coffee trees and use three packets of seeds.

Some of the coffee will be cut down and I will make a fence to keep the pigs out. In just four months the broccoli will be ready – one month in the nursery bed and three months in the garden.

Whilst broccoli has the benefit of providing an income for such situations, the choices available to producers are limited by the availability and prices of agricultural supplies. As these become more expensive, relying on cash crops for income becomes harder work. The farm manager at Kabiyufa school explained,

Prices of fertilisers, chemicals and other farming needs are on the rise.
Lots of people now see the importance of farming, especially as the population of Goroka is increasing. But as demand goes up, so too do the prices of chemicals and inputs. Even the price of tools is increasing quickly. Both in response to increased numbers of people growing cash crops and the irregular supply of seeds and fertilisers to local trade stores
by international traders, prices in the market and in the trade stores can vary considerably. From time to time growers change crops in response to lack of supply and increased competition. When prices for seeds or fertilisers increase, there is little they can do but rely on local subsistence crops for their own sustenance and wait for their next opportunity to grow cash crops.

The other consequence of this model of commodity food production is its impact on soils. With the shift to chemical inputs for food production and the potential threat to the quality and health of local soils this poses (Shiva 2016) drastic counter-measures are now being implemented. For example, the Kabiyufa school was setting aside land to remain fallow for 25 years due to soil damage that the farm manager believes results from overproduction. During my visit to the school, he explained how this soil problem arose:

A big problem is clubroot. This affects all brassicas including cabbage, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage and broccoli. Soil salinisation is the result of using too much fertiliser and other inputs, which we use to prevent clubroot, and then there is an increase in acidity. We need to use more organic fertilisers and plant legume plants to help address this. Now some farmers are letting bush come up [leaving land fallow]. This should help.

To add to the soil dilemma, the modern phenomenon of urban encroachment is competing for space and therefore placing further pressure on Goroka’s surrounding land. Thus far I have outlined the potential risks and concerns with moves to the production of cash crops such as broccoli. I have suggested there are ecological and economic risks to such production in linking growers to global economies and markets where power is not distributed equitably.
Furthermore, mass-produced seeds and fertilisers have social and environmental impacts, and the production pedagogy is epistemologically and ontologically different.

Additionally, the shift to using manufactured goods to grow commodity crops puts pressure on social relations, including husband-wife relations and those kin living alongside one another. I now turn to examine how the production of commodities such as broccoli plays out in a context of local gifting, or relational, ethics. Commodification and monetary costs can strain social relations that are encompassed by local ethics of gifting when these are at odds with individual production costs.

**Commodities Embedded in Gendered Moralities, Local Gifting Ethics and Pasin**

As Goddard asserts, “the gift economy… is substantially more than an exchange of objects” (2000: 138). It is also a matter of the ethics and ideas of personhood that exist in everyday interactions. *Pasin*, as I have defined it, the expectation to share resources and show care and recognition of others, is part of this everyday morality and the way that women especially are assessed by others in terms of their generosity. As LiPuma (2001) has argued, the logics of modernity are in dialectical tension with local values and ethics. However, rather than those living in Goroka being encompassed by modernity, as he argues happens to Maring, I suggest that the ethic of relationality encompasses the marketplace. Yet this creates tensions as the cost of inputs are at odds with the ethic of sharing: at this point reciprocity is expected, otherwise the sharing stops.

Foster argues that the increasing satisfaction of daily needs through cash purchases indicates an intensification of commodity relations: “intensification implies a qualitative transformation of social relations as well as a quantitative increase in the degree to which
social relations are commoditized” (Foster 1995). Broccoli requires money to grow and is part of the intensification of commodity relations. Growers have to be conscientious of how they use their seeds and fertilisers. In Goroka, these resources may only be shared if people in the community can be trusted to help at other moments. An ethos of sharing is not inevitable, and *pasin* is an aspect of sociality and an affect (a mode of speaking nicely, being sociable, making the effort to attend ceremonies, sharing material resources) that has to be maintained. Someone who does not acknowledge the presence of others through greetings, is perceived to behave only with themselves in mind, does not engage in displays of affect which are valued (sharing food, spending time with others talking, laughing, telling jokes) and behaves in ‘selfish’ ways and is not considered to have *pasin*. This is also sometimes referred to as showing *waitman pasin*, acting like a white person. Women who look after their guests well, share food with others, speak nicely and are friendly are said to have good *pasin*, or ‘good behaviours’.

The narrative that follows shows how local moralities of demonstrating sociable and sharing behaviours matter when inputs have a price. In this case, Moses and Josie were allowing an older aunty in the village to dig some of their sweet potato for herself, yet refused to share fertiliser with another younger woman with a husband and child due to her own lack of *pasin*.

As we dug in the garden, my back to Josie and the old aunty from the village, Josie called across the garden, “And she never gives him money from her broccoli sales!” As the conversation went on, I realised they were criticising the wife of a man in their hamlet for what Josie and the older woman perceived as a lack of care for her husband. This wife came up in conversation because she requested to borrow some fertiliser from Josie and Moses. Josie refused, saying they did not have any to spare. This was partly because fertiliser is very expensive, Josie told me, but also because she thought this woman does not show good *pasin*, meaning she does not display generosity or willingness to share.
When she came and asked us for fertiliser I thought, eeeey, fertiliser is an expensive thing and you are asking us for some? We bought this with savings from our last round of broccoli and she could go get some the same we did. Anyway I told her we didn’t have enough. I wasn’t lying. But why should we lend her these expensive things when she does not show gutpela pasin? *Fertiliser em had wok samting, yu no inap givim nating, ol givim yu ken givim, sapose ol no givim, yu no ken givim* (fertiliser requires hard work to buy, it’s not something that can just be given away, if they don’t give then you shouldn’t give)”.

Debate regarding this woman continued that evening over dinner. Another woman from the hamlet said, “She doesn’t help her man either. A woman must help her husband to get his family’s approval [*em mas winim tingting bilong ol lain bilong en*]. She doesn’t do this with us.” In this instance, the issue was not just a matter of failing to reciprocate but also a failure to fulfil the obligation to give which comes with being a ‘good woman/wife’. The ethic of sharing resources not only pertains to kinsmen but to spouses also.

The following quote from M.Strathern explains the nature of social relations within the gifting economy that she defines:

> In a gift economy, social relations are made the overt objects of people’s activities. In the direct, unmediated activity of work, the fact of relatedness may be taken for granted (as between kinsmen), but work makes the specific relations visible – kinsmen do things for one another as kinsmen should, as spouses also work with each other in mind as spouses should (M. Strathern 1988: 180).
M. Strathern suggests husbands and wives constitute each other through the exchange of their labor for one another. Similarly, in a commodity economy, the cash earnings of men and women are expected to be shared, even though as I have already demonstrated, the money women make from cash crops is largely unquestioned when it is used to meet their household’s subsistence needs (A. Strathern 1979: 536). However, whilst it might be said by Josie that the woman’s husband could give some of his income to her, in reality there is less pressure on men to do this, and usually they will buy store food for the household as their contribution.

The incident shows that such an ethos of gifting exists in Goroka today, but the cost of desired commodities such as electricity or fertiliser puts pressure on people’s abilities to share. Commoditised aspects of social life mean market women are expected to be productive in the cash economy – such as growing broccoli and taking it to the market – and share their takings with their husbands and his kin. Occasionally, they may also receive resources from their husbands to pay for household items. However, the morality of a man’s personhood is not judged by how he shares resources with his wife and children as a woman’s personhood is judged by her sharing resources with her husband or his kinsmen. The tension between the need for women earning money in the marketplace to care for their wider kin networks and to conserve resources for themselves and their own households is an example of the “tension between reciprocal values that make life secure in still largely subsistence-based communities and the enlarging sphere of individual choice” (Barker 2007: 12). The wife that Josie and Moses are discussing demonstrates her own agency through choosing not to share her resources with others. However, this has its consequences in gossip and talk that undermines her relational personhood and social status.

People who live alongside each other, neighbours sharing physical space and people related through shared land tenure and kinship can become estranged when resources that require
money or manufactured goods are not shared and bad feelings towards each other develop, as shown in other parts of PNG (c.f. (Martin 2007; M. S. Mosko 2013: 168). In this case there are elements of the ethics of a gifting economy alongside the individual competition and ownership of a commodity economy, what Mosko has considered “indigenous ‘dividual’ patterns of partible personhood and sociality which incorporate seemingly ‘individualist’ practices” (2013: 168). Nevertheless, women growers demonstrate the ability to make choices over what they do with their resources, whether to share or not share, what to spend their incomes on. They are economic actors with some (although differentiated) ability to adapt to the different opportunities that the markets in Goroka provide.

In the next section, I show that producers want more markets and more state intervention rather than less, regardless of some the issues raised by cash crop production, as I have highlighted here. There is then a tension between the impacts of commodification of crops on growers within the global economy and their environments and local demands for more economic opportunities and market access. From the perspective of growers, greater recognition from the state would enable them to make bigger returns from their cash crops, which in turn would further their ability to access the quality of lives that they desire (Narotzky and Besnier 2014).

**What growers want: more state intervention, more capital and more markets**

One morning after a heavy day’s work in the garden, Moses and I sat by the fire in their *haus kunai* with our cups of sugary tea and discussed local and international politics, as had become our custom. We were discussing why rice growing had failed in PNG and hence PNG’s reliance on imported rice from Australia and Thailand. Moses reflected on their broccoli production,
It would be good if the government supported us subsistence farmers, helping us market sellers to find buyers rather than us wasting time sitting in the market getting tired and sore.

This comment is somewhat ironic, considering it is usually women, and Josie in this case, who sit down in the market for long periods of time selling their wares. However, I interpreted his ‘us’ as referring to the rural communities that depend on growing food for the marketplace. Remembering some basics from a political economy course, I said, “Yes, but they might also give you a lower price if you sell to big buyers. Big buyers tend to pay less to suppliers for large quantities.”

Moses continued,

Yes, that might be true. But last year we sold lots to people coming round the market who were buying in bulk to send down to Port Moresby. Now there are not so many of them. And there are many people selling broccoli in the market, so prices are going down.

Many producers complain that they need a better market and distribution system that allows more of them to send their crops to places that need them, hotels and mining sites being especially lucrative for producers, as they are likely to buy in large quantities. The lack of refrigerated transport or cold storage in Goroka town was stated as a major hindrance by many sellers and has become a key part of local political leaders’ electoral campaigns.

A report by Spriggs et al. (2003) supported growers’ calls for better infrastructure and showed that hotel and supermarket managers in Port Moresby claim they would like to buy more fresh produce from the Highlands but struggle to get a consistent supply of good quality produce. Meanwhile growers seek access to larger markets and guaranteed demand. As this
report also points out, the producers, who also sell it in the markets, take about half of the produce that is shipped to Port Moresby there themselves. They hire a truck to transport the produce from the Highlands to Lae and then, using a refrigerated container, ship the produce to the capital city. I also knew buyers who bought broccoli and cabbage in bulk in Goroka market and then paid for it to be flown to Port Moresby and used in hotels run by their relatives. Sellers use their own networks to transport commodities between major cities with the aim of making a decent profit, and also to raun tasol, (just going round) to see places and people for leisure (Benediktsson 2002; Sharp et al. 2015; Sharp 2016).

Regardless of the potential social, environmental and economic shifts occurring as growers turn to cash crops such as broccoli; these crops often provide the only or the best opportunities for rural people to access resources and opportunities that they would otherwise struggle to gain without moving to urban areas. Market vendors use these crops to enable them to pay for the next generation’s education with hope that this will lead to waged work.

**Conclusion**

The materiality and production of certain kinds of commodities entangle growers into political economies and epistemologies that they cannot control. Processes of production and exchange of commodities such as broccoli contribute to a shift in the nature of agricultural knowledge and relationships but do not necessarily change the underlying ethic of a gifting economy, in which care for others and sharing is expected (Goddard 2000; Graeber 2001).

Market women mostly grow broccoli for its high monetary value. Many urban people in Goroka think of broccoli as a healthy food (as elsewhere in the world) and it also has associations with modernity, whiteness and urban lifestyles. Perhaps it is partly for these reasons that it has a high demand in the marketplace as I rarely consumed broccoli whilst staying in villages out of town although certainly some village women did exclaim that if
they had refrigerators then they would buy more broccoli. These specific structures of
demand enable growers to send their crops further afield, but their production also connects
them to the fringes of global markets of seeds and fertilisers. They also require knowledge of
agricultural experts that is not local or historical but instead comes from people trained in
agricultural science, a type of knowledge detached from local place. This knowledge, like
that of *tumbuna* crops, is now passed on between friends and kin, and on to children who
spend time in the garden, however this knowledge is accompanied by added financial
expenditures (expensive inputs).

The value of ceremonial crops such as *asbin*, when gifted, may be incommensurable. The
effect it has both on the giver and receiver is intangible, social and significant, and not
measurable against a quantitative standard of value. This differs with food that is grown
mainly for the purpose of the marketplace in Goroka. Food such as broccoli has a price, a
monetary value, and the nature of the exchange in the marketplace does not directly provide
the grower or the recipient with any other social rank or political prestige. Their moral
character is not recognised within a network of relations in these exchanges; instead, they are
independent, autonomous persons, exchanging broccoli in a moment that will not have any
meaning beyond that time and space. This is the dominant form of exchange for broccoli, and
therefore it is predominantly a commodity: an object whose meaning does not create bonds
between people through its exchange but merely leads to monetary gain.

As money has become the necessary means by which to purchase new and desirable foods,
and also an expected part of collective obligations, people now value money highly (Lipuma
1999; A. Strathern 1979). Furthermore, the next generation desire money to move ahead in
the urban context. For this reason, people who are not working in waged labour must produce
objects that can become commodities and sold for money. In the process, they are
objectifying their labour in a way that is distinct from that associated with ceremonial foods.
exchanged in brideprice or mortuary compensations. These foods are given in a spirit of mutual recognition, understanding each other’s emotional states, and the desire for ongoing peaceful relationships (Robbins 2009). The contribution of foods in these moments also defines kinship. As M. Strathern (1988) explains, social relations are objectified and reified in the persons, and objects stand in for the relationships. Cash crops do not hold such symbolic value or meaning, but they are a link in a chain of events that is necessary both for pursuing the duties of kinship and for maintaining a household’s livelihood.

This chapter has shown that broccoli production, like other cash crops, requires a continual flow of commodity production and consumption, with some negative consequences for local soils and social relations. So why are people shifting to intensively growing these cash crops? As I have shown elsewhere in the thesis, the desires for formal education and housing are some of the calls upon vendors’ money. Another major demand is for aspects of social reproduction. In the following chapter, I turn to money as a valuable, where it is no longer a mechanism for market exchange but a token of social and relational value. The cash generated by women in the marketplace through crops such as broccoli supplies major public ceremonial exchanges in which money takes on different aesthetic and affective forms. In this particular event, broccoli too features, not just as the basis for creating monetary wealth but as an added adornment that symbolises life, land and productivity.
The photograph that opens this chapter is of a mortuary payment, or *hedpei*, made between two clans that spanned North Goroka, West Goroka and Goroka town. The clans had congregated around the exchange of 25,000 kina which one *lain* was gifting to another in accordance with a *kandre* (uncles) kinship relation, the brothers of the deceased man’s mother. The deceased was a leader in his community, and the payment was to mark the food and care that his mother’s brothers’ clan members had shown him prior to his death seven
years earlier. The scale, composition and visual impact of the payment was unlike anything I had seen in other public exchanges I had attended, and brought about a sense of wonder and awe in me that, coupled with the unfolding of events, engaged my senses and a range of emotions from trepidation, amusement and boredom to fear and exhilaration. Through my own senses and emotions, and later through reflections on the event with its organisers, Magaret and Jona, who had invited me to attend, I show the aesthetic and affective processes that market women and men use to transform money into a valuable and adornment (Graeber 1996).

