Imagined Futures in a Moral Economy

Experiences and Perceptions of Wealth at the University of Goroka

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 Abstract

This thesis is about the staff and students at the University of Goroka in Papua New Guinea, and how they perceive and experience wealth, a concept that ties "how we make claims on the future in the present" to the past, through a moral economy (Foster 2018:19). For students, their status at the university and their future potential to become wage earners are for the most part contingent on their relationships with relatives and financial sponsors from the past and present. They imagine futures based on the obligation to reciprocate to those people who helped them get to that position. I draw on three months of participant observation and fieldwork at the University of Goroka, 16 semi-structured interviews, and 32 survey responses to address how staff and students experience and perceive wealth.

Education is viewed as the gateway to success for students and staff at the University of Goroka. This message is directed at individuals who are encouraged to think that they can gain wealth and status, and become agents for the development of PNG, as well as at communities who receive benefits back from their "investments" in students. Drawing on my interviews and interactions with students and staff about the topic of wealth, I argue that they operate in a moral economy where people as agents act on a history of relationships which provide the bases for future relationships. They believe that being at a university should reflect their own moralities, which are based on the idea of reciprocity, and making sure that their success as students is shared.

Underlying all these experiences and perceptions were culturally specific ideas about morality, personhood, and agency. Ideas about wealth are related to personhood, as staff and students are in relations of reciprocity with other persons. Out of this data, I suggest that four main themes emerge about how staff and students view themselves as people and agents and how they express wealth; how they view the concepts of wealth and modernity; how the relationships from the past bind students, and people more generally, to the relationships in their futures; and how people moralise the use of wealth on broader scales.

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Introduction

The University of Goroka, in the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, was only a ten minute walk from my residence at the Research and Conservation Foundation (RCF) in North Goroka where I stayed for three months of fieldwork. Most mornings I would walk out the RCF gate and turn the corner towards the Humilaveka hilltop plateau were the University had sat since 1965. My routine always involved walking past people sitting with tables on the sides of the road selling food, *buai* (a nut with drug-like properties), and store bought items. The tables are made of wood, but tarpaulins or mats served as table substitutes. We exchanged hellos, conversations about the day in *Tok Pisin*, the lingua franca in Papua New Guinea, and sometimes food. I became friendly with the sellers outside the University gate, particularly one young woman who was about the age of my other University friends. She sat in a line of sellers who sold hot sausages, bags of chips and biscuits, cigarettes and buai, clothes and shoes, and fresh produce, although whether table sellers who sell produce in *kona* (corner) markets on the sides of roads have produced it themselves or have bought it from others is a point of contention (Busse 2019:211-212).

The table sellers across the road from my residence knew the most about my comings and goings, and the sellers at the *kona maket* (corner market) at the end of my road knew whether I was going to the University to the left or into town on the PMV bus – ten-or eleven-seat vans which often fit up to fifteen people as they travelled different routes around Goroka. The table sellers at the town bus stop offered me shelter from the rain while I waited for a friend. They began to associate me with my adoptive family, occasionally relaying my movements to them. They called me *sista* and *misses*, and some women became increasingly interested in my marital status once I mentioned that I grew up three hours west of Goroka, in an area called Banz.

One sunny morning early in my fieldwork, when I was finding it particularly taxing to walk around in the heat and altitude, I found myself feeling sorry for the table sellers. They had to sit outside in the heat all day, and it looked like they were hardly selling anything. I mentioned this to one of the staff at the University who was showing me around, and he agreed that it was hard work out in the sun, but he also mentioned that they do make a lot of money. So much money, in fact, that they are able to give out loans to people who work at the University when they run out of money at the end of the fortnight between their paydays. He called them loan sharks because they charge a 50% interest rate on borrowed money. If a staff member were to borrow 100 Kina (the equivalent of around $45NZD at the time), they would pay back K150. Occasionally I saw signs around the University advertising money selling at lower prices, for example, a 30% interest rate if a person had a bank card to use as

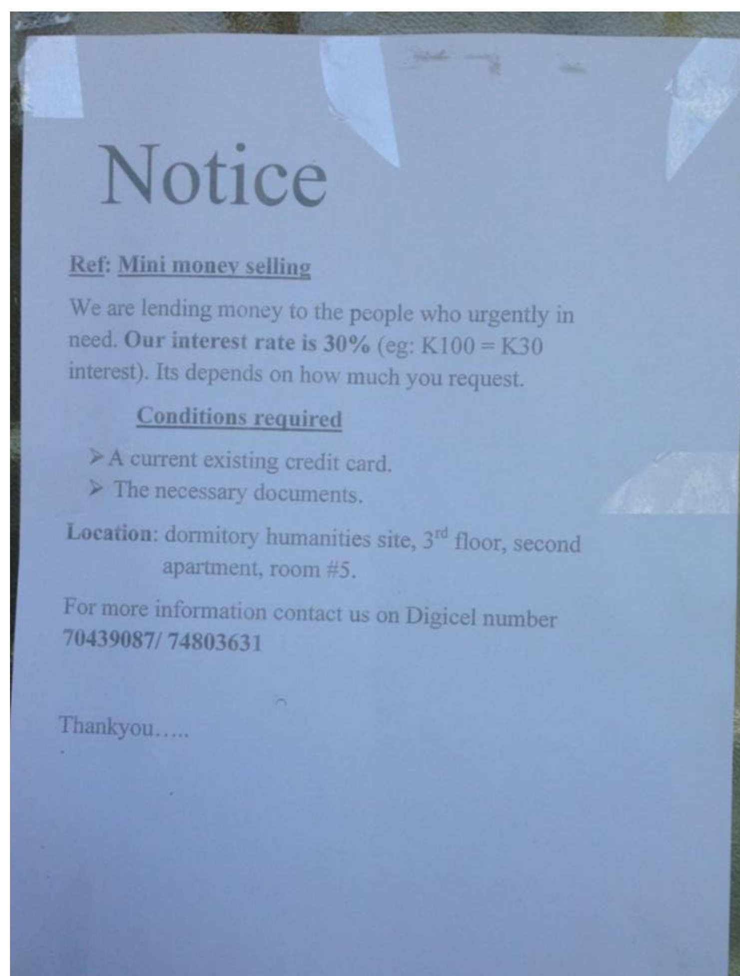


Figure 1: A notice on the School of Social Science noticeboard about borrowing money

collateral, and the vaguely described "necessary documents". I was a little shocked initially, but when I thought about the necessary conditions to have a table, it began to make more sense: sellers needed land to sit their table on, money to buy the initial objects to sell on in the first place, and relationships with people who would be buying from the them.

One day I sat down with some sellers to chat and they talked about how red I had become. I was a little sunburnt, but mostly hot from the exercise of walking around. I told them that I would never be able to be a table seller because my skin was not strong enough to withstand the long hours in the heat, and they laughed and agreed. In Ira Bashkow's (2006:103) ethnography *The Meaning of Whitemen: Race & Modernity in the Orokaiva Cultural World*, he explains how Orokaiva from the Oro province near the capital Port Moresby would worry about his own white skin and offer him advice to make sure his skin kept soft. Orokaiva attributed this softness to the wealth and development of white people in developed countries like Australia and the United States; not only did they not have to do hard work, which made the skin hard, but they also could afford creams and medicines to keep it soft (2006:104).

People could see someone's skin and clothing and read certain kinds of wealth on them. University students wore clothes that demonstrated their performance of modernity and future wealth. The clothes that they wore were not suitable for table selling in practical terms, but they did adhere to the expectations of families who wanted students to fit in to an urban and modern environment at the University. My white skin gave the impression that I was not from Papua New Guinea, and therefore, for a myriad of reasons, I was not suitable for table selling. Students and staff told me that the overwhelming expectation of someone who goes to University is to be able to get a paying job so that they do not have to do table selling amongst other money-generating activities, but some people saw the benefit in making more money this way, at least as a second job. Table selling is very profitable, and in some cases,

more profitable on a day-to-day basis than a job with a salary, but it is not as prestigious as getting a job as a teacher or government official, which is the goal of many students. The difference between these two jobs, the table seller who makes more money versus the university educated teacher who has more respect, is indicative of the difference with staff and students' perceptions between wealth and money.

This example is also indicative of the moralisations that Papua New Guineans make about how people make wealth, and what they do with that wealth, particularly monetary wealth. Papua New Guineans moralise people's actions based on their relationships and the social context, so students and staff make moral evaluations of other people's actions from their own vantage point. Students have obligations to their family and relatives through the wantok system, a system of networks and obligations with kin, friend, and work relationships which I will discuss in detail in Chapter 3. What students and staff do with their wealth is moralised by the people with whom they are in relationships, and students must navigate the obligations they will have in the future and balance these obligations with their own financial needs. The demands that people make on students are sometimes overwhelming, and some students ended up describing their engagement with the wantok system in negative moral terms. If someone existed in a relationship where they perceived an injustice in the obligation, demand, or the reciprocated object, they also evaluated this in negative terms. This is because morality is socially contingent on the relationships and the social context of the person perceiving the exchange (Read 1955:257; Bashkow 2006:135; Carrier 2018:18).

This thesis is about the staff and students at the University of Goroka, and how they perceive and experience wealth, a concept that ties "how we make claims on the future in the present" to the past, through a moral economy (Foster 2018:19). Students and staff acted within a moral economy where "relationships develop and obligations emerge from a history of interactions, each transaction builds on those before it, and provides the base for future

transactions, and from this emerge appropriate ways to act and transact" (Sharp 2019:184; cf Carrier 2018). Underlying all these experiences and perceptions were the culturally specific ideas about morality, personhood, and agency. In this thesis, I will demonstrate how people at the University of Goroka thought about their wealth in the present and the future, and how this related fundamentally to their personhood, as persons in cycles of reciprocity with other persons, and as agents whose actions reflected on them as individuals and as people in a society who are made up of other people.

Imagined Futures at the University

Students have a lot of expectations and obligations about the future when they graduate from University and hopefully enter paid employment. One student told me how she was studying at the University of Goroka to be the "wealthiest person" she could be. Other students mentioned that they had not yet been paid for work, but they hope to be in the future, particularly in teaching areas. But there were also several in-service students, who returned from their teaching jobs to upgrade their diplomas to bachelor's degrees, and other staff members at the University who explained that ideas such as 'financial independence' were not as simple as students hoped or imagined. This is because students are already in a cycle of reciprocity that connects their past to their present and future.

Researchers in Papua New Guinea have argued that Papua New Guineans think about people as being made up of their relationships with other people in more explicit ways than non-Papua New Guineans. Their relationships are based on the idea of reciprocity – giving with the conscious expectation of receiving something in return. This means that because students rely on their families and communities to pay for school fees, clothing, and daily needs, they are in cycles of reciprocity that are meant to establish, continue, and build upon relationships between people. As Marilyn Strathern (1988:338) explains, the objects that people exchange are indicative of the relationship one person has with another. Those objects

come to represent the relationship, and people act as ‘agents’ with their relationships in mind. A student who receives objects, money, and support via their relationships with other people therefore thinks about the future with those people in mind; the relationships and gifts are such that “one might say that [people] owe their persons to those relationships, and thus to other ‘persons’” (Strathern 1988:338). Because of this conception of personhood, most Papua New Guineans can look at a university student and see their past and present relationships and the future obligations that they have to reciprocate.

Students and staff experience and perceive wealth and the relationships and exchanges they make with others through a moral context that emerged through repeated transactions. This context is a moral economy, a concept which “roots moral economic activity in the mutual obligations that arise when people transact with each other over the course of time” (Carrier 2018:18). One way that students and staff and their communities are connected is through the *wantok system:* a system of exchange and reciprocity where people demonstrate and emphasise the obligations and opportunities of relationships. Students are able to go to University because of the financial support of their *wantoks*, such as close family and relatives, and are expected to reciprocate back to those people when they enter into employment. The exchange, the obligation, and the opportunity that wantoks have to make demands of or claims on these students are all part of being a wantok and the wantok system. These exchanges are situated within a history of exchanges between people in a given community and point towards further exchanges in the future. Therefore, these exchanges and obligations are mutually reinforcing; they make up the moral basis for relationships in the past and they set the groundwork for moral evaluations in the future (Carrier 2018:25; also Robbins and Akin 1999:7-16; Sahlins 1972:186; Sharp 2016, 2019:184 ; Busse and Sharp 2019).

One of my interviewees mentioned to me that the wantok system was "one step before corruption". She described how some people in positions of authority might give jobs to their wantoks over other people who apply for the jobs, which was a typical example that students mentioned when I asked about the wantok system. The morality or immorality of this action emerged from the repeated giving of jobs to relatives and friends. Some staff and students described other people giving jobs to their wantoks was akin to a kind of nepotism, however others also acknowledged the benefits that students received from their relatives through the wantok system. Students seemed to be making or not making claims of corruption based on their relationship to whomever was benefitting from the fast track through a job application process. Students also applied this tendency to evaluate actions as either good or corrupt onto other aspects of university life, such as the allocation of university funding, and the grades that some students received. Not only did students make accusations of corruption based on the social contingency of an action (or the relationships between the people who acted), but the social context of the university played a big part in how students felt about various allegedly corrupt actions.

The University of Goroka is a particular context, and students, their families and communities, have ideas about what kinds of wealth an education will provide for them. University officials also encourage this thinking. In his 2018 PhD thesis, Ivo Syndicus drew on several years of fieldwork at the University of Goroka. He looked at the setting of the University as one which "enables a broader frame of attention," connecting students to their relatives and sponsors and to ideas about national development (Syndicus 2018:11). I noticed a similar kind of attitude towards education and the future of national development. During my time at the university, the School of Education held several seminars about various school related topics titled "Research is the Bridge towards National Development". In this thesis I mainly discuss the imagined futures of students amongst other topics, but I draw on material

from both university staff and students. The university staff I interacted with were once students themselves, and provide a different perspective of the same ideas that students have about wealth and how to use wealth. Further, staff contribute to and shape students' aspirations for the future. For students, a university education can represent several future aspirations: personal wealth in the form of money, status, and an education; students can become "agents of development" in their communities; and it is also a base of human resources for national and global development (Syndicus 2018:11, 22). University staff have gone through the same process of getting an education that students were going through during my time in Goroka, and demonstrate the kinds of exchanges, obligations, and opportunities that provide the basis for students' aspirations.

In the last few weeks of my fieldwork, then-Finance Minister James Marape and other Ministers of Parliament were causing a stir by crossing the floor and giving the majority in Parliament to the opposition. Marape was later elected by the National Parliament to be Prime Minister after the former Prime Minister Peter O'Neill resigned on May 29th 2019. Marape described a new vision for the future of Papua New Guinea in a Facebook post on the 6th of June 2019, in which he explained that he wanted to "take back our economy (country)" and "make PNG the richest black Christian nation" (PM Hon. James Marape 2019). Students at the University of Goroka are therefore in an important position to fulfil not only their families' expectations but to contribute to national expectations of wealth and autonomy. In this thesis, I explore not only the personal and familial expectations and perceptions of wealth, but also how students perceived different national phenomenon (the wantok system and corruption) in relation to their status as tertiary students and future leaders.

Modernity and Papua New Guinea

A university in Papua New Guinea is also a particular context that is specific to the country. Staff and students' ideas about wealth are tied up in their ideas about what makes

them modern, and are particular to their social context. I define modernity as a dialectical process in which ideas and structures from different societies come into contact with other ideas and structures of other societies. People begin to act, and think about the future and the past, in a different light because the meeting of both sets of ideas and structures cause a reorientation to being in the world (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012:9). Modernity is a concept that is raced (Bashkow 2006:9-15) and gendered (Wardlow 2002a; 2002b). People evaluate interactions with modern objects and ideas, attributing them quickly and easily to white people (Bashkow 2006:9), and gatekeeping certain activities for men and not for women (Wardlow 2002a:152). Modernity, race, and gender are all linked, and this is why I emphasise the *meeting* of ideas and structures, rather than the encompassment of ideas and structures. Modernity does not supersede preconceived ideas about race and gender, but the modern and the traditional come together to make something new. The way that a Papua New Guinean thinks about modernity is tied specifically to their society and incorporates the characteristics of that society, which in turn becomes inherent to their conception of modernity.

Part of a new consciousness that students have about wealth is the dichotomisation of rural and urban kinds of wealth, and the different valuing of land, pigs, and gardens versus money, education, and jobs. While people often told me about this distinction, with further prompting, many students went on to emphasise how “rural” forms of wealth are still very important in urban settings. My host mother epitomised this new consciousness when she told me about how she brings up her children; she wants them to get an education to get a job and make money, but she also teaches them gardening skills in case they fall on hard times. As with modernity, wealth is culturally specific. When a Papua New Guinean student or staff member talked about wealth, I did not take for granted that I automatically knew what they meant by the word, even though it was an English word or cognate.

The same can be said for other English words I use in this thesis. The shared spelling and phonetics of a word do not denote the same meaning. As I mentioned earlier, many aspects of how people in Goroka perceived the university and their expectations of what an education would bring were familiar coming from a New Zealand context, but they nonetheless also remain culturally specific to a nation that is hoping to take back the economy and become the richest black Christian nation. In chapter 2, I discuss how money has a particular history in Papua New Guinea that means that people currently moralise its use based on ideas of personhood that are specific to PNG (Robbins and Akin 1999; LiPuma 1999; Busse 2019; Sharp 2019). Money is also related to work, and there are many different ideas about what does and does not constitute work (Schwimmer 1980; Strathern 1988; Pickles 2013; Busse 2019). In chapter 1, I discuss how Papua New Guineans believe that skin and clothing can communicate ideas like wealth and modernity, because the skin relates to and expresses feelings and inner identities (A. Strathern 1975; M. Strathern 1979; Bashkow 2000, 2006; Strathern and Stewart 2007). A person's wealth objects can be seen 'on the skin,' as an extension of the body, so while clothing is worn literally on the body, it also demonstrates wealth that is figuratively on the body; that is there is 'money on the skin' which the person used to buy the clothes, so there must be money that other people can make claims on (Bashkow 2006:98 cf Strathern 1975).

In this thesis, I explore how my interlocutors perceive and experience wealth. And with different perceptions and experiences comes definitions of wealth which can also vary from person to person. In their recent special issue, Rakapoulous and Rio (2019) brought together various anthropological definitions of wealth, all of which are varied and cannot be defined in one simple sentence (Gregory 2019). However, for the purposes of this thesis I use Foster's definition from this issue: wealth is "how we make claims on the future in the present;" wealth combines "meaning (human use-value) and matter;" and the accumulation of

things as well as the capacity to accumulate things (Robert Foster 2018:19). This definition combines the material and immaterial, ideas about value, and the relationship of the past to the present and future, all of which are parts of important conversations I had about wealth with my interlocutors. Significantly, it combines these ideas in a specific temporal relationship.

My Methods and History

Papua New Guinea was my original home, and it is where I have my first memories from growing up until I left the country when I was 8 years old. When I returned to it seventeen years later, I was excited about the smells which I remembered clearly and fondly – fire, dirt, and rain. I was ready for the blast of hot air that hits you and engulfs you when you leave the airplane in the capital, Port Moresby. It feels like it is stuck to the skin and the back of your throat. When I left my residence in Goroka for the first time I still did not know many people, but I knew the sound of my sandals scraping against the loose stones underfoot; I knew the plight of the trucks avoiding potholes along the Highlands Highway; I knew the balance of my body and how to walk through the slippery and sticky mud. I was and am still surprised at how much about PNG my body remembers.

While my family was living in Papua New Guinea, we once made the four hour van trip east to Goroka to visit the Bird of Paradise hotel. I was 5 years old, and I slipped on the tiles on the way to the pool and hit my head. When I revisited the hotel at twenty-five years old, I joked that my main memory was about head trauma. Christian Leader's Training College (CLTC) is an enterprise set up by Evangelical Churches in Australia and New Zealand that aims to teach both theology and business, and soon it will teach an early childhood certificate. It is located in Jiwaka Province, and it is a small compound of around 300 people which acts as both a college and a chicken farm. It had a landing strip, a library, two schools, and a store, and now it has a dental clinic, one school, and a slightly nicer store.

Goroka is a town in the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, sustained by coffee industry and its proximity to the Highlands Highway, which is the main road through the highlands. The University of Goroka has approximately 4000 students, and the town itself has around 20,000 people. The University was established in 1997 after the teachers' college and an offshoot of the larger University of Papua New Guinea, situated in the capital Port Moresby, were combined to create the University of Goroka.

Over the three months that I spent in Goroka, I conducted participant observation of students' lives at the university, in the town, and in people's homes. I met people during classes, seminars, and around the university campus, and traded stories about university experiences across these contexts. Being around the university when semester fees were due meant that money was at the forefront of everyone's minds. This was an opportunity for me to learn about how students viewed and treated the money they handed over to the University. I also conducted interviews and surveys at the university, using both classrooms and outdoor areas as interview locations. This meant that my interviews were less about asking and answering questions and more about the conversations my interviewees and I had. I was present for student registration, half of the semester, and graduation. I attended classes, morning teas, seminars, and the School of Social Science board meetings, and was able to spend time with students around the university, in the library, and at their homes. Over this time I managed to gather more data than I thought possible, particularly because as this fieldwork was part of a one-year MA, my time was limited, and therefore the time to collect data was constrained by my own academic year.

