

Rural Women and Everyday Resistance to
Structural Adjustment in Melanesia

by

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ABSTRACT

The context for this thesis is conflict between indigenous peoples and foreign aid agencies over land 'mobilisation' in Melanesia. The thesis considers whether or not the everyday activities of rural women can be shown to constitute and contribute to resistance to 'development' bank structural adjustment. The research was conducted in Ambrym, Vanuatu, with the permission of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. The study uses feminist, decolonising methodology, and qualitative methods including five months of community-based research and interviews conducted in Bislama. The findings highlight how the rural women engage in daily activities that maintain their connections with their land and strengthen communal value systems, thus resisting structural adjustment. Also featured are tensions between the women's desires to hold on to the land and to access perceived benefits from the modern cash economy. The thesis concludes by making a case for the need to incorporate everyday resistance into analyses of conflict situations.

Supervisor: Dr. M. Reitsma-Street, (Studies in Policy and Practice)

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GLOSSARY

Bislama: the Vanuatu dialect of Melanesian Pidgin (also called Neo-Melanesian); and one of the three official national languages of Vanuatu, the other two being English and French.

kastom: the Bislama word meaning traditional political, social, religious, and economic structures, and their associated practices, systems of knowledge, and material items. (This definition was extracted from the *Vanuatu Cultural Research Policy*.)

laplap: traditional Vanuatu dish; grated root crops or bananas mixed with coconut milk and sometimes with meat or fish added and sometimes also surrounded by local cabbage, which is wrapped in large leaves and cooked on hot stones.

Ni-Vanuatu: a citizen of the Republic of Vanuatu as defined by the Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu.

tamtam: a slitgong drum that stands upright in the ground and is traditionally beaten for ritual purposes.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The context for this thesis is conflict between indigenous peoples and the 'development' banks in the Melanesian nations of Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu located in the southwest Pacific. These are two of the last countries in the world where the people who have built an intimate relationship with the land over many generations still control its use. However, the World Bank / International Monetary Fund (WB/IMF), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and other agencies promoting foreign aid and investment in the region view customary communal control of land and traditional subsistence-based economies as impediments to 'development'. These agencies have imposed economic and public policy reform programs, usually referred to as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), which call for the registration of individualised land titles under centralised state control to make it easier for companies, especially foreign ones, to control land. SAPs also promote cash cropping and other forms of wage labour rather than subsistence.

Melanesian peoples have not passively accepted attempts by the 'development' agencies to enclose their land and labour. In Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, people have undertaken awareness and petition campaigns and have demonstrated in opposition to structural adjustment. Police repression of demonstrations in Papua New Guinea in 2001 left four people dead and 17 others injured. Yet in both countries local governments have continued to allow the structural adjustment programs to move ahead. In the context of such blatant dismissal of indigenous opposition to 'development' bank programming, how can the people continue to resist, or how might they resist in more effective ways? Furthermore, what might be learned by looking more specifically at the contributions women make to the resistance?

This thesis examines the contributions of rural women to the movement and finds a myriad of everyday forms of resistance. Despite the vital contributions of these less oppositional, more female forms of everyday resistance, such resistance is both less acknowledged and a less critically conscious engagement. When people talk, theorise, or write news stories about the resistance to structural adjustment and other forms of corporate globalisation in Melanesia, they tend to focus on the awareness, advocacy, and protest movement. Movement leaders, mostly men, are quoted in the newspaper, but the vital contributions of their mothers, sisters, and wives in the rural areas are not mentioned. It follows that most people in Melanesia are unaware of how

the subsistence sector comprises a crucial component of the overall resistance movement by attending to the daily activities associated with provisioning and cultural continuity.

In 2001, a student leader of the anti-structural adjustment movement in Papua New Guinea spoke of social injustice and a vow to struggle for government accountability (personal email, 7 September 2001). The student went on to cite the fact that “we have the entire rural masses behind us” as a major strength of the social movement. But how true is this? That is, what proportion of the rural masses, especially the women, actually support or are even aware of the social movement? And more importantly, what is concealed by framing the resistance in this way? Have this and other urban activists in Melanesia ever considered that perhaps the reverse is more true – that is, that public protest movements are actually ‘behind’ the subsistence sector which is staging its own forms of daily resistance? It becomes clear that in Melanesia today there are two complementary forms or spheres of resistance to corporate globalisation, with one more male form being privileged over another more female form in terms of awareness and acknowledgment of the crucial contributions that it makes. Given continuing conflict between the ‘development’ banks and civil society in Melanesia, and a predominant focus in the media and academic literature on the popular education and protest movement, this thesis examines other potential forms and expressions of resistance – that is, I consider how the everyday activities of rural women fit into the conflict and whether or not they can be shown to constitute and contribute to resistance to structural adjustment and other forms of corporate globalisation.