Magaret and Jona were an older couple who worked hard in the gardens to produce and sell food in the market. Through my relations with neighbouring communities I got to know them in the marketplace and at ceremonial events, and got on well with them both. Magaret was forthcoming, with a bold charm that meant she could be strident in some instances of conflict amongst her lain, and sweet when tending to her own friendships and children. She was, however, a woman I decided early on that I would not want to be on the wrong side of, and like many older women in Goroka, tall, strong and slightly intimidating. Jona was in comparison quiet, relaxed and friendly, modest in his daily interactions but also a good public orator, which I only came to realise through attending a number of hevis at their invitation. Jona was also known for being active in the gardens, whilst Magaret was more concerned with political matters in town that concerned their family matters and local government initiatives for women’s leadership. They welcomed me readily so that I could learn about matters of their clan exchanges and attend them regularly if I could. I sensed they hoped I was willing to momentarily become part of their lain –they joked that I should leave the lain I was associated with nearby and marry into theirs, as many women had done for generations. It is through my relationship with Jona and Magaret that I gained some insight into how money became a valuable in the mortuary exchange that is the focus of this chapter.
There has been much literature regarding the incorporation of state-backed currency into ceremonial exchange. Andrew Strathern (1979) argued this was partly the result of big-men wanting to maintain their control over women’s productive resources, while Nihill (1989) suggested it was in part due to its shimmery, shell-like qualities. These authors also suggested that the importing of shells into the Highlands by the Australian administrators as payment for labour deflated their value as they were then no longer a scarce or ‘special’ resource. However, there has been less analysis of specifically how money becomes a valuable in a ceremonial context, despite extensive analyses of what kinds of monies have existed and continue to remain in use despite the rise of state-backed currency (Akin and Robbins 1999).

Recent ethnographic study has instead focused on the financial aspects of money within social relations, such as through the notion of personal viability and fast-money schemes (Cox 2013; Bainton 2011). This chapter explores the contemporary use of money in the otherwise well-trodden terrain of ceremonial exchange in the Highlands. I draw on Marilyn Strathern’s (1988; 2013) understandings of aesthetics as the way that ‘things’ bring about social action, and that ‘seeing’ is part of the required nature of sociality in PNG, where things make relationships visible. However, I suggest it is not merely the way that things appear that is significant but the way they move bodies and the way bodies move things, creating oppositions between stability and flow through a difference between a static display (of money attached to bamboo) and a performance of velocity (through ‘play’ money). Affect refers to the reactions of the body that can be unpredictable and chaotic (Wetherell 2012); at this event there was what appeared to be unpredicted conflict over the various directions of exchange. Furthermore, rather than women’s productive efforts being appropriated by men to boost their prestige, women are active participants in this public ceremonial exchange and demonstrate their agency before, during and after such exchanges.
Money Made Valuable: Adornment and Display in Ceremonial Contexts

Money earned from the cash cropping of coffee, wage labour and commercial activities has created new needs and obligations, including contributions to ceremonial exchanges (Sexton 1984). Yet, it is not just ceremonial contexts in which money is part of maintaining ongoing social relationships. Research into phenomena such as trading in betel-nut markets and gambling in competitive card games demonstrates that what may appear to be about satisfying short-term economic interests can also be in the service of more enduring long-term relationships (Pickles 2014; Pickles 2013a; Sharp 2012; Zimmer-Tamakoshi 2014).

Here I take up the place of money in more formalised, ceremonial contexts, where long-term, intergenerational relationships are usually made.

Some local valuables (such as cowrie shells), but not all (such as pigs), have lost their ceremonial status and been dissolved and replaced with money in ceremonial contexts (Brookfield 1968; Stewart and Strathern 2002b). This is an additional driver of participation in the cash economy and ramps up the pressure for money (Brookfield 1968). How some Papua New Guineans have expressed concern about the impact of money on their relationships has also been acknowledged by anthropologists such as Akin and Robbins (1999), Robbins (1998; 2003) and LiPuma (1999; 2001). Others have shown how these anxieties are resolved through compartmentalising different forms of exchange (modalities) and the kinds of objects that are allowed into circulation (Gregory 1997; Sykes 2015; Cox and Macintyre 2014; M. Strathern 1975). In Goroka, some expressed concerns that now ‘everything is about money’, and some suggested this had meant *selfis pasin kamap*, meaning people were acting in response to the needs of their more immediate family rather than extended kin. However, whilst there are some anxieties around the impact of money on behaviours, money is nonetheless readily accepted into ritual exchanges at important life events.
The fact that state-backed money has become a ceremonial valuable in PNG exchange systems has been well documented by anthropologists (Gregory 1982; Nihill 1989; 1991; Sexton 1984). Andrew Strathern’s work in Hagen (1979), and more recently Nick Bainton’s research and Martha Macintyre’s at the gold mine in Lihir (Bainton and Macintyre 2016), show that the financial benefits made through integration with global commodity chains – in these cases, through coffee or royalties from mining – has led to an efflorescence in gift exchanges and scale of prestations in some parts of PNG.

Andrew Strathern (1979: 536) argues that the big-men of Hagen allowed cash valuables in the hopes of retaining control over women’s labour in producing cash crops and pigs. He suggests that as big-men became threatened by women’s increasing involvement in the cash economy, they turned cash into a ceremonial valuable so that they could regain power over the products of women’s labour. Sexton (1984) shows that women in the Eastern Highlands decided to take matters into their own hands. The fact of money becoming an exchange valuable, and men’s continued control over the structures of ceremonial exchange, led women in Daulo, like women in Chuave, to establish their own forms of ceremonial exchange using their cash savings (Warry 1986; Sexton 1986).

While market exchange and ceremonial exchange overlap in Goroka and are interconnected through the passing of objects between contexts, they could be thought of as differently organised ‘spheres of exchange’ (Bohannan 1959). Bloch and Parry’s (1989) concept of short-term and long-term transactions is more useful, however, for explaining how the marketplace and the ceremonial economy are separate but overlapping in the kinds of relationships that are established in transactions and the way objects are exchanged between people. The different way that money is transacted and the affect with which it is exchanged are key defining aspects of what distinguishes money in the market from money in this ceremonial context.
Bohannon (1959) suggested that money threatens the boundaries of different spheres of exchange and the moral institutions that maintain them. However, the collections edited by Parry and Bloch (1989) and Akin and Robbins (1999) demonstrate that rather than reducing money and market relations to that which is amoral or antithetical to maintaining ongoing relations, money can take on multiple forms that continue to both create relationships and produce particularly moral forms of social action.

Whilst there has been substantial debate over whether the inclusion of money as a valuable has led to an efflorescence of gift exchange and the extent to which it has changed the form and social relationships of gifting, there has been less analysis of exactly how money comes to be a valuable. How money is positioned in relation to these other valuables and persons can be made sense of through considering the nature of the different acts and performances contained within the event and how they relate to the broader economy of mutual recognition.

**Producing Value: Performative and Affective Acts**

Lambek (2013) argues that value is the result of performative acts, acts which are ethical. His exploration of acknowledgement and respect is similar to Robbins’s (2009: 57) argument that gift exchange amongst Urapmin constitutes an economy of mutual recognition. This is the context in which I come to understand the exchange of money as a valuable in this setting, the result of a series of acts that are deemed ethical and that acknowledge the recipients in the *hedpe* event on which I focus here. In order to explore exactly what acts are performed to turn money into a gift, and in turn to attempt to *decommoditise* it (Lambek 2013: 147), I follow the lead of my interlocutors, donors of this mortuary payment, who emphasised the importance of aesthetics and affect as part of eliciting a particular emotion in their recipients. Donors explained their efforts in decoration and performance in this ceremony as wanting to make the recipients ‘happy’ or *hamamas*. This emotion word designated not only to an
internal, individual, emotional state but also a collective state that refers to positive relationships between groups.

Lambek recognises that there is significant value in “what we say and do and in the saying and doing themselves” (Lambek 2013: 155). He reinterprets the discussions of gifts and commodities and questions the emphasis on the object and materiality. He thus offers a rereading of Mauss to show that what circulates is not so much material objects but the actions of giving and receiving. Similarly, M. Strathern (1988) and Hirsch (1995) analyse aesthetics as that which elicits actions in others. As Mauss explained, the gift involves an obligation to give, an obligation to receive and an obligation to give back. With this event, the donor clan were fulfilling the obligation to give back to their *kandre lain* (uncles), showing gratitude for the food these relatives had provided for the big-man before he died. However, in order to ensure that the recipients fulfil their obligation to receive, the donors (in this case, also the hosts) performed various affective and aesthetic acts with the aim of eliciting a positive emotional response. This required the input and agency of market women as organisers of the event and as transactors of objects and affects (as embodied, social and ethical acts).

O’Hanlon (1993), working in Wahgi, and Hirsch (1995), writing about Fuyuge in Central Province, point out the significance of display and aesthetics for bringing about assessments and reactions in others. As Strathern (1988: 289) has argued, it is not what an object expresses that matters for people in PNG but the actions that it elicits in others. This is a key aspect of an economy of mutual recognition (Robbins 2009), where donors seek out the recipients’ reaction and simultaneously make themselves ‘visible’ through making relations appear (M. Strathern 2013). Hirsch (1995: 64) argues that the person (as in mind or body) is able to elicit an effect from another by manifesting itself in a concrete way. Ritual is a part of this process in PNG. Hirsch states that things can be done with objects in order to elicit
actions in what he refers to as coercive ways. He questions the anthropology of aesthetics as something concerned merely with objects and instead shows the way non-material actions are part of aesthetics, as moments that come into being and fade away. O’Hanlon (1993) has also demonstrated the importance of aesthetics in performances of dance in festive displays amongst men from Wahgi. He argues that it is the way assessments are made by spectators, as part of scrutiny of moral relations, that incite Wahgi men focus on appearance and performance in display (O’Hanlon 1993: 111). Here I do not investigate how assessments are made, nor do I know how the recipient side perceived this particular exchange. Instead, I am concerned with how the donors understood and explained the efforts they went to in presenting this ceremonial exchange of money.

In the marketplace, market women often kept money in bilums or pockets, tucked away and subtly disposed in small amounts when necessary. There is little eye contact made during a transaction. Customers drop money casually down to a spot close to the seller or hand it to the seller directly, and then pick up their desired produce according to the amount that they gave. The customer makes a calculation of the total based on the little cardboard price signs laid in front of the produce, and there is usually minimal discussion between the vendor and customer. Shoppers have usually evaluated whether prices are fair for the quality and quantity of the produce sold by the market vendor in question through careful and quiet observation of the range of sellers, and there is rarely any haggling. The market women clear the money away and tuck it under their tarpaulin sheets or discretely put it in their bilums, reluctant to show how much they have accumulated lest they be at risk of theft later. Although money is fundamental to many of the transactions, the visible place of money in the marketplace is modest, quiet and often made in small increments. The ceremonial use of money contrasts significantly with exchanges in the marketplace, and yet much of the amount on display in ceremony is accumulation of market takings.
The Hedpei Display: Aesthetics and Spectacle

It was evident that the hosts meant for this display to impress. I had seen food piled up neatly at other payment events, particularly for bridewealth, but this was the first time I saw money tied to bamboo and food accompanying it. I gasped at the scale, and it took me a while to comprehend what I was seeing. This was a display that aimed to be seen and to elicit a proper response. Building on Strathern’s concept of a moment of ‘wonder’, Da Col (2013) explains that catching an observer by surprise, and making them wonder, is part of the acts required to make objects appear as more than ‘things’, evidence of sociality and devices of exposure. In this display it was not just that the aesthetics of money created awe; the added integration of market foods and traditional garden foods displayed both productivity and fertility.

Magaret came up to stand with us, and I asked her why broccoli was also attached to the display. Taro, yams and sugarcane are typical ceremonial foods to find at such major ceremonial events because they have social value, but foods that ostensibly have no ceremonial value or prestige status, such as carrots, did not obviously add to the wealth payment. The answer was simple: “it is to look nice and add colour”. I then read the display differently. I saw that there were *tangets*, grasses used as decoration and flowers. This grid not only held up objects of value but looked vibrant and beautiful. Its appearance added to the spectacle and was made to be seen (M. Strathern 2013). The food items may have been added for their colour, but they also appeared as ornamental touches that associated the money with the ‘life’ of the land and soil. The money almost appeared to be growing out of the land, as though suspended on tree branches or the natural shoots of new bamboo.

In the case of this payment, women were major contributors to both the wealth being exchanged and the organisation of the event. Magaret told me that she had started growing broccoli six months in advance to sell in the market and had organised many of the other
mamas to do the same. Like moka (c.f. A. Strathern 1971; M. Strathern 1979), such events are the result of months of planning and galvanising networks of relations into action.

Each bamboo had a different denomination of money, which meant each one was either green or purple. The last one to the right was smaller than the others. I wondered if this meant the amount would be smaller, but later I noticed that it carried mostly notes of 50 kina, whereas the others were 20s or 10s. At the base of the frame were different-sized pigs tied up on ropes and snuffling around in the grass. Nihill (1989) describes the way 20 kina notes become equivalent to shells amongst Anganen in the Highlands and implies that there is a direct equivalence established between these shells and money, which allows them both to be used in exchanges.

A characteristic of money generally, and in PNG especially, is its ability to be hidden. In this context money was on display in a fashion that revealed the internal capacities of the group and its social power (M. Strathern 1999: 97; Pickles 2013b; Strathern and Stewart 1999). This money, pinned to bamboo, was an adornment, a show of what this group had achieved in its past and was looking to continue into the future through the relationships that the bamboo indexed (Robbins and Akin 1999: 18). This is in turn a show of strength and power, as A. Strathern (1979) explains:

Occasions of formal display are always the concern of a group, and what is displayed is the sum of individual effort – not the financial calculations and machinations through which valuables are obtained, not the political strategies which have kept the group together or the secret murder of enemies which has protected their number, but the end of these means: wealth, strength and power. (M. Strathern 1979).
What is really at stake is a comparison of people’s capacities rather than a numeric comparison of the objects themselves. Magaret explained that the men sitting in front of the display and talking were ‘leader men’: a local judge from the village court, a councillor, a church pastor and a couple of clan leaders. A number of these men later became orators and distributed money amongst the audience along with other members of the donor lain.

The men were flanked on either side by young women in full traditional dress. I had only seen such traditional dress (known in Tok Pisin as *bilas*) at school graduations in Goroka and later at the Goroka show. The vibrancy of their face paint, *bilum* (woven wool) dresses, and bird of paradise feathers complemented the greenery of the bamboo grid and its adornments. The young girls had white paint across their cheeks, with yellow dots and a red stripe down the centre of their noses. Their attire was slightly different to those who arrived from the other clan, dressed in darker colours of red, black and yellow. Whilst it was normal for women to wear this kind of decoration in marriage ceremonies up to the 1960s, Magaret explained it is only some people that do it now.

A similarity can be drawn between the decoration and dances of men in Hagen to the decoration of young women in this event: “decorations which act as a medium of display for the clan adorn its individual members” (A. Strathern 1979: 246). These girls were part of the display of their clan’s wealth and vitality. As the granddaughters of the deceased man whose name was being honoured in the exchange of wealth between him and his *kandre*, the girls represented the power and strength of the group in relationship to him as a big-man.

Furthermore, as Munn (1986: 100–103) suggested for Gawans in the Trobriand Islands of PNG, beauty is important to making exchange relations. Gawans present themselves in beautiful ways as one of their persuasive tools. Closer to Goroka, in the Western Highlands, O’Hanlon (1993) has suggested that displays are a necessary part of the assessments and evaluations that groups make of each other in the struggle for respect and influence. More
than mere aesthetics, how Wahgi performers present themselves influences how they are perceived by others. In particular, such displays are intended to showcase their strength as a group. The young women here were examples of the continuing reproduction of generations since this renowned leader had passed, as well as the generations spawned from his mother, whose brothers were coming to receive the *hedpei*.

One young woman was not dressed in traditional attire but walked around with a bamboo frame around her head with 50 kina notes attached to it, a living, breathing part of the display and a representation of the nexus of relations that the valuables were materialising (M. Strathern 2013). Valuables of the highest esteem within gifting economies are often adornments—Māori cloaks or *kula* armshells, for example—and have been important objects of exchange as a result (Graeber 2001: 93; Mauss 1967). In this instance, what is primarily an object of exchange (money) was transformed into an adornment. By wearing the money, this young woman was bringing it to life and representing the wealth of her clan. Marilyn Strathern (1979) argues that Hagen men reveal their social person on their skin—that the skin is where social relations are displayed for the eyes of others. By wearing money in this way, the woman became part of this group display of strength and wealth.