I was hosted by the Social Science Department at the University and this is reflected in my data. Social Science students and staff make up the bulk of my interviewees, however I was also able to conduct a survey with science, education, and accounting students. Throughout my fieldwork I became friends with education, business, psychology, and

language and literature students. My interviews were conducted with students of various ages and from various university years, from first year to post-graduate. Some of my participants were students straight out of high school, some were working at the university (in the case of the staff), and some had worked and then returned to university. My interviews with staff also reflected my association with the School of Social Sciences, however I was able to interview education and science staff as well. In total I conducted 16 interviews with 15 participants, during which we discussed family history, job aspirations, and specific ideas about money and wealth. My interviews were semi-structured and ranged from 15 minutes to one and a half hours, however the average was 45 minutes. The students whom I interviewed approached me, hearing about the research mainly through word of mouth and my connections with lecturers. My interviews with staff were organised after one would express interest and I would offer the interview. I also took a survey with 50 students, of which I gathered 32 responses. The surveys had three questions – asking about how they would describe a wealthy person, a story of when they saw a wealthy person, and whether they had any work experience – and the participant was asked to provide story-like answers to the questions. My surveys were conducted in class, before which I had given lectures on research methods and ethics. All of my participants received ethics information sheets, however the lectures were a good way to explain the information surrounding the surveys as well. These interviews and surveys provided me with a range of perspectives on money, wealth, and work, which I contextualised with other data from participant observation. Out of this data, I suggest that four main themes emerge about how staff and students view themselves as people and agents; how they express wealth (Chapter 1: Clothing and the Body); how they view the concepts of wealth and modernity (Chapter 2: Money is Distinct from Wealth); how the relationships from the past bind students, and people more generally, to the relationships

in their futures (Chapter 3: The Wantok System); and how people moralise the use of wealth on broad scales (Chapter 4: Corruption and Morality).

Overview of Chapters

I have structured the themes in this thesis to move outward from the body: from the way a person would decorate their body to demonstrate wealth; onto their ideas about wealth and how it relates to their relationships; particularly with close family and other relatives; and lastly to the interactions between individuals and institutions. Through my interactions with students and staff when discussing wealth, it became clear that they operated in a moral economy where people as agents acted on a history of relationships which provided the base for future relationships, and that they believed that being at a university should reflect a particular kind of morality (Carrier 2018). For students, their status at the university and their future potential to become wage earners were for the most part contingent on their relationships with relatives and financial sponsors from the past and present; they imagined futures based on the obligation to reciprocate to those people who helped them get to that position. University officials, staff, and students themselves all conceived of the university as a place to develop students into future leaders, which meant that a failure to deliver this obligation of the university towards students was seen as 'corrupt'. Students at the university envisaged their futures based on these expectations, which in turn shaped their perceptions of wealth as "how [they] make claims on the future in the present", and their experiences of wealth in the present (Foster 2018:19).

In Chapter 1, I outline how people's perceptions and experiences of wealth are linked to the different ways they read wealth on the skin or on clothing, on male and female bodies, and on foreign bodies. Clothing is a decoration meant to express modernity, wealth, the inner self, and moral behaviour (Strathern 1975; Gell 1993; Wolff 2005; Bashkow 2006; Wardlow 2006). The ways that students dress is indicative of their wealth, or whether they would like

to be perceived as wealthy or not wealthy. In this chapter I also demonstrate how clothing relates to the skin, and how wealth is connected to the body and the decorations on the body. There were formal and informal University expectations about what to wear, but not everyone followed these expectations. However, students at the University, a modern institution, did often dress in ways that expressed their modernity. The ways that students dressed were individual actions, but they were tied to a history of relationships that arose when people transacted with each other over the course of time (Carrier 2018:18). I discuss how the clothes that students wore were often gifts from family or bought with money that their wantoks gave them, which meant that when people looked at students, they were also able to see the people who sustained and supported the student through their time at university. While students often dressed their bodies to show things about themselves, they were also tied to their wantoks in particular ways through their clothing.

Conversely, I also explore how people who are foreigners in PNG do not have the history of relationships that students do, and so Papua New Guineans read wealth on foreign bodies in different ways. I draw on Ira Bashkow's *The Meaning of Whitemen* (2006), which is the ethnography that made me reflect on my own history in Papua New Guinea and how wealth would be read on my white, female body. I then discuss how wealth items and expressions of modernity are gendered. These discussions, although brief, are important to explore in any discussion of wealth and modernity when they are set in the context of historically gendered ideas of work and wealth and modernity (Sexton 1982, 1984; Strathern 1988; Wardlow 2006; Barnett-Naghshineh 2018, 2019).

In the second Chapter, I discuss how wealth is demonstrated, but not defined, by money among staff and students at the University of Goroka. For them, wealth also includes land, education, status, opportunities and relationships. Students and staff made a casual dichotomisation between traditional and rural forms of wealth like land, pigs, and gardens,

and modern or urban forms of wealth like money, education, and jobs, but the distinction is not as clear cut in daily life. In this chapter I discuss modernity and westernisation, and how the trajectory of capitalism has been interpreted by some anthropologists to lead to a new kind of "possessive individualism" (MacPherson 1962). I explore how, because of the deep historical connections and future obligations between students and staff and the people they are in relationships with, people are seen as relational rather than possessive in character.

In Chapter 3, I discuss what it means to be a relational person with regard to wealth. In a set of relationships called the wantok system, students are obligated to give back to their wantoks, the people who supported them while they went through university. Living in an urban environment means that living costs are a lot higher than in the village, and students rely on family to cover those living costs. The cost of living and the cost to get to university mean that students must consider the past when imagining their future wealth; their wealth, as with all actions and relationships, links to temporality. Families will put their children through university in order to "harvest" from them, as one father explained to me. These expectations and obligations are to do with how Papua New Guineans conceive of personhood, and how the gifting of school fees relates to the past, the present and the future. I discuss how students moralise the wantok system, and how it interacts with their ideas about their wealth and modernity.

In my final Chapter, I build upon the ideas of morality and modernity in Chapter 3. I discuss the point at which experiences and perceptions of wealth are most at odds: when someone is charged with corruption. The accusations of corruption that I discuss are made on a moral ground rather than a legal ground, around the misuse of money. I discuss how morality is tied to personhood and agency, so that when people use wealth in a way that does not benefit one person, they view this action as unfair, and immoral. This is because morality is socially contingent on the relationships that a person perceives. Viewed in this way, I argue

that one way to think about an accusation of corruption is as a modern form of jealousy, which has a long history in relationships in Papua New Guinea.

Across all these chapters, I demonstrate that how people at the University of Goroka think about wealth is tied to how they view themselves, the people they interact with, and the institutions that they encounter. The way people evaluate wealth and the use of wealth relates to the moral values that develop over time, because the history of interactions between people to do with wealth establishes the appropriate ways to act and transact, and the basis for future transactions. This is also the reason that students are at university trying to gain an education, and why they must consider their future relationships with people when they think about the wealth that they claim in the present, as students at a modern institution, but for their futures. If Papua New Guineans owe their persons to relationships, and thus to other persons, most Papua New Guineans can look at a university student and see their past and present relationships and the future obligations that they have to reciprocate wealth (Strathern 1988:338).

Chapter 1

Clothing and the Body

Students at the University of Goroka express many things with their clothing and accessories. What they wear can demonstrate levels of wealth, if their clothing is new and tight on the skin; professionalism, if they have access to suits and button-ups; affiliations, like sports teams or provincial logos; and relationships to communities, such as provincial styles of bilums. The values students place on clothing are related to Papua New Guinean ways of being, and they are also related to particular ideas about what it means to be a tertiary student, and an agent in a moral economy. Clothing, like other kinds of decoration, are a representation of the relational person.

When I asked staff and students about how students showed their wealth at university, they almost universally responded that clothing was how you tell who has wealth. When I asked what kind of clothes they were talking about, responses included suits and suit jackets, skinny jeans, and in general, having the choice to wear several different kinds of outfits. The clothes that students wore were often from western countries, but the fashion was Papua New Guinean; it was imbued with meaning from a Papua New Guinean perspective, and particularly, one of a student at a university. The point of this chapter is to demonstrate that by wearing western styles, students can demonstrate their modernity, fashion, and future wealth, especially at a site like the university where the clothes that students wear take on new symbolic meanings such as the approach towards modernity.

Rosa

Many universities that I have visited have "the quad," and for the University of Goroka, the quad became my home. It was a small grassy area surrounded by the Social Science Department offices and classrooms. It also had the department noticeboard, which meant that

I could linger by pretending to read the notices again and again and again. Before the university semester began, there was very little that I felt like I could do to make friends and talk to people. The head of department, Dr Bill Sagir, had said that I might get an office, but I realised quickly that there were not enough offices for the actual staff due to renovations, let alone an extra one for me. Instead, I perched along the rails of the second storey of classrooms, looking out over the quad. I met Rosa[1] and her sister Leslie there before the semester started. They were charging their phones in a classroom because the electricity at their rental was unreliable. Rosa and I became fast friends because she was from Hagen and I was from Banz, which used to be in the same Western Highlands Province until Banz was taken up by the creation of the Jiwaka Province. She was in her second year of a business studies degree, and had a penchant for losing her phone (she had three different phones over the three month period I was in Goroka).

As one of the few white people on campus, I drew a lot of stares, but also smiles and hellos. People often looked at my feet in sandals, especially on rainy days, and also my *bilum* (a woven bag), which was a gift that my mother received twenty years earlier. The sandals and the bilum were both comfortable items that I wanted to use and also an attempt to fit in, decorations meant to express belonging. About a month into my fieldwork I was leaning against the rails watching students and staff walk by and letting them watch me. Students would cut across the well-trodden paths through the grass carrying bilums or bags with different sporting or technology motifs: Nike, Adidas, the New Zealand All Blacks, and Apple were popular logos. Many male students wore brightly colour sports shirts or jackets, women mostly wore long pants and skirts with t-shirts, and while there were students walking around in full suits there were also students in tattered shirts with no shoes. While it could be

[1] In this thesis I use pseudonyms for students at the University for privacy and anonymity. I gave staff at the University the opportunity to have their names connected to some of their words, to allow for proper attribution of ideas.

the case that some students' families do not have enough to cover both school fees and school clothing budgets, it could also be that some students made deliberate choices to dress this way, either to hide wealth on the skin or as a virtue of modesty. However, it did mean that that those students would be refused service at the education department, which had a sign up saying that they would not communicate with people who were not appropriately dressed. I took this to mean that the department expected students to wear clothes of a certain level of 'professionalism,' an expectation that Rosa soon confirmed.

I bumped into Rosa, who was waiting while Leslie was in line for paying her semester fees. The lines stretched out past the financial services room and through the walkways of the university because all the payments were made in person and students had to receive a handwritten receipt. I had been wondering about the fashion choices of students at the university, particularly the varied sports team shirts that a lot of men wore. On any given day I might see ten different sports team shirts from several different kinds of sports, but most common were the rugby league shirts and cricket baggy caps. I asked Rosa about the sports shirts and she told me about why they were inappropriate to wear at university. She told me that students are meant to wear clothes that would reflect what they would have to wear in the jobs that they are going to get. I understood this to mean two things: that students are told to hope for and imagine futures where they would wear professional clothes in a professional setting, and that the university wanted to present its own professionalism. Most of the students who take business studies do so because they want to set up their own businesses, and other students such as Leslie who take subjects such as Chemistry or History are doing so in order to become teachers. Therefore, Rosa said, in the university setting, men should not wear sports shirts because they are not professional, but instead they should wear button up shirts. Women should not wear pants because they are not appropriate, they should wear skirts or dresses instead. Rosa clarified that if you do not have a button up shirt, the next best

thing is to wear a polo shirt with three buttons at the top. It was around this time that I noticed what she was wearing: a Tommy Hilfiger polo shirt and shorts, which I took to mean that while the rules are communicated they were not fully internalised.

Students and Imagined Futures

Students at the University of Goroka used clothing to demonstrate different parts of themselves, their home places, and their wealth. Students who won sponsorships from their provinces, or were particularly involved with their provincial group, would wear logos of those provinces, but there were also provincial differences in the appropriate ways to dress. One of my interviewees told me that it was easy to tell who was from Port Moresby, the because they would be more fashionable, and any woman who wore tight pants would not be from Goroka, because it is inappropriate to show off hips there. In fact, I saw many women wearing skinny jeans and tight shirts or singlets. While this did cause some lecturers to comment about the students to me, in general the desire to show off wealth and the western styles of clothing won out over the social pressures of dressing in the professional or modest manner that the university suggested.

In the 2017 film *Aliko & Ambai*, by Diane Anton and Mark Eby, Aliko is a secondary school student who has to move to the town to finish her education. In the film, Aliko's aunt implores her to buy new clothes for school because the ones she brings with her from the village are not suitable. She must somehow stretch the money she was given for school fees to buy new clothes from the second-hand store in town. Aliko is shown going to the second-hand store and buying several items including a knee-length skirt and a Hannah Montana shirt (a popular TV show in the United States). She buys clothes that differ in colour from the ones she is seen wearing in the village setting, and also clothes that are shorter and tighter.

The main places to buy clothes in Goroka are on the sides of the street, where people sell on the best bits that they can source from the masses of second hand clothing that gets

shipped to Papua New Guinea that ends up in the second-hand stores shown in *Aliko & Ambai*. This means that there are a lot of clothes from the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Most of the second hand clothing is torn or stained, but you can also find some gems in the rough. There are also Variety Stores which are often owned by Chinese people, and the clothes there generally cost more and are sometimes worse quality. Lastly, many students have family who make bilums, bilum caps, and *meriblouses*, which are modesty dresses made from colourful styles of fabric.

But even if I saw familiar clothes, the way the clothes were used was not familiar. Brand label jeans or polos like I saw Rosa wearing were nothing to bat an eye at, and instead, large logos and colours were important. Petrol station jackets were highly sought after, and make-up brand totes were used as school bags. Even backpacks were sometimes worn with one strap along the forehead, mirroring a bilum more than a backpack. One day, returning from town on the bus, I saw a man wear a deep purple dressing gown, which distinguished himself from others in the area in colour and substance. I had never seen another person wearing a dressing gown before in Goroka. He perhaps wore the dressing gown to demonstrate his interaction with western styles of clothing, but also to stand out amongst the crowd. The values placed on the clothes meant something different to someone in Papua New Guinea, and these values also influenced a different usage of the piece. Western clothing and western styles were abundant, but the fashion was distinctly Papua New Guinean.

The Body and the Skin

Ira Bashkow (2006) and Marilyn Strathern (1975, 1979) have looked both at ways in which wealth in different parts of PNG is connected to the body, and at experiences that people have with wealth because of their bodies. Their ethnographies demonstrate that Papua New Guineans see wealth through skin, both as an organ and a part of the body, and through the adornments, decorations, and materials that can be applied to the skin.

Writing about the Orokaiva of Oro Province in eastern PNG, Bashkow observes that "white involvement has changed Orokaiva from a self-ruled people who were sovereign over their own lands and wealthy in their own traditional forms of wealth, to a politically marginalized people who recognize themselves as poor in the context of a global economy" (Bashkow 2006:3). The whiteman's skin is a point of paradox for Orokaiva because where Orokaiva skin that is hard and dark represents wealth through toiling on land, whitemen's skin is soft and light. In Orokaiva terms, this would mean that whitemen do not work and are therefore poor, but Orokaiva see that whitemen are materially wealthier than Orokaiva, and this has changed how Orokaiva think about themselves and others. This brings about a paradox in the moral economy of Orokaiva: the whiteman's softness implies wealth, but their softness also demonstrates that they do not do the work required to get wealth, as Orokaiva understand it (Bashkow 2006:111).

The whiteman is a category, a construction of an archetype of western modernity (Bashkow 2006:2). Orokaiva deliberately use different terms for whiteman, some in *Tok Pisisn* and some in other dialects, which Bashkow consolidates to 'the whiteman.' The whiteman is deliberately a man because Orokaiva most frequently interacted with white men. The term also "conventionalizes attributes of whites that are noticeable and indeed striking to Orokaiva in comparison with themselves" (Bashkow 2006:8). Orokaiva conceive of the person being made up of the *"jo"*(inside/interior, connoting volition, intention, and will) and the *"hamo,"* (literally 'skin,' the visible parts of the body); the *hamo* is also the aspect of a person's body that was nurtured by others, and it "reflects a person's social interdependences and obligations that carry over from the past" (Bashkow 2006:96-97). The *hamo* is also where people can see visible wealth on someone's skin.

Marilyn Strathern (1975) explained how Hagen men experienced wealth (or lack thereof) as embodied and talked about having "no money on our skins". In this she talks

about how urban migrants face the struggle of migrating to urban environments and the style and cost of living there compared with the expectations of success that their families place on them. In *No Money on Our Skins*, Strathern focuses on Hageners who migrated to Port Moresby for a variety of reasons, including money, adventure, and freedom. The migrants were typically young, unskilled men who were unmarried and mostly unattached from a lot of social obligations (1975:30). The title of the ethnography "No Money on Our Skins" is a reference to the idea of skin being imbued with social obligation. On the one hand, the wealth that was present on the skin, for example: clothes, decorations, and food which makes the skin oily and healthy, was visible to others, and therefore other people can make claims on that wealth. On the other hand, young men could leave the village and go to the town because they had no money on their skins, or they had no obligations and worries. Women did appear in towns at times, however women represented social obligations and maturity (and marriage), which suggested the opposite of the freedoms associated with town (1977:436). The perception of migrating to a town was that one would make money, enter into business, and spend that money frivolously because of the lack of social obligation (Strathern 1975:22-24). While this was not always the case, it is important that this was what potential migrants believed was the case. In reality, there were social obligations required to build networks in business as well (Strathern 1975:43). In a moral economy, young, unmarried men did not have the kinds of relationships that kept them in their villages: they did not have money on the skin, which brought about obligations and demands, and they did not have others taking care of them and nurturing them (Bashkow 2006:97).

Clothing is a decoration that represents the relational person has because it is tied to ideas of wealth which bring obligations and demands. It is both a cause of wealth through the nurturing of others and the consequence of wealth through the decoration that it represents. Clothes can "suggest visual attachments across the material world" and they also present a

particular person’s identity (O’Hanlon 1989; Strathern 1979, 1988; Gell 1993; cf Küchler and Were 2005). Bente Wolff (2005) discussed the integration of modern imported clothing among the Mekeo, who regarded it as not entirely new nor foreign, but they incorporated it into the contemporary ideas about dress codes and the innovation became inseparable from the long-existing values. Strathern and Stewart note how within the process of modernity, people frequently change how they express what is written on the skin, be it gender relations, emotional and physical well-being, and the expression of hopes and desires (2007:250). The body is a decorative area, which represents the relationships of a person to other people and their relationship to wealth.

Why is the skin so important for thinking about wealth? In Strathern’s 1979 discussion of “the self in self decoration”, she explains how in Hagen, a town a few hours from Goroka, “the [inner] identity of a person is known through their physical features” (1979:243). When people decorate their bodies, they are not trying to hide their bodies for the sake of their outer appearance, but they are attempting to show the relationship between the inner and the outer self; they are trying to demonstrate on the outside what is on the inside (1979:243). Both Strathern and Bashkow have commented on the fact that oily skin is a symbol of both health and wealth, and my survey respondents also pointed to the body as a site of wealth: “He/she looks physically fat (for some), he/she wears clothes and shoes which are much more expensive;” “they are mostly fat, short with big belly, always looking clean… They eat expensive food and wear good and expensive clothes;” “They look healthy, their family members look healthy”. In a similar way to skin, clothes can indicate the health or wealth of a person.

As I have mentioned, when I asked students how they would show their wealth, they almost universally said they showed it through clothing. The clothing that they wore to demonstrate wealth was often a style taken from a western country and worn in a Papua New

Guinean fashion, so that even if it looked the same, it was imbued with a different meaning. For students, the way they dress is symbolic of their status as students, and a promise of future wealth. Some men wore suits and suit jackets to university, even on very hot days. One of my interview participants wore a suit, sometimes complete with waistcoat, to university every day. He was recognised among many of the staff and students as “the guy who wears the suit”. His choice of clothing might demonstrate significant wealth or status and professionalism, but it is also a decoration that distinguishes him.

These kinds of outfits are associated with modernity, by which I mean a dialectical process where ideas and structures from different societies come into contact with other ideas and structures of other societies. This causes a rupture between the past, present, and future, and scholars such as Daniel Miller and Jean and John Comaroff define modernity as “a new consciousness about the present and its separation from the past” (Miller 1994:61); or referring “to an orientation of being-in-the-world… to a restless impulse toward innovation whose very iconoclasm brings a hunger for things eternal” (Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff 2012:9).

Of course, no students were sitting with me talking about how they have reoriented their thinking thanks to modernity and are now wearing skinny jeans to show it off, but one conversation I had does stand out with regard to this. I was sitting by a fire with a university student, helping to cook dinner, when we talked about the different ways that Papua New Guineans think about white people. He said that while in the past, people may have thought white people were better than them, now “we think of ourselves as equals. You are not better and I am not better, but maybe you have more education than I do. So that’s why I go to university.” This student linked this change in thinking to the process of education and university, so it follows that the university is an important site for students to enact the modern. Clothing is an extension of the person and all the other persons who make up a

student, it is a site of decoration, and an arena to indicate wealth and success, not only by being at a University, but also pointing towards their potential future success as a wage earner.

When students imagined their futures, they were also considering the past. They imagined futures where they would hold office jobs or teaching jobs and be able to save enough money for a house and cars and things. While Syndicus (2018:15) explains that there are different socio-economic vantage points, and some students come from families with university-educated parents, many of the students I spoke to and interacted with were some of the first in their families to go to university. Students had to make choices about how to interact financially with communities in the future, to either "be 'with' the community" and contribute to ceremonial events and community matters, or to "'isolate themselves' from the community" and focus on their own immediate family (Syndicus 2018:12). The two options are the extremes, and many students would, in the future, fall somewhere in between, but even the students whose families had more material wealth than others also acknowledged frequently that ideas like financial independence and saving money are at odds with their reality, at least for a little while. This is because students are already in a cycle of reciprocity and obligation that connects their past to their present and future.

To attend university, students rely on their families and communities to pay for their school fees. They also rely on families for pocket money, clothing, almost all basic needs, as one of my interview participants mentioned. Because students are gifted their clothing, or money for shopping, their clothing reflects the present wealth – as in financial wealth - of their families, not just the wealth – as in a store of future value – of their education. However, their clothing also represents their relationships with their families in the past and the future as well. Papua New Guineans think about people as being made up of their relationships with other people. Their relationships are based on the idea of reciprocity – always giving while

getting back. That means that when students receive gifts like school fees and clothing budgets, other Papua New Guineans recognise these as gifts, and can recognise the people who gave those gifts. When they see a person, they can see all the other people who have made up that person. Because of this conception of personhood, most Papua New Guineans can look at a university student – who dresses in particular symbolic ways - and see their relationships of the past, present, and the future obligations that they have to reciprocate. I will elaborate on this idea of personhood in chapter 3, when I discuss the obligations surrounding reciprocity.