I came to this research project after over a decade of solidarity work with people’s organisations in the Pacific, and with experience, practical knowledge, and files of participant observation data gathered during over six years living and working in Papua New Guinea. In 1990, I worked with the South Pacific Peoples Foundation (SPPF) of Canada – a non-government organisation which does development education and advocacy on contemporary issues in the Pacific, as well as cooperative project work with Pacific Island organisations – compiling a fact-sheet on ‘Colonialism and Militarism in the Pacific’. From 1991 to 1993, I was Associate-Director of the Indonesia-Canada Research Project, which worked cooperatively with a West Papuan people’s organisation to investigate the impacts of Canadian involvement on indigenous peoples and the environment in West Papua (the western side of the island of New Guinea). During my first three years in Papua New Guinea, I worked with a women’s group in the rural Highlands, and then the Melanesian Environment Foundation and the National Research Institute in the national capital, Port Moresby. In 1996, I moved to live and work in a rural village on Lou

Island in Manus Province in the New Guinea Islands region. Based there, I worked as a subsistence farmer and as volunteer administration officer and trainer for a community-based group which was doing environmental and social justice awareness in Manus. From 1999 through 2001, I served as Board Secretary for the Pacific Peoples Partnership (PPP, formerly SPPF), in Victoria, B.C., Canada. Before arriving at my research site in Vanuatu, I was already fluent in Melanesian Pidgin (also referred to as Neo-Melanesian). Furthermore, I already had a good understanding of many aspects of Melanesian culture, which facilitated the gathering and interpretation of research data.

This thesis is presented in six chapters. Chapter II provides a review of the relevant literature as well as a rationale for conducting the research. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the resistance to structural adjustment in Melanesia. Following this is an overview of meanings and perceptions of land in Melanesia and an introduction to the debates over 'mobilisation' of land for 'development'. The chapter then reviews the relevant literature on resistance, comparing advocacy and protest activities with less public, less oppositional everyday forms of resistance. Next, everyday forms of resistance are examined in the context of Melanesia, shedding light on the contributions rural women make to the resistance against corporate globalisation. Women and their daily lives are placed at the centre of the thinking in order to spotlight a form of resistance based on the life-sustaining daily labours of women. The chapter goes on to look in more depth at the relationships between the daily lives of rural Melanesian women, subsistence, and dynamics and impacts of globalisation. The chapter ends with a presentation of the research rationale – that is, an overview of the need for a focus on rural women and dailiness in an analysis of resistance to structural adjustment and other forms of corporate globalisation in Melanesia – and a statement of the two central research questions.

Chapter III presents the research methodology, methods, and ethics. The chapter starts with an overview of the feminist, decolonising research methodology. I then describe my relationship, as researcher, with the region, the issues, and the research process. A description of the research site is followed by an overview of the host organisations and their requirements. The chapter then presents the women who participated actively in the research, and discusses sampling issues as well. Following this, research project ethics are reviewed, including university requirements, and community and individual consent to the project. The chapter next presents the research design, reviewing the research methods and process. Issues that arose while doing the

research are also discussed, including bias and constraints that affected data gathering. The chapter ends with a discussion of the data analysis process.

Chapter IV presents the research findings in relation to the first research question: What do rural women in Melanesia do in their everyday lives, particularly those activities that work to maintain traditional land-based ways of life and communal value systems, and how do the women perceive, understand, and value these activities? The chapter outlines categories and patterns of women's work and activity as well as women's perceptions of their work. Chapter V goes deeper into answering the first research question and also answers the second research question: Has the popular education and protest movement regarding structural adjustment affected the women's daily activities or their perceptions of what they do? The chapter examines women's priorities, and the impacts of changes including those associated with colonisation and globalisation. The chapter also examines and discusses tensions and contradictions within the data. Chapter VI links the research findings and the relevant theory on resistance and conflict transformation. The chapter presents various approaches to women's everyday resistance in rural Melanesia, and makes a case for the need to incorporate everyday resistance into analyses of conflict situations.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH RATIONALE

This chapter begins with a brief history of the resistance to 'development bank' structural adjustment programming in the Southwest Pacific region of Melanesia. The more specific focus is on indigenous resistance to the land reform initiatives of the structural adjustment programs in the two Melanesian countries of Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. Following is a discussion of meanings and perceptions of land in Melanesia, including the contrasting perceptions of land as inalienable versus commodifiable. This section then takes a closer look at the conflict over development bank 'land mobilisation' programs, reviewing the literature on the purported need for 'land reform' versus the strengths of the status quo, that is, customary communal land tenure systems. The section ends with an overview of arguments for and against land registration and codification of land laws, including examples of impacts of such land reforms in other countries. The focus of the next section is social movements and resistance. Specifically, more public, active, oppositional kinds of resistance are contrasted and compared with everyday forms of less openly adversarial resistance. Women and their daily lives are then placed at the centre of the thinking in order to spotlight a form of resistance based on the life-sustaining daily labours of women. Also discussed is the need to assess the methods and processes of resistance of any particular group or individual from the standpoint of the local culture.