**Emotions and Recognition**

Those who choose to dress up frame why they do so in terms of emotion. When I asked an older woman I had become friends with why she was wearing full traditional *bilas*, considering that many of the other women in her clan had not\(^3\), she told me it was “to make

\(^3\) Although I cannot be sure as to why she dressed up and others did not, the effort fitted her general persona, an active sister and generous person who contributed widely to others at times of exchange or compensation. She lived alone, divorced, and supported by her sons. Her affective and aesthetic contributions here may have added to her social position within her clan maintaining her relational personhood despite being an older, single woman within her community—something that can leave women vulnerable to negative judgement from others.
people happy” (*long mekem ol hamamas*). In her answer she includes a referent to others, the way they may react to her appearance and her intention to bring about a positive feeling in them. It is notable that this market *mama* felt it important to dress traditionally for this occasion where large amounts of money were being exchanged specifically to elicit emotions in others.

It is commonly held in western thought that an emotion word serves the function of labelling an internal state and to communicate that state to others (Lutz 1982: 113). But as Lutz (1982) and Besnier (1990) point out, in parts of the Pacific, emotion words can be statements about relationships between people and events, and not necessarily reflections of one’s own internal state or that of others. In PNG, the emotion word *wanbel* has attracted attention for its meaning of being without conflict (Troolin 2013). Similarly, when *hamamas* is used as an explanation for acts, I interpret this to refer to the state of a collective other where there is a desire for positive ongoing relations, not just a state of harmony but of joy, expressed through dance, war cries, jumping and other embodied acts. These in turn contribute to transforming money into an object that materialises the relationships being established.

Here there is a contradictory aspect to the matter of intention. As many anthropologists have shown in the Highlands, there is a common reluctance to presume knowledge of another’s intentions or to state why they may have taken a particular action (Keane 2008b; Schieffelin 2008). However, to bring about a reaction or an emotion in another is deemed moral and explanatory. The result of all these touches of colour, arrangement and composition was an impressive show of this clan’s wealth and vitality. The dress of the women added to making this a ‘special’ event or spectacle and was specifically motivated to effect and bring about feelings in others.
Hirsch (1995: 61) argues that aesthetics does not mean objects hold meaning in themselves; rather, it is what is done to them that matters for eliciting action in others. Hirsch (1995) draws on Strathern’s formulation of aesthetics in stating “it is not what the object ‘says’ or ‘expresses’ that is the key issue for Melanesians, but what it does” (1988: 61). Hirsch (1995) argues that wealth should be understood in terms of coercive strategies, and that objects are only meaningful in PNG in a context of action, particularly coercive action in the form of ritual (Hirsch 1995: 68). However, the notion of coercion implies the potential use of force. Instead, the use of aesthetics and affect in Goroka are more persuasive than forceful and involve a desire to bring good feelings in a collective other and continue relations through time as well as impress their collective strength on the recipients. However, the donors conduct such exchanges with humility, men’s speeches infused with significant appreciation of the other side’s feelings and contributions. This is part of an economy of mutual recognition, where ceremonial events bring parties together in an act of common humanity.

Honneth (2001; 2003; 1996) has questioned how human beings come to communicate that they recognise one another’s humanity and their status as full emotional and spiritual people drawn upon by Robbins (2009: 52). In Goroka, groups and individuals show recognition of others’ humanity materially through acts including exchanges of food and money, and immaterially through attendance to events, spending time with people, embodied expressions of emotion, and words. Saying ‘thank you’ to people for their time, food contributions and affective support was an important part of all the ceremonial exchanges that I attended. Such events are also a time when individuals are recognised for their achievements. In the following narrative, I demonstrate the series of performative acts, singing and speech that displayed mutual recognition in a back-and-forth of movement and sound. This formality opened the space for marking collective and individual connections through time.
A Reciprocal Acknowledgement

Four times the donor Ave lain came back and forth greeting their guests on the road before Ruvex were let in through the gate. Ruvex, the kandre lain were waiting in the driveway. The Ruvex clan kept singing out their war cries and dancing. Soon the calls and dances of the hosts eased, and the rest of guests made their way inside, individuals shaking hands and hugging those that they knew as the field filled up with an audience.

The women greeted each other by moving forward and backward in a collective wave as two or three men came in behind them to call out the name of their clan in a war cry, “Aaaaveeruzzaaa ha ha ha ha!” They stood to the left of the display, facing the Ave lain on the right. The Ave women were still singing and dancing, and one of the leaders behind the table started shouting at them loudly again, telling them they were delaying the proceedings.

The expansive grassy area in front of the bamboo display was then full of people. They formed a calm semi-circle, leaving an empty space in front of the table where the leader-men sat. Throughout the initial meetings and the proceedings, women on both the giving and the receiving side were bouncing on two feet as they called out “Oh oh oh oh oh!” in staccato, high-pitched calls, some holding tagents, others wearing tagnet skirts. They were distinguishable by their differently coloured face paint, and those in full bilas wore headdresses with bird of paradise feathers that signalled their clans.

On the edge of the crowd was a woman dressed in bilas. I knew her from the market, as she was known for growing pineapples and starting a bilum-exporting company. I told her she looked amazing; she thanked me and explained, “This payment is for the kandre lain, the family of the old man’s mother. It is to make them happy (long hamamasim ol).” These women may not have been making the formal speeches, but they were critical to the affective
efforts that went into creating the atmosphere of (what was meant to be) a joyous occasion, what the women themselves deemed important and desirable for the event.

Jona then started to shout and address the crowd.

Thank you, everyone. I am very happy. Our father had a lot of children, two girls and one boy. He died and for a long time we have not given you anything. Now we have got money and have called you to come. You had a daughter and she gave birth to this boy, so now we give you payment to say thank you. This boy became a big-man here and he had many wives and lots of children. He was a good man. He looked after people and he was a nice person. So thank you to all of you Ruvex lain.

The speech of the man made clear that this was a moment of thanks and gratitude to recognise the life of the old papa (a big-man) who had died and remember his behaviours, his generosity and leadership. In the speech the various clans related to him were named. The explanation for why the hosts were making this payment of cash, pigs and food was down to the care that the kandre lain had given the old man before he passed away. As the mother of the deceased man’s brothers, this relationship involves an obligation of visiting and providing food for the descendants of a woman that marries and lives elsewhere. This is reciprocated with wealth payments at later times. These aspects of reciprocity, the exchange of material items for somewhat immaterial efforts, are couched in emotional terms including gratitude.

As Maschio (1998) argues, an important dimension to ‘the spirit of the gift’ is contained in the gift’s embodiment of personal memory of relationships. He argues that the rationale for, and objectives of, particular exchange scenarios matter, and when explained in emotional terms, these become key to the narrative of the gift. These emotional narratives constitute a moral perception of gifting. Maschio (1998: 90) explains that some moments in ceremonial
exchange are specifically about either bringing about particular affects or performing particular emotions as aspects of “ritually patterned drama”. In the course of this event there was pattern and spontaneity, as well as elements of drama. However, throughout was a negotiation of the acts that constituted a mutual recognition of the other and a valuing the relationships that connected them. These came with contestations and conflicts over who were the rightful recipients and who were the donors. Time and space were collapsed in this moment as some guests were trying to contribute cash to the donors, hoping to receive part of the hedpei later.

There seemed to be various moments of some upset throughout the proceedings. After the leader’s speeches, the main leader of Ave yelled out, “You keep your money; we want to give to you now!” (Mipela laik pilai. Yupela holim moni bilong yu. Mipela laik givim yu!) Magaret later explained that this was because members of the Ruvex clan were trying to make contributions (to mark the death of the ancestor) even though they were supposed to be the guests and donors. However, these contributors were aiming to gift something so that they would soon receive something back. These kinds of ‘late shows’, appearing seven years after the father had died, was quite normal for prestations. The temporality of the exchanges, i.e. that there was a time lag between exchanges, was irrelevant: what mattered was the sequencing. By contributing prior to receiving, the continuity of these relationships was being maintained and mutual recognition achieved. A small group stood in front of the table and one of the leader-men said they would call out the names of individual families. Before they got this going, some of the host men were getting angry with the women dancers; as part of the dancing and welcoming of the event, Ave women started putting money inside the tops of the Ruvex. Then one of the leader-men called out at the dancers, “Stop! There is big rain coming, we need to be quick!” He was surrounded by a group of other men, all of them
drinking open cans of SP beer, an aspect of the jovial atmosphere such exchanges often had, however in this case appeared to fuel heightened emotions.

**Stability and Flow: Bamboo and Play Money**

Robbins and Akin explain that currencies in PNG embody both social stability and social flows, required elements for social reproduction. Currencies can be at once owned, held and static and simultaneously circulated and put into motion (Robbins and Akin 1999: 18). Money was both presented in a stable form affixed to bamboo and circulated in rapid movement and flow as *pilai* (play) money. “We want to ‘play’ money now” called out one of the leader-men as the dancers were cleared away, and individual families were beckoned according to men’s names, and given smaller denominations of money whilst dancers called out and bounced around.

During follow-up conversations with Magaret, Jona and their relatives, I learnt about the preparations before the event and their explanations and reflections on it afterwards. Robbins and Akin (1999: 18) highlight the significance of stability and flow in PNG’s currencies as they feature in social reproduction. Ceremonial exchange events link the present and the future, creating a momentary sense of joy and strengthening ongoing intergenerational relationships.

Some days after the event, I asked Magaret and Jona about the money on the bamboo. The following is an excerpt from our conversation.

**Olivia:** This thing is hard for me to understand. For what reason should money go on the bamboo sticks like that?

**Jona:** We gave the bamboo to the family of our mother’s brothers [their uncles]. Our mother’s brothers cooked food and gave it to our father. When our father died, we are
supposed to pay back this *dinau* (loan, debt). Each bamboo went to a family that killed a pig for our *papa*. With each pig, there is a bamboo. To pay back this debt, we tie money to the bamboo.

Magaret: We give them money on bamboo so that they will be happy.

Jona: To make sure payback is 100%. We pay back the pig and we pay back the same again in money.

Me: So the bamboo sticks have the same money as the price of the pig?

Wesley: Yes, one pig is 1,000 kina. So we give this back again on the bamboo.

Strathern & Stewart (1999) note that whilst money takes on a representational capacity of gifts, it cannot stand alone. In this display, money was surrounded by other objects: pigs, fresh produce, banana trees, bamboo. It was made into a ceremonial gift through its accompaniment of these objects, the acts of dancing and singing, and an affect employed through *pilai*. The fact that the money on the bamboo is of the same monetary or market value of the pig given along with it is notable. Like pigs, money came to represent the ongoing flow of relationships: “Currencies join the past, the present and future in an unending flow of repayment and future reciprocation” (Akin and Robbins 1999: 18).

Some ethnographers have understood pigs in the Highlands to be symbolic of the relationships women have to their gardens, to the land they cultivate and the bodily substances infused into the pigs, and thus representing various parts of social relations through time (Strathern and Stewart 1999; Lipuma 1999). Pigs are now assessed and quantified in monetary terms (a ‘500 kina’ pig, ‘1,000 kina’ pig) referring to their size. Nonetheless, pigs have retained their place within ceremonial contexts in the Highlands.
rather than disappearing as with shells (Nihill 1989; A. Strathern and Stewart 2000; Stewart and Strathern 1998).

Unlike pigs or shells, money can be easily divided and recirculated, but also must go through processes of transformation in order for it to be the right ‘kind’ of money. Jona’s sister-in-law Gee explained they had to find new notes to tie to the bamboo as only pristine notes could be used in this exchange (Nihill 1989: 153).

Gee: I went to the bank and got new ones. We get new clean ones from the bank so that they will stand up straight. It is about the decoration. People see it and are happy. They will be excited.

Olivia: One thing I noticed is that each of the bamboo have different notes. Some of them were 5 kina, some were 50 kina. Is there any reason for this?

Magaret: It was just for decoration. To make it colourful.

Jona: The thing that matters most is the amount that we are giving. That is very important.

Whilst the women in this interview emphasised the aesthetics of the presentation (‘to make it colourful’), Jona explained that the monetary value was most important. However, both the display of quantity and the colourful aesthetics were necessary for this display to have impact and be clearly visible as a valuable and ‘wealth’ in the eyes of its recipients (Graeber 1996). The bamboo money (mambu) was for specific amounts, allocated to particular families and people who had performed the care work for the old man before he died. The bamboo represented the large amount of money going to the different families in the clan and the enduring relationships through time that both clans were maintaining through partaking in
Foster (1990b) explains a similar exchange for a mortuary feast on Tanga island, where he argues that the gift of cooked food and pork construct the recipients as perishable and in need of durability, and simultaneously constructs those who gift the consumables as the source of ‘durability’ as they are the recipients of shells. Building on Strathern (1984b) he considers viewing exchange in terms of what the attributes of the objects exchanged suggest about the attributes of the persons involved in the exchange. In that context, the mortuary feast is part of a process where lineages replace their dead. A consideration of the qualities manifested in the two forms of money in Goroka could suggest a desire by the donors of the bamboo for enduring, stable relationships whilst also emphasising the strength and status of their ancestor who they remember and seek to compensate the care that conducted by the kandre during his elderly life.

The donors used money in this event as a token of value and turned it into an aesthetic object, an adornment hoped to elicit a positive response from the recipients. Its value in the commodity economy gave it the status of something valuable. Thus whilst it was readily accepted into this ceremonial realm of exchange, it was adapted to an aesthetic where relationships are displayed and reproduced through visual displays.

**Pilai Moni**

One novel aspect of this hedpei was pilai (play) money, a term used to refer specifically to the acts of gifting this money in a way that differed to other forms of gift exchange. This came after the leader’s welcome and prior to the presentation of the bamboo. It involved smaller amounts of money being stuffed into guests’ pockets, mouths and handbags in order to ‘make them happy’. Both the words used in the speeches and the performance and aesthetics of this display suggest an attempt to construct a particular narrative around the gift as that which is repaying the care that was carried out for the deceased leader, and the
ongoing social relationships between his mother’s brothers’ clan and his own, showing a desire for recognition from the kandre lain.

The movement and velocity of food being exchanged as pilai money in the ceremony, compared to the stability of the mambu (money on the bamboo) money, demonstrates the affective dimensions of this event and the difference in social relations being established between the two forms of monetary exchange. Whilst money fixed to the bamboo or mambu was to go to specific people, the money handed out in a jovial manner was in smaller increments and seemingly according to random names being called out and people coming forward from the audience to receive their share. I found it difficult to keep track of who was receiving how much as women and men took cash notes from their own pockets or bilums and placed them directly in the hands, pockets and mouths of those whose names they called out.

As I asked about the pilai money in the group interview, Jona, Magaret and their relatives Gee and Wesley all started laughing. They were laughing at my observations of small details of the event and curiosity about what to them appeared banal and unimportant. Nevertheless, they took pity on me and attempted to explain the intention behind this aspect of the exchange.

Olivia: So before you gave money you had play money?

Gee: Yes. We were doing it to make them happy.

As Lutz shows, in the Pacific, emotion words can be statements about relationships between people and events and not necessarily reflections of one’s own internal state or that of others. ‘Happy’, or hamamas, was a term used generally to refer to the nature of a person within a relationship or context. To be happy, hamamas, was similar to being wanbel, or in agreement (Troolin 2013; Hukula 2017), and could be applied to a collective of people, the lain, rather
than as a representation of an internal state of a single person. Instead this is a state of contentment within a particular social situation that can be expressed on behalf of a whole e.g. *mipela hamamas olsem yupela kam* (we (extensive plural) are happy that you (plural) have come). Emotions are generalised to a side, a collective of people or a clan who are, in that moment of mutual recognition with another clan, presenting themselves as unanimous in their feeling, even though the reality usually involves extensive negotiation, talk and debate.

In trying to understand the nature of *pilai* or ‘play’ money, I went with what I understood it to mean in English, that this was for fun, for the atmosphere or the festivities, to make the occasion joyous.

   Olivia: So this money isn’t serious? It is just to make people happy? This isn’t the real *hedpei* – it is just to make people happy?

   Gee: No, it is still part of the *hedpei*.

I tried to understand this further but struggled to ask questions that would elicit a clearer view of what *pilai* money aimed to achieve. Magaret intervened, “It is for those people who helped but don’t have a bamboo, or big name. So we still call their names. To make them happy.” In this Magaret demonstrates the desire to enable recognition of those who were attending from the recipient clan but who had not specifically contributed to the food given to the *papa* before he died. These are people who may not be leaders or specifically related to this particular exchange relationship but had nonetheless contributed in some ways and were noticed by the hosts of the ceremony. However, the way in which the money was gifted remained a mystery to me. Magaret explained their intentions as trying to control or overpower actions of the recipients in a jovial manner with the result of producing an entertaining spectacle for others in the audience.
Olivia: Okay, I see, and why did you put it in people’s mouths?