The expectations of reciprocity and the imagined futures connect to why Rosa was able list off items of clothing that were meant to express professionalism in a moral economy. Students and their communities viewed a university education as a pathway to wealth and to stable employment as a trained professional. They also felt that university graduates were "agents of development" who would bridge the concerns of local communities and provincial and national expectations of growth (Syndicus 2018:22). Students and their communities view a university education as a good and moral thing, motivated by the desire to gain wealth and help communities. Students were therefore justified in their expression of modernity, even if it did not always reach the expectations of professionalism, because the underlying value of being at a university to gain an education was understood by many as a good and moral thing (Carrier 2018:23).

When a student dresses for university, they are attempting to demonstrate something about themselves, but also their family, their past, and their future. But bodies and the decoration of bodies are particular and specific. No one has the same body as their family, so how does one person mean many people, and how do many people make one person? Especially with fashion, which in some places is held as the paragon of individuality, and which is in one moment in time tied to one individual. Students must claim their success

(when it comes, at graduation) as their own, but also not their own. The degree is named for one person, but they have made many obligations through that degree. There are choices that they make, homework that they do, and classes that they attend that will make them successful; the completion of their actions is their own – they do the degree – but the cause of their actions is not their own.

It may be difficult to attribute particular actions to particular people if you consider a person to be made up of many people. Marilyn Strathern (1988) builds off Leenhardt (1979) to demonstrate how cause and effect works with a Papua New Guinean conception of a person. Leenhardt (1979:154, 156) explains that with the Canaque in New Caledonia, people did not conceive of others as 'one person,' and a Canaque "is obliged to have a different name for every domain which involves his person in various relationships and participations." Therefore, a person conceives of themselves through their relationships and "he exists only insofar as he acts his role in the course of his relationships" (Leenhardt (1979:153). Leenhardt then had an issue with conceptualising a 'self;' and Strathern suggests there is no 'self' at all, at least, not in the Western, centering-of-the-person sense of self (Strathern 1988:269).

So how does someone act as an individual? Strathern uses the example of the Sabarl in southern Massim, off the coast of Papua New Guinea, to demonstrate how someone might act out an action, or how someone might be an agent. Sabarl, in Battaglia's ethnography (1983:296), explain actions using the diagram of a *tobwatobwa*, or an ax with a particularly pronounced elbow, resulting in less than a 90 degree angle between the shaft and the blade. In Battaglia's example, a man explains that a mortuary feast for a father looks like a *tobwatobwa*, in that the father gives food and gifts to a person, represented by the shaft; the person (in the case of the feast, the children of the father) who receives and benefits from the gifts and food is the pivot for the exchange, or the elbow; and the reciprocal food and

valuables given back at the mortuary feast and that benefit the father's side is the blade (Battaglia 1983:297). Strathern explains that "from the point of view of his/her father's kin, the 'child' is called an 'elbow', the turning point at which valuable objects that have moved away from the village come back again" (1988:272, citing Battaglia 1983:297). As the elbow, the child is acting as an agent on someone else's behalf, or with someone else in mind.

Strathern defines an agent as "one who *from his or her own vantage point acts with another's in mind and that others may in fact coerce the agent into so acting*" (1988:272, original emphasis). This is why the ax demonstrates the feast, because the children are a pivot point of relationships, acting as agents to turn a transaction made by a father away from the kin, back into a benefit towards the kin (Strathern 1988:272). In the same way as students have their fees paid through gifts from kin, they must follow through with the reciprocal transaction and give back to their kin. The two directions of the ax link the past to the present, the outcome of the actions come from relationships in the past and continue relationships in the future by pointing in the direction of the past.

Strathern also notes that by engaging in a reciprocal relationship, a father is compelling a child to follow through with the transaction back to kin. She does this to exemplify how agents may act but they are not the cause of their actions, or "they are not the authors of their own acts…they simply do them" (Strathern 1988:273):

> The cause is the 'person' with whom the agent's relationship is to be transformed, a unitary reference point for her or his acts. The one who is regarded as acting, however, is the one who in taking account of the cause – the reason for acting – also acts for him or herself. The agent's position is intrinsically multiple (Strathern 1988:273).

Now the person, whom Strathern establishes as made up of other persons, is a continuous being, but the agent acts in one moment. The student is made up of all the actions of others, and that makes them a specific person, unique from anyone else. Agents are subjects who act in one moment, out of the relationships that form their person, or "in the

knowledge of his or her own constitution as a person in the regard of others" (Strathern 1988:275, emphasis removed). A person reveals their agency when they act on a relationship, when they give a gift or perform an action from their vantage point with another person in mind. Because a person is a "living commemoration of the actions which produced it," a Papua New Guinean can look at a student who wears fashionable clothes and see the family who produced the person and see the person who is enacting the modern in the present, who is projecting a future where their success will reflect back towards the family (Strathern 1988:302).

The fact of a student being at university is a result of a history of relationships, and it is justified with a moral outcome of the student gaining wealth and employment in order to give back to their communities. Students get to university through the "mutual obligations that arise when people transact with each other over the course of time" (Carrier 2018:18). Out of these values that arose over time, students, staff, and their families began to see the university as a site not only of education but of modernity and development, and through gaining an education students can become "agents of development" who give back to their families and communities based on those relationships that got them there (Syndicus 2018:22).

Clothing is a decoration that connects the inner self to the physical appearance. It is also a site for people to read and realise the relationships of a student in a moral economy, be they the past objects exchanged to get to university, the present clothes they are wearing as a gifts from their families and communities, or the future store of value, or wealth, that they hope, and their families hope to see in future jobs.

A Foreigner's Wealth

Towards the end of my fieldwork at the University of Goroka in Papua New Guinea, one of my friends, Joy, commented on the shirt that I was wearing. She said it was nice and brightly

coloured. Earlier that day, one of my friends who lectures at the University also complimented me on my shirt. It was a blue and yellow Hawaiian style shirt that I had bought in New Zealand, and I had thought it would also be appropriate for Papua New Guinea. The compliments were nice, and new. Most people had not been commenting on my clothes at all, and Joy told me why: "You usually dress quite boring."

Joy herself is quite fashionable and she knows it. She wore beautiful skirts and pants, and had the nicest bags for university. The first day I met her, she accused everyone in Goroka of not knowing how to dress. You could look at Joy and assume that she or her parents had a lot of wealth, and Joy herself mentioned that she felt that this was how people saw her, even though it was not true. Joy had hinted that my fashion was lacking several times beforehand.

My boring clothes are partly my style and partly by design. As a white woman walking around university, students assumed that I am wealthy and more importantly, educated, by virtue of being white. I did not want my clothes to bring any more attention to me than I already had. I was discussing a past white staff member with a few Papua New Guinean staff members. He used to wear t-shirts and shorts to the university, a far cry from the professional dress code that Rosa had laid out, we agreed that white people could get away with not wearing quite as professional clothes because of our whiteness. Our whiteness heralded wealth and education so our clothes did not need to. It also indicated that we were foreigners.

There is an interesting aspect to the perception of wealth when Papua New Guineans interpret the actions of people who are steeped in western and capitalistic traditions. Orokaiva perceptions of whitemen and whitemen's wealth also relates to physical and social distance. Whitemen are considered to have great wealth, not only because of the money they have when Orokaiva encounter them, but also because of their white skin and soft bodies.

Furthermore, whitemen have an impressive ability to transport themselves and their ideas over large distances with ease. As Bashkow explains, this ease relates to the lightness of their body, because their bodies are not heavy with moral obligations that tie them down to one place. They are both literally light, as in without weight, but they are also light because they are not tied to other people. Whitemen are wealthy individuals with few social obligations; all of this is present on their skin (Bashkow 2006:20). As I mention later, the difference in the colour of my skin to Papua New Guineans also made present the fact that I had few social ties in Goroka at the beginning of my fieldwork. For Orokaiva, space and distance are obstacles to social relations and power because of how difficult it is to move over distances quickly (especially by foot) and to keep relationships healthy and fruitful despite this distance. However, Orokaiva also appreciate that being able to influence people over space is crucial to your power and wealth. Furthermore, Orokaiva become tied to particular places because of their obligations to people, and in travelling, will acquire more obligations because of the reciprocity extended to them when they need accommodation, food, and assistance far from home. Travel brings social obligations, but it also brings influence and power (Bashkow 2006:72).

Whitemen need no such obligations in their travels and do not seem to acquire any more obligations based on the power they have to control such large distances and influence people over these distances (Bashkow 2006:73). Essentially, whitemen can act in their own cause – without thinking about another person's vantage point - when they travel over distances and they can act in their own cause to acquire power through this. The social distance they have from people by not entering into obligations means that they can travel over large distances to extend control and influence with their wealth. Their status as an individual is also perpetuated by travel because to travel without obtaining several obligations in the process is contrary to the Orokaiva experience of travel. If an Orokaiva

man were to emulate the whiteman and enter into business like a whiteman, he would have to remove himself from several obligations that tie him to spaces and that tie him to social spaces.

The construction of a whiteman is a foreigner with white skin that did not have the history of "mutual obligations that arise when people transact with each other over the course of time" (Carrier 2018:18). They were not a part of the moral economy because they did not have nor act on the underlying morals. For the Orokaiva, this meant that they had a paradoxical wealth, a kind of material wealth that did not fit into their own understandings of how a person would gain and use wealth. In chapter 2 I discuss the difference between money and wealth, and how people distinguish between the two. During my fieldwork, the kinds of wealth that I had were very distinguishable from the kinds of wealth that my interlocutors talked about.

As a masters student, money is something that I do not always have a lot of. The fieldwork I did was made possible through awards and grants that I gained outside of my university. I also used my own money for living expenses and preparation. I also took out more money against my student loan in order to keep afloat during the first month of my fieldwork when the money from the award had not yet been put into my bank account. I recognise that these opportunities, like the ability to apply for a grant and the ability to get a loan from my government, are sources of wealth for me. People in Goroka may have looked at me and seen a lot of money. Despite me being a broke student, it was true that I had a lot of money.

I gained this money through relationships that I created with institutions and with the help of my supervisors and as a virtue of being a citizen of New Zealand. Whether or not the money for my fieldwork was mine or not, I had a lot of monetary wealth. I felt a disconnect between the way I was seen as wealthy and the way I felt about my wealth. This was a

familiar experience for staff and some students at the University. I heard many times from people in “high paying” jobs that they felt that they were not as wealthy as other people saw them because of the obligations that inevitably arose from their wealth. Whether it was the process of going through school and university and needing to reciprocate because of school fees, or the fact that people could contribute more money to life events because they were paid more money, a lot of staff and some students felt that they could not save the money they earned as a store of future wealth. The obligations I had to spend my wealth in a particular way (on accommodation or flights or anything related to fieldwork) were different from the obligations of staff to contribute to life events, or the obligations of students to contribute to the community and help “pay back” their school fees.

Some other guests at my residence at RCF also had opinions on my wealth. A few Papua New Guinean guests I spoke to had been surprised when they were told that a white woman was staying there. One woman in particular asked why I was not staying at a hotel, and nodded her understanding when I said I was working at the University. One Australian guest asked if I was being given a discount because I was staying there so long, and the prices had risen recently for a guesthouse that was, in his view, not as good as it used to be. Another guest, who I met three different times over my fieldwork as he travelled for work, wrote me a letter asking whether I would be interested in finding some funding for him and his school, if I could.

I also developed ideas over my fieldwork that would contribute to my discomfort with money; that wealth is sometimes seen in the frivolous spending of money (especially with students), that my rent was so much higher than everyone else’s, and the fact that I was frequently only ever buying groceries for myself which meant that I visited the local store for convenience more than going to the market. People saw me spending money all the time, and would have perceived that I did not have concrete social connections which would mean I

could use money less. I did not have a garden or a long history of family with land on which I could build a house. I had to pay for these things. My skin and my clothing expressed the fact that I was not socially connected.

There was little I could do about this association, however, as explained to me by one of my friends that I made early on. Samson is a student at James Cook University in Australia. This signals that he has a lot of wealth because he has the ability to go overseas for study. Not only has he had an education most likely at a private school, so his parents had enough money to pay for that, but now they also have enough money to send him overseas and pay for all the associated costs of international study. When I introduced myself and we started chatting about my research, he was quite interested in the topic, as a business studies student himself. I asked him what his thoughts were on wealth. His answers were surprising and, as I found out throughout the rest of my fieldwork, they were also fairly novel. I attribute this to his overseas schooling as well. He mentioned that land was wealth and gardens were wealth, but they were types of wealth that made you lazy. You could rely on them for your food and day to day living, which meant that people were not compelled to work for money, which he considered a good way to gain wealth. You did not have to work if your wife could garden well, if your wantoks could assist you, and if you raised pigs. Most of the other students I asked about wealth did not moralise certain kinds of wealth in this way. His conception of wealth was very gendered, and I will explore gendered experiences with wealth in the next section.

Samson's conception of wealth for Papua New Guineans was one that was not immediately applied to me. When I did mention my history in Papua New Guinea, especially that my father was born there, people would often say that I am Papua New Guinean, but this history was not read on my skin or my clothes unless I wore a bilum or explained my family history. I asked Samson to do a small thought experiment with me. I asked him to imagine

that he was a business owner in Goroka town who had seen me walk around. What would he think of me? He said that he would probably try to rip me off. Samson expressed that this was not what he thought of me, but what he might think of me if he were a business owner. I expected this response and laughed along with him, and I asked why people would want to rip me off. Because, he said, you are a white person in Goroka, your whiteness signals your foreignness. He continued, explaining that my foreignness signals wealth not only because I am from another country, but because it would also usually signal that I am not from Papua New Guinea, and therefore I do not have land in Papua New Guinea. If I do not have land here, then I must have money, because otherwise there would be no gardens for me to grow my food, no land to raise pigs, and no wantoks to ask assistance from. I did not have the necessary social connections to be wealthy, all I had were the economic aspects of wealth. I have to have money to be a white person in Papua New Guinea. I was quite surprised by this explanation: I had to have money because I had no wealth.

The understanding that foreignness is a sign of wealth applies to more than just white people who are not from Papua New Guinea. One interviewee told me about her husband, a man from an African country, who has requests for money made to him all the time:

> I'm married to an African also, so when people see my husband, they think he has money and you see all the street sellers, they bring stuff to him all the time, and then I tell them to go away, but they think like, hey hey, buy this, buy that, they think he has money just because he's a foreigner. Maybe. But uh, we have the same skin colour, but because he's a foreigner, they think he has money.

Anita's husband also needed to pay for an airfare to get to Papua New Guinea, and his family does not have land here, so he also has to have money to live. Most of the time, a different skin colour denoted wealth, like for Anita's husband: "but then for, like other people with different skin colours, they just associated the skin colour with better benefits or better life or, money, and these kinds of things." Not only this, but the idea that making money was easier in other countries came up frequently, especially when I asked about Chinese businesspeople

in Goroka and Port Morseby. People accepted that maybe some people moved to Papua New Guinea to make a better life for themselves, but with China being much more economically powerful than Papua New Guinea, very few people seemed to think that they really needed to move to PNG to earn money. If they did so, they must be trying to take advantage of the proportional low cost of living.

Some of the ideas that are present in Bashkow's *The Meaning of Whitemen* can be applied to any person who is not from Papua New Guinea, like when Orokaiva view whitemen as being light of obligations, and the ease with which other people can travel. Money facilitates this process: fast travel, a fulfilled obligation or payment for a service, and store-bought food. Having wealth in other forms, like land, for instance, would tie you down with obligations to those around you.

Wealth is not only present on the skin of Papua New Guineans, but it is also present on the skin of foreigners, albeit in different ways. Foreigners do not have the history of "mutual obligations that arise when people transact with each other over the course of time" (Carrier 2018:18). They are not a part of the Papua New Guinean moral economy because they did not have nor act on the underlying morals, but they do act as a foil, reinforcing the idea that wealth is to do with having a history of relationships. For the Orokaiva, this meant that they had a paradoxical wealth, a kind of material wealth that did not fit into their own understandings of how a person would gain and use wealth.

Female Bodies and Wealth

I have mentioned briefly how my status as a white-skinned person influenced my experiences at the University of Goroka, but I would like to mention briefly how my status as a white woman influenced my work. This project began as a series of questions about both Bashkow and Wardlow's 2006 ethnographies, the first predominantly about male whiteness, and the second predominantly about how Papua New Guinean women conceive of modernity and are

moralised for being too modern. While reading both these ethnographies, I questioned what my own status as a white woman would be in PNG, with regards to wealth and modernity. Whilst my project ended up very different from the initial questions, my project continues to be influenced by my experience as white-skinned and my gender. My definition of "gender" follows that of Lisa Rofel, as the "contingent, non-foundational differentiations of femininity and masculinity that are mapped onto social relations and bodies, defining the nexus of power/knowledge that permeates social life" (2002:177). In my experience, women were not the target of casual business talk, and women's work outside of the university was often moralised in different ways to men's work. Like with Orokaiva who thought you could become like whitemen by acting similarly to them, I found that women's wealth was moralised so that they had to aspire to be more like men, or enter into what was seen as men's work. Due to the colonial history which had and still has white men at the forefront of business ventures in PNG, my body was also moralised in similar but distinct ways in Goroka.

In *The Gender of the Gift*, Marilyn Strathern not only laid out a comprehensive explanation of personhood in Papua New Guinea (which I discuss in Chapter 3), she did so based mainly on work in the Highlands, and by explaining the relationship of work, personhood, food and other concepts through male and female domains. People are imagined in contrasting inter-related forms, that is, as men and women. Men objectify their relations with women and women objectify their relations with men, so that all people are "the objective form of relationship," and therefore the outcomes of a person's actions originate in those relationships (Strathern 1988:338). Because of the social arrangements in the Highlands, like the ways that men associated with each other, the transactions between people, and the ways that Highlanders conceived gender in relation to time, men dominated women and were seen to benefit from women's work and actions (Strathern 1988).

Strathern explained that during the process of modernity, it is women, not men, who "emerge as specifically 'social' in their orientations," by which she means that women were expected to continue to carry on the more traditional forms of social interaction, while men moved into colonial and post-colonial spaces and enacted modernity by integrating more western actions and fashions (1988:76-77). There is an interplay between modernity and tradition. By this I do not mean that modernity and tradition are mutually exclusive terms. If modernity is a rupture and change that brings a new consciousness, but this consciousness is enacted on structures that exist already, then elements of those structures will continue. In the case of Strathern and Wardlow, the roles and work that are typically ascribed to women are thought to tie more to tradition than modernity. This is because of the ways people moralise women's actions and work.

Wardlow (2002a, 2002b, 2006) discussed Huli women's consumption of Western items as a sign of gratuitous wealth and an attempt to be "*oslem misses*", or be like white women. She noted that within the Southern Highlands and Hela Province context, rupture and authenticity (or inauthenticity) were especially poignant in a moral economy (2002a:150). Modern objects could "escape the constrained paths of traditional exchange," therefore one had to authenticate the object, or align it with society's structures and ideas, before one used the object, or reject it altogether (Wardlow 2002a:151). The difference in approach was drawn along gender lines; women were expected to reject commodities (and specifically gendered commodities) like make-up and shoes, while men were able to appropriate and authenticate western commodities like sunglasses and jeans as "the modern equivalent of traditional male display items" (Wardlow 2002a:151). The consumption of modern and western items by Huli women was seen as a sign of being *bighed*, or stubborn and impertinent, and also as an attempt to be "*olsem misses*" which is a punishable impulse (Wardlow 2002a:152). Gender was a limit as to who could enact modernity because of the

ways gender influenced western societies and Huli society. Western women had gendered products like make-up and kinds of fashion, so when these commodities are transferred to another society, they have a site of expression based in Western society. However, in a new society, these commodities had to be consumed also in accordance with ideologies of gender.

One discussion Wardlow did not have in her analysis of gendered modernity is how white women are framed in the discussion of modernity. She noted that scholars of modernity have often argued that modernity is gendered, with women taking on the role of the foil of modernity, or "traditional culture" (2002b:10). Women were central to the project of modernity, but "they do not themselves enact the practices or display the goods that become most associated with modernity" (Wardlow 2002b:11). White women are used as a point of departure from both Huli men and Huli women. Huli men are not like white women, because they take on a role of masculine modernity. Huli women are not meant to be like white women, or else they risk departing from accepted notions of gender.

One of my interlocutors talked about his step-mother who had become very wealthy because of all of her business dealings. He mentioned that she came from a wealthy family with a lot of pigs and who were able to send all of their children to school. His father and step-mother were originally meant to be married, but his father felt that he could not pay the bride price for such an educated woman. Ashraf, Bau, and Nunn (2020) have demonstrated that education plays a significant role in bride price or bridewealth in Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia, and "higher female education at marriage is associated with a higher bride price payment received, providing a greater incentive for parents to invest in girls' education." My friends at university also reinforced this idea for Papua New Guinea, wondering occasionally what kind of bridewealth they would garner.

My interlocutor's father married his mother and had children, and upon the end of that marriage, he remarried to my interlocutor's step-mother. During the intermediate years, his

step-mother “went her own way…and built herself up,” she “had a house, she had cars, she had buses, she had people working for her, she had businesses on her own”. He told me that “in the village, they used to call her a man. Her positions, they are more than any other man in the village”. This seemed quite interesting to me. Just like the Orokaiva conception that a man could attain some levels of whiteness by being supremely wealthy, women can attain some level of manhood by being supremely wealthy. When I say that people can attain some level of whiteness I do not mean that their skin turns white, I mean that they can be attributed all those other stereotypes and assumptions that people assume onto people with white skin.

For Orokaiva, there were connections between work and wealth, wealth and modernity, and modernity and whiteness (Bashkow 2006:3). But there were also other connections between modernity and things that connote femininity, such as the softness of the whiteman’s body (Bashkow 2006:109). Orokaiva men had hardened bodies because of the strenuous work they did over their lifetimes, and Orokaiva women’s bodies were also hardened because of work, but their bodies were understood to be softer (Bashkow 2006:109). Orokaiva men’s work was also the work that produces wealth (Bashkow 2006:109). The interplay between wealth and modernity, and wealth and masculinity is turned on its head with Orokaiva conceptions of whitemen, whose bodies are soft, but whose bodies also connote wealth. But as with Wardlow, questions arise as to what Orokaiva experiences of white women mean for their conception of modernity.