Having provided some historical context to the conflict as well as an overview of relevant resistance theory, the chapter identifies and outlines two contrasting forms of resistance to the neocolonialism of development bank structural adjustment in Melanesia: an awareness, advocacy, and protest movement; and everyday forms of resistance comprised by the daily life-sustaining activities of people, especially women, in the subsistence sector. Each form of resistance is discussed and the relationship between the two forms of resistance is analysed. The overview of the awareness, advocacy, and protest movement looks at how and why activists in Melanesia have challenged development bank thinking and programming. Light is then shed on the limits of this more public movement, particularly the limited participation of women, and on how women may or may not resist in their own ways. The next section goes on to look in more depth at the relationships between the daily lives of rural Melanesian women, subsistence, and dynamics and impacts of globalisation. Various authors discuss how colonisation and missionisation have undermined women's traditional spheres of power and influence throughout Melanesia. This section also examines the value systems of the dominant culture of globalisation which separate economic and social issues and concludes with an overview of the Subsistence

Perspective – a theoretical perspective which brings economics, social issues, and the natural environment back together. This discussion concludes with a focus on rural women in Melanesia and their daily life-sustaining labours. The chapter then ends with a presentation of the research rationale – that is, an overview of the need for a focus on rural women and dailiness in an analysis of resistance to structural adjustment and other forms of corporate globalisation in Melanesia.

A Brief History of the Resistance to Structural Adjustment in Melanesia

The three independent nations of Melanesia – Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea (PNG) – are culturally and linguistically the most diverse nations in the world with more than 1000 distinct languages spoken. They are also the last countries in the world where the people who have built an intimate relationship with the land over many generations still control its use. Because of a relatively short and superficial history of European invasion and colonisation, over 90 percent of the land and 80 percent of the labour in these countries remains under the traditional clan-based regime (Bonnemaison 1981, 17; Faraclas 2001b; Larmour 1998, 27). This system provides the people with complete food, housing, employment, and other forms of social security, and protects them from the artificial scarcities created by the cash economy (Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies 1999, 145-7; Faraclas 2001a, 75). However, the World Bank / International Monetary Fund (WB/IMF), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and other agencies promoting foreign aid and investment in the region view self-reliant subsistence¹ and customary communal control of land² as impediments to ‘development’ (ADB 2002; Qureshi 1988, 20; World Bank 2000a). These agencies have imposed economic and public policy reform programs,

¹ The term ‘subsistence’ is used in this thesis to refer to self- and community-provisioning activities that take place within the non-cash economy.

² ‘Customary communal control of land’ refers to control via customary communal systems of land tenure which still operate in most parts of rural Melanesia. There are as many specific systems of customary land tenure in Melanesia as there are languages and cultural groups, precluding a detailed description of the particulars of these systems in the context of this thesis. What can be generalised is that while these communal systems of land tenure comprise relationships between nuclear families and smaller pieces of land within larger extended families or clans and larger sections of land, the communal aspect / relationship is the key concept here as it is this aspect which ‘development’ bank policy seeks to eliminate due to the difficulty foreign investors perceive in having to negotiate with a clan rather than just one individual ‘landowner’. It might also be generalised that while the borders of a clan’s land tend to be more fixed, the land that a nuclear family works on tends to be more changeable due to various factors such as the need to let land lie fallow every few years, to a couple having numerous offspring or no offspring, or to allowing other relatives to have temporary use rights to a piece of land.

usually referred to as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). SAPs call for the registration of individualised land titles under centralised state control to make it easier for companies, especially foreign ones, to control land. SAPs also promote cash cropping and other forms of wage labour rather than subsistence (ABC Radio Australia News 2003; ADB 2004; ADB 2003c; World Bank 2000a).

Melanesian peoples have not passively accepted attempts by the 'development' agencies to enclose their land and labour. In Papua New Guinea, for example, when the WB/IMF first tried to implement land registration in 1995, there was a ground-swell of popular opposition which culminated in a protest march to parliament. Following this strong show of popular opposition the government withdrew the *Land Mobilisation Bill*, but land reform remained a high priority for the WB/IMF. In 2001, students, social justice advocacy groups, and other members of civil society became aware that the WB/IMF was implementing a privatisation program whereby national assets were being sold off to private, mostly foreign, companies. Furthermore, land 'mobilisation' was on the agenda again. A coalition of demonstrators staged a peaceful protest on the steps of Parliament House in June 2001. When the demonstrators were still there a week later, the police used tear gas and gunshots to disburse them, which led some students to vent their frustrations by burning two government vehicles. The authorities retaliated by bringing in a mobile police squad which stormed the university campus leaving four people dead and 17 others injured (PNG Post Courier 2001a). Despite this national tragedy the WB/IMF and the 'pro-bank' government in power at the time continued to move ahead with the 'structural adjustments'. A couple of months later the government announced it "would continue with the privatisation program, using the receipts to retire debt" (PNG Post Courier 2001b).