Magaret: To make them happy, put it in their hands, in their pockets, inside the *bilas*. Sometimes we put it in their mouths to stop them making noise – they can’t make war cries too much if we shut them up with the money.

Beeman (1993: 380) argues that making a spectacle involves heightened emotions: “The mere event of displaying these symbolic representative elements in a special framed context is enough to elicit strong positive emotional responses from the observing public”. By putting money playfully in their mouths, pockets and bags these families and individuals were publicly and personally recognised in that moment by Magaret and her *lain*, with the goal of making those receiving money happy or *hamamas*. By receiving the money as their name was called out, the recipients also demonstrated mutual recognition of the Ave *lain*, agreeing to engage in the spectacle. As Hirsch (1995) explains, such aesthetic efforts are part of persuading others to act. These were direct attempts at elicitation in that the intentions were to produce a particular form of reaction (M. Strathern 1988: 297):

Acts must appear in a form other than the agent’s intention, and to that extent are ‘separated’ from the agent. Furthermore, the subsequent outcome of acts, their effect, is always embodied in another (relation, person). If force is applied to an external object it is to display the imprint of one’s own effectiveness, and in this sense to make the object part of oneself.

In this case, the intention to create a joyous occasion was not separate from the agent; it was consciously an attempt to display one’s own effectiveness through bringing about a positive emotional reaction in others. The giving of money as *pilai* added movement, energy and noise to the occasion, emphasising the capacity for money to flow and move at different
velocities. The benefit of this was felt by both sides. As Jona explained, it was not just about making the other side happy but also about celebrating their own joy at having this debt brought to an end36; “It is a happy time. This hevi is finished now. We are celebrating. We put it in their pockets, in their mouths, in their bags.”

The act of placing money in the pockets, handbags or mouths of the recipients is performative, validating and authenticating money as an object that is materialising social relations and contributing to fostering mutual recognition (Lambek 2013; Robbins 2009). Foster explains, “exchange objects… function as the concrete embodiment of the relations that exchange creates between persons” (Foster 1995: 170). However, it is only these acts of pinning money to bamboo or forcing it into people’s pockets that can bring about the necessary decommoditisation, as Lambek terms it, of money to transform it into a materialised object of value that is no longer money (Lambek 2013: 154). It is through ritual acts that this process is achieved. Yet the efforts are momentary and temporary: once the acts are over, money once again becomes the materialisation of exchange value, a commodity high in demand and scarce.

The emotions of people are acknowledged and expressed in language and gesture and in transformative acts. Smiling faces, singing, calling out war cries and embraces were all attempts to make this a joyous occasion as acts that produced value. As M. Strathern (1988: 297) states, the outcome of these forces can be played out in the actions of others, and this may result in embodied, emotional reactions that are unpredictable and seemingly chaotic. Affect is a concept that captures this unpredictable and disorderly aspect of bodily reactions,

36 As Gregory (1982: 47) states, “gift exchange – the exchange of like-for-like – establishes an unequal relationship of domination between the transactors. This comes about because the giver usually is regarded as superior to the receiver”. A. Strathern (1971) suggests that this superiority may or may not imply political control: this depends on the individual systems in question. I do not have information regarding the political dimensions of this exchange or an explanation of who had power over who.
and adds complexity to the notion that a subject can act in terms of its own singular agency. In the following section, I suggest that the efforts to create joy and excitement at this ceremony, through the scale and velocity of actions taken with respect to these two forms of money, built a climax that could not reconcile the difference between the receiving parties.

Conflicts and Tensions: An Abrupt Ending

In describing Hagen exchanges, M. Strathern explains that these events are tense moments because, open statements are being made about otherwise intimate matters: “what is ordinarily hidden is… brought out into the open” (M. Strathern 1979). In this section, I turn to the tensions that appeared to be bubbling under the surface of the exchange and finally erupted into a drunken brawl.

While money can clearly be used to promote and maintain social relationships, the inclusion of money as a gift may add to the stress and pressure of such events. Emotions and bodies have been noted by social theorists for their “dramatic and turbulent qualities, along with the random, the chaotic and the spontaneous” (Wetherell 2012: 13). This event seemed to randomly change from a happy occasion to one of unpredicted conflict and drama. The format of the exchange led to an argument internal to the recipient clan, which became a fight. However, I noticed tensions rising from the beginning of the proceedings, beginning with men on the donor side yelling at the women who were performing their own ritual acts.

Each person whose name was called out to receive part of the pilai money was greeted from the audience by women jumping up and down and calling out their war cry. Some of the men in the organising group became frustrated by this, arguing the women were slowing down the proceedings and that it was soon to rain so they needed to be quick. The women refused this, arguing they wanted to make their guests hamamas, and continued. However, there were also tensions within the group of people who received the payment, some of them feeling as
though members of their own clan were receiving too much money in the form of pilai, and wanting to move on to the exchange of the bamboo posts and pigs. The handing out of money and singing went on for almost three hours. The format of pilai money giving was being questioned by individuals who thought it was going on too long or that the wrong people were receiving money.

I sat legs crossed in the distance trying to ascertain who was giving what to whom. When a man lurched towards us, a woman nearby laughed and said, “People have been drinking for days”. Although the crowd was laughing and teasing the few men that had drunk too much, soon the fever of the crowd seemed to rise. All of a sudden, just as the pilai money was coming to an end and Ave were about to present the bamboo sticks, there was yelling and screaming as a fight broke out in the middle of the crowd. I was grabbed by the arm by my elderly mother, Pake, as she yelled to me as her namesake, “Pake! Pake! We need to go now! Run! Run!” As the crowd suddenly changed direction, hundreds of people were running towards us, with punches flying and women grabbing babies and heading for the hills. The fun and games of the pilai money had exploded into fear and fighting and in an instant my state of passive observation was transformed into a rapid need to move; a strong push to act rushed through my body. In hindsight, in reflecting on the conflict, I had felt torn between a curiosity to know what was going on and the anguish on my friends’ faces that suggested I needed to move as fast as possible in the opposite direction.

Jona later explained the anger that sparked this moment was from the men who were receiving the bamboo money. They resented the distribution of money that was going to others:

Jona: One went to Simone, the man who killed a pig for our papa’s feast.

He was the one that was angry. Next man was Robert. They are cousin-
brothers. The other man to receive a bamboo was Robin. The other two bamboos didn’t go to single men but to groups that bought beer and chicken for our papa before he died. It went to the group of people that contributed these little bits. Then another bamboo went to the children of the sister of papa, with one live pig.

Olivia: So that is why the fight broke out within their own clan? Simone fighting with people in their clan?

Magaret: Yeah. Simone started it.

Olivia: Why was Simone angry?

Magaret: Because he said we were calling the name of lots of other people and he wanted all the money for himself. He is selfish. He wanted himself to take the money.

In this instance, the desire to take the majority of money for himself was deemed selfish, a negative connotation and an attempt to belittle Simone’s behaviour. The drive to give pilai money to many people in such a public way can be considered in this light. To perform this was to present themselves as generous and giving. Magaret had already explained that the money that she and the other women handed out was out of their personal market earnings. They each held an amount in their dresses and bilums that they chose to give out to others as pilai money – in her case it was 1,500 kina. All of those contributing calculated how much they each individually held in their pockets at the beginning of the ceremony, and how much was on the bamboo, in order to be fully aware of how much they collectively were giving away on that day.
Magaret explained that Simone thought they were giving too much money as pilai money to those members of his clan that had not directly contributed to the papa’s life. He was also angry because he thought he was not being paid enough considering what he had previously done for the papa. Magaret considered his anger a result of his selfishness. I wanted to ascertain whether he was angry purely for himself or on behalf of his family. There was disagreement amongst the organisers as to what was really going on:

Olivia: He wanted it just for himself or for his whole hauslain?

Magaret: No, just for him.

Jona: No, for his village.

Wesley: He wanted just himself and his blood brothers to get it. But not the whole clan. He wanted just him to get it.

Magaret then conceded, and agreed Simone wanted it for himself and his brothers. She distinguished this from the sharing of the money between the wider clan. However, later I found out that Simone was under pressure from others to whom he owed money, which situates him within a number on ongoing reciprocal exchanges that he felt the need to ‘pay off’.

A couple of days after the hedpei I was working in the broccoli gardens with Moses, who lived in the neighbouring village but did not attend the event with us. He asked, “Olivia, have you got any good stories from that hedpei with the people of Ave?”

“Only what you already heard, Paps, about the fight, and the singing and dancing I told you about. And then me and Mama Pake running away into the gardens,” I responded. He proceeded to explain what had occurred and why Simone was angry.
Oh yes, I know one of the brothers is still very angry about the whole thing. Simone spent a lot of money on this and he cooked a lot of food for the Papa, but then all different kinds of people came to get the money. Simone was angry because he didn’t get enough money in return for all the food he cooked for this Papa. Another man who sells betel nut in West Goroka helped Simone with the food that he cooked. But when Simone didn’t get enough money this caused big problems for them, and the buai man was angry.

Whilst I do not know how much Simone had contributed in terms of the monetary value of the food he bought and cooked for the Papa, it is clear that he felt this was not reciprocated appropriately. Simone had also borrowed money from a buai seller in town and needed to compensate him for his help: he had debts to pay off to someone who was not his ‘blood brothers’ or clan members but rather a businessman that lent him money as a form of ‘investment’ in such an obligation. Simone was functioning within two transactional spheres that overlapped and ended up causing tension for him and for those to whom he was indebted. As Bloch and Parry put it, short-term and long-term transactional orders are related but separate, and can be understood as “on the one hand transactions concerned with the reproduction of the long-term social or cosmic order; on the other, a ‘sphere’ of short-term transactions concerned with the arena of individual competition” (1989: 24). The short-term interests of individuals are to satisfy their immediate needs, and these may run counter to – or facilitate – their longer-term collective interests. For instance, the marketplace can be considered a space of short-term transactions in that individuals satisfy their needs for both money and sustenance through these monetary transactions. However, the acquisition of money in this sphere can also be used for contributions made to long-term transaction orders of ceremonial, collective payments.
Much of the economic activity that is carried out in the cash economy, i.e., short-term transactions, are subsidising the long-term transactions of ceremonial exchange that are a major part of people’s lives. The marketplace and other cash-generating activities become necessary for social reproduction. A whole network of relationships depended on the money being transacted during that hedpei, and this added to the tension over who should get what. Such exchanges can be used to cement the bonds of kinship, but they can also test and break those bonds (Bloch and Parry 1989: 9).

**Conclusion**

In order to understand how and why money becomes a gift in the Highlands, it is necessary to pay attention to the emotional, aesthetic and affective elements of such exchanges. This builds on the work of O’Hanlon (1993), LiPuma (1999) and Stewart and Strathern (2002b) examining the symbolism of money. Such an approach recognises the significant role of women in large-scale exchange events as they dress up, perform different affects and organise much of the financial logistics beforehand. In Goroka today, it seems women do not seek out their own forms of ceremonial exchange such as the wok meri system of Daulo in the 1980s (Sexton 1982, 1984, 1986; Warry 1986) but rather have their own position within collective exchanges. Women are active organisers and transactors of this ritual event; yet the efforts to create an entertaining and fun moment can heighten tensions, as some people have significant material, emotional and political investments in the process.

The materiality of money is particularly important. If it were not in the form of lightweight paper (now plastic), it may not be so easy to hide and to reveal, or to present in relationship to other valuables and enable it to flow between bodies. In Goroka people use aesthetics and affect to turn money into a ceremonial valuable and divide it into different kinds of ‘special monies’. My inclusion of emotions and affects in our understanding of economies develops
the idea that both material and immaterial elements circulate in ceremonial exchange (Hirsch 1995: 61). The immaterial elements that make a gift exchange are just as vital as the material ones. An array of emotions is expressed and acknowledged during such exchanges. Tensions can arise between the material aspects of how much money is being given, to whom and for what purpose, and the immaterial, experiential aspects where the donors aim to provide an occasion that will ensure their kandre will accept the payment they have to offer. To make the kandre lain hamamas is to ensure that their social obligations through time have been reconciled and that the peaceful connections between groups is maintained.

Nonetheless, there is also ambivalence about the amount of money that should be given, and conflicts often arise in such events. Whilst I cannot state that these conflicts are because of money per se, I do suggest that the efforts of ritual performance are attempts to limit the commodity aspects of money, yet tensions can still run high, and some people are inevitably unhappy. As Maschio (1998) has suggested, there are both narratives and counter-narratives of the gift that people use to explain why they give things and how. In this instance, it was not merely narratives but performance, actions and speech that were used in attempts to manage the boundaries of the gift exchange, and these were punctuated by uncontrolled, unplanned and alcohol-fuelled anger. The outburst of anger was perhaps unsurprising, matching the energy put into attempts to elicit feelings of hamamas or joy. The conflict resulted from a tension between money as compensation for the whole clan and for just a few members. The long history of relationships amongst relatives, kin and neighbours meant that those who were giving and receiving were embroiled in complex historical and present networks of exchange, and some were significantly more invested in receiving this payment than others.

In the next chapter, the perceptions and subjectivities of women regarding marriage exchanges are analysed. Both this chapter and the next highlight the active role women play in ceremonial transactions and the (potentially) increased agency they have in these matters.
as a result of being market vendors. As with the other chapters, this shows elements of complementarity and antagonism that play out in negotiated power dynamics between men and women within both marriage relations and wider intergroup dynamics. Here I demonstrated that women play a key part in ritual processes, including both their material and immaterial aspects, and yet they also continue to hold the position of ‘producers’ of wealth that is formally ‘transacted’ by men (M. Strathern 1972). There is both a continuity with the past and a shifting dynamic in the present as the cash economy opens up new ways to enable women as transactors as well as producers (M. Strathern 1972; Sexton 1986).
Chapter Eight. Money, Marriage and Gendered Agencies Part Two: My Own *braidprais* I Shall Pay

It was supposed to be about saying thanks to the parents for bringing up the woman and training her and showing their appreciation, but now men think it is like they are buying her.

—Athena, a young woman from Henganofi working at the University of Goroka

Making peace is the real meaning of the term *braidprais*; it brings friendship and reunion of two disputing clans; they share food, exchange pigs, shells; it is peace making.

—Sawan, middle-aged, from Goroka, local NGO representative for women’s health issues in PNG

In this chapter, I explore the nature of women’s subjectivities with regards to bridewealth exchanges in Goroka and demonstrate the complexities of their agency. This chapter builds on Chapter Two by considering the issue of marriage as an institution through bridewealth payments, adding to an insight of what the experience of marriage can be for some women. In Chapter Two, I discussed how women deal with money in their relationships and how they conceptualise the effect it has on their husbands. In this chapter, I examine how different women think and feel about money as a component of bridewealth exchanges and about the process of marriage transactions. Through this examination I build on the overall thesis that women are recognised by others through their place within ceremonial exchange, and
contribute to giving objects, people and events value through meaningful affective and aesthetic acts.

According to Gregory (1982: 63), the practice of bridewealth exchange is clearly the result of “male dominance” in PNG. Yet in Goroka today, there are multiple interpretations of what bridewealth means. For many of the women that I spoke to, bridewealth is a moment of recognition for the loss to their families, a way of showing gratitude, a marker of their own place in maintaining ongoing relationships between groups. For Caroline Jones (2011), who examines analyses of bridewealth across cultural contexts, the assumption that bridewealth payments are a symptom of women’s inferiority is a reflection of the often-male European anthropologists who have analysed these exchanges. Jones argues that it is the devaluation of women’s work in the western male academics’ own contexts, especially that of caring for others, that means the compensation for these efforts are seen in negative terms. Similarly, Ogbu (1978), writing about the African context, questions anthropologists’ bafflement regarding why marriage payments are paid, and points to the importance of public legitimacy that these exchanges give to relationships between men and women, and in turn the rights that women gain from the exchanges. In Goroka, bridewealth payments are perceived as legitimising marriage relationships by kin and as recognition of their women’s worth. Women also perceive these exchanges as recognition of the efforts and emotional loss of their families. However, some women in Goroka see these exchanges as explicitly shifting the nature of their agency as well. Anthropologists have preferred the term bridewealth exchange as this emphasises the ongoing exchanges of different forms of wealth between groups, as opposed to brideprice, which implies a commodity transaction where women are assigned a monetary value (Jolly 2015: 16).