Analytically my identifiers as white and as a woman can be separated but they are experienced at the same time. Although I cannot make any major statements about Papua New Guinean’s perceptions of me, I understood that I was broadly perceived as innocent and in some cases, fragile. These perceptions were based on my whiteness and gender at the same time. During an interview with Joy, I asked her what people would think of me walking around town. She told me that people would not think much of me, or rather that they would

not be suspicious of me. Instead, they would think I am innocent. I did not understand her characterising me as innocent as calling me naïve, rather, she had mentioned that white men are viewed with scepticism when they walk around, because no one knows what they want, but they probably want to do business with someone, and many people had felt that they had been taken advantage of by white men. I was innocent of such stereotypes.

Many people during my fieldwork explained to me that women who work at the market have lower status than those women with a business. The reasons offered were that selling at the market demonstrated a lack of education and the conditions that they had to work in were tough. The same reasons were also given for women who did table selling. The conditions were harsh and if you saw young women table selling then it meant that she had no opportunity for education. When I asked about the decent amounts of money that could be made by women who do table selling or market selling, I was told that only if she put that money into a business, or used it to develop herself in some way, then she would be seen as high status. A white woman lowering herself to do table selling was a laughable thing because surely her whiteness would prevent her from ever falling into a situation where she had to do table selling.

Being at the University of Goroka presented different avenues for success for women. Education is the most available one, especially because business and politics are seen as men's activities. This reinforces, for different ways for women, that an education can bring wealth back to the family, whom the bridewealth is paid to. While the young women I met at the University of Goroka desired a good job, the ability to give back to their communities, and become agents of development, they also knew that their education would eventually bring a higher bridewealth for their families as well. Women's work, their relationship to money, and the ways they can enact modernity are all moralised in particular ways due to

gender, however a university education also afforded women different ways to achieve success.

The fact of a student being at university is a result of a history of relationships, and it is justified with a moral outcome of the student gaining wealth and employment in order to give back to their communities. Students, staff, and their families see the university as a site not only of education but of modernity, and through gaining an education students can become "agents of development" who give back to their families and communities based on those relationships that got them there (Syndicus 2018:22). People's histories are tied to their bodies and to the decorations they put on their bodies, because of the way people are made up of other persons. Clothing is a decoration that connects the inner self to the physical appearance. People read and realise the relationships of a student in a moral economy on their bodies, in the same way that they read and realise wealth and relationships on the bodies of foreigners, or on the bodies of women.

Chapter 2
Wealth and Money

Anita

One of the classrooms at the quad was used for the School of Social Sciences morning tea every Wednesday. The first University event that I attended was the morning tea, which Bill had invited me to in order to introduce me to all the other social sciences lecturers. At my first meeting, I gravitated towards the women in the room: the social sciences office administrator, an HR person, and a political science lecturer, Anita. When we all sat down together, a man in the room made a humorous comment about how segregated the genders were. None of us made a move to rectify this; while everyone in the room had the knowledge that it was important to give the appearance of diversity and equality, a department morning tea did not feel like the exact time that we needed to challenge the cultural impulses that at least I was acting on. My mind flashed back to sitting on the floor mats on one side of a church while my younger brother sat on a makeshift pew on the other side of the church (he now assures me that it was not very comfortable). I also thought about the History 100 lecture when I sat on the right side of the lecture hall with all the other women because that was the side that the women's toilets were on when students approached the door to the hall.

The university is a Western institution which is associated with old and new Western traditions: a ritual of graduation, a conferring of a degree, and in more recent times, an attempt to rectify the gender imbalances that exist within the institution and within education. In the process of modernity, the traditions of one society meet the traditions of another society, creating a new dynamic between the two. Modernity is characterised by a rupture in thinking or a change in consciousness (Miller 1994; Comaroff and Comaroff 2012). Therefore while it was easy to comment on the gender segregation, it was harder to resist both the comfort of my same-gendered group and the knowledge that there were different

gender roles at play than I was used to in my home university. The institution of the university in Papua New Guinea may seem familiar to a Western one, but like Western clothes that become PNG fashion, it is a distinctly Papua New Guinean exercise to exist in one. The same can be said about new ideas of wealth. I frequently heard comments about old kinds of wealth (land, gardens, pigs, and wives) and new kinds of wealth (money, assets, capital). When I asked "what is wealth" to a staff member or student in Papua New Guinea, I heard different answers than if I asked the same question in New Zealand. Further, if I were to hear similar comments, the motivations for those answers would not be the same. Wealth in PNG is a distinct, modern concept that is unique to the particular space and time.

After that first meeting, Anita and I became fast friends. We chatted after morning teas about parts of the discussion that interested us or that we disagreed with, and I was fascinated by her experience of getting a PhD in political science at the University of Hiroshima. When I asked my requisite "what is wealth?" question, she was one of the two interviewees to answer that wealth is money:

> "…for me personally when I think about wealth I think about it in monetary terms. Okay I have a lot of money, then I'm wealthy. But I guess so many people will have another point of view, I saw a documentary on something in Mendi, a remote village in Mendi, and we saw that documentary with my course mates in Japan, so when they were asked about what they value, in their society, they said pigs, and kaukau, so maybe for them that is wealth. And if you look at our traditional society maybe having a lot of pigs means wealth. But nowadays, this has changed, everybody relates wealth to monetary…having money. So like, MPs, member of parliament, people think that they are very wealthy, or people with cars, they think they are wealthy, or people who are drivers for companies, that drive around with cars, people think oh he is wealthy, but actually, he's the driver. And most ladies end up marrying the driver, not knowing that they are the driver, not the owner of the car. So this is the kind of, and I think for me, when I think of wealth I think of money, and it's having money and the amount of money determines the level of wealth."

Anita and I shared the same scepticism about people saying that wealth was not just money. For both of us, more money could buy more education and more financial stability which can mean more happiness.

In this chapter I examine the definitions of wealth and money and staff and students varied perceptions on what makes wealth, and how money can or cannot define what wealth means to them. While Anita first explained that she felt that wealth was money, she later explained that money was one part wealth, and that there were different "senses" of wealth, meaning that there were different ways that people understood wealth. While staff and students presented me with many different understandings of wealth, the ideas behind wealth generally fell into three categories: "how we make claims on the future in the present;" wealth combines "meaning (human use-value) and matter;" and the accumulation of things as well as the capacity to accumulate things (Robert Foster 2018:19).

The first part of this definition, that wealth is "how we make claims on the future in the present" ties into ideas of morality, because actions are deemed moral or immoral based on a history of interactions, where "each transaction builds on those before it, and provides the base for future transactions" and "from this emerge appropriate ways to act and transact" (Sharp 2019:184 cf Carrier 2018). Something can only be moral in the future and present if it has been established as moral through a history of transactions. However, the history and future of transactions and interactions change when ideas and structures from different societies come into contact with other ideas and structures of other societies. Some scholars have argued that this means that people have changed from being relational to being possessive, or from being made up of other people to being solely responsible for their own lives and possessions. In the last section, I discuss how the possessive individual does not map onto the way that most of my interlocutors saw themselves.

Wealth and Money

Students and staff gave me multiple definitions of wealth, including money, education, time, resources, and health. Hann and Hart define capital, in the context of a capitalist society, as "wealth that is used to make more wealth". Wealth is "all resources having economic value"

and value is “what people hold in high esteem” (2011:143). They also clarify that in the discipline of economics, value means “the sum of everything that can be measured by a universal equivalent, that is, *money*” (2011:143). Both Anita and I were making a jump between wealth being something that has value, and this value being measured by a universal equivalent. But there are many situations where this logical jump does not make practical sense.

Over the three months of my fieldwork, I asked several staff and students at the university a very easy question that was very hard to answer: “what is wealth?” My interlocutors and I all used the term “wealth” in many different ways. My interviewees almost universally explained their use of the term to mean not just money and not just things, but something more. Examples were education, time, and ability to use resources. But in conversation, for the most part wealth meant money or things. Some of my survey respondents explained what they thought a wealthy person looks like:

> “To me, I personally see a wealthy person as someone who has a lot of material possessions or resources that can be exchanged for money;” – a 4th year Physics student from Goroka
>
> “Someone that has wealth would look like a working class person;” – 4th year science student from New Ireland Province
>
> “In modern economy, they have luxery [luxurious] life and better standard of living and in traditional econ only it’s the people who have more pigs, garden, wife, and etc.” – 1st year Vocational Studies student from Goroka

At other times, the link between wealth and money seemed more tenuous, but still apparent. These answers mentioned the social aspects of wealth as well as the financial aspects:

> “In Mt Hagen, the person who has wealth is entitled as “Big Man”, people in the community and society respect him for who he is, basically because of the properties he has;” – 1st year Hospitality and Tourism student from Hagen
>
> “They look so healthy, strong… and walks around like they own the whole town of Goroka because there is nothing to worry about when they have everything and focuses on growing their business. Their wealth look[s] like they have everything and anything;” – 1st year Hospitality and Tourism student from Goroka

> "In Papua New Guinea, someone has wealth will leave [live] in healthy and live enjoyable life. Those who does not have wealth lives poorly. Wealth gives luxuries [luxurious] life." – a 4th year Education student from the Western Highlands

When I sat down with students and staff for longer interviews, some interviewees shared similar perspectives, but others defined wealth in more social terms:

> "Wealth is all about having what we need, but its beyond being content…[if] I am leaving [the university], I can walk up and down…but if I have a vehicle, then I see that's wealth, because I am living beyond what I can contain;" – Thomas Alope, Science lecturer

> "It's about a person's livelihood, how they sustain themselves in terms of everyday living. It's all aspects of life. Not specifically one thing;" – returning Nursing student from Goroka

> "Wealth is about what you have on the inside. Of your brain. Wealth is about understanding. Wealth is about doing good things to others. I see money and other material things as the subject of wealth". – Daniel Akiva, Political Science lecturer.

All of these definitions describe distinct forms of wealth, which can also be combined within other definitions. As the third example from a Vocational studies student mentions, students see different definitions of wealth in different contexts, from the traditional forms of economy like "pigs, garden, wife," to whatever the respondent would define as living a luxurious life. Students see wealth as all-encompassing, as "how they sustain themselves in terms of everyday living," and as excess to everyday living, "beyond being content," or "beyond what I can contain". Thomas explained that this last comment, living "beyond what I can contain" is to do with living a life with excess, where even though you do not need a car, you have a car, for example. Within these answers, there are implicit and explicit references to money, for instance someone's everyday living that is of a higher standard than someone else's would be considered more wealthy, and vehicles cost money. Daniel explicitly mentions that "money is the subject of wealth", by which he meant that you need money to gain a qualification: "first level of a degree, masters, yes that also speaks something to wealth, that's part of wealth," but he acknowledges that wealth is not only your education but how you use your education: "collect as much information as you can…learn about what

is happening at the moment…how smart you can or someone can be to look at the situation at present and come up with a solution.”

Many of my interlocutors and most people I spoke to about wealth mentioned how ideas about wealth have changed. But they also mentioned how ‘traditional’ forms of wealth still remain in some parts of Papua New Guinea (mostly classified as ‘rural’), and non-monetary forms of wealth very much influence how people think about money-as-wealth. Further, while money is used as a form of compensation in village court cases or in bridewealth and funeral ceremonies, many people who have lived in urban Goroka for years continue to use pigs as items of exchange when it is necessary for the situation. Daniel explained that:

> From majority perspective, wealth is about how much you have in your account. Traditionally, wealth is about how many pigs you have, your pig house, wealth is about how many connections you have. That is from the traditional perspective. I come from a chief family. My grandpa was a chief in the community, he was a very wealthy person. Because of what? It’s not because of money, it’s because of how many pigs that he has, because of the kina shells, because of the cassowary that he has. That defines wealth. Now in PNG context, wealth is about how much money you have in your account.

Daniel also explained what happens in a compensation:

> Daniel: “When you kill someone with your car, just an accident… ‘ohh I will give you K100000 to go to the hospital,’ they will not accept it. They will want to see the line of pigs. So I have to put four lines of pigs with six rows. Twelve in a row.”
>
> Me: “Even if it makes up to K100000, they want the pigs?”
>
> D: “They want to see the pigs.”
>
> M: “Okay, why is that? Why do they want to see the pigs instead of…”
>
> D: “Because pigs is very valuable. It is over K100000 there, your money is useless compared to a pig.”
>
> M: “This is for if someone dies?”
>
> D: “Yes, even bridewealth ceremony.”
>
> M: “because that’s where the value is?”

> D: "Yea, because that's where the value is. Shows the respect. If you have pigs, then it shows the respect, if you really want to solve the problem. And they will understand. But if you just put money, in a death compensation, they will say no. You are not appreciating. You are not doing a compensation."

Daniel's assertion that people think about wealth as what is in your bank account is one way of defining wealth, but it is not the only way to define wealth, because there are situations where "your money is useless". As he says, money is subject to wealth [ie. it is a part of wealth], but it does not wholly define wealth, just as E.E Evans-Pritchard established in his 1931 on "An Alternative Term for "Bride-price"". In this paper, Evans-Pritchard mentions how the term brideprice "emphasizes only one of the functions of this wealth, an economic one, to the exclusion of other important social functions" and encourages people to think that "'price' used in this context is synonymous with 'purchase'" (1931:36). Like Anita and I discussed, there are very obvious economic and transactional aspects to what wealth is, but these are not the only aspects or functions of wealth, and this is why students and staff saw a distinction between money as a universal equivalent of economic value and wealth as all resources that have value in general, not just economic value, but social value as well. People moralise the way that objects are exchanged and used based on the history of how they are used and exchanged in the past, and this lays the foundation for how objects should be used and exchanged in the future. And, as I will discuss later in this chapter, a Papua New Guinean society that is founded on principles of exchange and reciprocity which create relationships will also moralise exchanges to make sure that money does not become the means for determining an absolute universal equivalence.

This distinction between wealth and money is one that anthropologists have maintained throughout discussions of wealth. It is one of the reasons that Hart and Hann's (2011) definition of wealth in a capitalist society as all resources with economic value, and value as, at least in the discipline of economics, anything that can be measured by the

universal equivalent of money, do not necessarily follow in Papua New Guinea, nor in the discipline of anthropology. Money is not always a universal equivalent in Papua New Guinea, nor is it elsewhere and anthropologists have been adamant to keep the distinction between wealth and money separate (Zelizer 1989; Martin 2018:118). Even if, in practical terms, a lot of the people I spoke to defined wealth in financial terms, many frequently spoke about the social aspects of wealth. Rakopoulos and Rio (2018) emphasise this in their special issue Towards and Anthropology of Wealth. They cite Jan Guyer (1997:114) describing the good reasons that anthropology views wealth differently to the discipline of economics, and that "an anthropological take on wealth avoids reifying it into a hoarding, static status" (2018:10). Where the discipline of economics sees household wealth as the production and consumption of a household, anthropology sees that is it "bound up with larger issues of morality and values" (Rakopoulos and Rio 2018:10). Wealth is not just the money or fashion of a student, nor the money that they may earn in their future jobs, nor just land or pigs, but it is the communal value and moralities of the causes of wealth, the relationships that wealth can help continue and create, and the ability to make more relationships (or make more kin (Strathern 1988)). In short, the way that people think about wealth is based on a moral economy. Rakopoulos and Rio (2018:2) come to the same conclusion as Mumford ([1934] 2019:378): "what we call wealth is in fact wealth only when it is a sign of potential or actual vitality".

There is a lot of difference between how people use a term in everyday life and how I and anthropologists more generally use a term analytically. For instance, I define the term "wealth" in anthropological terms: "how we make claims on the future in the present;" combining "meaning (human use-value) and matter;" and the accumulation of things as well as the capacity to accumulate things (Robert Foster 2018:19). Within this definition there are themes that I have already mentioned, in how people frequently spoke about seeing wealth on

other people through the things they accumulated and how students dress for their future wealth. In the next chapter, I also discuss how students are tied to their families and their pasts through the claims they are making on the future and their increased capacity to accumulate things. So how does wealth combine "meaning and matter"? The man who I saw wearing a purple dressing gown to distinguish himself from others demonstrates how an article of clothing – matter, can have a different meaning, to decorate his body, to distinguish him from others, to demonstrate his use of Western clothing and perhaps his own modern take on the piece of clothing.

While students talked about wealth and meant money, they do not always make the same conclusion when it came to money meaning wealth. As I mentioned in my introduction, my first experience of not seeing money when it was very present in Papua New Guinea was when I walked past table sellers on the side of the road and assumed that they did not have a lot of money. However, I found that staff and students' perceptions of table sellers demonstrated to me both how wealth is not just money, but it is the combination of meaning and matter, and money does not always mean wealth.

Many of the parents of students at the University of Goroka are subsistence farmers who grow crops on their land and sell them at markets. Some parents work contract jobs throughout the year and some own businesses. Some parents worked in schools or other universities, or in someone else's business in town. Those Papua New Guineans who have stable and daily employment in an institution or business are called "working class". They are defined by the idea that you go to a job in the morning and return at night, and you get paid every fortnight, which is why people talk about pay cheques as "fortnights". The working class in Papua New Guinea sell their labour for money, but they are also defined by other characteristics. John Cox (2014:1) also points out that the working class is different from the

‘elite’, which consists of “networks of senior public servants, politicians or business elites, who have little in common with an emerging educated wage-earning class in PNG.”

Gewertz and Errington (1999:2) cite Thompson (1964:9) to describe class in Papua New Guinea “not “as a ‘structure,’ nor even as a ‘category,’ but as something which in fact happens…in human relationships.” There is no naturalised class structure, instead there is a differentiation between people based on a moral economy. Because Papua New Guinea is a developing economy and because Papua New Guinean’s ideas about personhood and relationships are culturally particular, traditional theories of social class do not map well onto the many Papua New Guinean societies. However, there are people whose relationships to wealth, money, and other people are changing in a way that they identify as a distinct group of people (Gewertz and Errington 1999:2, 8). Whatever class distinctions people make in Papua New Guinea (which they do, as evidenced by the “working class”), they make these decisions based “between an objectively defined set of economically derived positions and subjectively held identities” (Gewertz and Errington 1999:10).

Students looked at the working class and people who own businesses and saw wealth. They were able to afford nice houses and nice clothes, and their families looked well fed. They have a lot of influence in the community because wealth and status go hand in hand:

> “To me a wealthy person is someone who;
> - Owns a private company or is employed in a highly paid job
> - Have abundance physical possessions like cars, houses, etc.
> - Lives a luxurious life
> - Sends his/her children to private schools where the school fees are expensive
>
> The values of all the assets owned by wealthy people [are] worth more than the normal person so such wealthy people are well respected and feared in the community or society where I came from” – a 4th year science student from Goroka

From this perspective, a wealthy person can have a lot of money and things, and also treats their family well. They have high standings in their societies and make decisions for communities. Staff members at the university are seen as wealthy people because they have a

tertiary degree and a high paying job; they have people yelling "*skulman* (school-man)*!*" at them, as one lecturer told me. But when Anita said that "I think about it in monetary terms…the amount of money determines the level of wealth", she also went on to talk about how as a fortnightly wage earner, sometimes she runs out of money before her next pay period. In the future, she might take up selling biscuits or coffee out of her office at the university (which is fairly common). Some of the other staff members already sell chickens on the side of their working class jobs to supplement income. In PNG, a wage earner in a family has significant obligations to a large group of people (see Gewertz and Errington 1999, Foster 2002, Kauft 2002, Martin 2007). When you receive your fortnightly wage, you have a lot of obligations to give out part of your money. By the end of the working fortnight, there is a large chance that a wage-earner may be forced to get a loan from one of the women who sell things at a table along the road to pay for their daily needs.

Table sellers did not garner a lot of respect from the students I spoke to. Nor did women who made a lot of money selling their produce at the market each day. When I spoke to one of my friends, he said that if they wanted to have respect and be wealthy, then they would take the money they make from the market and put it into a business. Not only was this a devaluing of the different types of work that women frequently do, it was also a rejection of the idea that simply making money made someone wealthy and worthy of the authoritative respect that students often attributed to wealthy people. Table sellers also did not garner a lot of respect because of the ways that selling on products that you did not work to make are moralised (Busse 2019). These are the kinds of perceptions that are built on a history of transactions and which are now affecting ideas about wealth and the claims that students make on their futures.

When I asked a number of students whether they would be a table seller in the future, many said no. Students were getting an education so that they could have the opportunity to

get a job as a teacher or a government official, not to sit on the side of the road selling things all day. Even if they made more money each day, they wanted the status of being a working class person. The money they made from table selling would not have the same meaning as the money they earned from a fortnightly pay cheque. Along my walk up to the university, there was a young woman who sold oranges and buai outside the University gate every day. When I walked past her with one of my friends one day, my friend said that she was sad that the table seller missed out on her opportunity to get an education. Despite the fact that she probably made more money than some of the lecturers at a university, the money that she made did not mean that she was wealthy in the eyes of a student, and a wealthy person with an education and a working class job did not necessarily make the same amount of money as someone without those attributes.

To some degree, the meanings that students placed on working class jobs were a justification for their long stay at university. These meanings are based on a desire to develop their communities, to gain a stable job, and to become wealthy in the future (Syndicus 2018:22). One survey respondent mentioned that the main reason all students are studying at a university is to "be the wealthiest person ever". Some students had never had the experience of being paid for a job, and most cited the fact that they were studying in order to get a job as the reason for not having a job. In chapter 4, I discuss how these meanings and the underlying morality behind them lead students to challenge the ways that wealth is used in a moral economy. The moral economy is affected by the combination of a Papua New Guinean conception of personhood and how a Western institution functions in PNG. Many students and many parents also perceived wealth and success as being associated with a modern, Western style education. In this next section, I discuss how Papua New Guineans incorporated new money into their old ideas about morality and exchange, leading to a new consciousness, or a process of modernity.