In the nation of Vanuatu, the people campaigned so effectively against the WB/IMF and structural adjustment in the 1990s that agencies opted to work through the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and to use the terms 'Comprehensive Reform' and 'Land Use Planning' rather than 'structural adjustment' and 'land reform' or 'land mobilisation' (Faraclas 2001b). Several new land laws had already been passed which erode traditional power over land (Simo 2004). The Comprehensive Reform Program (CRP) imposed in Vanuatu in 1997 aims at "further opening up the economy to attract direct foreign investment" (ADB 1998). According to ni-Vanuatu³ economist, John Salong,

³ Ni-Vanuatu: an expression referring to the indigenous citizens of the Republic of Vanuatu.

“CRP is simply a clever use of words and process by agents of the ADB to recolonise the people, lands, and resources of Vanuatu. The CRP should be known as the Complete Recolonisation Program.” (1998, 18)

In 1999, a national petition with over 6,000 signatures, nearly ten percent of the adult population, was handed to the government demanding an end to the Comprehensive Reform Program (CRP). Some of the main organisers of the petition campaign were jailed and beaten by the police in Luganville town on Santo Island.

More recently in Vanuatu, land ‘mobilisation’ is being pushed through the *Customary Land Tribunal Act (2001)*, which was sanctioned by the CRP to settle land disputes that foreign advisors say have hindered economic development in the country (Tarere 2003). The *Customary Land Tribunal Act* employs a deceptively clever use of words aimed at confusing and co-opting the people and their leaders. The findings of a study done by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre show that most people confuse the term ‘tribunal’ with ‘tribe’. Coupled with the use of the term ‘customary’, the majority of the population assume this latest land reform scheme was initiated in the best interest of ‘customary tribes’ (Simo 2004). Some communities, however, are not misled so easily. On Tanna Island in Vanuatu, most chiefs are opposed to the *Customary Land Tribunal Act* and have raised awareness on Tanna and elsewhere about the potential negative impacts of the new law. In the words of Chief Ringiau of Tanna,

“The set up of the Land Tribunals is a scam, cleverly designed by foreign powers to facilitate registration and recolonisation of land. . . The thing the government is trying to sell to us will only make us lose our customs and strengthen our dependency on money, foreigners, and their ideologies. It will destroy our communal way of life and reliance on our land for survival.” (Tarere 2003)

Meanwhile, local government officials are pressured to accept the new law. Local communities that have opposed the law or have been slow to implement it due to lack of awareness or understanding of the implementation process have been threatened by Lands Department officers with fines or imprisonment (Toa 2003; Simo 2004).

In the context of such blatant dismissal of indigenous opposition to ‘development’ bank structural adjustment, how can the people continue to resist, or how might they resist in more effective ways? Furthermore, what might be learned by looking more specifically at the contributions women make to the resistance? As a feminist scholar who supports the right of the indigenous people to maintain local control of their means of production, I am interested in

working together with people, especially women, to generate possible answers to such questions so that resistance movements and their members might learn and gain strength from past experiences. I am also interested in the potential for such a collective reflective process to shed light on possible ways of balancing power and transforming the conflicts in Melanesia between the 'development' banks, the national governments, and the people in a peaceful way (see Lederach 1995, 12-13).

Land in Melanesia: Perceptions and Contentions

Meanings and Perceptions of Land in Melanesia

“For ni-Vanuatu, land is more than simply a commodity to be used for gain and to be disposed of when it has been stripped of its value. Land is an intrinsic part of themselves and their whole being. Land to ni-Vanuatu is what a mother is to a baby.”

This statement made by the Minister for Lands, Sethy Regenvanu, in 1980 – the year that Vanuatu won its national independence⁴ – highlights the traditionally inalienable, non-commodifiable nature of the Melanesian relationship with land (Regenvanu 2003). For Melanesian people, land is a source of identity, spirituality, knowledge, and all basic needs (Bolton 2003, 71; Samana 1988, 17; Van Trease 1987, 3). People are born belonging to a particular place – a village in a province in one of the Melanesian nations – and when they die, the bodies of most Melanesian people are still returned to their original villages for burial. Despite the conversion of most Melanesian people to Christianity, most people still also believe in a form of ancestor worship based on the reverence they hold for their ancestors who are buried in the land (Bonnemaison 1981, 18; Jolly 1991, 67; Samana 1988, 17). The vital importance of land for Melanesian communities was articulated by French cultural anthropologist, Joel Bonnemaison, as follows: “The identity between the clan and its territory is probably the central fact of Melanesian culture. The tie to the land is security in a changing world; it is cultural identity and the basis of new wealth” (1981, 23).

Papua New Guinean political scientist and former Ambassador to the United Nations, Utula Samana, highlights the inalienable nature and meaning of land in Melanesia:

⁴ Vanuatu was subject to colonisation by both the British and the French, including administration by the Anglo-French Condominium government, from the late 1800s until Independence in 1980.