The question of what marriage payments mean has long been of interest to anthropologists, beginning with the early writings of Evans-Pritchard (1931). Anthropologists’ reluctance to
accept the perspective of missionaries – that these exchanges are symptomatic of societies that devalue women and see them as mere objects to be exchanged for interested gains – has shaped the discussion around this issue. However, interest in bridewealth also reflects the cultural milieu that many anthropologists come from, that is, societies where the nuclear family is the norm and romantic love marriages have dominated since the Victorian era.

Amongst my own peers in the UK, there is a common assumption that we, especially women, should have free choice over who we ‘love’ and should choose when to marry and settle into a (usually) nuclear family household. Of course, across the world such individualised notions of love, marriage or choice have not always predominated, and the place that marriage has in a broader scheme of relations and what it means for both masculine and feminine constructs of personhood is often of primary importance. The contrast between the liberal and largely Christian-influenced ideas of marriage in western contexts and what are perceived to be marriage unions with unequal relations between men and women in other cultural contexts has fuelled interest in bridewealth exchanges (Oyewumi 2002). Of course, there is a paradox here considering the often-patriarchal aspects of marriage in western contexts also where weddings symbolise women becoming men’s property (with the woman walked down the aisle by her father and handed over to her husband, then taking his surname as her own) 37.

Women in Goroka have complex and conflicting agencies where their desires both are part of their relational personhood and demonstrate autonomous will (Lepani 2015; Théry 2009). They partake as transactors in ceremonial exchange, both materially and immaterially, and these exchanges entail both recognition of others’ emotional states and opportunities to publicly display emotions associated with this moment of a woman leaving her clan. As

37 As with bridewealth ceremonies in Goroka, there are of course huge variations in how people enact weddings in western contexts today, and many reasons why traditions such as these continue regardless of what they may appear to represent about male proprietorship of women and patriarchy. Like bridewealth exchange, weddings are important moments in which to make a relationship publicly legitimate, consolidate obligations between partners and share with relatives or friends the parents’ moment of loss of the married couple.
noted in Chapter Two, women have a relational agency, where they make choices depending on their sense of connectedness and responsibility to their kin. Lepani (2015: 52) similarly examines the gendered forms of relational personhood and simultaneous acts of individual autonomy amongst women in the Trobriand Islands. Many of the women who I include in this chapter act with others in mind (M. Strathern 1988: 272) and yet maintain an autonomous sense of choice over their lives. Bridewealth exchanges, rather than ‘objectifying’ women, also provide a moment for them to express and experience their subjectivity. However, these exchanges are also a structural element of kin relations as marriage is generally not permitted within the clan, which means people intermarry with other clans, and bridewealth serves as the legitimation of these relationships (Stewart and Strathern 2002a: 16). As one man described it, “Bridewealth is our equivalent of a wedding ring”, referring to the public act of exchanging rings at western weddings where the betrothed wear rings to display their union, and simultaneously demonstrate that they ‘belong’ to someone in a monogamous and life-long partnership.

Furthermore, western feminist concerns with bridewealth payments and arranged marriages also stem from an understanding of agency as that which resides in the individual who should have rights to exercise choice and autonomy over their lives in any given moment. However, this position runs counter to the sense of obligation and responsibility, i.e., the values of maintaining relationality and kinship that exist across many societies through marriage. As Ogbu (1983) observes across African cultures, and in response to Comaroff (1980), the importance of legitimacy and thus recognition of the relationship by others is a constant rationale for marriage transactions. This aspect is similarly important throughout PNG. However, exchanges are also a matter of the aesthetics of relationships.
Analysing bridewealth exchanges reveals a great deal about gender relations and women’s changing values and lifestyles in an urbanising PNG. It shows the continuing importance of marriage practices when many others have changed or been lost (such as magical flutes kept secret from women and played during male initiations), illustrates the moral tensions that lie between the individual and the collective, individual property and relationality, and tests ideas of value-making. I suggest that examinations of bridewealth should pay attention to the recognition that women perceive it attracts for those that nurtured them and themselves. This speaks to bigger issues of how we understand what it means to be valued by others and in relation to others as part of economies of recognition (Honneth 2001; Fraser and Honneth 2003). Recognition is about feeling valued by others. It is this that Hegel (1979) and subsequently Honneth (1996) suggested is fundamental to human well-being, and that Hegel and Mauss (1967) posit requires the exchange of material items, as well as non-material acts (Robbins 2009). Here I contribute to the discussions regarding the changing nature of bridewealth payments, how these are perceived locally, and the place of money in these payments by emphasising the important ways women and their relationships to others are recognised through these exchanges.

Bridewealth payments are the series of transactions made between two groups of people affiliated with a man and woman which form what is, within Papua New Guinean constitutional law, marriage (Sykes 2013). Whilst some women perceive final payments of bridewealth as indicating a shift in their freedoms in relation to their husbands, many see these payments as allowing them access to resources they would not have otherwise. They gain their own house and gardens, formalised protection from their brothers or kandre lain (mother’s brothers) and their husband’s families (in-laws), and personal recognition for themselves and their family. Hence women are significantly invested in these exchanges in multiple ways.
In this chapter I begin by noting how anthropologists have attempted to answer questions about bridewealth and the impact that money in these exchanges is thought to have had in PNG. I then describe the scenarios that complicate the notion that men are exchanging women as objects, a notion that both negates women’s agency and implies they are not themselves transactors. Third, I give examples of scenarios where women pay their own braidprais, part of what they see as a necessity to demonstrate recognition for their family’s efforts and to fulfil their desire for public legitimisation of their relationship when choosing who and when they want to marry. Finally, I turn to the complexities of women’s agency, as women are positioned paradoxically within bridewealth today. For some, these exchanges signify a real change in their freedoms; for others they signify recognition of their own worth and of their families’ efforts. How and when these exchanges are enacted today has little correspondence to when men and women start cohabiting or when they have children together. Thus the practice of bridewealth exchange continues to primarily bring lains together, and what this means for the subjective experience of women varies significantly.

**Understanding Bridewealth**

The meaning and function of bridewealth payments in the Highlands, and in other parts of the world such as Sub-Saharan Africa, Afghanistan and Iran, have been the subject of extensive debate within anthropology (Comaroff 1980; Goody and Tambiah 1973; Tambiah et al. 1989). Structuralist analyses may focus on how bridewealth transactions contribute to other aspects of social institutions such as kinship, political leadership and distribution of resources, often in the interests of men who dominate in the structures. However, the social or cultural purpose that bridewealth transactions (referred to as braidprais in Goroka) serve is not the primary interest here: instead I examine the different positions that women hold both in these transactions and in how they feel about these exchanges in their own lives.
Bridewealth has generally been understood in terms of structural arrangements, the creation of statuses and alienation of rights, and political economy negotiations of affinities between groups (Comaroff 1980: 14). A significant analysis of bridewealth by anthropologists has been the notion that bridewealth signals the rights of a woman being transferred to her husband and his kin (Comaroff 1980; Feil 1981a). However, M. Strathern (1988) has questioned the application of western jurisprudence to contexts where western notions of ‘rights’ may not be applicable, dependent as they are on the bounded individual. Nonetheless, both the discourse of rights as that which is acquired by men over a woman during braidprais (Tok Pisin for bridewealth) and the counter-discourse of ‘women’s rights’ have nonetheless become part of everyday language regarding marriage relations in Goroka today. However, this is a contemporary view of marriage exchanges; previously marriage was considered a means of producing new linkages, as, A. Strathern (1982) shows for Melpa in the Western Highlands – “people marry to exchange”.

The critiques of bridewealth have often emphasised how it benefits men and enhances the power or status of their clans. Ogbu (1978), considering African contexts, contends bridewealth serves the interests of both men and women as the legitimisation of relationships. Highland contexts deserve a similar observation. Furthermore, debates regarding the extent to which women are objectified in the process of bridewealth payments and how they become objects of exchange emphasises the economic and relegates the subjective experience of women to a background matter (Dalton 1966; Feil 1981a; Gregory 1982; Maclean 2010).

Turning this debate on its head M. Strathern (1984b), argued that from a Papua New Guinean perspective, what is being realised in moments of marriage exchange are social relations. Women moving from one clan to another are partible persons in that they personify the relationships that have been made by her kin in order to nurture her, meanwhile the objects that flow in the opposite direction represent prior relations and contribute to the
multiplication of future relations. As much as the process of exchange objectifies women the objects are personified in the same moment, she argues, taking on similarly partible characteristics. However, as she also notes, each ethnographic case demonstrates something different, making general theories about the nature of marriage exchange a misnomer (M. Strathern 1984b: 47). She later argued that in the PNG context, who benefits from these transactions cannot be clearly delineated as the husband’s and wife’s actions are invested in one another and in their shared interests (M. Strathern 1988).

Wardlow (2006a) shows amongst Huli in the Southern Highlands that the monetary element of bridewealth payments has encouraged some men to view these transactions more like a commodity exchange, where there is a transfer of women as property. However, this notion has historical roots. The idea that bridewealth meant that women were an ‘exchange commodity’ began with missionaries’ initial observations in Africa and Papua New Guinea, and then carried over into anthropological studies (Jolly 2015; Jones 2011: 101). Much of the debate regarding ‘brideprice’ and ‘bridewealth’ has been regarding the economic implications of these terms; for example Dalton stated that “to use the term ‘brideprice’ is to imply that payment at marriage is a market or commercial transaction and therefore that marriage entails a commercial purchase of rights or services” (Dalton 1966: 732). As Jolly (2015) demonstrates in Vanuatu, early Christian missionaries perceived such exchanges as making women into objects to be bought or sold. Missionaries assumed bridewealth transactions were a mechanism for women to have their value calculated according to their sexual, labour and maternal services: “Portrayals of the bride price in Vanuatu using the language of the commodity have been part of foreign representations since the mid-19th century and cash has been part of such payments since at least the 1920s” (Jolly 2015: 68). The incorporation of money into bridewealth transactions in PNG has similarly added to the concerns of scholars, development organisations and some local interlocutors about the
meaning of bridewealth transactions today, the monetary component calling the moral aspects of these transactions into question.

Feil (1981a: 74) explains that bridewealth in Enga validates the transfer of sexual rights to the husband, bestows his clan identity upon the children his wife bears and compensates her family for the loss of a garden worker. Like many others writing about bridewealth, he explains that bridewealth transfers a bundle of rights to the husband. Through this, a woman becomes ‘in between’, a negotiator of pigs between her brothers and her husband in the encompassing exchange system of tee, similar to the place women held in between clans during moka in the Western Highlands (Feil 1981a; M. Strathern 1972). The situation can be quite different around Goroka today. Whilst there are these aspects of rights that come with bridewealth exchanges, what are sometimes referred to as women becoming ‘underneath men’ (andernit long man), an idiom for women being under the control of men (what Wardlow describes as “under the legs of men” (Wardlow 2006a: 11). Some of my interlocutors would explain that braidprais meant women had to listen to their husbands and respect them and at the same time would be making most of the decisions within the household.

Furthermore, there are two aspects, often overlooked, to how bridewealth payments in the PNG Highlands are understood. One is the emotional loss experienced by a woman’s family that is recognised and compensated for through these payments, as noted for other parts of PNG (Maschio 1998; Robbins 2009). The other aspect, which deserves further attention, is the transfer of goods that women make between themselves at times of marriage exchange and the contributions they make to their own bridewealth exchanges (as well as that of others).
Bridewealth exchanges can be considered events where joy, grief and recognition of loss are acted out as relationships are displayed and made through transaction. They are also a moment where women who become wives can feel valued by others, and in turn show respect for their own kin relations. Nonetheless, these payments can also compete with women’s multiple interests in terms of freedom to move around, access to other residences and ability to leave their households when they want to, all factors which vary with the women’s physical proximity to natal kin, quality of relationships with their natal kin and financial resources. Bridewealth exchanges can offer protection and honour a woman’s relational personhood, and yet simultaneously connect them to networks of obligations that restrict them and cause distress. It is the situated complexities of their agency that I offer in this partial analysis of what I observed of bridewealth exchanges in Goroka, amongst a variety of women spanning different ages, education levels, distances to town and relationship circumstances.

**Braidprais in Goroka**

*Braidprais* is a process rather than a one-off payment. Whilst anthropologists may prefer the term bridewealth rather than brideprice to refer to marriage transactions made between groups, in Goroka the common term, like in much of PNG, is *braidprais* or *baim meri* both of which can refer to the transaction of wealth from the men’s *lain* to the women’s. These large-scale payments include food, pigs and money. However, these terms are also used as synonyms for *makim pei* (where the woman’s *lain* state how much they request for their daughter) and *salim meri* (an exchange that comes after the *braidprais* and involves the woman’s family officially leaving their daughter with her new *lain*. These involve transfers of food from the woman’s family to the man’s, thus *braidprais* exchanges involve two directions of transfer, however money is only given in one direction from the man’s *lain* to the woman’s.
Strathern (1988; 1996) argues that kinship is about connections and disconnections, and that when a woman gets married she is disconnected from her natal clan and becomes an “additive” element of her husband’s clan. However, in Goroka, bridewealth exchanges are just the beginning of a series of transactions that occur throughout a woman’s life, made to her mother’s brothers, beginning with her first menstruation initiation. Reference to these multiple payments, some men said women are like asbin with its multiple edible parts: ‘you will keep eating’. These exchanges continuously connect women to their natal clan through the relationships formed between her husband’s clan, despite formally disconnecting her as they ensure that the affinal clan are continuously compensating her family for their loss.

Those who receive these payments are called the kandre or Uncles. However, it is sometimes in the process of receiving these payments that people become appointed Uncles. Food and money is then transferred to the Uncles of the woman for every child she gives birth to (also termed hedpei); and for the lives of her children once they die, and for the woman’s own death.

Strathern’s (1984b; 1988) work has provided the conceptual tools to show that marriage payments are embedded within a context of kinship connections, or what she refers to as ‘social units’. She has argued that these exchanges are not transactions made by self-interested individuals but instead are part of reproducing social relations. However, this perspective does not leave much space for how women themselves perceive the experiences or the kinds of agency that they have within them. Such an investigation requires another method of analysis, one which I propose through a focus on the paradoxical position that women hold in these exchanges.

What these marriage transactions mean for women at different stages in their lives varies considerably. Many women in Goroka considered braidprais to be important for recognising the wok their families did bringing them up. Wok refers to both nurturance and care enacted
(such as feeding, washing and buying food) and today includes the investments that are made in a girl’s education. *Wok* therefore refers to the many versions of physical and material efforts that have gone into producing a social person, someone connected to others and productive both in gardens and in the cash economy. Her capacity to produce resources that benefit her family and can be redistributed are recognised in the moment of her marriage transaction, and for some women this is a moment that brings them a positive sense of self-esteem and respect.

For many women in Goroka, the exchanges represent a significant change in their lives and a shift in how they perceive their agency with regards to their children and the behaviours of their husbands. Nonetheless, many women of varying education levels and relationship to village and town exercise their choice in terms of who and when they shall marry, before the exchanges begin. It is the underlying values of respect and recognition upheld by bridewealth payments that are in tension with the discourse that through bridewealth men purchase rights to women’s bodies, resources and agency.

There are also material and instrumental aspects of bridewealth exchanges that many people I spoke with saw these transactions as facilitating. Some of the explanations refer to the peacebringing aspects of marriage. For example, as an elderly couple from Okiyufa explained,

> It is a means of making enemy ground safer – the daughter becomes the bridge between their land and the enemy’s land, and their area becomes safer.

Through bridewealth exchanges women are guaranteed access to land to grow gardens, and they become invested members in their husband’s clan. They also consider themselves to have some rights to their husband’s income and expect him to provide a house and do some garden labour. Many women I knew were already cohabiting with men with whom they had
children but had yet to exchange bridewealth. In this sense, the exchanges were not compulsory and not the only way to guarantee these outcomes. The importance of going through the exchanges also varies for different women. However, there seemed a general level of agency and choice in these matters where women decided when and who they wanted to marry, and recognised their relational personhood through these exchanges when they wanted to.