Money, Modernity, and Morality

When state-sanctioned money in the form of kina and toea was introduced into Papua New Guinea, many people thought that "global capitalist expansion would quickly overwhelm traditional Melanesian economies" (Robbins and Akin 1999:1). Instead, Papua New Guineans used the idea of Western money from other societies, combined it with aspects of their own society, and "many local systems of exchange appear to have flourished" (Robbins and Akin 1999:1). For a society where relationships are based on reciprocity and exchange, Papua New Guineans quickly adopted a new medium of exchange. The process of modernity is the dialectic of ideas and structures from societies coming into contact with ideas and structures of other societies. The dialectic creates a rupture from the past and creates new possibilities for the future. State-sanctioned money also introduces the possibility of an entrance into the global economy, giving people with this money a larger reach, locally, nationally, and internationally, than those with local currencies. The control of money, how it is made, and the moralities around money have become important themes in Papua New Guinean understandings of money.

Papua New Guineans incorporated the idea of state-sanctioned kina and toea into their ideas of wealth, as a more widely accepted currency that could help measure objects that had previously not been measured. State-sanctioned money opened up avenues of exchange that were not previously opened, and therefore Papua New Guineans began to think about money differently. As measures of equivalence, money, similarly to traditional currencies like kina shells and shell necklaces, cannot be consumed (Robbins and Akin 1999:4). Currency must continually be exchanged, and therefore facilitates relationships by encouraging exchange with more objects and partners (1999:4). Over my fieldwork I heard many times that people who could not save properly "ate their money," as a metaphor, but actual money must be converted into something consumable first (Robbins and Akin 1999:4). This also means that

because money cannot be consumed, it must be exchanged; there is no other way to use it (Robbins and Akin 1999:5). It also means that, in opposition to traditional currencies, money can "move against anything *in any kind of exchange between people who stand in any kind of relationship to each other"* (Robbins and Akin 1999:12, original emphasis).The difference between money and other local currencies is their relationship to the global economy, and therefore also more widely available exchange and an increase in objects to be exchanged (Robbins and Akin 1999:5). Papua New Guinea's entrance into the global markets also means exposure to the idea of capital, or wealth that makes more wealth (Hart and Hann 2011). The introduction of money brought more than just another means for exchange, but also a "new consciousness about the present and its separation from the past" by introducing new forms of exchange, new partners to exchange with, and allowed people to exchange a wider range of objects (Miller 1994:61; Robbins and Akin 1999:9).

Students and staff at the University of Goroka desire more money and the lifestyle that a lot of money can afford, but are also apprehensive about having money and the obligations that this brings. Therefore, like many other Papua New Guineans, they desire to control the ways in which people used money. Anita expressed to me her distaste with the idea that because she is seen as a wealthy university lecturer, people have begun to make different demands on her when she returns home, because they also see her as someone who has money:

> When I go into the villages, people think like, I go with money, so people come to ask for money, they don't ask me for clothes, or buai, or like, they don't ask me for buai, they say 'BUY my buai,' so like, even for them, they know, they associate wealth with money.
> What I think is when they tell you to buy buai, they're just assuming that you have money, like go buy my buai, but like sometimes I don't have money…'give me buai' is like, you have, you give. You don't have, you don't give. But when you are told to buy a buai, like if you don't have one, okay buy me one."

In this case, money that Anita has earned from her job in one place, where she has one relationship with her bosses and the government who provide the funding for the university,

can be exchanged for buai in another place, where people perceive her as wealthy and make demands on her money via their kin relationships with her. They cannot see whether she has money or not where they would have been able to see pigs previously – another change in the perception of wealth – but because she is seen as wealthy, people assume she has money and make demands on her. Because money moves quickly in exchanges and relationships, it can facilitate individual choice much more quickly and differently than other forms of wealth (Brison 1999:163). This means that people have a lot more freedom to use money in different situations and more immediately than other currencies or wealth. As Papua New Guineans made choices about how to use money and also how to gain money, they also began moralising these choices. These new moralisations were also a part of the dialectical process of modernity, and students expressed their hesitancy to engage with forms of reciprocity that they moralised in certain ways, as I discuss in the next chapter.

Money brought new moralities, such as new ideas about what should be bought with money (Strathern and Stewart 1999), what kinds of work that generate money count as work (Pickles 2013), and what were good ways to earn money (Busse 2019). Men with money become Big Shots, that is, men with a lot of money and wealth who have respect and authority for that reason alone. A Big Shot's identity is formed on the basis of their wealth, as one of my interviewees, Daniel explained: "Most people like to see wealth as: when you see someone wealthy, he has a status. As for someone who doesn't have a lot of money, you say, he's just an ordinary person." Money also separated the generations. The patriarch of my adopted family would often talk to me about how he grew up with traditional wealth but also now lives in the time of monetary wealth. LiPuma (1999:204-205) also discusses how people changed from using money only on special occasions to the children of those people using it "to satisfy small, immediate, personal desires". The staff I spoke to at the university would

tell me, in very deprecating tones, about how students use money to go out to clubs and drink.

Table sellers were moralised because of the way that they made their money. As Busse (2019:205-206) explains, market sellers who sold fresh produce that they grew in their gardens complained about table sellers who sold store goods like tinned fish and cooking oil as "'six pack people' or describing what they did as 'black market', phrases with negative moral connotations related to beer and the consumption of alcohol." This is because of the way that the work done in the garden to create produce corresponds to the price of food in the market, and because people who sell on items that they buy from stores or from the market are not putting the same kind of painful work into producing the item that growers are (Busse 2019:206). In fact, business people and traders who buy in bulk to sell in bulk to companies often pre-emptively explained the good and moral ways that they would spend money – like for children's school fees – in order to combat the negative moral conclusions that growers placed on them (Busse 2019:212). Thus the inherent process of capitalism, that money makes more money, or that wealth makes more wealth, is moralised, at least in produce markets, in Goroka.

The common theme across this discussion of moralisation is how money affects the individual, in terms of choice and accumulation, and that individual's relationships to others. This has led scholars like Foster (1999, 2002), LiPuma (1999, 2001), Gewertz and Errington (1999), Brison (1999) Sykes (2007) and Martin (2007) to examine how global capitalism changes the idea of the social person in Papua New Guinea to a more Western style of individual. Daniel Akiva, a political science lecturer at the university, likes to call the process of modernising 'westernising' instead. This is because he says that other countries that are modern, such as Japan, have their Japanese culture, but Papua New Guinea is taking ideas and structures from Western culture, and thus are westernising. He also acknowledges that

Papua New Guinean ideas about relationality are often at odds with a strictly Western way of doing things, especially business and justice:

> I sometimes struggle to understand our constitution that talks about PNG way, a part of our constitution talks about Westernisation. No, it's confusing. Let me give an example…I might be in a position to appoint someone, and from the different applications, one of my relatives from my community might also be applying for the same position. And for Papua New Guineans, from the different applicants, maybe, he is not that qualified than the others, we have more qualified Papua New Guineans who are suitable for the job, than him. But because he comes from my village, just because he's my relative, I must put him in the position. Now, if you don't put him in the position, the bad implication is this. You will be rejected in the community. The translation of that is that, he deliberately doesn't want to put me in the position because he is jealous of me. So to avoid this one, you must put him in the position. That's wantok system. So to us, wantok system is good. But from Western perspective, wantok system is bad. That's collusion, that's corruption. That's nepotism, that's corruption. So, which part of the constitution are we serving?

When Papua New Guinea's constitution was written for their independence in 1975, it incorporated ideas about westernising; for example, a democratic government and a Westminster judicial system. With Papua New Guinea engaging in global capitalism and westernisation, and trying to balance this with *kastom,* it is worth discussing how the individual may change in the process of modernity.

Possessive Individualism and the Relational Person

C.B MacPherson writes about the agency of people within a society from a historical, Western perspective. While Strathern (1988) offers a theory of a more society-driven individual, MacPherson writes about a possessive individualism, which helped create modern liberal-democratic political theories (1962:3). Possessive individualism is the idea that a "possessive quality is found in [the] conception of the individual as essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owning nothing to society for them" (MacPherson 1962:3). This idea of individuals being solely responsible not only for their property, but also their minds, actions, and achievements, seems largely at odds with the relational person as described by Strathern, where people are made up of the other people around them. At the university, where students are required to have relationships in order to gain access to their

education, they do end up owing their communities something back in return. As I elaborate on in chapter 3, this reciprocity is the bedrock of any and all relationships for most students. However, it is worth discussing possessive individualism because of the trajectory of capitalism in Papua New Guinea. PNG is increasingly engaging in the global market, and many students hope to make the best out of their degrees in government, schools, banks, and other kinds of Western institutions that are built on liberal democratic ideas.

MacPherson wrote a comprehensive review of the political theories of Hobbes, Harrington, and Locke to evaluate the interaction between society and the individual. His argument was that liberal democratic society was based on the idea that a person that owed nothing to society and the government and market were institutions that reinforced this idea. He concluded that the changing society, particularly one where everyone could vote and not everyone had an equal opportunity in the free market, meant that the possessive individual could not exist in the ideal state. Either a possessive individual had to live in a society which denied the freedoms to make society equal amongst individuals, or the individual ceased to own their person and capacities (MacPherson 2011[1962] ix).

MacPherson firstly broke down "modern society" to its parts: human nature, the market, and political obligation. He asked what the essential requirements of these parts of modern society were, and lastly explained how the possessive models worked for the requirements.

Hobbes wrote about the state of nature and human nature. The state of nature is what he argues individual people would desire to do if there "were no common power to overawe them all," and the human nature is to desire and establish power over others (1962:18-19). MacPherson explained that Hobbes believed that the possessive individual was a universal phenomenon, but MacPherson applied it instead to the small number of people. This is because only a small number of people met the criteria to be a possessive individual in a

society with a competitive market, a democratic government, and a human nature like Hobbes described. The interaction of the possessive individual with the market, the politic, and human nature was very particular. Amongst other things, people must own their labour, own their land, be willing to work more than others and desire more power over others (MacPherson 1962:54; 61). Those who work the most and own their land have power through the competitive market. Lastly, MacPherson explained that Hobbes believed that even though human nature was to desire power over others, if there were no overarching power to govern everyone, the unchecked power would lead to unhappiness amongst the majority MacPherson 1962:70). Therefore, people had an obligation to form a government to protect the common interest over personal interest (MacPherson 1962:70). In a liberal democracy, MacPherson argued that the possessive individual should be free to live a life where they are subject to a democratically elected government (which would protect other freedoms) and subject to a competitive market society where all people have an equal opportunity to work more for more power.

MacPherson next turned to Harrington, whose arguments about society he argued were neither consistent nor convincing, and then to Locke, who examined states of nature, the market, property, and political obligation in a similar way to Hobbes. MacPherson realised his overall argument about political morality in his discussion of Locke's views of the individual and the collective. MacPherson (1962:255-256) explained that Locke is neither an individualist nor a collectivist, but because Locke viewed the individual as a possessive individual, owing nothing to society for their own person and capabilities, he also must prioritise a political collective to govern over individuals. If he did not, people would not adhere to people's rights to property. MacPherson argued that there must be a collective agreement about the ideology of the possessive individual, and a government which is elected

by those with the most power – the people with land, who work, and are at an advantage through the competitive market society.

MacPherson (1962) established that Hobbes and Locke viewed human nature, the competitive market, and political obligation as social facts. He then argued that people had to understand that they were subordinate to market forces and that only a few people in power would be enfranchised to elect a government to rule them all, otherwise the ideology of the possessive individual would fail. Having derived this logic from Hobbes and Locke, MacPherson argued that people needed to buy into this ideology in order to understand why they were possessive individuals who were subject to market forces and government.

Lastly, MacPherson argued that the conditions that were necessary to internalise this morality no longer exist in liberal democracies. Liberal democracies now have universal suffrage, meaning that people without private property can vote, people whose interests would be different from those who own private property (1962:271). The competitive market meant that the working class began to feel unequal to the upper classes as they were "no longer…fundamentally equal in an inevitable subjection to the determination of the market" (MacPherson 1962:273). People acted as though everyone has equal access to the competitive market but the structure of the market means that not everyone agreed that they were subject to the market in an equal way (MacPherson 1962:275). Therefore, if people were not free from the effects of other people's actions in both government and the market, the possessive individual either did not exist, or the individual was obliged to elect a government and work in a market that did not allow them to realise their full possessive quality (MacPherson 1962:275).

Although I do not mean to make a direct comparison between English society in the 1700s and Papua New Guinea after independence, I would like to contextualise my next discussion by looking at which of MacPherson's conditions Papua New Guinean society meets.

Firstly, I have already looked at the ideas of nature and human nature in the discussion of agency in the first chapter. Secondly, the national, provincial and local governments in PNG are colonial introductions, and are often accused of having little legitimacy (Dalsgaard 2019:255). Dalsgaard (2019:258) explains that Papua New Guineans think in terms of three forms of authority; *gavman* (government), *kastom* (custom or tradition), and *lotu* (religious or church activity). People can use the different ideas within a form of authority to gain power in other areas, such as obliging potential voters to vote for a candidate within the *gavman* arena by involving them in reciprocal relationships and giving of gifts in the *kastom* arena (Dalsgaard 2019:259). People over the age of 18 can vote, and voting is not exclusive to property owners because of the distinct ideas about property and ownership in Papua New Guinea. Most land around Goroka is owned communally and success in gardening for the Gehamo people who live in and around Goroka is tied to having a good relationship with the ancestral spirits which inhabit the land (Busse 2019:213). Work itself is not a solitary action, because a Gehamo person can work as much as they want, but if they do not have good relationships with ancestors, whom they must please in order to have good harvests, they may still fail in their gardening (Busse 2019:213). And finally, while PNG engages nationally with global competitive markets, local markets are not always, or not completely, based on price competition (Busse 2019).

People's ideas about what is moral (in the market, in the government, and as a person as guided by their ideas of human nature) do not seem to be based on the idea that a person and their capacities are only owed to themselves, they are instead based on a history of interactions where objects are exchanged and people understand themselves in relation to the people they exchange with. As I discussed in chapter 1, a person's actions are often caused by the people around them and the relationships that make up that person. As an agent, someone acts from

their own vantage point, or out of all the specific relationships that make up that person, and they act with other relationships and other perspectives in mind (Strathern 1988:272).

Many of my friends at the university expressed their desire to own wealth materially, as houses or cars or as money saved in a bank. People talked about financial independence, and one of my interviewees mentioned how it was easier to save money in Goroka because he is not from there. When he is at home in Central Province, he spends almost ten times his daily budget because he is around his family and engaging in daily acts of reciprocity and has more people who make requests of him. However, he and his community also understood that he continues to be engaged in cycles of reciprocity. One friend mentioned how it was much easier to get her out of town brother to pay his share of bridewealth with internet banking as there was no spatial distance for him to use as an excuse not to pay it. Several students told me that they were at university to be able to make money in a job in the future, and as Syndicus (2018) explains, students desired the power to make decisions for their communities and the authority and respect that came with wealth. I say all this to demonstrate that people do wish to accumulate wealth and capital and gain power in capitalist ways or to have power over others. New money or power reflect both on individuals as well as a community, success is desired and people distinguish themselves from each other by gaining prestige. However, I do not think that those Papua New Guineans who distinguish themselves begin to act, transact, and relate to others while basing their moralities solely on the idea that they are "the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them" (MacPherson 1962:3). When Papua New Guineans engage in reciprocal relationships, their actions are borne out of these relationships.

In the 1990s, anthropologists picked up on MacPherson's idea of the possessive individual and applied it to a Melanesian and Pacific context as people began engaging in liberal democratic institutions (Foster 1995; Gladney 1997). Instead of the possessive

individual being a basis for the development of liberal democratic institutions as MacPherson theorises, anthropologists applied the possessive quality – the idea that someone could own their selves, actions, and objects as only theirs – onto people once they had already engaged in the liberal democratic institutions. Some scholars argue that you can find the possessive quality to individualism in traditional contexts (Smith 1996; Robbins 2004). In particular, Foster (1995) and Gladney (1997) argued that you could see the concept of the possessive individual in the emerging elite of newer Pacific nations, and that people began to have a new moral basis for their actions (Sykes 2007:218).

Scholars have also argued that the elites who gain their power and prestige through liberal democratic institutions act as though they were free from social obligations, and that this movement from obligation to lack of obligation is a failure of liberal democracy (Foster 2002; Gewertz and Errington 1999, Knauft 2002). Martin (2007:286) argues that some people, often labelled as "big shots," try to constitute themselves as a possessive individual, but the "hegemonic scope" of the possessive individual is "not readily accepted by everyone in every social context". He goes on to suggest that "those seeking to constitute themselves as such have to fight hard to resist the claims of others on what they seek to present as being their own capacities" (2007:286). As I have discussed with family wealth being visible in clothing, many of my interlocutors easily see the impact of others on one person's successes, so removing oneself from this view would be incredibly difficult. Instead, Martin argues that what is happening is an "ongoing struggle over the applicability of different moral visions of the person in different social contexts" (2007:293). He mentions how Big Shots do not wish to engage in accepted forms of everyday reciprocity, like one man who refuses to ask other people for buai but allows people to ask him for some (2007:288). Martin interprets this action as a refusal to "surrender responsibility for themselves," making sure that they do not receive so that they do not have the obligation to give (2007:288). However, in other

contexts, in kastom events, they will engage in acts of reciprocity in order to continue to have relationships with their families and communities.

I interpret the action of refusing to ask other people for buai as an action meant to break down the reciprocal relationship, which is still an act which is constructed from the agents vantage point and acts with another person's vantage point in mind. Reciprocity is the obligation to give when one has received, and also to receive when one has given. Big shots attempt to break the cycle of giving and receiving with the knowledge that not receiving from others will be understood by them as this attempt. However, when one's wealth is already seen as a family's wealth, when people see the cause of an agent's actions as the relationships that make up that person, others will continue to make claims on that wealth. Martin also acknowledges that the wealth of Big shots are usually made up of the actions of other agents as a part of their relationships:

> the Big Shot's assertion of autonomy is, of course, contested. For example, people frequently complained to me that, in the early days of setting up his business, this individual had relied up on the cheap or free labour of those to whom he had a customary relation. It was also even claimed that much of the initial capital had come from community development schemes (2007:291).

Further, as I have discussed briefly in chapter 1 and will return to in chapter 3, reciprocity is an act that keeps both the past and the future in mind. Students may, in the future, attempt to claim their achievements as being solely of their own capacity, but the capacity to act does not mean that agents are the cause of their own actions (Strathern 1988:272).

Big Shots engage in kastom events in order to continue being a part of a society with their kin. The Big Shots that Martin spoke to were adamant that kastom events continue, even when the grassroots people were not as interested as they would hope (2007:287). Although they attempt to make it a "separate sphere," one Big Shot "acknowledges the pull that '*kastom'* has on his business ('the traditional tie must always be there, pulling me out of the office')" (Martin 2007:292 original italics). When people interact between a business and

community sphere, they are acting on a morality that is understood by both people. They are agents who are acting out of relationships to influence other relationships. A denial of this pull would mean separating from it entirely, which is not the case, nor is it desired by Big Shots. A possessive individual is one who owes nothing to society for their own capacity. But even a Big Shot who acknowledges a separate sphere of their life, where their morality stems from the reciprocal relationships that people have with each other, their ancestors, and their future kin, is acknowledging that in some part of their life they owe something to the people around them. Big Shots may attempt, like the Orokaiva see the whitemen doing, to be lighter of obligations and ties in one sphere, but they also acknowledge that having those obligations is where power can come from.

In the end, it seems that the possessive individual in Papua New Guinea faces the same issues as the possessive individual in a Western liberal democracy who is not subject to an equal market force, or who knows their class position and the lack of power that may come with that position. MacPherson cannot reason for a morality of a society of individuals who owe nothing to each other yet who continue to work in a collective with each other, with each other in mind. The collective of community in PNG comes from the relationships between individuals, and the actions that people as agents take which are caused by those very relationships.

The history and future of transactions and interactions change when ideas and structures from different societies come into contact with other ideas and structures of other societies, but they have not changed to such a degree that people have become solely responsible for their own lives and possessions. Instead, staff and students presented me with many different understandings of wealth, and although some ideas about wealth related to personal and material wealth, their ideas were firmly tied to how they view personhood, agency, and morality. Wealth can be “how we make claims on the future in the present”, and

this ties into ideas of morality because actions are deemed moral or immoral based on a history of interactions, where “each transaction builds on those before it, and provides the base for future transactions” and “from this emerge appropriate ways to act and transact” (Sharp 2019:184 cf Carrier 2018). As I discuss in the next chapter, even with ideas and structures from western institutions, or even within modern ideas of relationality, wealth and the aspirations of students are tied to their relationships and histories with other people.

Chapter 3
The Wantok System

Joy

Joy approached me while I was leaning against the rails above the quad one day. I was intentionally positioned where I was overlooking the entrance to the School of Social Science offices because I needed to interview a lecturer, but he had not returned from class. She seemed to be waiting for someone at the Melanesian Institute offices, but I never found out why she was there. She struck up a conversation with me and I enjoyed her easy laughter and good conversation. She was the first post-graduate student whom I had met, and I assumed from her clothing that she was quite wealthy. She later told me that this is an assumption that many people made but she did not think it was true. When she heard about my research, she immediately asked to be interviewed and then retracted her request because she felt impolite. I was quick to assure her that I loved her approach to my research. During our interview, she immediately explained that she wanted to be financially independent, but was not there just yet.

> J: Having a job is different from being financially independent. I think, once you have a job, a paying job, this is PNG, and so many things are inter-connected. We have family that are depending on you, and once you are up there or out there, people notice that you have this working job or paying job. Then you automatically become a person of interest to people who have never even paid attention to you growing up and they just start requesting for things, or their presence in your life makes you self-conscious, and so, I don't think, what I mean by not financially independent yet, even though I was in a job, a paying job, I didn't have time to save, because I felt like I had to give back to people who were , in one way or another helped me, so I'm not as financially independent as I'd like to be yet.
>
> M: So once you get to the point when you are able to save for yourself then you will feel financially independent?
>
> J: Being able to save for myself or being able to, I feel, get away from the strains of family and relations, yeah, being able to get away from the strains of family and cultural ties.