“In terms of Melanesian attitudes, land is not an economic item: it is a form of social being. When you die you go back to your land; you are buried back in your land. There is a spiritual bond between the Melanesian people and the land; land is your identity. So it is important that the language of land is not land as a commodity, but land as a total concept of human existence.” (1988, 17)

In his synopsis of the various opinions and perspectives put forward at a symposium on land and development held in Papua New Guinea in 2001, Michel Rynkiewich stated three key correlations: land is life; land is relationships; and land is identity (2002b, 249-250). He expressed the inalienable connections between land, community, and relationships as follows:

“Land does not exist as a commodity, an entity set apart from all others. Land exists in relationships, in community. All land exists in a web of specific histories, stories, rights and obligations. Land is interwoven into the cognitive processes of the people, it is part of thinking and being in community. In order to understand land, one must understand the ways in which people are obligated to each other.” (2002b, 250)

In Melanesia, there are as many ways of organising access to land as there are cultures and languages. While some areas trace descent patrilineally and others trace descent matrilineally (Jolly 1991, 67), still others exhibit a mix of patrilineal and matrilineal traditions (Sparks-Ngege 2000). Even in matrilineal areas, however, it is often men – women’s brothers – who play the central role in the distribution of land (Kenneth and Silas 1986, 73). Furthermore, in patrilineal areas, women sometimes assume custodial rights to land when there are no male heirs. Women are important in terms of providing links through which husbands, sons, brothers, and other male relatives might gain use rights to land (Van Trease 1987, 4). In all cases, in rural Melanesia while some clans may control more land than others, the central importance of relationships, in addition to cultural norms of redistribution, reciprocity, and generosity, have continued to function to such an extent that even today everyone has access to enough land to provide food and other basic needs for her/his family (Rodman 1987, 163; Nekitel 2002, 57; Simo 2004).

While globalisation and modernisation have led to changes in perceptions toward land, Melanesia is still a place where most people feel connected to their ancestral land. In 2001, at a conference held at the University of the South Pacific, Hilda Motarilavao Lini, a ni-Vanuatu woman who was an instrumental figure in Vanuatu’s struggle for national independence and a former Member of Parliament said,

“As Pacific Islanders we do not need to be reminded of the importance of land being our heritage and how it encompasses all our spiritual connections and how it links us to our past and future.” (Goundar and Waqa 2001)

In 2004, an expatriate director of a Vanuatu-based non-government organisation (NGO) solicited the views of a Vanuatu-focused email list-serve regarding the meaning and importance of land for ni-Vanuatu youth. He explained that research done by his NGO had shown that the number of young people born and raised in town who had never visited their ancestral homelands was increasing. He asked: “Would the readers of this site then agree that stressing the importance of land is no longer relevant for many of the generation of 0 to 20 years and that authorities have to seek other ways of including youth in society if they are not to feel increasingly alienated?” The feedback received rejects the notion that land was of decreasing importance for the younger generation, regardless of their situation. Salong talks about the continuing Melanesian custom of ‘rooting’ people by burying or ‘planting’ the placentas and umbilical cords of new-born babies in their ancestral lands. He explains that other indigenous groups have similar traditional practices, and quotes a Canadian First Nations elder as follows:

“The problem with young people these days is that their mothers birth them in hospitals and their mothers don’t care [about the traditional practices]. When they burn up their placentas and umbilical cords in incinerators, their children’s connections go up in smoke. The children become jet setters, looking for a mother to give them shelter, nourishment and comfort. . . . When their placentas and umbilical cords are put in garbage cans and taken to the tip, is it a wonder that insecurity, strife, and mental illness are becoming the norm?” (Salong 2004)

Ralph Regenvanu, the son of Sethy Regenvanu and Director of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, strongly opposes any idea that land is becoming less important or relevant for ni-Vanuatu youth:

“I think we all must continue to stress right to access and use of land for everyone – this is not only a customary right . . . but it is also a human right. The idea of people NOT having access to any land as one of their fundamental rights is a foundation of the present capitalist system and its inequalities. . . . The idea that we have to rent or buy land otherwise we don’t have any is a very recent thing in human history and we have to fight any idea that it may be a ‘truth’ of the way things are. We should be encouraging young people to question why they don’t have access to land anymore and why, for example, huge tracts of land around Vila that are perfectly livable are off limits to all but cows and coconut trees⁵.” (Regenvanu 2004)

⁵ ‘Cows and coconut trees’ refers to cattle ranches and coconut plantations controlled by big businesses.

Mathew Kalotiti, a 22-year old from Mangaliliu Village on Efate Island – a 20 minute drive from Port Vila town – lives in his village but is back and forth to town regularly. He recently secured his first paid job doing a short-term contract with a youth-focused community development organisation. Kalotiti stresses the need for parents as well as youth to remember the importance of land for future generations:

“I think we need to talk about land more, with the youth and with our parents too. Now many people from Efate, our parents, are selling their land. But they’re only thinking about the present, they’re not thinking about the future.” (personal communication, 26 May 2005)

Conflict over Land Mobilisation: Issues and Views

In July 2004, Helen Hughes, an Australian academic based at the Centre for Independent Studies, published a report on Papua New Guinea which claims that the country’s economic survival depends on individual land ownership. Hughes said that Papua New Guinea is on the brink of economic collapse and that recovery and growth are not possible while land remains communally owned (Radio New Zealand International 2004). Hughes analysed the Pacific as a whole in a subsequent report and argued for ‘growth-focused economic reforms’, including land registration:

“The economic reforms that are essential for growth are well known. Moving from communal land ownership to individual property rights, getting rid of barriers to business, eliminating protection, freeing up labour markets and downsizing and privatising the public sector are all needed if agricultural incomes and jobs are to be created and for governments to enforce law and order and maintain infrastructure.” (Hughes 2004)

Such views are anything but original. They echo the prescriptions pushed by the ‘development’ banks in Melanesia for decades, particularly since the late 1980s (ADB 1998; ADB 2004; Qureshi 1988, 20; World Bank 2000a; World Bank 2000b; World Bank Watcher 1994). Jones and McGavin (2001) argue that communal land tenure systems in Melanesia provide inadequate security for ‘development’ projects, including cash cropping, urban expansion, and mining. They also cite a weak state in Papua New Guinea as the main cause of the failure of land mobilisation programs, and suggest that ‘developers’ should consider “the formation of agreements for land mobilisation, in which the role of the state has been reduced in favour of a ‘bottom-up’ approach” (2001, 2); that is, side-step national and provincial governments and negotiate directly with customary landholders for access to land.

Patrick Matbob explains that the land and development issues symposium held in Papua New Guinea (PNG) in 2001 was “an attempt to highlight how culture can hinder progress in PNG largely because of land issues”. However, the book of papers from the symposium has been renamed ‘Culture *and* Progress’ largely because many presenters at the symposium “insisted that culture need not hinder progress in PNG” (Matbob 2002, 34). Francis Irara, from the PNG Department of Lands, says that it is incorrect to argue that customary lands in Melanesia are not registered. Irara stresses that the lands are registered, but through oral rather than written traditions:

“All lands held under customary tenure are REGISTERED, but unfortunately not in the form interested parties in a modern society such as banks would normally recognise. Local landowners know the boundaries of their land. They also know what their land rights are and the different activities that are and can be performed on the various parts of their land . . . The factor which distinguishes this mode of registration from other more commonly used methods is that ownership, including land boundaries and the rights held by individuals of the clan, is not recorded on paper.” (2002, 148)

With respect to Irara’s claim, Peter Vandergeest (1997) reminds us that most modern-day states no longer accept the legitimacy of oral traditions and instead require written state-sanctioned records of property rights:

“From the point of view of most states, property is not property unless it is communicated, recognised, recorded, and enforced by state agencies. Beginning at the end of the last century, states around the world began to claim not just the right to be the judge of what counted as property, but also the sole right to act on behalf of collectivities. . . In small communities, where people live for a long time, communication can take the form of oral or locally-meaningful markers . . . State officials being unfamiliar with particular situations rely on written forms of communication such as cadastral maps, a set of formal procedures, and state police or militaries for enforcement.” (1997, 5)

In his overview of the ‘human consequences’ of globalisation, Zygmunt Bauman (1998) stresses the central role of enclosing space or mapping and registering land in the modernisation process:

“One decisive aspect of the modernizing process was therefore the protracted war waged in the name of the reorganisation of space. The stake of the major battle in that war was the right to control the cartographic office. . . The space structure to emerge at the end of that space war was to be one perfectly legible for the state power and its agents, while remaining thoroughly immune to semantic processing by its users or victims – resistance to all ‘grass-roots’ interpretative initiatives which could yet saturate fragments of space with meanings unknown and illegible to the powers-that-be, and so make such fragments invulnerable to control from above.” (1998, 30-31)

Notably, Bauman talks in the past tense, as if all lands on earth have been mapped, registered, and enclosed, while in Melanesia the process is not yet complete and is the source of contention and conflict.

Enclosing People's Consciousness in Order to Enclose the Land

Where mapping and enclosing land are key steps in the process of 'modernisation' described by Bauman (1998, 30-31), enclosing people's consciousness and views on land is a key prerequisite to land enclosures. While the traditional Melanesian view of land as inalienable and non-commodifiable has helped to keep land in the hands of the indigenous landholders, the language and consciousness of land is changing in the face of corporate globalisation. Indigenous Melanesian languages have no word for 'landowner'; instead, these languages most often express the relationship between people and land in inalienable, familial terms, such as father, mother, or child of the land (Faraclas 2001b) or as the 'land owns the people' (Salong 2004). However, today, the impacts of the onslaught of corporate globalisation and its language are evident as more and more Melanesian people now refer to themselves as 'landowners', and in doing so accept a commoditised or semi-commoditised view of land. In 2003, a network of grassroots people and groups in Vanuatu published the *Pipol's Forum* newspaper, which focused on the issue of 'independence' and highlighted the danger of the increasing commoditisation of land in Melanesia:

"Land is dangerously regarded now as a commodity – something you can sell or lease. What this implies is that Independence or Sovereignty can be sold. Worse still, 'our land' becomes 'my land'. Individualism is spreading like wild fire, engulfing communal lifestyles our ancestors have been living for many thousands of years. . . Given our struggling economy the temptation to use land as an easy cash source is overwhelming." (Pipol's Forum 2003, 1)