Bridewealth exchanges have increasingly involved inflated sums of money which can be discursively construed as representing men’s rights to women’s labour, bodies and reproduction (Jolly 2015; Macintyre 2011; Wardlow 2006a). However, the extent to which this escalation is the result of the monetary component depends on the perceptions of individual men. For instance, one young woman from Chimbu province, a sister of one my interlocutors, married a fellow university student from Mt. Hagen. She had a full-time job and received her wages into her bank account. Her husband insisted she give him her wages, and when she refused he demanded her pincode for the ATM. When she still refused, he beat her and broke her arm. We can infer that he felt that her wages were rightfully his, and when she refused him, he tried to take what he wanted by force, using the fact that his lain had paid her braidprais as justification. This story surprised me as they were a young couple and both had university degrees. Yet older women in the marketplace generally told me they do not share any of their market earnings or income with their husbands, nor is it expected of them. My own bias was to expect that younger and educated men would have more liberal views towards women’s freedom and income, yet at times it seemed the discourse of ‘buying’ women and having rights to them through braidprais was more common amongst younger men. A student from PNG living in Auckland explained this to me as because younger men have not been taught the values of the tumbuna (ancestral) times, or the real meaning of braidprais. Young generations have also only known an era where commodity transactions
are the norm, compared to older generations who grew up with money and commodities playing a less significant role in their social and cultural lives.

The extent to which women themselves perceive braidprais as the man’s rights to her body is in tension with the perceptions that this is an honouring of their personhood and a means of achieving respect within their husband’s communities. Some of this tension differs between rural and urban perspectives and between more or less formally educated women with exposure to ideas of ‘women’s rights’ and ‘gender equality’, English phrases which periodically featured in Tok Pisin conversations I had with men. However, this dichotomy cannot be strictly drawn because many women who were highly educated, had well-paid jobs and lived in town still desired a formal bridewealth exchange to legitimise their relationship, incorporate them fully into their husband’s lain and show recognition of their own lain. Thus women who may be considered as ‘empowered’ in a ‘modern’ liberal or urban sense still value bridewealth transactions as highly important to them.

My data shows a different attitude to those of women living in Port Moresby (Spark 2011) and Lihir (Macintyre 2011) who actively seek to avoid marriage and braidprais. Both of the groups of women interviewed for those studies are engaged in full-time work and living within an industrialised or highly urbanised context. In Goroka, there is a broad array of positions held by women within the cash economy and town, yet the difference between village women and town women is not as great as one might expect. This points to the complex and conflicting positionalities that women hold, and the sometimes internally conflicting desires they have for their own well-being and futures and for mutual recognition with others.
Making Choices: My Own *Braidprais I Shall Pay*

There is a range of views and perspectives amongst women in Goroka, but for many what is important is the sense of self-esteem that comes with formalised marriage through exchange. To make ongoing payments to the brothers of a wife continues to be regarded as a matter of respect and honour, even amongst those Papua New Guinean women who are urbanised, financially independent or in waged employment (Sykes 2013). For some women, they insist on the importance of this relationship to the point of making the payments themselves or pushing their families to do. For instance, the following story explains the conflict that emerged between a daughter and her father when he hoped she would complete her education rather than getting married and having children.

When we met, May was a twenty-two-year-old daughter of two coastal migrants to Goroka. She was born and brought up in a village about 15 km outside of town and spoke Goroka *tok ples*. Her father was determined to pay for her to finish high school, growing cabbages with her mother to pay the fees. When she was 17, May was in the marketplace and noticed a man that she liked the look of. He saw her too and asked one of her friends for her mobile number. They started sending messages, and soon he asked her to come and stay with him in his village. She spent the night in his parents’ house. The next morning the parents agreed that she could stay permanently. As May liked him and his parents, she decided to leave her parents and go live with this man, soon becoming pregnant. She dropped out of school and her father was furious and said she had thrown away her future and the opportunities he had worked hard to provide for her.

She explained this to me as she sat selling strawberries she had grown on the land of what she referred to as *man bilong mi*, the term women use for their spouse to demonstrate they are tied to him in a relationship akin to marriage but without necessarily meaning an exchange.
has taken place. Although *man bilong mi* does not mean bridewealth has been exchanged, it does suggest an agreement to share resources and cohabit. For this reason, *man bilong mi* can be considered equivalent of ‘my husband’, just as *meri bilong em* refers to a woman that is the wife of a man or publicly in a relationship with him. *Meri* (woman) becomes the equivalent of the word ‘wife’ when put with *bilong*.

After initial arguments with her parents, eventually her *lain*, the Goroka clan that her parents and her were adopted into, went to the village of her man and his family to *makim pei* (request an amount for her bridewealth). This act demonstrates that the clan recognised the relationship and agreed to formalise it. It had taken three years to reach this point as May’s parents and others in their *lain* had repeatedly attempted to make her come home, including on two occasions going to the man’s village and forcibly trying to remove her. The second time May came back with them, but after a couple of weeks she left again. Her insistence on staying with this man eventually led her *lain* to agree to legitimise the relationship. They took various forms of uncooked, fresh foods including bananas, sugarcane, *mareta* and sweet potato. In return, the man’s *lain* cooked three large *mumus* and fed the truckload of around thirty people that had come as May’s *lain*. They requested 6,000 kina for her bridewealth, acknowledging that she already had a baby and that some of the *hedpet* for this child should be included. The man’s *lain* agreed and said they would call May’s *lain* when they had the money ready. The two clans, one from upstream a river and the other from downstream between Asaro and Daulo, had a long history of marriage between them: “We are brothers – women come and go between us”, one of the spokesmen of the man’s *lain* said. May’s relationship was one amongst many over time, and the exchanges of their daughters, food and money continued to solidify those relationships. Nonetheless her parents were not convinced that May would benefit from the matrimony in the long run.
In May’s case, this relationship did not primarily serve to create or further connections of solidarity between two clans. She had exercised her agency both in choosing to accept this man’s gestures through text messages and in choosing to stay with him and leave her parents’ household. She had repeatedly demonstrated her own desire to stay with her husband despite the objections and concerns of her mother and father. It turned out that the man she had chosen was a member of a clan that had ongoing relations with her own, which enabled their relationship to be situated in a history of matrimonies and connections between the two sides. In this scenario, she was the agent, and her actions meant that in the long run she achieved the outcome that she desired. Through her marriage relationship she gained freedom from her parents’ household, where she found her father’s protection overbearing, had access to her own gardens and eventually provided for her own household through the selling of strawberries. Her husband traded coffee and contributed store goods (rice bags, tinned fish) to their household. May was relatively satisfied with this, though she did express a desire to return to college and work in IT. Her aspirations to have a formal waged job in an office had become more difficult to realise since the formalising of the relationship:

I want to go back to school, but the fees to finish my diploma are 3,000kina. Now that my family have put my price at 6,000kina, it will be hard for me to pay my school fees.

At first I did not understand how these two issues were connected. May explained that she is the second wife of the man she had chosen to live with, and his lain were not happy to pay for him to have another wife. For this reason, if she wanted to stay, she had to pay half of the braidprais herself along with contributions from her husband and the people who she could convince to contribute.
The practice of paying one’s own braidprais was not uncommon in scenarios where a woman enforced her own will over who she would marry. An older woman living on the outskirts of Goroka, Delia, had paid her own braidprais. She had chosen to marry a man who had migrated from the coast, and her family and lain did not approve of their relationship. Because of this Delia insisted they would live together and agreed to pay much of the braidprais herself: although this was not the usual practice for his family, it would mean that her own family recognised their relationship.

After having three children together, Delia became disillusioned with his behaviour and wanted a divorce. Although this process was difficult, expensive and lengthy, the fact she had paid her own braidprais was one of the arguments she used in court (as well as suggesting he had committed adultery and was often drunk) for breaking the marriage, a significantly harder formality for women to do than men. Delia had fulfilled her obligations as a relational person, and had shown respect for her family by paying the braidprais at the same time as exercising her own will over her relationship. When it came to deciding to end the relationship, she similarly had to use this aspect of her relational personhood to argue for her individual rights to choose when to leave the relationship.

Whilst braidprais does not have the same meaning in men and women’s lives, to assume bridewealth is purely a system of male dominance is to ignore the desires and goals of women themselves. Furthermore, this position overlooks the many women who choose not to marry or to leave unhappy marital relationships. It also reproduces the assumption that men are transactors and women the objects. In reality, there are many layers to these transactions, and women themselves can be the agents that simultaneously foster a relationship, enable or encourage these exchanges, transact items of value and try to break the connections.
Women as Transactors: Affect

As noted in Chapter Two, earlier ethnographies often depicted Highlands women as subservient to men and their relationships with men as antagonistic (Langness 1967; Meggitt 1964b; Read 1982; M. Strathern 1972). However, Zimmer-Tamakoshi (1997a), Dickerson-Putman (1994) and earlier work of Faithorn (1976) have shown that Gende, Daulo and Kafe women respectively were not always in such inferior subject positions and could gain power through age and their active involvement in exchange. Meanwhile Sexton (1986: 92–93) similarly showed how older women create positions of power and influence for themselves within the Wok Meri movement and control the flow and exchange of wealth. However, bridewealth exchanges in Goroka are not just about the exchange of women by men; women engage actively in these processes as organisers, transactors and facilitators of these marriage relationships. Furthermore, transactions also include affect. The spokesmen at bridewealth exchanges acknowledges the relationships between the two clans, and the work that has gone into raising their new daughter-in-law. They often promise that her new clan will take care of her. But without the performance of sorrow and loss by women at these exchanges, there would be no visible recognition of the emotions which her relatives experience and for which these exchanges are compensating. These emotions are both ‘really felt’ and necessary to demonstrate the collective connections with a daughter who is leaving the clan.

Families and lains exchange food, pigs and money partly to acknowledge the emotional loss of a daughter and sister through marriage. When a bridewealth transaction is made, those speaking on behalf of the man’s family or sub-clan speak directly of recognising the hard work and efforts that her parents and clan have gone to in raising her. These efforts are material and non-material, acknowledged through the exchange of valuable objects and through embodied emotional actions. Ceremonial exchanges involve efforts to aesthetically present objects of value in a way that show the collective strength of both groups, and include
emotional performances at the instance of technically ‘losing’ her to demonstrate how much her family care.

Women perform grief through quietly crying (referred to as showing sore), mourning the loss of their daughter when her her husband’s family give her a new first name, as she formally becomes part of their clan. Once the food and money has been exchanged, women’s gifts of bilums are placed upon the head of the married woman, gifted to her and indicating expectations of hew new productive personhood within their clan. Her sisters and other women kin from her natal clan crowd around her and weep at her side, hugging her and holding her. On two occasions, this crying lasted around twenty minutes. In both cases, I followed suit, ducking my head, making small weeping sounds and holding my face in my hands. In one case, the woman getting married was a close friend of mine, and I was officially her ‘sister’ through a friendship with her mother. When this sister saw me join the other women, she also shed tears and remarked on how seeing me cry made her cry more. Afterwards the women explained that they are sorry to lose their pikinini meri (daughter), and so they cry, knowing they will miss her. In a second scenario I was told to join the women crying at a bridewealth ceremony, but I had not met the woman being married before and was attending as a guest of one of her relatives. I performed similar acts as seemed appropriate, following the other older women, but felt little emotion myself compared to the genuine sadness I had felt on behalf of my ‘sister’ that she would be leaving her family and living elsewhere. I later found out that my ‘sister’ would in fact continue to live next door to her parents (my friends) in her husband’s family’s house. I had thought we were expressing emotions that I understood, a loss that I could personally identify with. I then wondered why we had been crying when in reality she was not physically going very far. It was at moments like this that I realised my own ideas of what emotion is and why or when we enact them were not necessarily the same in Goroka. Whilst there can appear to be shared
understandings between people across different cultural contexts, the meanings of emotional acts can be quite different, especially in the effect they are hoped to elicit, or the relationships they are supposed to display. In these instances, losing their daughter is a loss to her clan that women’s ritual crying acknowledges. The women demonstrate the sadness of all of their lain over the loss of their daughter to another, and even if they still will see her often, her main interests will lie with her husband and his lain. This disconnection is marked through the public display of their collective emotions.

Whilst I did not witness crying at every bridewealth ceremony, it was normal for the husband’s family to acknowledge the loss of their in-laws, explain that they will take care of their new daughter-in-law and express that they look forward to the coming together of the families through the relationship. As Robbins puts it,

\[\text{At the heart of the final exchange [of bridewealth]… is a mutual recognition by both wife-givers and wife-takers of the humanity and right to respect of their opposite number. (Robbins 2009: 51)}\]

It is through these acts of crying, along with the other acts of joviality, that women enact during ceremonial events that I suggest women have an important place in an affective economy, where the embodied enactment of emotions is necessary to demonstrate a recognition of the relationships that are being made and unmade. In the case of both death and marriage, women gather and weep. On numerous occasions, clan leaders thanked the women publically for this and gave them food for taking time out of their days and coming to share the grief and show sore. Thus performing particular emotions at these major life events is itself considered a gift, something to be thanked for and acknowledged through exchanges of food and words. Women’s participation in these affects contributes to making and marking
the specific ethos of the event, and represents the emotions of the occasion on behalf of the groups that are staking out their relations in that moment.

**Women as Transactors: Objects**

Women can be both the instigators of bridewealth exchanges and active agents in the transacting of objects during these exchanges. Thus they are not merely objects to be exchanged by men; they are themselves transactors at various levels of these marriage transactions. To illustrate this, I use one particular example of a bridewealth ceremony in Lufa district. In this instance a young woman named Rose, living with her mother and two brothers, was approached and asked if she would like to get married to a man from the neighbouring clan. When I asked her why she accepted this offer at just 17 years old and whilst still at school, she explained quietly, away from the crowds of people attending her marriage exchange, “I was tired of living with my mother who was too bossy, and I was bored at school and wanted to leave. So I accepted the proposal.”

Her father, who had moved to live elsewhere, explained,

> It was my daughter who accepted this payment. If I had been there I would have said no. I would prefer she finish school before getting married. But she said yes so now it is happening.

When I spoke with Rose after all of the exchanges were finished, she told me that she was excited about the prospect of moving and that she liked her prospective husband’s parents and family.

> I’m looking forward to having my own garden, and I am very happy with all my new *bilums*, dresses and things for the house. I am a bit nervous
about moving to Port Moresby as I don’t know anyone there, but I will go once he [her new husband] says he is ready.

Much of the ceremony involved the bringing together of two families and many relatives through singing marriage songs and eating food from various earth ovens. During the moment of the actual exchange she was ceremonially lifted out of the arms of her brothers and carried into the crowd of her new husband’s lain, physically taken from her brothers on the arms of a man, and moved across an expansive gap between the two lains. This was symbolic of the disconnections she was making with her lain and the connections she was making with her new husband’s clan, a very public display of her movement and her transfer between two groups of men. However, whilst the aesthetics of these performative aspects of the bridewealth ceremony (including public negotiation of the amount that would be paid, speeches of both sides, and her being carried) made it appear to be a process of transaction occurring between men, there were in fact layers to this process that involved women.

After Rose was carried across the large open space clutching a stick with monetary notes attached to it (her braidprais payment), she was steered into a three-walled structure made from bamboo that was covered in bilums and brightly coloured floral dresses on wire hangers swaying in the breeze. She was told these were all her new clothes and she should change into one of the dresses, thus removing her ‘old clothes’, making her new personhood publically visible as she moved to a new clan and simultaneously given a new first name by the main orator of the event. Then she was directed over to another space where there was a large blanket laid out covered in neatly piled household objects. The vibrant pink and blue of the soft blanket on the dusty ground was complemented by metallic shimmers of washing-up sponges, green and yellow bars of soap, shiny new saucepans, bowls and cutlery. This bed of gifts indicated the life she was expected to lead, providing her with everything needed to do
the work expected of a wife and mother: cooking, cleaning, carrying heavy loads, and providing food and drink for the household and for guests.

I later learnt that the woman giving this instruction – Traysee, a woman in her thirties – contributed substantially to initiating the marriage and raising the braidprais. She explained to me later that she would now look after this young girl, show her the gardens, help her fetch sweet potato and greens and show her where they would mumu. It was evident that although much of the public negotiating was done by men, there were various layers to the exchange that involved women. In this moment, Rose was given ownership of her own objects and told that she would control how these things were used. This was the beginning of her becoming a mama, a woman of full social personhood able to deploy hospitality and care for others when and if she wanted to.

These objects were much appreciated and desired by Rose, who told me later she was happy with her new dresses and was excited about the new gardens that would soon be her own. These objects were hers and only hers, but they came with conditions. According to Lederman (1986: 119), during her fieldwork in the late 1970s, Mendi women had an active role in marriage exchanges, one that she noted differed from women in Hagen when she compared her data with M. Strathern’s (1972). In Mendi, women were responsible for the distribution of wealth at their own marriages and had an active role in choosing their husbands. Weddings are one of the few ceremonial contexts, Lederman argues, in which women have a formal role to play (1986: 119). However, in these transactions, Lederman shows that the valuables formally handed over by women are not the ones they actually contribute. This wealth is given by the bride to particular people, unlike the koma tumawe wealth, which is given in public (Lederman 1986: 119).
A particularly talkative and bold woman, Traysee was the spokeswoman for this part of the proceedings, explaining the rules of the gifts to Rose with a crowd of women sitting around the bed and another crowd of men surrounding them. I was later told Traysee is a ‘leader-woman’.