Joy mentioned that she did not have any time to save at her job, because she had to give back to people who had “in one way or another” helped her. Even if someone in her community had only given her 50 toea (the equivalent of 25 New Zealand cents) towards a lunch or school supplies, they would expect something back from her. This kind of reciprocity and overwhelming obligations because of these relationships are very familiar to all students at the University of Goroka. Joy also mentioned getting away from the “strains of family and relations,” or in other words, the demands that her community would make on her once she was employed in another paying job.

Ivo Syndicus’ (2018:12) interlocutor Thomas outlined the two “poles” of community interaction that students who gain employment after university will evaluate:

> To ‘isolate oneself’ here means to focus on looking after one’s own immediate family (such as in the idea of the Christian ‘nuclear family’), or to be perceived to keep one’s earnings to oneself. To ‘be with the community’, on the other hand, is to maintain an active involvement in its general affairs. This means to contribute to community matters such as exchanges of various forms, for example life-cycle ceremonial events, but also to help when extended kin and community members at large are in need.

While it appears as though Joy wishes that she could remove herself from her obligations to her community, even if she were to do so, she would still be in relationships based on reciprocity with her immediate family, as well as the friends with whom she chose to interact. And as I mentioned in Chapter 2, while distance can and has stifled everyday acts of reciprocity, the advent of internet banking and transfers means that even those people who are fairly far removed physically from their family can still engage financially in ceremonial events.

The kind of reciprocal relationship that Joy was describing is indicative of the wantok system. All students and staff at the University of Goroka exist in relationships with their communities through the wantok system. For Papua New Guineans, the wantok system is a system of exchange and reciprocity in which people demonstrate and emphasise the obligations and opportunities of relationships; it is a system of networks between people and

familial obligations which informs interactions. In this sense, the wantok system is a moral economy. Wantoks, such as family and relatives, fund students' university fees and daily needs with the expectation that if students prosper in jobs or status once they graduate, they will give back to their wantoks. If they are able to gain stable employment in their futures, students realise that they will fall into the same predicament as many other townspeople who live off money in urban areas: obligations to their kin that compete with their need to spend money to live and their desire to save. In general, students told me that they did not wish to engage too much in the wantok system, as they see it as a kind of corruption. However, most people also recognised the need to engage in the wantok system because otherwise you would become isolated, like Thomas suggested.

In this chapter, I will discuss how the ways students imagine their futures are affected by the obligations in the wantok system. Students may desire a successful and wealthy future, but they also understand how the people around them will place pressure on them and their finances. I will discuss how Papua New Guineans conceptualise personhood, and how the future is intricately tied to the past through reciprocity and the wantok system. This, in turn, affects the imagined futures of students, because of how wealth is "how we make claims on the future in the present" (Foster 2018:9). Life is constantly reproduced as it is lived, based on the past and affecting the future (Gross 1998:81). Because "each transaction builds on those before it, and provides the base for future transactions, and from this emerge appropriate ways to act and transact", students must ask themselves how they will interact with the wantok system in the future (Sharp 2019:184 cf Carrier 2018). I will finish this chapter by discussing how the wantok system is reified and how this reification is used by the relatives of students and also by the students themselves. For Joy, her perception of the wantok system is that people will begin to call on her for money beyond those in her family whom she is obligated to take care of through the moral demands of the wantok system.

What is the Wantok System?

The wantok system is pervasive at all levels in PNG, and is tied to how Papua New Guineans think about personhood and relationships. Many people have competing ideas about whether the wantok system is good or bad, but this moralisation generally depends on the kinds of exchanges that are made and the kinds of relationships within which the exchanges happen. Anyone can become a wantok by engaging in and developing a reciprocal relationship, or simply through "facts of birth," or kinship, and both these avenues link to ideas about personhood in Melanesia (Levine and Levine 1979:72).

In the present, the word 'wantok' and the term 'the wantok system' are used all over Papua New Guinea and in day-to-day life. People use and define the term 'wantok' in many different ways, but the word itself comes from the combination of the *Tok Pisin* words *wan* (meaning one, or together) and *tok* (meaning language, and implicitly, knowledge and understanding). Gordon Nanau (2011) defines the wantok system as a socio-economic and political network, engaging all aspects of Melanesian life at local, national, and sub-regional levels. The wantok system is about relationships, obligations, and co-operation between people who have either a common language; a common kinship, social, or religious group; common area of origin; or an ongoing reciprocal relationship (de Renzio 1999:9). Nanau simplifies this by defining the wantok system as a system that "signifies a setting demanding a network of cooperation, caring and reciprocal support, and a shared attachment to kastom and locality" (2011:32). *Kastom* is a "is a reference to practices, including indigenous leadership norms," which can vary from locality to locality, and which is why people connect it to their area of origin (Nanau 2011:33).

The distinguishing feature of a 'wantok' compared to someone else is their ability to be in a "safe relationship which ensures security," where all participants acknowledge the "national importance of reciprocity" (Warakai 1989:45; Monsell-Davis 1993:4). Most

scholars believe that wantokism arose with increased urban migration, as a way to classify others, and that it could relate to the socio-economic realities of urban migrants (Warakai 1989:45; Kajumba 1983:10; Monsell-Davis 1993:2; Stevenson 1986; Strathern 1972; Rew 1975, 1980). In a new environment and in an attempt to create order out of the chaos of multiple moralities and values, people classified others as wantoks or not a wantok. As I will discuss later, these reciprocal relationships are indicative of Melanesian personhood and morality. Some scholars have interpreted the wantok system as a system that allowed young urban migrants to create social capital from their displaced belongingness, accruing status with other people from their locality by virtue of being away from that locality: "Early observers of urban growth in Port Moresby argued that people coming to town were replicating the village community in a new area, and their migration to town was part of a larger strategy for aggrandisement that was centred on the village" (Schram 2015:5, see Benediktsson 2002). Thus the term 'wantok system' arose out of the displacement of people from the locality of their usual and known reciprocal relationships, obligations, and people they depended on.

In Bashkow's *The Meaning of Whitemen*, the wantok system is one of the major points of differentiation between whitemen and Orokaiva. This is because Orokaiva's idealised version of western capitalism and morality sets up an individualised whiteman who acts only out of self-interest against the foil of Papua New Guinean's wantok system and the reciprocal favours and social safety network that are part of being involved in relationships (2006:226-227). However, this is a simplistic version of the wantok system as well, because many Papua New Guineans recognise the pressure that people are under to share income, and others worry about how some people could feel disincentivised to work when they can rely on their kin for their daily needs (Bashkow 2006:227). In the chorus of PNG pop band

TarBar's song "There Goes My Pay," a young government worker complains about the inability to save and the obligations he has to others:

> I think that I am contributing to the nation
> Cause all my money goes to my relations
> There goes my pay. Oh oh oh oh…
> (This wantok system is driving me crazy!)

Students at the University of Goroka have similar feelings about their futures. They attend university hoping to be the next generation of leaders, but they could very well become tied down through obligations. In the future, students seem to have to make one of two choices, or at least figure out how they want to balance their relationships: distance themselves from some relationships in order to grow wealth, or continue the relationships and have their wealth remain fairly stagnant (Syndicus 2018:13). Since having material wealth like money and businesses, and having people rely on you as a voice in the community, are both viewed as having wealth, people who do have monetary wealth try to balance their interactions with relatives, as Keir Martin (2013) mentioned in his article about Big Shots which I explained in chapter 2. Students who take actions in the present to make claims on their wealth in the future, take these actions as agents who are relational persons, just as the people who act to support the students also act as relational persons. Furthermore, acting upon other persons and eliciting their agency has a transformative effect in terms of the internal temporality of persons (Gross 1998:83). I will return to this point below.

Monsell-Davis (1993:11) described the example of a man who earned a fortnightly salary who then had to take over most of the economic responsibilities of the household, leading him to quit his job. For my interlocutors and friends, most people described the issue of constant demands from wantoks in terms of saving money: "I have a savings account but it is always at zero. I look at my balance and it's just always zero", as one of my friends mentioned. However, many of my interlocutors also described one aspect of social capital/wealth that they would never be able to give away: their education. This is part of why

students and staff view their educations as wealth: because it is how they make claims on the future in the present. An education is something that cannot be taken away from a person, but the benefits of an education can be reproduced again and again.

The constant demands for money on a wage earner are exacerbated by the fact that living in towns is much more expensive than living in villages. Deborah Gewertz and Frederick Errington (1999:69) discuss the issues of wantok system demands for middle class people in Wewak. While they occasionally returned to their 'home' villages to visit parents, once this parental relationship with a village broke down (usually due to death), the members of the middle class often had little to do with the village (1999:69). In town, people could engage in opportunities to gain wealth and education while living with other people who sought the same, while in the villages people demanded economic assistance (Gewertz and Errington 1999:69). In order to gain and sustain wealth and business, the members of Wewak's Country Club needed to act on fewer relationships than they would be doing if they continued to meet the demands of wantoks in rural areas. While wantok system between towns and villages still existed, members of the middle class stressed that the relationship was complex and needed rules and regulation (Gewertz and Errington 1999:69). Relatives in villages were less wealthy and less educated than people in towns. Middle class Papua New Guineans were worried about being "pulled down" to the status of their relatives should they meet the demands for economic assistance and fall into debt themselves. They educated their relatives on the stress of running businesses, and how they could not meet all social obligations because they had business obligations (1999:69). This seems similar to the arguments that scholars have made for the development of the possessive individual in PNG, however, Gewertz and Errington also explain how middle-class Papua New Guineans also sought to create networks with other "successful" wantoks whom they met while attending university or living in the towns (1999:70). By creating new forms of wantok relationships,

these middle-class Papua New Guineans still acted based on a history of interactions which informed how they were acting at the time.

Papua New Guineans frequently idealise the wantok system and viewed Western capitalism as its antithesis. In quick conversation, the wantok system was described to me as "a social safety net". However, the wantok system also includes "intense pressure to share income" and a "strong disincentive [to]…work in paid employment" (Bashkow 2006:227). It is both "an effective form of social insurance and shared responsibility…in an environment where it is difficult to save and store wealth" (AIDAB 1994, cf Bashkow 2006:227). Many of the people I spoke to who had jobs felt that the wantok system meant that they could not save money because whenever they received their pay, they were obliged to use it rather than save it. However, compared to a simplified perception of Western capitalism, in which "people are believed to be moved to act only out of greedy self-interest", and where "everything good depends on having money", the wantok system does appear to be a social safety net based on morally good actions that stem from relationships (Bashkow 2006:227). This is all to say that how a person views the wantok system is dependent on their vantage point or perspective, and how the wantok system might benefit or disadvantage them.

Students' Perceptions of the Wantok System

When I asked the question "what is the wantok system" to my friends and interlocutors, most people responded with this type of answer: 'The wantok system is when your brother needs a job, and you are in a position to hire him, and so you give him a job.' There are major consequences for people who do not reciprocate or carry out their obligations in the wantok system in appropriate ways. You could lose the relationship that you have built with someone because you have an obligation to your wantok over those you are not in a wantok relationship with. One interviewee told me that there is a chance that you could lose your name and status within a family, and therefore be left out of the family at gatherings.

However, people also pointed out the consequences of following the wantok system, especially when discussing their future job opportunities. Fulfilling the obligations of the wantok system can lead to accusations of corruption, it can be very costly to wage earners who need to distribute their pay cheques throughout the family. While anyone can become a wantok in the town, students generally use the term to refer to close families and immediate communities, such as those people who live near their families and speak the same language. In general, people talked about the wantok system in terms of their perception of how people engaged with the wantok system, or as a social safety net.

In general usage, people use the word ‘wantok’ to mean family member, friend, co-worker, use it to describe someone from the same village, province, or use it to describe fellow Papua New Guineans. Several of my friends and interlocutors talked about how the wantok system functions as a support system, but as wage earners and future wage earners, the obligations of the wantok system are also a big part of their futures. Goddard’s (1992:22) point that “a modest cash income often gives rise to kin-group expectations which can never be fully satisfied” holds true for many of my interlocutors. Depending on a person’s position and perspective, the wantok system would have positive or negative benefits, therefore people evaluate the wantok system in multiple and sometimes overlapping ways.

Nanau (2011), de Renzio (1999), and my interlocutors describe and define the wantok system as an omnipresent part of relationships in Melanesia. Like Warakai (1989:45) suggests, I found that there was no “distinct ‘local’ or ‘social’ group from which a wantok is drawn” amongst my interlocutors, rather, students and staff at the University were aware of how the places that they occupied influenced their wantoks. One of my participants listed the different ways he met wantoks at the University: his classmates, his province mates, the people with whom he rented his accommodation. Because many of the students come from nearby provinces, they create wantok relationships like those of the urban migrants in earlier

scholarship; provincial student groups are popular because they provide a good way to find wantoks from your province, as well as to hear the latest news on provincial sponsorships. People also gravitate towards others from their province or location because “they come from the flexibly defined ‘same place’” and those people are “‘natural’ choices for friendships” (Levine and Levine 1979:72). I found this quite practical for myself as well, and many of my early friends and relationships were with people from the same province in which I grew up, or around the same general location. More generally, people were even happier to have met me after I told them I grew up in PNG as well.

Levine and Levine (1979:71) found that wantoks might be people who “stick together, converse together, and eat together”. However, while all levels of personal relationship can make up wantok ties, scholars also make an analytical difference between the wantoks through kinship, locality, and friendship (Levine and Levine 1979:70). Nanau (2011:32) also suggests that wantok is “a social capital concept at the micro and family levels”. For staff and students who I talked to, this analytical difference may be becoming a practical difference. One interlocutor spoke about how moving away from his province has helped him focus his budget on his immediate family, and that previously in his province, K1000 could be gone in one day due to obligations based on the wantok system. While he had moved away from his more established network of kin, he would also be moving into other wantok relationships in his new town. Students receive a lot of support through the wantok system in the present, but they also risk their future wealth via future interactions with relatives. Therefore, their perception of future wealth is tied strongly to the present and the past, both as relational persons who determine what is morally right or wrong based on a history of exchanges and interactions with other people, but also through how they act as agents in the present to affect the future.

Harvesting from Samuel

Many students can already anticipate the financial obligations that they will encounter through the wantok system. But many students also view their obligations as a good thing, and an anticipated outcome of their sponsored studies, and they act with this in mind (Gross 1998:83). University is an expected pathway to wealth and also to the status of being an agent for development in a student's community (Syndicus 2018:22). The obligations that one collects over the degree period, and the many reciprocal relationships that a student enters into in order to survive give students an opportunity to give back to all the people who contributed to their success.

Five days before I was due to leave Goroka, the university held their annual graduation. I had heard a lot about what graduation was going to be like, but I would never have been prepared for the sheer amount of people walking up and down the hill to the university, some in traditional dress, some in suits, many families wearing matching floral fabrics, and the graduands in their teal green gowns. I found myself a bit frustrated at being different all over again to all the people who did not know that I had been living in Goroka, but I bumped into a few friends along the way. My experience with graduations at the small theological college just outside of Banz where I grew up did not prepare me for the amount of table sellers, the cars, and the size of the stage that had been set up during the weeks before. This was, as I noted at the time, an *event*.

I had been invited to a dinner for a graduate who had rented a room during his degree from a family I knew, and he and his father were staying with the host family again for graduation. In a small living room built of plywood and two by fours, several of us sat on mats on the concrete floor, with our knees knocking and balanced plates on our laps. The food had been prepared much earlier, people were relaxed after the exhausting day, and Samuel's father had much to say in gratitude towards the host family. He said:

> On behalf of [my] family we are thankful, we are very grateful, because eventually Samuel ended up in this family, which has contributed to his success…To papa, to the son and the wife, and the rest of the family members, you know words cannot express to that extent… But what you have given, you have boosted his morale and his studies, finally, you know, it became a reality.

Samuel's father was thankful that Samuel had ended up with the host family instead of staying at the university dormitories, which were too expensive for his father to pay for. He mentioned how his family had a lot of financial constraints, but "all the money went to" Samuel during his degree, "so now I harvest from him". He went on to say that now that Samuel had finished his degree, he could finally return the favour, so to speak, and take care of his father. The conversation ended with a plea from the papa of the host family for all the students there at that dinner (including myself) to not waste the opportunity of a university education, to get a job right away.

I imagine that conversations like the one I was privy to were happening all over Goroka that night, as people from all over PNG had flooded to the town to witness their wantoks graduate and receive a degree. Not only was this a momentous occasion for the graduate and their potential future in the working class, but it was also the acknowledgement that it was time for students to begin the period of reciprocating back to their families and communities. As the liminality of being a student ends, the future and the past are brought together in the cycle of reciprocity. Students expressed that they want themselves and their country to develop, to progress, and to modernise. They imagined futures where they would hold office jobs or teaching jobs and be able to save enough money for a house and cars and things. A lot of students wanted their country and their families to westernise. The expressed the desire for a future that progresses in a linear fashion towards Western modernity, but they acknowledged frequently that they knew this was at odds with their reality, at least for a little while. This is because students are already in a cycle of reciprocity that connects their past to their present and future. Time and personhood are useful for understanding each other,

because "temporality and temporalization…are imbued with the directionality of life…[T]he critical question is, then, to ask how life is lived…how it is imagined, regenerated, reproduced and hence what kind of directionality there is to life in the particular" (Gross 1998:83). The relational person is made up of what has passed and what that history means for the future.

Personhood and Reciprocity

During their time at university, students' families do not like students to have part time jobs so they can focus on their studies. A first year student responded to one of my surveys by saying she did not have a job yet, but she was studying to fulfil her dreams. She elaborated on her dreams and what she thought about wealthy people in society:

> Those people are highly respected and [we] treat them well because wealth is basically one thing people of Papua New Guinea are looking and working for all of their lives, this is the main reason why we are studying here at University of Goroka, to be wealthiest person ever.

This student in particular imagines a successful future based on her education. Her family and relatives would be supporting her daily so that one day she could give some of the rewards of her education back to them. One of my interviewees mentioned how "when you look at the students in PNG in public universities, we are entirely dependent on our parents, for like, pocket money, clothing, most basic needs". At times, the dependency and future obligations back to family and relatives can make the future frustrating for students.

The notion of reciprocity is so intrinsic to the wantok relationship because of the way that Papua New Guineans conceive of personhood. Definitions of personhood are contextual and complex, incorporating ideas of agency, decision making, consciousness of others and self-consciousness (Strathern 1988:91). In explaining cross-gender and intra-gender relationships in Papua New Guinea, Marilyn Strathern (1988:338) explains that people are imagined in contrasting inter-related forms, that is, as men and women. Men objectify their relations with women and women objectify their relations with men, so that all people are

"the objective form of relationship," and therefore the outcomes of a person's actions originate in those relationships. Her explanation of this objectification is that "one might say that [people] owe their persons to those relationships, and thus to other 'persons'" (Strathern 1988:338). Persons and agents are defined differently, because persons are made up of multiple others persons, but agents affect only the relationship and person with respect to a specific act (Strathern 1988:338). When someone acts, they act out of the multiple relationships with other persons that make them up, but they act on the one relationship with the other person (whom they also acknowledge is made up of multiple persons) (Strathern 1988:274).

These actions – the back and forth between two persons – are therefore the basis for the relationships (the wantok relationships) that make up a person. Without being an agent and maintaining all the relationships that makes one a person, one cannot be a person. This is emphasised by Strathern (1988:90): "The mind…first becomes visible when a child shows feeling for those related to it and comes to appreciate the interdependence or reciprocity that characterizes social relationships." Reciprocity and interdependence are crucial to social relationships, and when someone is mindful, conscious, and self-conscious of those concepts and the relationship that is formed because of those concepts, they are persons with the ability to act on the relationship. In wantok relationships, there is the "expectation that wantok will engage in ongoing transactions governed by 'generalised reciprocity'," and "any breakdown of this reciprocity is likely to signal a rupturing of the relationship" (Levine and Levine 1999:72). If someone no longer maintains their side of the reciprocal relationship, the relationship breaks down. People can choose, as agents, to act or to not act on the relationship in terms of reciprocating items like food, money, jobs, and housing.

As I explained in Chapter 1, agency is inherently part of personhood. People are also made up of the other persons with whom they are in relationship. Claudia Gross (1998)

explains that relationality is tied to temporality through propagation, or that relationships tie both the past and the present and future to each other because relationships are based on the history of repeated transactions which also point to a future of repeated transactions. She states that “as agents, persons realise (make concrete or manifest) their own relational capacities and through their acts they may also elicit and hence activate the capacities of others” (Gross 1998:83). This relates to the past, present, and future of particular agents: “If one defines agents as relational persons, it is clear that actions that act upon other persons and elicit their agency in turn have a transformative effect in terms of the internal temporality of persons” (Gross 1998:83). The history of actions affects the future of particular people who are acted on. Therefore, relationships are tied to temporality, to the experience of time, because "time is not a line between happenings; it lies in the capacity of an image [or a person] to evoke past and future simultaneously" (Strathern 1990:28).

As Strathern (1988:220) suggests, what is exchanged in wantok relationships works as both “the cause of a relation as well as its effect”. The objects that are circulated via gift exchange in particular relations then become objects which express that relationship (Strathern 1988:220). An object that expresses a relationship is an object that defines a relationship’s past (there was an object to establish the relationship); the present (in the exchange based on a relationship); and the future (in the continuation of the exchange – another object is exchanged back).

It is this middle point, where the object is exchanged, that I found myself at graduation. Some people may suggest that the exchange in this relationship is when the school fees are paid for a university education. However, the object of the exchange does not appear until graduation. I asked one of the staff members at the University what would happen to a student if they failed out of university. Would their community want them to pay back the money they put into their education? He said no, they only expect to be paid back if

they graduate. The outcome of the gift of the school fee does not occur until graduation because of the way Papua New Guineans understand relationships, outcomes, and their recursive view of time in growth.