All of this has cost a lot of money, so you must look after it well. And when you have your children, you yourself will buy these things. And one more thing, when you are fighting with your man, it is tambu (prohibited) to break these things. Fight with your bodies, not with these items.

Rose was also instructed about how to use these gifts, and was explicitly told these gifts were not to circulate further:

If you give these away to someone and we see them on someone else’s skin, the people who have given you these things will not feel good. You must look after these items and not give them away. When these ones are broken then you have to buy your own. When the time comes to contribute to another braidprais, you must buy new things – you cannot give these ones. You, women from the husband’s lain, this cargo is hers. You cannot boss her around and tell her to give it to you. If you do then you will damage their marriage. She will control these items; it is not for us to control them.

Traysee’s speech shows that the gifts were potentially alienable. She instructed that they should not be circulated beyond Rose and said that if they were, the consequences of this would be a poor marriage dynamic for Rose and poor relationships between Rose and others in her new clan. In this instance Traysee is trying to prevent these objects becoming gifts again. This is to ensure Rose can survive independently in her new community and look after
her house. For Rose to give away these objects would offend those who had given them to her. The emotions of others were part of the reasoning behind ensuring these gifts did not become alienated. Allowing the gifts to be recirculate would be to deny the necessary obligation to receive them as part of acknowledging the new relationships Rose was now embedded in. Traysee justifies these rules not for any abstract reason but clearly stating the emotional impact such an offense would have.

Similarly, the women in Rose’s new affinal clan are clearly told not to boss her around or to try and take Rose’s new items. This is not justified merely by the emotional consequence for Rose but because disobeying or disrespecting the spirit in which these items were gifted could lead to the downfall of the newlyweds’ future together. The failure to respect these gifts would elicit an outcome that was not the result of Rose and her husband’s own acts (M. Strathern 1988: 181).

To suggest what would happen were these gifts to be visibly used or worn by others ‘on their skin’ implied that Rose’s relational personhood would be compromised if she were to recirculate her gifts. These resources were given to her as an act of embedding her within a nexus of relationships that she would reciprocally engage with later as she became productive. To let others take her gifts, was equivalent to rejecting the position she was being placed in and stunting the further reciprocal exchanges that she would engage with at other bridewealth events. These gifts were also protected in that she was to treat them with care and not use them as objects-cum-weapons during conflicts with her husband – mentioned in passing as an inevitable dynamic – and they should fight using their bodies and not her new things.

Much like live pigs and sweet potato seeds were previously given to women by their natal clan as they left to live with their affines, today women give each other soap, pots, pans,
blankets and *bilums*. These are all things required to help her set up her own household, ready to do the wifely duties of cooking and cleaning. In this instance, the women gifting these items were from the natal clan and the affine or in-laws’ side; as there was intermarriage between these clans, women were contributing both as in-laws and ‘sisters’. The next morning, the third day of the event, after all of the ceremonial transactions had taken place, Traysee took Rose to see her new gardens, where Rose would become a productive part of her new clan.

Traysee was responsible for creating this young woman’s personhood within her new clan. She also laid down the conditions of her relationships by clarifying what property is hers and on what conditions, and in what ways she should be engaging in future exchanges. Through the act of giving certain objects, Traysee transforms Rose into a transacting woman. She becomes economically active, not just through the food she will sell in the market grown in her new garden but also through the circulation of money and gifts that she is expected to engage in. Although the public negotiation of the monetary element of the *braidprais* was between men, there were layers to the exchange that involved women, both between them and organised by them.

Further, I later found out that Traysee, who was giving the instructions about the various gifts, had in fact chosen Rose as her sister-in-law and had raised a large proportion of the *braidprais* for her by selling of sweet potato in the Goroka marketplace and collecting contributions from others. Not only was she a leader in distributing and organising the women’s gifts for Rose, she had facilitated much of the arrangement that meant Rose was to be married into Traysee’s affinal clan in the first place.

Traysee was central then to this marriage taking place, and took a lead in bringing about Rose’s incorporation into her new family. Whilst the negotiations of payment occurred
between men of both clans, the practical requirements for Rose becoming a wife and following through with her own future obligations was Traysee’s responsibility. This aspect of bridewealth transactions, i.e., how the woman being ‘exchanged’ actually becomes embedded in her new context, involves much affective and material effort: making the young girl feel welcome, ensuring she knows where her gardens and house are and learning how to do the work that is required in her new role. These are the practical realities for marriage that can be overlooked when discussions focus instead on the objects being exchanged and their meaning for broader structural relations.

My point here is not that women are equally as powerful as men or that their gifting is equivalent to that which is exchanged during bridewealth transactions; rather, these examples show that women also make relationships through transactions, including bridewealth transactions, and are political even if they might be considered ‘domestic’.

**Do Urban Women have More Agency in Marriage Exchanges?**

It might be assumed that educated urban women have greater agency compared to village women or market women. Development discourses especially have tended to assume that a woman who is educated and has access to her own finances is more ‘empowered’. I had such a liberal notion in my mind at times that meant I also assumed a woman who lived in town and was educated and/or in paid work might not feel the need or desire for bridewealth transactions as the economic motivations for marriage may be diminished. Despite their similar subject positions, women in Goroka actually had varying feelings towards *braidprais* and its implications for their lives.

I met Susan, a neighbour of one of my friends living in West Goroka, as we sat outside chewing betel nut on the street. Susan explained that she had three small children with a local teacher, but as he had not paid her *braidprais* yet, she could come and go to her village as she
pleased. They built a house together in town, and she lived in it with him and two of her children. Her youngest born lived with her parents in the village. She felt her *braidprais* would limit the options available to her;

Once he pays the *braidprais* he has the right to take the child back with him. Now he can’t tell me what to do, and if he sleeps with another woman or mistreats me then I can threaten to leave him and return to my parents. Once he has paid my *braidprais* this will become much harder.

Susan had finished her education at Goroka Secondary School. She did not work, but as a couple they were part of a set of young urban people working for government agencies including the local schools, hospital and police force.

A woman from a similar echelon of Goroka society, Martha, was living with the father of her children and had been for years, but there had been no exchange of bridewealth. Martha explained that the value of an educated woman is made especially visible when the exchange takes place, as the *braidprais* signifies how much she has achieved and how hard her family has worked for her to get there. In the same instance of giving a large amount of wealth for her, the status of the donor is also recognised.

If you look after pigs, it gives you big status. At *braidprais* ceremonies, if a large amount of money is passed over for a woman, with lots of pigs and food, the person giving will make a good *nem* and show how strong they are. The woman they are buying is also seen as important as she is worth a lot because of her education or if she has good *pasin*.

Martha wanted the exchanges to happen in order to show recognition for the efforts of her parents and clan. As she went on to explain,
Braidprais is a gift to her parents as the family have worked hard to bring up their daughter.

However, her partner said he felt that she is ‘not a commodity’ and so had told his parents they would not make any payments. These different perspectives of educated, urban women married to young professionals exemplify the opposing positions women have on the purpose and effect of bridewealth exchanges in Goroka. In the latter case, Martha’s husband, educated abroad and working in the hospital, considers it an insult to their relationship and did not want the mother of his children to become a ‘commodity’, adopting the Christian and often western view of what bridewealth exchanges are. Martha, however, saw the payment as a gift to show appreciation to her parents. As with the market women of Chapter Two, Martha makes pragmatic decisions based on her relational self, but demonstrates an ability and agency to do so. In the former case, Susan believes the exchanges will encourage her husband’s violent behaviour and leave her with fewer options for escape afterwards, and hence she tells her family to hold off from asking. She also illustrates her agency in being able to control when the exchange takes place and dictate the terms of when and if she will curtail her rights and freedoms. Susan is well aware of how her agency is situated within a network of relations and expectations and refuses to allow transactions to take place that might threaten her or her children’s well-being.

In the first scenario I present here, Susan demonstrates her own agency in the matter, instructing her family not to demand any payment until she is sure her husband can be trusted to treat her well. In the second case, it is the husband that refuses marriage transactions out of a sentiment of not wanting the mother of his children to become a ‘commodity’ rather than an equal family member. In this case, Martha, his wife of over ten years, did not mind, yet felt these transactions would be an important recognition of her parent’s efforts and loss.
Jolly (2015: 72) argues that bridewealth exchanges can acknowledge a woman’s worth as something in and of itself, as her personhood in relation to others, and as an equivalent in rights to her body and agency, which can sanction mistreatment from her husband. Whilst Susan’s concerns demonstrate this, other women felt that the exchange of wealth meant their brothers were more likely to protect them in the case of violence or mistreatment. The exchange of wealth is a paradox within which women’s agency and subject position are contested; it can be what maintains their connections with their own natal kin, keeping them connected and protected, whilst at once disconnected and distant. It can also be what transfers more legitimacy to her husband to control her actions, with little impact on his own. By offering these examples of educated women who are not dependent on the marketplace for their household’s survival nor are valued according to their productive capacities in the gardens, I demonstrate that the significance of braidprais exchanges is no less complex or paradoxical. Women who are educated, and women who are predominantly market gardeners, all vary in the ways they perceive braidprais and marriage as offering freedom or restriction, recognition of themselves and recognition of their families’ efforts in bringing them up. This further demonstrates the error in Marksbury’s (1993) prediction that waged employment and formal education of women would lead to more individualised marriage exchanges. Whether this is the case or not in fact has little to do with education or employment. Furthermore, these aspects of women’s subject positions can add to their personal pressures of braidprais, as they are expected to contribute more to their husband’s lain as their ‘price’ inflates with these symbolic and material achievements.

**Conclusion**

Women are morally and emotionally invested in bridewealth exchanges to varying degrees, and with differing positionalities, depending on when they are the agents, subjects or objects
of the exchanges. Some actively engage in the processes of exchange as transactors. Others see these exchanges as limiting their agency. Whilst women can make choices that demonstrate personal will over when they want to get married, to whom, and for what reasons, their decisions in the end contribute to the collective interest of making and maintaining relationships which mutually legitimise and recognise others. Their autonomy and will, displayed in their different feelings about their marital relations and personal lives, are deeply connected to the acknowledgement that others give to their personhood and well-being through marking their relationships publicly. Doing so, however, can also be a step towards limiting their agency in terms of freedom to leave the house and freedom of where children should live and by whom they should be cared for.

Marriage transactions or braidprais are hugely variable in and around Goroka, and perceptions of what these mean and whom they benefit differ with age, education and proximity to town. However, these variables cannot be entirely considered as causal categories nor factors explaining the variability in women’s personal desires and choices. Market women living in villages out of town may choose to get married through bridewealth transactions, just as highly educated businesswomen may also endorse marriage payments. The act of transfers at marriage formalises relationships between clans or lains and can bring resources and respect to the woman herself. Nonetheless, depending on the temperaments of her husband and his family, it can also amount to restrictions and pressures. How women feel about this differs according to their personal situation. Furthermore, the generalisations that people make are rarely matched to the behaviours of men and women in practice, where personality and force of will make a significant difference in the dynamics of their marital relations.

In this chapter, I have aimed to show a range of women’s desires and agency as well as their complex subjective positionalities and conflicting interests. This provides further evidence
that women are active agents in the economies of which they are a part, as transactors, producers and agents who navigate the complex position of being simultaneously subjects and objects. They enact their agency in multiple ways both in choosing when to get married and to whom and through exchanging and displaying their emotions and material resources in ceremonial contexts. Women’s relational and productive personhood enables them to become active transactors.
Chapter 9. CONCLUSION

My research began by asking: why are most of those who sell food in the marketplace women, considering that public transactions are – according to the ethnographic literature on the PNG Highlands – usually associated with men? What part does the market play in women’s lives more broadly? How do marketplaces create and constrain opportunities for women’s agency? How does food sold in the marketplace as a commodity relate to its social status as a gift? Through asking these questions I have explored the place that emotions occupy in the local economy, expanding the definition of economy to include the ways that people demonstrate and express relationality (and mutuality), and how these intersect with and shape the nature of commodification. These matters overlap and interact as gender relations shift with the effects of colonisation, urbanisation and other changes associated with modernity. At the same time, I have demonstrated that there are many ways that men and women in Goroka turn money and other commodities into objects that represent the value they place on relationships with others and on recognition of these relationships. Different forms of transaction, gender and emotion are all tied together in the way objects are produced and circulated. These processes of production and circulation of meaningful and valuable objects also relate to shifting gender relations and the kinds of agency that women perform in Goroka’s multi-layered economy.

Throughout this thesis I have demonstrated that the marketplace is situated within an economy of recognition (Robbins 2009), where the emotions and material needs of others are acknowledged within everyday acts of sharing and within the broader ceremonial context of exchanging money, food and emotions. Building on Wardlow’s (2006a) suggestion that the agency of women is encompassed by bridewealth exchanges, I have illustrated the variety of
ways market women demonstrate agency both within and outside of these structures. There is no single masculine or feminine identity in Goroka. Gender relations are contingent and varied as they intersect with local, national and global economies. With rapidly changing urban environments, the national economic agenda and the dynamics created by commodification and consumption (Foster 2008; Errington, Fujikura, and Gewertz 2013), market women are finding multiple avenues to assert themselves within their networks and marriage relations, or to choose not to assert themselves and withdraw into their own kin groups. Whilst bridewealth is perceived by some women both inside and outside of PNG as a means for men to claim ownership over women – indeed, some men enact behaviours that imply this – these collective public exchanges between clans and families also give women support and strength in their relationships.

To understand how the marketplace has affected gender dynamics and the politics of gift exchange requires paying attention to emotions as well as material objects. Recognising the importance of emotions to gift exchange, alongside symbolic and material analyses, allows for a greater understanding of Goroka’s food economy from the perspective of the producer-sellers themselves, especially how people in Goroka assign value to objects, practices and behaviours. Making money in the market is a way for women, and some men, to provide for their families and exercise greater personal autonomy. Yet the marketplace is also an extension of women’s gardens: a place of provisioning for others, generating money that can be used as a valuable in ceremonial contexts and a means of making their own contributions within social networks that provide them with support, security and social recognition.

The Goroka main market is a space where gendered identities are both formed and performed through embodied, emotional practice and in relationship to objects, in this case fresh food. Selling has become a naturalised and embodied part of women’s identities in Goroka as producers and providers, i.e., as mamas. However, gender identities in Goroka are contested,
shifting and multiple, constructed with local and colonial histories (Besnier 2007) and open to transformations and transgressions (Butler 1988).

How genders are constructed shifts as new food objects, money, beliefs and ideas are indigenised into the local context. Through the marketplace, and elsewhere in Goroka, gender is acted out and reproduced in multiple forms that intersect with education, migration status (local to Goroka or not), employment, Christian faith and even geographical landscape. This means that whilst similar patterns and practices persist throughout the Goroka Valley in terms of what it means to be man or woman, there is considerable variation in how individuals define this for themselves and how their gender inflects their daily experience. This variability has not always been possible for me to convey, especially the nuances of individual people’s personalities and their positioning within their kin networks and the broader economies in which they are situated. Thus I have offered a partial, and in places generalised, perspective. However, I have sought to show that how money, as a key driver and outcome of market trading, gets used, and how it is thought to affect behaviours, desires and emotions, is gendered in Goroka. And money plays an important role in how people come to make and maintain their social relationships, as it represents two different and connected forms of value: that of commodity exchange and that of social production.

Gendered forms of value extend to different types of objects and associations. As I have shown, emotions form part of the discourse that delineates men from women in the marketplace and the associations made between commodities and gender. The word sem describes both what men might feel under the gaze of others if they are seen doing something associated with women, but also provides an explanatory frame for how the marketplace becomes gendered in terms of what items are sold by whom. Meanwhile, although I have established that there is shame and shyness on the part of men in terms of performing tasks associated with women, I have also argued this is not necessarily suggestive of a devaluation
of women’s work or an implication that men see themselves as superior. Instead, I posit that it is possible for women’s activities to be valued differently to those of men, in ways where both are recognised as meaningful acts (Graeber 2001; Lambek 2013). Thus I have shown that whilst antagonistic aspects of relations exist between men and women today, sometimes exacerbated by the stresses and pressures caused by commodification, there is also ongoing complementarity. Women are proud of the work and efforts they carry out, and they are respected for these within the economy of recognition. Meanwhile men gain prestige in business or development areas and in their efforts representing their lain in ceremonial contexts. Exploring the role of the marketplace in relation to other aspects of economic development, and how men and women engage with these differently, would be an important area of research, considering that the growing and selling of food is one aspect of the Papua New Guinean economy from which its citizens directly benefit and over which they have control.