Strathern (1988:280) states that "it is in anticipation of the separation of grown thing from grower that the thing so grows, for it is only known to have done so after the event." In the same way, a community cannot have supported a student through university until they are through university. A family who sends their child to university to gain education anticipates the outcome of graduation from the gift of school fees, just like they might anticipate a yam if they plant a seed. However, the yam is not grown until it grows, and is only known to have grown after it is planted. Students are not finished at school until they graduate, which means that the gift of school fees is not received by students as an object until they graduate, marking the time at which the object is exchanged. After the student has grown and has graduated, like Samuel's father said, it is time to harvest from them.

This also means that the graduation of students is only realised as the result of the gift and growth supplied by families and communities. Families and communities act as agents and give an object with an anticipated outcome well in the future. The object is only exchanged once that anticipated outcome is reached, and the student graduates. At this stage, the onus of reciprocity falls back onto the student, who must take actions to give back to their community. Daniel explained to me what he did when he got his job at the University:

> I just completed a moka ceremony on the Christmas. I have to say thank you to my mum, for bringing me up. And for giving me a life like this, for educating me, and all this, and so I have to say thank you to mum, and my uncles, and give them something by way of appreciation…So when I am working like this I have to humble myself. I have to say thank you. So I have to get the pigs, purchase those pigs, for 10k, 8k, 5k, 4k, 52 pigs. I have to use 35 thousand kina cash. Just to say thank you mum. That is one thing I organise in the community.

In this situation, most students and staff see that the object which is exchanged, the education, belongs to the student but is caused by the family and community. This conception

of exchange, gifts, education, and agency poses major issues for anyone who does not reciprocate; for example, not hiring their brother for a job, not housing relatives when they come to stay, not using their education in a way that will help the community. The cause of the success of education, relationships, must also have the same effect in the form of relationships.

Students who graduate have succeeded, like Samuel's father suggests Samuel has done. They have received a gift and the growth of that gift is now over. The gift points as much to the past and to the student's relationships as it does to the future and the way students must act as agents to reciprocate the gift. While students may make claims on their future in the present and imagine a future of development, they also must imagine futures that look back to the past as well, because they act within a moral economy that is rooted in their history of exchanges and transactions with other people in the past.

Using the Wantok System

The wantok system is not just a blessing of the past and a sure-fire way to lose wealth in the future. Students as agents act to reproduce the wantok system in their futures by engaging with it in other ways that they see as beneficial rather than a "strong disincentive [to]…work in paid employment" (Bashkow 2006:227). People reify the wantok system in everyday life. People 'use' and 'do' things through the wantok system, which is set up against a bureaucratic or administrative system in institutions like the university. For example, Syndicus notes that some onlookers perceive university staff admitting children of government figures to UPNG as part of the wantok system, when it is simply intimidation (2018:222). I heard stories of staff members who were expected to give better grades to their wantoks, and who blamed this expectation on the wantok system.

If, or when, a student receives a high paying job with a lot of influence, they are expected to use that influence to assist their wantoks in the future. However, they are also

occasionally the recipients of this help. A fourth year accounting student suggested the wantok system helped students more specifically:

> You know, some people find the wantok system as a kind of life sustaining practice. Like for example, if I graduate, like tomorrow, next year, I graduate, I go out, if I don't have a wantok in the field, it will take me three to four years searching for a job. It's a waste of school and waste of time for this schooling. And I'm looking for a job for four years. So uh, helps us recover what our parents invest in us, so wantok system is one of the fastest practice to get you into the job and get you into the system and pay the parents. That's our modern practice of wantok system.

This student made an important point that students rely on the relationships within the wantok system to get them a job in the same way they see it as being a barrier to success and development. Depending on your position and perspective, the wantok system will have positive or negative benefits, therefore people morally evaluate their own and others' engagement with the wantok system in multiple ways.

Attaining wealth after graduation is linked to the wantok system, both in how people will get jobs, and also in how they will use their money. On the whole, students do not have part-time jobs during university, or at least during the semester, because their wantoks want them to focus on their studies. One of my friends was very confused as to why I was asking him if he had a job or not during the university semester because relatives assumed that students would focus on their studies instead. Of the jobs that students do have during university break times, many students indicated that they were paid for work that they got through their familial connections.

Students' engagement with wantok system after they graduate is also sign of wealth. This is demonstrated through how much someone's wantoks depend on them or how much the community 'invested' and how much the student would contribute in return. One survey respondent mentioned how the community "look up to [wealthy people] when there is a compensation to be paid". If and when students became employed, they would be called upon to contribute to compensations and other life events. I approached one of my friends as she

was texting her brother in Jiwaka to make sure he was contributing to the funeral preparations of a family member who had recently died. She mentioned how it was much more simple to initiate dislocated family members into contributing towards life events because of internet banking now, so sending money from province to province is safer and easier. However, she also lamented the way that the internet made the process more simple, because it meant that people with money no longer had an excuse not to contribute. I knew of staff who were paying for the school and university fees of their brothers and sisters. Often staff expressed how difficult this expectation was, especially when their living standards changed or they got married and had kids.

Students often gained access to university through the wantok system and the wealth that could be gathered for a cause like semester fees. Students were also expected to return this wealth to their communities when they graduate. This assumption is a moral assumption based on the history of exchanges within students own relationships, and the moral example set by staff members like Daniel. If someone breaks down this reciprocal cycle, they are saying something important about that relationship: namely, that they do not want to continue it. For students, reciprocating is integral to their post-university experience because of how it relates to personhood and relationships, and that it ties the future to the past. For relatives, their relationships to students are their claim on the future in the present; these students a claim of future wealth to them. And to students, their obligation to their relatives is also a claim on wealth in the future, when the reciprocal cycle of exchange continues.

When people engage or disengage with the wantok system, other people make value judgements on these decisions. This moralisation is highly dependent on perspective. For example, in Chapter 4 I discuss how while there are claims of corruption based on legal grounds, and these are evident through legal scrutiny, some claims of corruption are instead based on moral grounds and are a necessary reaction to someone else’s fortune and success in

the face of one's own failure or lack of success. People enforce the morality of the wantok system on people who have power and wealth, and are in a situation to give money, jobs, housing, or food to their wantoks. It is also clear from these discussions that people reify the wantok system, suggesting that you can "use" the wantok system, the wantok system "does" things, and the wantok system can be "done". The networks and processes that people employ when they use the wantok system, the relationships that are called on, and the ways these relationships are called on mean that the wantok system is indeed a type of system, with interconnected and interrelated elements, guidelines, and consequences, forming a complex aspect of personhood in Melanesia.

Students talked about the wantok system in the present with respect to how their obligations may be shaped by the wantok system in the future. The experiences of staff were that wantok system was still functioning very well at their level: they were often asked to contribute to community funds for funerals or bridewealth, and they also engaged in more everyday reciprocity like buying buai for others. However, students whom I spoke to imagined a future where they would only encounter the positive aspects of wantok system after they graduated: getting a job through a family member, or helping their communities. They hoped and perceived that their new status as a university-goer would help them gain different kinds of wealth, including education, respect, and a good job, and that they could use this wealth to reciprocate to wantoks in ways that they perceived as fair. Not many students wanted to be encouraged to place their wantok in a job once they got into a high enough position, but because of the obligations of wantok system, it could become a daily part of their lives once they graduate. In the future, their perception of the wantok system could change because they may benefit from it. I will return to the difference in moral perspectives in the next chapter.

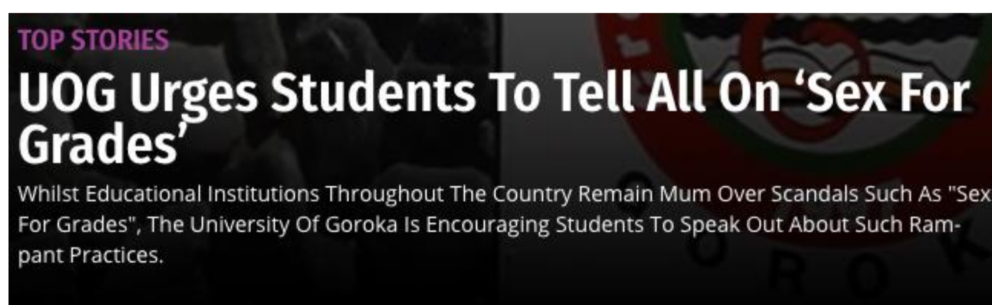
Students at the University of Goroka attain new statuses as university-goers through attending university. They gain social status as *skulman* (school-man), and enter into relationships with new people from different places. This means, as Joy said, more people from their communities will be taking notice of them, interested in the new kinds of demands they can make on successful students. Perhaps they too will soon be inundated with requests for money, housing, jobs, and food, when they are just starting out as working class people. The staff whom I spoke to stressed this for themselves. Students anticipated the difficulties of maintaining the obligations of the wantok system and the relationships that scaffold it, as well as their desire to earn wealth.

The way that students imagine their futures hinges on the past, how they act as agents, how they interact as relational persons, and how they moralise their actions. The wantok system is a way of moralising actions based on the history of reciprocity that so many Papua New Guineans engage in with their wantoks. The wantok system is a moral economy; it is the moral basis for future actions because it is the history of past actions, and life is constantly reproduced by being lived, based on the past and affecting the future (Gross 1998:81). This affects the imagined futures of students and their ideas of wealth, because of how wealth is "how we make claims on the future in the present" (Foster 2018:9). Because "each transaction builds on those before it, and provides the base for future transactions, and from this emerge appropriate ways to act and transact", students must ask themselves how they will interact with the wantok system in the future (Sharp 2019:184 cf Carrier 2018). Students viewed the wantok system as something that did not necessarily benefit them, and therefore they moralised the ways that people did interact with it, as they do with all kinds of exchanges of wealth. The evaluation of an exchange of wealth is also key to how students perceive and make accusations of corruption.

Chapter 4

Corruption and Morality

At the beginning of the school year and just after the first-year orientation, I walked around the university campus, attempting to map the layout. I stopped to read at almost every department's noticeboard to see what sorts of notices were already up: mostly newspaper articles about universities in general and announcements about the chancellor and Vice-Chancellor's movements. One newspaper article in particular was very striking, as the heading read "Sex for Grades" in large font across the top. The *Post-Courier* article, recreated for their website here, said that some students "negotiated" with their tutor or were encouraged to negotiate by their tutor, for better grades.



TOP STORIES

UOG Urges Students To Tell All On 'Sex For Grades'

Whilst Educational Institutions Throughout The Country Remain Mum Over Scandals Such As "Sex For Grades", The University Of Goroka Is Encouraging Students To Speak Out About Such Rampant Practices.

February 20, 2019

BY JERRY SEFE

Whilst educational institutions throughout the country remain mum over scandals such as "sex for grades", the University of Goroka is encouraging students to speak out about such rampant practices.

Acting Pro Vice Chancellor for Academic, Research and Innovation, Dr Sam Najike, alluded during Orientation yesterday, whilst reminding students of their core priorities that, sex for grades "will not be tolerated".

"The incentives are to be on HECAS when you score good grades. We know that this Sex for Grades or SFG has been an ongoing practice in almost all institutions throughout the country especially universities where tutors are enticed. It can also be the other way around where students are enticed by tutors to negotiate for better grades. Whatever it is, the administration will not allow this behaviour," he said.

Figure 2: Screenshot of the Post-Courier article on the practice of "Sex for Grades," recreated for their website. Accessed from postcourier.com.pg/uog-urges-students-to-tell-sex-grades/ on the 28th of November 2019.

The article also states that the "University of Goroka is encouraging students to speak out about such rampant practices". I asked my new friends Rosa and Leslie about whether they thought that this actually happened. They both said that it did happen, and quickly amended that maybe if that did not happen, then other students did pay for grades, and that hopefully now that other people knew it was happening, it would stop. They said that it was just one of those corrupt practices that happens, like how people get a job through *saveface* (literally "knowing-face," or recognising someone). I asked if it was like the English idiom "it's not what you know, it's who you know," and they agreed. The conversation turned to the wantok system – this was the first time I heard the phrase used – and we discussed that people get jobs through knowing people through both *saveface* and the wantok system. During that conversation we also spoke about the new University dormitories which were built between 2012 and 2016. Rosa and Leslie said these were so expensive that half of them sat empty, and elaborated that the University would rather not put people in them who cannot afford them because the University is all about money. Therefore, Rosa and Leslie said, you knew that someone was either rich or on a scholarship if they lived there. They said that it was corrupt that the university did not open the dormitories to other people to live in when there was space there. These sorts of comments about the University dormitories came up a lot. The dormitories were seen as a symbol of wealth, though many staff and students could not agree on how exactly the buildings symbolised wealth. Some students told me that it was luxurious. Some thought of the dorms as a symbol of University corruption because so much money had been spent on something that so few people could use and enjoy. Some people told me that it was very nice inside, and some told me that it was not very nice at all. One interview participant referred to the "five-star hotel" as a "waste of money". These perceptions were based on past experiences that students and staff have within institutions like universities, and of individual experiences with wealth, and how people use wealth. One student said that

while he thought the dorms were a waste of money, they were also a "symbol of wealth" that students could all "look to for morale", and imagine a future where they could achieve the wealth it takes to live there, or some place just as nice.

I was struck by how quickly people would label something as "corrupt". It seemed that people would often label things that they found unfair as corrupt, whether or not they could identify some sort of illegal activity. But whether something was illegal or not was never the point of the accusation, it was about the morality of the action. Grant Walton (2013:61-69) argued that scholars need to reframe debates about corruption in Papua New Guinea, moving away from "mainstream" definitions such as legal, public office, and economic corruption, and towards a moral perspective of corruption. Joe Kanekane wrote that Papua New Guineans have a tolerance for corruption because of their custom (2007:23). At the time, Kanekane was the president of the PNG Media Council. He argued that Papua New Guineans give MPs who do wrong a second chance because they place personal relationships before rules and laws of the state (2007:23). In this case, the values and morals about relationships and personhood have more to do with corruption than legal or political values.

In this chapter, I argue that the point of a student's accusation of corruption was to establish the fact that, from their vantage point, what had happened was disadvantageous to them and their relationships. The accusations were to do with wealth and how someone used the wealth, from the perspective of another person or other people. Because morality is socially contingent, when something is perceived to be immoral, like the use of university funds to provide housing for wealthy students and not allow other, less wealthy students in, it can be perceived to be corrupt. For students who have the weight of community obligations and expectations on them, the imagined future of wealth and status could be put at risk by an institution that does not have the same moral obligations towards students as students do

towards their communities and wantoks who have helped them in their journey. However, students do not perceive a difference in moral obligation, instead they see a moral corruption.

However, if unfairness or immorality were the only criteria to make something corrupt, there would be constant accusations of corruption. An accusation of corruption is a distinctly modern accusation, tied in with ideas about how people use monetary wealth, how western institutions like universities or governments use wealth, and how this relates to agency and obligation. In Papua New Guinea, people sometimes use feelings of jealousy, resentment, or hostility as the basis for an accusation of witchcraft or sorcery (Strathern and Stewart 2004:7). The practice of witchcraft and sorcery varies from place to place, but the *jelesi* (jealously) that the accusations stemmed from were often to do with greed, wealth, and how people use or do not use wealth, especially in a newly emerging cash economy (Strathern and Stewart 2004:114; LiPuma 2000:145; see Bloch and Parry 1989; Robbins and Akin 1999; Strathern 1982, 1988; Strathern and Stewart 2000, Stewart and Strathern 2000 for examples). Sorcery is an individual practice that is to do with how one feels about a relationship, and the valuable and material objects that one person has instead of another (LiPuma 2000:144-145).

For students, an education is a gift given to them through the financial assistance of their relatives — a gift that is only fully realised upon graduation. However, the university views students in terms of a commodity relationship. From the management perspective, the university is a modern institution and the students needed to learn and appreciate the way it functions (Syndicus 2018:21-22). This data suggests to me that corruption is a modern moral claim against an institution, which has no personal agency against which a student can claim witchcraft or sorcery. This, and the interaction between the individual and the institution, are topics for further research. The claim of corruption based on misuse of wealth, in this case, a university budget, is about the perspective that one person has in relationship to the

institution making the decision about what to do with wealth, and about how people conceptualise their agency in relationship to structures. The conflicting perspectives between students and the universities with which they engage feed into local understandings of corruption.

Perceptions of Corruption

Writing about several student strikes between 2010 and 2015, Ivo Syndicus explained how students were unhappy with how the university and, in particular, the Vice Chancellor, treated them as consumers or clients rather than as agents:

> An analogy that the VC provided was that at a store or supermarket, customers also cannot simply decide to pay less for goods because they find the price too high. To set the price for goods, or the fees for university education and services, was not for students to determine…Students, in contrast, felt improperly recognised, and their claims about 'mismanagement' and 'corruption' appeared more related at the style of management – in terms of relating to students as agents in their own right – rather than in terms of the formal aspects of institutional management (Syndicus 2018:21).

Students wanted to be seen as agents who made decisions and not just as clients who passively consumed what was given to them. Syndicus (2018) theorised that this tension was due to different ideas of social stratification, or that the university simply had one idea of how to enact the modern university and students had another idea, stemming from the differences in social status and ideology. The students' ideas of corruption were in fact a perceived failure to acknowledge or follow through with the promise that students would one day become wealthy, elite, and develop their nation, as I will elaborate below (Syndicus 2018:21).

This is not to say that corruption in the legal sense did not occur. As I was leaving Papua New Guinea, former Prime Minister Peter O'Neill was charged with official corruption for the second time in five years. Later in the day that I had my conversation with Rosa and Leslie, I attended a workshop run by Transparency International on the new government legislation to create an Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC).

The ICAC legislation has been endorsed by Cabinet, and the Government hopes to have it established by 2022 (RNZ 2019). Part of the workshop run by Transparency International was defining what corruption is: "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain"; and that it "can be classified as grand, petty and political" (Transparency International 2018a). They define petty corruption as "everyday abuse of entrusted power by low- and mid-level public officials in their interactions with ordinary citizens"; grand corruption is "acts committed at a high level of government that distort policies or the central functioning of the state, enabling leaders to benefit at the expense of the public good"; and political corruption is "a manipulation of policies, institutions and rules of procedure in the allocation of resources and financing by political decision makers, who abuse their position to sustain their power, status and wealth" (Transparency International 2018a).

According to Transparency International, in 2018, Papua New Guinea scored 28 out of 100 on a scale of perceived corruption among businesspeople and other experts, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean (Transparency International 2018b). This ranks PNG as one of the more corrupt countries in the world, at 137th out of 180. Transparency International call their corruption index the "Corruption Perception Index", since it asks about how much corruption businesspeople and experts perceive there to be in a country. These views are, as Transparency International mention, the views of informed people. It is important to note that this index is still run based on the *perception* of corruption, because it may at times run in a feedback loop, where people perceive more corruption because they are based in a country that is said to have a lot of corruption.

In 2013, Transparency International in Papua New Guinea published a report on a questionnaire about corruption that was carried out between 2009 and 2010. The report was made up of 1,825 household interviews based on questions about the definition of corruption and a thought experiment about whether different scenarios were corrupt. The researchers

found that 51% of rural and urban Papua New Guinean's definitions of corruption were related to moral concerns, for example: corruption was "all things that are bad and evil" (26%); "any immoral act" (17%); "offensive behaviour" (8%) (Transparency International 2013:20). Transparency International categorised statements such as "the abuse of public trust for private gain" (at 28%) and "the stealing of money" (at 16%) as "state oriented" definitions, which seems to draw a formal and informal distinction between moral corruption and state oriented corruption that I do not believe exists in reality (Transparency International 2013:19). I also found that asking about the perception of corruption was very interesting:

> Me: Do you think that there is corruption in PNG politics?
>
> Joy: Of course. Corruption is a *hauslain* (related to houses, communities) thing. You know, it starts in the house, so when we get up there, it's normal for us. I mean I'm sorry to say this and it's sad that corruption is letting our country down but it really is something that is innate in us, so we can't really do away with it, so even though we speak so openly about corruption and fighting corruption and things like that, we are still practicing corruption in our own houses and you know, offices
>
> M: Is there a perception that corruption just happens in PNG and doesn't happen elsewhere?
>
> J: There is a perception that corruption in PNG exceeds anything that happens in the world.
>
> M: Exceeds it?
>
> J: Yeah, but corruption is a global thing, it happens everywhere.

This was a particularly meaningful comment to me, because at the time Joy and I spoke, news was coming out about the college admissions scandal in the United States, where 33 parents were accused of having paid money to inflate university exam entrance scores and bribe officials. I almost excitedly recounted the news to Rosa and Leslie, interested in their opinions of the same money-for-grades scandal happening in the USA, but they were uninterested in the conversation. This may have been because of my poor storytelling, or it could be lack of interest in another country's kind of corruption compared to Rosa and Leslie's first hand experiences of corruption. Ira Bashkow had a similar experience when he

told stories about poor people and criminal activity in the United States. He explained that "such questions [about whether his country experienced poverty and crime] were not really concerned with establishing the facts about another society far away. Rather, they were intended to point up the terrible problems faced by Orokaiva themselves" (2006:142). Orokaiva were not looking to critique or reform other countries when they compared the levels of poverty and crime, they were instead looking to critique and reform themselves (Bashkow 2006:142). Similarly, while Joy understands that corruption is a global thing, corruption in PNG exceeds anything that happens in the world. The perception of corruption on a global scale relates to how people perceive corruption at a very personal and local level, based on the values and morals that Papua New Guineans develop over time and in relationship with one another.

Joy expressed the view that corruption "starts in the house" and "it really is something that is innate in us, so we can't really do away with it". Joy did not think that there was an "everyday abuse of entrusted power by low- and mid-level public officials in their interactions with ordinary citizens", rather, she spoke about the morality of choices that people made with regards to the relationships they had around them and in their communities (Transparency International 2018a). The corruption that "starts in the house" is a part of the moral economy, not the political economy.

James Carrier roots "moral economic activity in the mutual obligations that arise when people transact with each other over the course of time" (2018:18). The moral economy is related to the past, through the moral values that become established through repetition and time, and the present and future, because of the future values that arise from present moral economic activity (2018:18). Other scholars define moral economy as the "'forms of integration' [in the economy] such as reciprocity, redistribution and householding" (Hann 2010:188). Palomera and Vetta (2016:4) define the moral economy as an approach to

political economy, integrating relations between capital, class, and state, and looking at the ways that those are embedded; it grounds the political economic processes in the everyday context. It is about appreciating how people's values shape how they behave within an economy, which is not limited just to how they try to maximise resources (Thompson 1991). In the quote above, Joy is also making an important statement about political, grand, or petty corruption. She is claiming that the morals that guide the behaviours in those areas are established at home, and they are innate, that they have arisen over the course of time and are the basis for future moral economic activity.