Women see men’s shame as stemming from a sense of embarrassment at being unable to achieve what market women do. The dominant discourse of men being superior to women masks the fact that in reality women are not passive, submissive or subordinate to men. An alternative discourse, provided by market women themselves, is that that women are more capable than men in this area of the economy. Women around Goroka are strong, expressive and angry at times where they need to assert themselves. They intervene where they perceive men in their families or lain to be making poor decisions, and they contest the decisions taken by others on their behalf.

I argue that gendered divisions are respected due to a shared interest in the collective and family goals of expanding relations and maintaining relationships of mutual recognition and respect for other people’s emotions and well-being (M. Strathern 1988). When inappropriate
or immoral behaviour threatens these relationships, women and men are active in standing their ground over their clan members and claiming what they believe is fair.

Gender norms and practices are not insurmountable, and individual persons demonstrate agency and individuality in their decisions to transgress the norms. However, both men and women justify transgressions of their normative gender positioning by explaining that this is accepted because they are aiming to distribute resources amongst others, what is locally considered the pasin of the Highlands. Thus enacting the economic behaviour that is usually associated with the other gender, be it selling vegetables in the market or exchanging pigs at bridewealth ceremonies, becomes normalised through relational actions.

Through the concept of relational agency, I focus on the way market women demonstrate their capacity to act according to their own desires and goals, with regards to the marketplace, their financial independence and the relationships they have with male kin who can offer them emotional and material support. This is not to undermine women’s capacity for independence but to highlight that in a context where relationships with others and community standing are so vital, these women demonstrate different means of balancing their personal prestige status, with the economic activity that is required for social and material survival. Having access to and control over resources is certainly a great asset to many market women, but maintaining relationships with their mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, in-laws and friends is also fundamental. In short, it is not just money that enables ‘empowerment’ in Goroka but strong and mutually supportive relationships (Rooney 2017). Nonetheless, I have shown that women’s agency is also produced, as well as constrained, by the demands of their kinship relations and social networks, as is the case for women in many parts of the world. However, in Goroka, it is these relationships – and women’s actions within them – that specifically provide them with recognition. Thus the marketplace is an economic sphere that has become critical to how women enact their relational selves and
contribute to their communities. The marketplace both enables and constrains the lives of women: they are expected to be economically productive, and yet this same productivity can leave them vulnerable to demands on their cash resources from their husbands, and in some cases, other women.

Before the marketplace and contemporary formal education, women were celebrated for their skills in looking after pigs. But as I have shown, it was not just as producers that they were recognised. Women have long had means of establishing themselves as transactors, and they have used their skills to maintain their own social networks through the gifting of the highly valued crop *asbin*. Through analysing this food, I demonstrate the gendered nature of value, how it is produced through gendered acts, and how it is a means of showing recognition for the actions of others, and in the act of exchange, leads to mutual recognition. Women are active transactors both in the marketplace and in the ceremonial economy in circulating objects that they themselves have produced. Furthermore, men and women of all generations and class statuses recognise the value of this crop and the skill and ability of those women who are able to grow it. The value of *asbin* persists despite the many other objects that circulate which denote prestige and symbolise ‘modernity’. However, women make decisions according to their own time constraints and energies and transform imported goods into equivalent gifts, thereby giving gendered value to these commodities. Like *asbin*, these objects symbolise the hard work that women and men do and provide the ‘protein’ and energy needed in order to do it. They are divided amongst relatives, strengthening relationships and recognising the social positioning of others, and the growers gain appreciation and notoriety in the process.

In the past, the production of pigs and indigenous crops such as *asbin* was a means for women to gain prestige, influence and power within their marriage relationships and kinship networks. Today, it is the women’s ability to grow lots of food and sell it in the marketplace
that is recognised by others. This is part of how they are evaluated and acknowledged by others. Trading food is one of the acts that makes up the identity of a good, accomplished village woman, a meri lo ples. For women who are educated or save meri, graduating from secondary school and/or having waged work also attracts recognition and is also part of how women come to be valued by others within the ceremonial economy. This economy of mutual recognition both compensates the efforts and inputs of their relatives and marks their own achievements.

Whilst appearing to be a process through which women come to be ‘measured’ and their value quantified as a ‘brideprice’, for them and their relatives this is a moment of recognition for the collective work that has gone into making them as a person, and also for the production in which the woman is expected to engage in the future. These acts of exchange contribute to a woman’s sense of self-respect and esteem and connect her to networks of support and security throughout her life.

Women hold multiple positions within bridewealth transactions and have varying views on what braidprais means for their lives. I have shown that women of various ages demonstrate agency in choosing when to get married or not to. However, these choices are nonetheless shaped by the emphasis placed upon marriage as a set of processes that gives woman full personhood and provides her with social recognition from others. Through the series of exchanges that are required in order for a relationship to be publicly legitimised by others, women can gain the protection of their new kinship members, and can also be put under pressure to perform their relational personhood. Nonetheless, many women perceive these exchanges as part of what is necessary to recognise the care and loss of their natal kin and thus mark this through the exchange of objects. Women hold various positions within these exchanges that are both material and affective, as transactors and as those who demonstrate emotional loss at the marriage of a sister. Their position within this aspect of the economy of
recognition is material and affective. The exchange of objects at bridewealth events are required to mark the emotions that are associated with these exchanges, and are part of the broader moral economy of publicly recognising emotions of others and mutual relationships. Without paying attention to the emotional aspects of gift exchange and the role emotions play in how gender is constructed and reproduced, the efforts of women are overlooked, and so are the processes through which the category of ‘woman’ is created.

**Women’s Choices**

As I have shown, market women hold an important place as both organisers and producers of wealth for ceremonial exchanges. They also contribute to creating the affect that makes these events ceremonial, particularly incorporating the expected emotions for the specific events. Women exercise agency both in the ceremonial economy and in the marketplace. The way that they transact in public and expand their social networks is not necessarily new nor only facilitated by money. Instead, education, church groups, political initiatives and the marketplace all provide arenas for market women to socialise, find leadership positions, exercise their voice and make choices over how to use their time and resources. There are multiple ways in which they demonstrate agency using both their material and immaterial resources, and making the most of the opportunities and materials that have arisen with the cash economy.

There are other ways women exercise choices that affect their own existence. As a woman with three children makes the decision to stay with a husband that she feels drinks too much and demands money from her, she also builds her own houses and employs people to help her grow food for the marketplace. She makes a pragmatic decision to stay in a relationship because it enables her to care for her children and means she can continue her food trading. As with relationships anywhere, compromises are made and women have to make difficult
decisions based on their positions within both gendered social norms and their place within the broader economy. Another woman may choose an opposite path, leaving an educated husband who she expected to provide for her family and establishing her own gardens, house and land ownership through money she saves in the marketplace. Market women’s lives oscillate around the marketplace as they grow and transport food for the sake of sending their children to school. Market women adopt, feed and care for children both for love and for the expectation that they will receive care in return, as part of their reciprocal, affective economy.

In returning to the dualism of gift-versus-commodity economies, Robbins (2009) argues that it is clear that the creation and affirmation of relationships is a key part of the interaction of gift-giving which is carried out consciously for the goal of mutual recognition. However, I suggest the recognition that women gain through acts of exchange is also at stake. Women are not merely objects being exchanged but subjects who gain personhood and recognition from their own and their husband’s kin through their varied places within these exchanges as transactors.

**Embedding Commodities**

However, the use of commodities in gift exchanges, and the use of money, are driving shifts in production in the gardens, alongside the increasing costs of services such as education, healthcare, clothing and food. Crops such as broccoli are grown to help provide the cash required for these materials and services as well as for large-scale collective payments in ceremonial contexts. But the production of commodities requires the consumption of commodities, and these costs increasingly put pressure on the extent to which growers are willing to share resources – an issue which could in turn directly affect issues of food security in moments of crisis.
Cash-crop production is mediated by local notions of *pasin*, individual enactments of moral personhood in everyday contexts. This involves material exchanges of food, money, betel nut and any other material object as well as the enactment of social concern and interest. These together make up the everyday acts of mutual recognition that are required for a person to be thought to have good *pasin*. Without this, the sharing of costly resources is less likely, and the social distance of kin and neighbours can become greater. However, I have argued that rather than modernity ‘encompassing’ people in Goroka (LiPuma 2001), local ideas of morality encompass the commodity economy.

Money’s incorporation into the ceremonial economy must go through performative acts and aesthetic transformations before it can become a locally meaningful valuable, showing a distinctly Highlands way of turning a commodity into a gift and of continuing social relations through it. Performative acts aim to produce emotional reactions that demonstrate the successful transformation of money into a valuable that denotes power and prestige upon the donor, and respect and recognition upon the recipient. Past, present and future social relations are made through aesthetics, affect and performance (Keane 1997). This is explained in local terms of *hamamas* and *pilai* (see Chapter Seven), references to making others happy. The joy and excitement are valued by donors and recipients. These affects are produced through the multiple forms into which money is transformed, partly as a result of women’s efforts and active roles as transactors. Thus, money takes on social value or *valyu* when it is transformed into something locally meaningful. Differently gendered acts create its spatial, temporal and aesthetic qualities in the ceremonial context, making its commodity status ambiguous and contentious.
Relational Agency and Recognition

Through my analysis and observation of the everyday life of market women and other women active within the urban cash economy, I have shown that men can be an important part of women’s relational agency, as supportive brothers, fathers, in-laws and husbands. These men can offer emotional, material, and moral support. This argument offers a different perspective on the literature on gender relations in PNG, which has often focused on the antagonistic aspects of male-female relations or the violent aspects of marital relations. Instead I demonstrate the sometimes complementary and supportive, and sometimes difficult, aspects of different relationships and how market women have navigated these issues, thus building on the work of Wardlow (2006a), Zimmer-Tamakoshi (1998) and Sexton (1986).

I have proposed that women have relational agency, which depends on relationships with other women in their lives and, importantly, brothers, uncles and husbands. Only with alternative places to stay, sources of land, money or food to fall back on can women still navigate the challenging aspects of married life. However, even those women in Goroka who are respected for their wealth, education and aptitude within the new urban economy must manage their social status in order not to be accused of adultery, a crime that has far greater consequences for women than it does for men.

Whilst women are as concerned with their kin relations and family as are men, they are also independent individuals managing their household finances and making decisions about what they want to do with their time and money. Some women are able to do this freely without having to field demands on their money from their husbands while others have to fight and resist. Their agencies are contingent on their relational personhood, but they also make choices about when and with whom they will activate their relationships.
Women’s relationships with others is an element of their personhood that must be maintained to conserve their ability to enact agency in terms of their own goals, desires and ambitions. These lie beyond merely the structural constraints of patriarchy, despite at times appearing to be contained by male prestige (Mahmood 2009). Education, paid work, garden work and market vending are all avenues women follow to gain social status, enjoy travel, spend time with their relatives and friends, and make contributions and claims within ceremonial exchanges and their social networks.

Women use their skills and expertise in growing food to shift between maintaining relationships with their natal kin and staking claims with their affinal kin and husbands. These acts of relationality are not conflict-free, and some market women have to make pragmatic choices about what is best for themselves and their children, often turning to the support of brothers and fathers in order to return to their home ground.

Along with the evidence of how women use money for their own benefit and for the benefit of their families, my data show conclusively that those living in villages around Goroka are increasingly dependent on money, and thus pursue activities which enable cash generation. This has consequences for social relations. Growers often complained of increasing thefts of food out of people’s gardens and the common request for monetary compensation for labour in the gardens from kin and neighbours. Money has permeated social relations, and although it is used as a gift to demonstrate care and a desire for ongoing connections with others, it nonetheless creates ambiguities around the true intentions of exchange due to its simultaneous status as a commodity.

I have suggested that theoretical models of gift exchange based on the PNG context should consider local explanations and discourses of gifting in more depth, alongside etic interpretations. As Robbins (2003; 2009) notes, recognising the emotions of others is part of a
moral economy of recognition, where the importance of social distribution and maintenance of human connection and responsibility toward one another is encompassed within the economy. However, this is not to romanticise or essentialise the place of emotions. Emotions are the tools that people can use to both manipulate, persuade and obligate others and are also part of socio-cultural discourses that structure social relations and rituals.

**Embedding capitalism within local moralities**

Building on the notion of relationality (or relationalism) as an ethic and social value (Robbins 2007: 307), I have used the local concept of *pasin* to convey how morality and personhood is shaped in a context where resources have a price tag and money is used as a ceremonial valuable. I demonstrate that in Goroka, what Gudeman (2008) has termed *the realm of market* is embedded in local ideas of morality, particularly the local concept of *pasin*. *Pasin* is a term that refers to a person’s good moral character. Those who are not actively engaged with others, do not demonstrate interest or concern with others and do not share material resources are assessed negatively. This is part of the continuation of the expectations of a gifting economy, in the context of increasingly commoditised social relations (Foster 1995). For this reason, I have suggested that through the ways growers share knowledge, inputs and seeds that come with cash crop production, and make decisions on who to share with based on their *pasin*, the commodity economy becomes embedded in local, gendered moralities. This becomes increasingly important as this realm of mutuality is simultaneously threatened by the rising costs of inputs and the growing number of people selling food in the marketplace, increasing tensions and conflicts between neighbours and kin.

Regardless of where women are positioned in the cash economy, and regardless of whether they are young, old, married, unmarried, rich in symbolic capital or hardworking in their garden, there continues to be the expectation and requirement to show *pasin*, that is, to show
humility, gratitude, recognition and generosity to others in material and immaterial ways. Women use their production of material items to maintain and supply those areas of their lives which contribute to and make up their personhood. Without the marketplace and their gardens, women who are not educated or qualified would struggle to be ‘women’. It is their place as carers and providers that produces their position in society. Both the monetised and the ceremonial economy depend on market women’s efforts.

Women express themselves and their desires, goals and interests within an economy that is made up both of ongoing, gifting relationships and discrete short-term monetary transactions (Bloch and Parry 1989). Some aspects of the short-term transactions of the marketplace and the broader market economy have allowed women to make choices for themselves and their children in spite of marriage relations.

Robbins (2003) argues that whilst anthropology has done a lot to contribute to ideas of exchange, particularly arguing that exchange is what makes social relations and structures, there has not been much consideration of the motivations that people in PNG give themselves for these exchanges. This means more emphasis ethnographic enquiries in the Highlands have placed more emphasis on the politics of men’s exchanges and group formation than the importance of acknowledging the emotions of others in gift exchange. Here I have shown how women in Goroka see their exchanges as acts of gratitude and attempts to elicit joy and happiness in others. This is part of their own means of making relationships and gaining recognition from others. It is also part of the larger scheme recognised in Goroka of providing for others as sisters, mothers and wives. Women’s place as ‘bringers’ of emotions to events that mark the life cycle is appreciated and recognised through ceremonial exchanges of food. This aspect of transacting emotions and affect is fundamental to why and how gift exchanges in ceremonial contexts take place, and how women value themselves and are valued by others. Their acts of emotions are themselves productive of value, demonstrating the
relationships that people have to one another through the embodied displays of emotion. Moral and social obligations, as well as genuine care for their kin, are all factors which drive people to attend these events. When we see the performance of these emotions as elements of exchange, then we see that women are not just active transactors in the marketplace but vital parts of Goroka’s economy too.

Through my study in the Goroka market, I have come to understand the significance of nurturance and care for women’s political status and personal sense of achievement. They are active in bringing about the exchanges that others have suggested exploit them. Much of this takes place in a context where valuable objects can cross from a gifting context to a commodity context, allowing women agency and choice, and equally challenging the security and stability of their relationships. How gender relations manifest today intersects with matters of urbanisation, access to markets, levels of education and proximity to kin groups.

Women create space to provide for themselves and others, pursue a variety of economic activities and invest in their children’s futures. However, the more growers turn to cash crops, the more integrated they become with national and global economies, which comes with vulnerability to environmental factors, global and national fluctuations. It is yet to be seen how local ideas and practices of pasin and other local forms of recognition can withstand pressures of urbanisation, given that commodification is now a deeply embedded process in Goroka.
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