This does not mean that every government official is morally corrupt, nor does it mean that Papua New Guineans teach their children to hide or steal funds for collective projects. It does mean that when large institutions like universities charge a lot of money for yearly school fees with increases each year, and when mentalities like that of the VC view students like clients, students who have grown up with a morality emphasising reciprocity and a focus on the relationships between people as agents, rather than consumers, can become outraged and go on strike (Syndicus 2018). Students evaluated the actions of the University based on their experience and history transacting with others and the University. They evaluated actions based on the moral values that are the context for their actions, the financial support they are given, the reciprocal nature of relationships, and the agency of individuals in those relationships (Carrier 2018:18; Syndicus 2018:22). They also evaluated actions based on the moral values that arose from the activity of going to university itself, and the futures that they imagined based on what they would do with an education (Carrier 2018:18). When students believe themselves to be "agents of development" for their communities and the next generation of leaders and MPs, they feel it is their duty to denounce what they perceive to be corruption (Syndicus 2018:22). They also believed they had moral reasons to reciprocate back to their relatives who supported their educations. Both

their belief in going to university to activate change in their communities and governments, and their choice to strike against the university were indicative of a moral economy.

The "Moral" in the Moral Economy

In Chapters 1 and 3 I elaborated on how Papua New Guineans view persons as being made up of their relationships to other persons, but also how they are agents who act with their relationships in mind. These relationships are based on ideas of exchange, reciprocity, and obligation. In their introduction to the volume *Money and Modernity: State and Local Currencies in Melanesia*, Robbins and Akin explain that Papua New Guineans have always moralised exchanges: "For an exchange to be a morally neutral conveyance, not only must people in the *right* kind of relationship be transacting with the *right* kind of objects, they must also be doing so in the *right* way" (1999:9, emphasis added). In this case, they are arguing that Papua New Guineans make moral judgements about the ways that money is exchanged, who exchanges money, and whether money is the right thing to exchange (1999:8). As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Daniel stated that money could be useless as compensation for a death, and from the introduction to this chapter, money should clearly not be exchanged between student and tutor. In Chapter 1, I described how Samson thought that having wealth like land and pigs made you lazy because that meant that you did not have to work for money, and Busse (2019:205-206) mentions how fresh produce sellers complain that table sellers who sell store goods are immoral.

These comments are about the underlying values of the economy. They are comments about how money is not the right object to exchange, or about how people are not earning money the right way, and lastly, about how fresh produce sellers think that table sellers are not in the right kinds of relationships to sell. They are people's values that they define through a pattern of repeated transactions and reciprocity with other people (Carrier 2018:18). Mark Busse makes this point clear in "Morality and the Concept of the Market

Seller among the Gehamo" (2019). Busse builds on Kenneth Read's 1955 article "Morality and the Concept of the Person among the Gahuku-Gama", citing Read's argument that "Gahuku-Gama morality was socially distributed" meaning that "an individual's moral obligations to others varied according to their social relationships" (1955:257). Read reinforces the idea that moral obligations are "contingent on the social positioning of individuals" and that what is "*right*, in any given instance, has basically a social connotation" (Read 1955:260 emphasis added). The types of people with whom you enter into relationships can extend beyond your kinship group, most often because of proximity or involvement in affiliations and group activities (Busse 2019:207 citing Church 2016). However, Busse explains that in urban areas like markets, where people from Goroka are interacting with people who travel longer distances to the market, market sellers extend their moral obligations to non-kin and strangers who are buying their food and to the other people who are selling in the market (2019:208).

There are several kinds of relationships in the urban market in Goroka, including those between vendors and other vendors, vendors and customers, and people's actions in those relationships influence their ideas about what makes a good person (Busse 2019:208). The relationships between vendors in the market demonstrate how Papua New Guineans moralise each other's transactions, exchanges, and relationships with customers. Most people in the Goroka fresh food market believed that "prices should be related to the work done by the people who grew food" (Busse 2019:209). This means that prices are often the same amongst vendors, as every vendor who sells a particular fresh food item has put in the same work and experienced the same pain to grow it. Because people who buy food to sell it on are not doing the hard work to grow the food themselves, fresh food sellers view their transactions as morally bad. In this case, table sellers who sell store goods or resell market

goods in different areas are transacting in an immoral way and, according to the fresh food sellers, making money in an immoral way.

The lack of price competition also meant that it encouraged customers to visit the same vendors repeatedly, and relationships between vendors and customers could flourish (Busse 2019:209). When customers did visit vendors from whom they had bought in the past, they were sometimes given an extra piece of food to either continue or encourage a relationship with the vendor. This could be to encourage a generalised reciprocity and loyalty of customers to vendors, but Busse (2019:212) interprets this differently. Because production of food is related to land and ideas about work, the objects that were transacted with fresh food sellers were indicative of relationships.

Fresh food sellers had a grievance with the objects that table sellers transacted because they viewed the relationships to be morally wrong. In the view of fresh food sellers, the objects that table sellers sold were not objects that they had worked for. Hard work was about putting "part of one's self into a thing", and therefore trading was not hard, it was lazy (Busse 2019:213). Growing food was also a kind of work that required the "recognition that producing food depended on multiple social relationships with both the living and the dead" (Busse 2019:213). A good relationship with ancestral spirits who inhabit the ground meant success in gardening, while a poorly producing garden was viewed as the result of poor relationships with ancestors. Therefore, the practice of giving extra is not just about market competition but about the continuation and creation of social relationships; produce is both a commodity that is sold for a fixed price based on work, and a gift based on relationships with ancestral spirits and with customers (Busse 2019:212-217). The lack of price competition, the giving extra, and the moralisation of types of work are related to how Papua New Guineans view people as being made up of the relationships around them, and how they moralise the actions between persons.

I elaborate on this example to demonstrate clearly how Papua New Guinean ideas about the morality of social relationships are the basis for transactions in a prime example of the economy; the market. The relationships between vendors and customers, venders and other vendors, or between student and tutor, or victims and people who pay compensations, are concrete examples of relationships between people. The relationship between a student and their university is more distant as there is no one person with whom students have an ongoing relationship and who can be defined as 'the university', apart from the Vice-Chancellor who acts as a figurehead. An 'institution' such as the university is an organisation of people for a particular purpose and the aims of those people and other interested parties are abstracted to be the aims of a university. Adam Reed (2003), writing about Port Moresby's prison, and Alice Street (2014), writing about a hospital in Madang, both focus on the 'visibility' of persons to the institution. Reed (2003:109) argues that the state makes prisoners visible as examples to the broader population and as panoptical subjects (cf. Foucault 1977). Street (2014) explains how patients attempt to make themselves visible to hospital staff for treatment. Syndicus (2018) argues that within the university:

> Students struggle to compel recognition by teaching staff; academic and non-academic staff struggle to make their efforts and commitment…noticed and appreciated by the management; and the university management is preoccupied by pitching the university's services and successes to the government for seeking the funds to enable its continued operation and expansion.

It is an unequal relation between an institution with a lot of power and a student with, individually, little power. University managers and officials act with some relationships in mind, and students act with their own relationships in mind. This is a struggle about how people conceptualise their agency in relationship to structures.

A person's relationship to a structure or institution is a topic for further research in anthropology. The examples above suggest to me that some claims of corruption that students make against the university, and that people make against institutions in general, are similar

in nature to accusations of sorcery based on jealousy. Sorcery and jealousy are to do with individual agency and how people moralise what other people do with wealth (LiPuma 2000:144; Strathern and Stewart 2004:113-139). A accusation of corruption is distinctly modern because of the lack of a personal relationship. Unlike a Papua New Guinean who is jealous of another, and who may cause harm to fall on them through sorcery or witchcraft, when a Papua New Guinean believes that something that a structure or institution has done is morally wrong or unbeneficial to them, they cannot act against the structure or institution itself. They will sometimes accuse a figurehead instead. However, there is a significant social distance between a student and the Vice Chancellor at University, or a voter and the Prime Minister. At times there is social distance between a voter and an MP, although this is not always the case. Instead, they must try to make themselves visible to the institution by claiming corruption.

Students had internalised the message that they were the next generation of leaders in their country, that education was the way forward for development, and that they were "agents of development" (Syndicus 2018:22). As persons in relationships with other persons around them and future obligations to those people, students felt that the actions that university management were taking, and their use of funds did not fulfil the promises that they had internalised about what a university education would do for them. They expected that with a university education, they could achieve a higher status and a stable job that pays fortnightly (Syndicus 2018:12). One of my survey participants mentioned, the "main reason why we are studying here at University of Goroka [is] to be [the] wealthiest person ever". As with Samuel and his father, the future of a student was hopefully filled with the promise of wealth and status that can be harvested, and hopefully a student may begin to reciprocate back to those wantoks who supported them over the years. However, this future is contingent on the university providing what the students and their communities believe they will

provide. Students feel that if they put in the work for their degree, if they pay their fees, the university should provide facilities and academics who will help deliver on this promise. This is a reciprocal relationship, and one where students want to be seen as "agents in their own right", with a vantage point where they can see the obligations they have to their communities. The morality of students is based on their understanding of personhood and their obligations to their relatives and it is set in a landscape where students imagine their future wealth and status based on the rhetoric that they are future leaders and agents of development.

Syndicus (2018:214, cf. Ballard 1977, Howie-Willis 1980, Meek 1982) points out that since independence in 1975, universities in PNG have seen their funding decreased significantly because it is difficult to explain why government funds should benefit the few students who go on to tertiary education rather than other public services. The University of Goroka introduced increases to school fees, boarding fees, and meal fees in 2016 in order to cover financial shortfall. But, despite paying more money, students saw little change happen in their facilities or in the level of teaching, in fact, the facilities worsened (Syndicus 2018:217).

In James Carrier's 2018 clarification of the term 'moral economy', he distinguishes between two ways to interpret the phrase; it used to describe both an economic activity that stems from a morality, and it is also the social context that shapes the activity. In the first interpretation, the word 'moral' is used to express that an act is good or right, or further, it can be

> used descriptively, to refer to any act motivated by a transcendent value that a person holds, though this descriptive use seems to be associated more with 'morality' than with 'moral'. What makes that value transcendent is that it is not simply utilitarian but *is related to what that person sees as a better world, whether envisaged in the future or remem-bered from the past*. (Carrier 2018:22 emphasis added)

Carrier adds to his definition of the moral by including not just the values that one places on an act but also the obligations a person has that come from relationships (2018:24). He states that "to call an act moral…is to point not only to the obligation that it expresses, but to its basis, the relationship between the actor and someone else" (2018:23-24). The obligations that people have to each other are affected by their circumstances, which then affect the way that people carry out the obligations (Carrier 2018:26). Citing Thompson (1976), Carrier uses the example of a baker who has to suddenly pay more for ingredients, and who then cannot sell bread for what other people think is a fair price; the relationship between the baker and the customer then changes because of the social context from which the relationship arises (2018:26).

From the perspective of a student, a Vice-Chancellor who claims that students are clients or customers is denying the moral aspect of the relationship between student and university; they are denied the ability to be agents in their own right who have an ongoing relationship with the institution. In James Scott's analysis of the moral economy, he describes the difference in the relationship between a passing transaction, like one in a store like the VC described, to the relationship between a landlord and tenant, who have ongoing interactions (1976). He says that the "the key element of evaluation is the ratio of services he [the tenant] receives to services he provides" (1976:171). Carrier explains that in a store transaction for the most part a customer and clerk have a purely economic relationship that ends once the transaction is over. In a landlord and tenant relationship, or in a student and university relationship, the relationship is not reducible to what is transacted [i.e. the fees]. The transaction does not end the relationship, it strengthens it (Carrier 2018:25).

So, students faced yearly fee increases with little infrastructural or academic development to show for the money, and they felt that the "perceived consistent infrastructural demise" had to do with corruption from inside the university (2018:213). This

was the same kind of managerial corruption that some of my interlocutors claimed took place to fund the university dormitories and to keep students who could not afford the facilities out. The lack of facilities has to do with the university's failure to provide the services that will aid the students to envisage and implement a better world; it is a failure to reciprocate in a moral economy.

From the vantage point of a student, the University acted in a way that was disadvantageous to them and their relationships. For students, an education is a gift given to them through the financial assistance of their relatives — a gift that is only fully realised upon graduation. However, the university views students in terms of a commodity relationship. From the management perspective, the university is a modern institution and the students needed to learn and appreciate the way it functions (Syndicus 2018:21-22). Accusations of corruption were more to do with this struggle between individuals and institutions, and the moralisation of how an institution is using wealth. Because morality is socially contingent, when something is perceived to be immoral, like the use of university funds to provide housing for wealthy students and not allow other, less wealthy students in, it can be perceived to be corrupt. For students who have the weight of community obligations and expectations on them, the imagined future of wealth and status could be put at risk by an institution that does not have the same moral obligations towards students as students do towards their communities and wantoks who have helped them in their journey. However, students do not perceive a difference in moral obligation, instead they see a moral corruption. The claim of corruption based on misuse of wealth, in this case, a university budget, is about the perspective that one person has in relationship to the institution making the decision about what to do with wealth, and about how people conceptualise their agency in relationship to structures. The conflicting perspectives between students and the universities with which they engage feed into local understandings of corruption.

Conclusion

> Those people are highly respected and [we] treat them well because wealth is basically one thing people of Papua New Guinea are looking and working for all of their lives, this is the main reason why we are studying here at University of Goroka, to be wealthiest person ever.

This first year hospitality student captures how students and their families idealise a university education, and how many staff and students think about wealth. Her lofty goal to become the wealthiest person ever is similar to the goal of Prime Minister James Marape for Papua New Guinea to become the "richest black Christian nation". Students study at the university in order to gain education, wealth, respect from their families and communities, and to become agents of development in their communities and for their nation. In this thesis I have discussed how staff and students perceive the ways that wealth is used and seen on bodies at the University of Goroka; how wealth is distinct from money; how wealth and aspirations of future wealth factor into familial and relational connections; and how people make moral judgements about relationships based on the use or perceived misuse of wealth. As I mentioned in the introduction, I have structured the themes to move outward from the body, and now to conclude, I will work my way back through my themes from a discussion of individuals and institutions, to relationships, to ideas, and towards the body.

The way that students imagine their futures hinges on their moralities: how they view the past, how they act as agents in relation to people and structures, how they interact as relational persons, and how they moralise their and other people's actions. How students moralise the way institutions use wealth is particularly interesting in a modern, and moral economy. When students believe themselves to be "agents of development" for their communities and the next generation of leaders and MPs, they feel it is their duty to denounce what they perceive to be corruption (Syndicus 2018:22). They also believe they had moral reasons to 'give back' or reciprocate back to their relatives who supported their

educations. Students evaluate the actions of the University based on their experience and history transacting with others and the University. They evaluate actions based on the moral values that are the context for their actions, the financial support they are given, the reciprocal nature of relationships, and the agency of individuals in those relationships (Carrier 2018:18; Syndicus 2018:22). They also evaluate actions based on the moral values that arose from the activity of going to university itself, and the futures that they imagined based on what they would do with an education (Carrier 2018:18). For students, an education is a gift given to them through the financial assistance of their relatives — a gift that is only fully realised upon graduation. However, the university views students in terms of a commodity relationship. From the management perspective, the university is a modern institution and the students needed to learn and appreciate the way it functions (Syndicus 2018:21-22). Both their belief in going to university to activate change in their communities and governments, and their choices to strike against the university were indicative of a moral economy.

Whether a use of wealth is illegal or not is not the point of an accusation of corruption, it is about the morality of the action. An accusation of corruption is a distinctly modern accusation, tied in with ideas about how people use monetary wealth, how Western institutions like universities or governments use wealth, and how this relates to agency and obligation. Like Grant Walton (2013:61-69), I argue that scholars need to reframe debates about corruption in Papua New Guinea away from legal and political definitons, and more towards ideas about morality. Even with ideas and structures from western institutions, or even within modern ideas of relationality, wealth and the aspirations of students are tied to their relationships and histories with other people.

The wantok system is also part of the moral economy; it is the moral basis for future actions because it is the history of past actions, and life is constantly reproduced by being

lived, based on the past and affecting the future (Gross 1998:81). The way that students imagine their futures hinges on the past, how they act as agents, how they interact as relational persons, and how they moralise their actions. The wantok system is a way of moralising actions based on the history of reciprocity that so many Papua New Guineans engage in with their wantoks.

As Strathern (1988:220) suggests, what is exchanged in wantok relationships works as both "the cause of a relation as well as its effect". The objects that are circulated via gift exchange in particular relations then become objects which express that relationship (Strathern 1988:220). An object that expresses a relationship is an object that defines a relationship's past (there was an object to establish the relationship); the present (in the exchange based on a relationship); and the future (in the continuation of the exchange – another object is exchanged back). Several of my friends and interlocutors talked about how the wantok system functions as a support system, but as wage earners and future wage earners, the obligations of the wantok system are also a big part of their futures. Depending on a person's position and perspective, the wantok system would have positive or negative benefits therefore, people evaluate the wantok system in multiple and sometimes overlapping ways.

Students and staff at the University of Goroka desire more money and the lifestyle that a lot of money can afford, but are also apprehensive about having money and the obligations that this brings, such as those that they may encounter in the wantok system. Students believe that a university education will bring them wealth, in all kinds of ways, not just monetarily. This became apparent to me when I asked about what wealth is, and what a wealthy person would look like. While other money-making activities like table selling are very profitable, they are not as prestigious as getting a job as a teacher or government official, which is the goal of many students. The difference between these two jobs, the table

seller who makes more money versus the university educated teacher who has more respect, is indicative of the difference with staff and students' perceptions between wealth and money. To some degree, the meanings that students placed on working class jobs were a justification for their long stay at university. These meanings are based on a desire to develop their communities, to gain a stable job, and to become wealthy in the future (Syndicus 2018:22).

> "It's about a person's livelihood, how they sustain themselves in terms of everyday living. It's all aspects of life. Not specifically one thing;" – returning Nursing student from Goroka

Despite the fact that table sellers probably made more money than some of the lecturers at a university, the money that they make does not mean that they are wealthy in the eyes of a student, and a wealthy person with an education and a working class job did not necessarily make the same amount of money as someone without those attributes.

As I mention in Chapter 2, the goal of possessing wealth has led some scholars to argue for a more possessive individualism in Papua New Guinea. Martin (2007:286) argues that some people, often labelled as "big shots," try to constitute themselves as a possessive individual, but the "hegemonic scope" of the possessive individual is "not readily accepted by everyone in every social context". He goes on to suggest that "those seeking to constitute themselves as such have to fight hard to resist the claims of others on what they seek to present as being their own capacities" (2007:286). Many of my interlocutors easily see the impact of others on one person's successes, so removing oneself from this view would be incredibly difficult. This is because people are made up of the people they are in relationship with. Modernity means that transactions and interactions change, when ideas and structures from different societies come into contact with other ideas and structures of other societies, but they have not changed to such a degree that people have become solely responsible for

their own lives and possessions. Instead, staff and students presented me with many different understandings of wealth, and although some ideas about wealth related to personal and material wealth, their ideas were firmly tied to how they view personhood, agency, and morality. Wealth can be "how we make claims on the future in the present", and this ties into ideas of morality because actions are deemed moral or immoral based on a history of interactions, where "each transaction builds on those before it, and provides the base for future transactions" and "from this emerge appropriate ways to act and transact" (Sharp 2019:184 cf Carrier 2018).

A student being at university is a result of a history of relationships, and it is justified with a moral outcome of the student gaining wealth and employment in order to give back to their communities. Students, staff, and their families see the university as a site not only of education but of modernity, and through gaining an education students can become "agents of development" who give back to their families and communities based on those relationships that got them there (Syndicus 2018:22). People's histories are tied to their bodies and to the decorations they put on their bodies, because of the way people are made up of other persons. Clothing is a decoration that connects the inner self to the physical appearance. People read and realise the relationships of a student in a moral economy on their bodies, in the same way that they read and realise wealth and relationships on the bodies of foreigners, or on the bodies of women. Clothing is an extension of the person and all the other persons who make up a student, it is a site of decoration, and an arena to indicate wealth and success, not only by being at a University, but also pointing towards their potential future success as a wage earner. These kinds of outfits are associated with modernity, by which I mean a dialectical process where ideas and structures from different societies come into contact with other ideas and structures of other societies. Now the person, whom Strathern establishes as made up of other persons, is a continuous being, but the agent

acts in one moment. Strathern defines an agent as "one who *from his or her own vantage point acts with another's in mind and that others may in fact coerce the agent into so acting*" (1988:272, original emphasis).

The student is made up of all the actions of others, and that makes them a specific person, unique from anyone else. Agents are subjects who act in one moment, out of the relationships that form their person, or "in the knowledge of his or her own constitution as a person in the regard of others" (Strathern 1988:275, emphasis removed). A person reveals their agency when they act on a relationship, when they give a gift or perform an action from their vantage point with another person in mind. Because a person is a "living commemoration of the actions which produced it," a Papua New Guinean can look at a student who wears fashionable clothes and see the family who produced the person and see the person who is enacting the modern in the present, who is projecting a future where their success will reflect back towards the family (Strathern 1988:302).

In this thesis I have demonstrated that how people at the University of Goroka think about wealth is tied to how they view themselves, the people they interact with, and the institutions that they encounter. The way people evaluate wealth and the use of wealth relates to the moral values that develop over time, because the history of interactions between people to do with wealth establishes the appropriate ways to act and transact, and the basis for future transactions. This is also the reason that students are at university trying to gain an education, and why they must consider their future relationships with people when they think about the wealth that they claim in the present, as students at a modern institution, but for their futures. If Papua New Guineans owe their persons to relationships, and thus to other persons, most Papua New Guineans can look at a university student and see their past and present relationships and the future obligations that they have to reciprocate wealth (Strathern 1988:338).

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