Despite the apparent trend toward commoditisation and enclosure of land and consciousness in Melanesia, the process is far from complete and 90 percent of the land is still held under customary title. There are many who point to the strengths and benefits of the continued existence and resilience of customary communal systems of land tenure, from precluding landlessness to providing a range of social security (see Holzknicht 2002; Faraclas 2001a; Lakau 1995; Maclellan 2001; Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies 1999; Rynkiewich 2002b; Simo 2004; Sullivan 2002). Howard Van Trease (1987) points to the individual and community benefits afforded by the flexibility underlying customary communal systems of land tenure:

“Underlying the total structure [of traditional land tenure systems in Melanesia] is the implied notion of extreme flexibility, allowing for alternative solutions to almost any situation in which the overt rules of custom created undue obstruction for the individual in gaining access to the necessary land to enable him and his family to meet their daily needs.” (1987, 12)

Dorothy Kenneth and Henlyn Silas from Vanuatu also highlight the strength of the flexibility of customary law, arguing that, “Custom is a set of rules observed within a particular group. It does not have the same rigidity as law. Rather, custom is a way of life and much of its strength lies in its flexibility” (1986, 68).

Ron Crocombe (1995) explains that those who push for land registration claim that because of land disputes over the ‘right’ custom to apply in a particular case, such problems would be solved by ‘codifying custom’ – that is, standardising and writing it into law. Crocombe, however, points to the dangers of such codification:

“[Codification] freezes a fluid situation during a period of change. The code can be changed, or reinterpreted by the courts or leaders, but like all codes, it often gets frozen in an out-dated form which some people regard as ‘right’ for today just because it was ‘right’ for yesterday. Given the rate of change in the world, if it was ‘right’ for yesterday, it is likely to need adaptation to best serve the needs to today.” (1995, 12)

In the 1970s, Michel Rynkiewich researched the impacts of the codification of customary land tenure systems into law in the Marshall Islands in the northwest Pacific. Rynkiewich found that “the codification of the matrilineal laws of land tenure and succession to chieftainship eliminated the flexibility that was in the system” (2002a, 50). Based on this research as well as years of experience in Melanesia, Rynkiewich cautions against the codification of land laws in Melanesia:

“People are agents of their own destiny. There are always alternative narratives and alternative customs that can be followed to reach a desired end. But if custom is codified, there is no alternative but to accept the wrong man as a chief or the accumulation of too much land in one person’s hands. It would be wise neither to replace the Melanesian system of land tenure, nor to codify them in law.” (2002a, 50)

Rynkiewich feels that Melanesian people have been justified in being suspicious of calls to register land under individual titles, explaining that, “historically, colonisers have used land registration as a means of individualising land ownership and then wresting the land away from the owner” (Rynkiewich 2002a, 50). Rynkiewich cites the example of the Dawes Act, passed by the United States Congress in 1887 in order to break up communally-held native reservations into

individual 40 acre titles. The general public was told that such land reform would facilitate 'economic development' for natives through their participation in the mainstream American way of life, that is, farming. The real and hidden impetus was timber companies that wanted to log reservation lands while native leaders refused to sell. According to Rynkiewich, "If the land could be broken into small pieces and given to individuals, then the timber companies could knock them off one by one. And it happened just that way" (2002a, 50).

A 1998 review of the history of land law in colonial North Borneo highlights how British land law was imposed in combination with codifying aspects of indigenous customary law in an attempt to maximise the potential for the commercial exploitation of land.

"Native laws were selectively codified, simplified, and in many cases ignored, based on the political and economic agendas of the ruling elite. While some customary laws were supported in statutory laws, those hampering commercial exploitation of land were replaced with Western legal principles." (Doolittle 1998, 3)

Research regarding the impacts of land registration in Thailand found that World Bank promises of economic benefits for rural villagers were not realised. Instead, the 1986 Land Titling Project, for example, led to numerous negative developments including increased rates of land disputes and rural indebtedness, higher risk for small farmers of losing their land, and greater economic differences between rich and poor (Ganjanapan 1994, 609). In Papua New Guinea, where the process of land registration has only just begun, the Minister for Lands in 2002 admitted that most applications to register and/or lease land had triggered an increase in land disputes (Benjamin 2002, 99). In this context, it is not surprising that an international seminar on 'The Negative Impacts of World Bank Market-Based Land Reform Policy' held in Washington, D.C. in 2002 concluded that such policies had negative results:

"The privatisation of communal lands undercuts community strategies of survival, cultural cohesion, and mechanisms of cooperation, leading to greater impoverishment." (Vanuatu Trading Post 2003)

Social Movements and Resistance: Definitions and Debates

My passion for social justice concerns and my desire to affect positive social change motivate me to do this research. John Lofland (1996) says the desire to promote more effective social change is one of the main reasons people choose to study social movements: "By trying to

understand what movements have done right or wrong in the past, one hopes to become a more effective social movement participant, activist, advocate or advisor” (16).

Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance

William Carroll defines social movements as “agencies of transformative politics” which have been “the primary carriers of social justice throughout the modern era” (1996, 89). This kind of analysis – described by the feminist scholar, Petra Munro, as a “neo-Marxist understanding of resistance as public, active, and oppositional” (1998, 109) – is useful but is also limited. The limitation stems from the fact that not all resistance is public, active, or oppositional. Considering domination and resistance from the standpoint of various oppressed groups, particularly groups that may appear to be unorganised or even not resisting, brings to light other forms and expressions of resistance. James Scott recognised this limitation and focused his attention on how the ‘rural poor’ resist oppression in their everyday lives (1985, 1989, 1990). Scott holds that peasant rebellions are uncommon events that are most often quickly and violently put down (1985, 29). It is, thus, more important to understand other ‘everyday forms of peasant resistance’ – what he termed “weapons of the weak” – including foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, feigned ignorance, desertion, pilfering, smuggling, poaching, arson, slander, sabotage, and even assault and murder (1989, 5). These activities may be disorganised, may not emerge from revolutionary consciousness, and may appear to accommodate structures of domination, but they are resistance. Scott explains the major difference between everyday resistance and other forms of resistance:

“Where everyday resistance most strikingly departs from other forms of resistance is in its implicit disavowal of public and symbolic goals. Where institutionalised politics is formal, overt, concerned with systematic, de jure change, everyday resistance is informal, often covert, and concerned largely with immediate, de facto gains.” (1985, 33)

Scott rejects the binary division between resistance and non-resistance, political and apolitical, and argues that any definition of resistance must take into account the experience and perspectives of oppressed groups:

“More than one peasantry has been brutally reduced from open, radical political activity at one moment to stubborn and sporadic acts of petty resistance at the next . . . if we allow ourselves to call only the former ‘resistance’, we simply allow the structure of domination to define for us what is resistance and what is not resistance.” (1985, 299)

According to Scott, everyday peasant resistance is usually reinforced by a supportive popular subculture and “the knowledge that the risk to any single resister is generally reduced to the extent that the whole community is involved” and can, thus, be seen as an actual social movement (1985, 35). Scott defines everyday peasant resistance as follows:

“Lower class resistance among peasants is any act(s) by member(s) of the class that is (are) intended either to mitigate or to deny claims (eg. rents, taxes, deference) made on that class by superordinate classes (eg. landlords, the state, owners of machinery, money-lenders) or to advance its own claims (eg. to work, land, charity, respect) vis-à-vis these superordinate classes.” (1985, 290)

While Scott does not feel that resistance needs to be organised or revolutionary to be considered ‘real’ or to be effective, he does say that any definition of resistance should incorporate “at least some reference to the intentions of the actors” (1985, 295). Scott also qualifies his views on the role of intent as such:

“For many forms of peasant resistance . . . their intentions may be so embedded in the peasant subculture and in the routine, taken-for-granted struggle to provide for the subsistence and survival of the household as to remain inarticulate. . . Evidence about intentions is, of course, always welcome, but we should not expect too much.” (1985, 301)

Forrest Colburn edits a collection of papers on peasant resistance. He supports Scott’s thesis and cites three general consequences of everyday forms of peasant resistance: first, “advantages secured by peasants enhance their welfare”; second, “the cumulation of peasants’ evasive tactics can erode away unpopular customs, laws, government policies, or in the extreme, a regime itself”; and third, “practices of resistance can lay the groundwork for more overt political activity once the constellation of forces moves to the previously weak peasants’ favour” (1989, x).

Women and Everyday Resistance

The work of Gloria Goodwin Rahaja and Ann Grodzins Gold (1994) builds upon that of Scott by exploring forms of everyday resistance or ‘hidden transcripts’ (Scott 1990) evident in women’s speech and song in North India – that is, “the often veiled, but sometimes overt and public, words and actions through which women communicate their resistance to dominant North Indian characterisations of ‘women’s nature’ and of kinship relationships” (1994, 1-2). Echoing the views of Scott and Colburn, Rahaja and Gold highlight the importance of everyday forms of resistance in creating and nurturing the conditions necessary for social change:

“The active rebellion that may at one moment be impractical or impossible may at another moment become plausible precisely because the idea of social transformation has been nourished in proverbs, folk songs, jokes, rituals, legends, and language.” (1994, 26)

For example, research by Aihwa Ong (1987) documents how 180 exploited female factory workers in Malaysia resorted to everyday forms of indirect resistance, which were “culturally consistent with their subordinate female status” (1987, 202). The forms of indirect resistance used by the factory workers ranged from crying and leaving work due to supposed ‘female problems’, to damaging factory equipment and spirit possession episodes (1987, 203-211). A most striking type of resistance to the factory work was workers becoming possessed by evil spirits, causing them to have violent screaming fits (1987, 204-105).

Bettina Aptheker (1989) puts women and everyday experience – or ‘dailiness’ – at the centre of her thinking about resistance. Aptheker explains that when we look at resistance from the standpoint of women, we can see women’s resistance that does not come from an understanding of any particular social theory but is “shaped by the dailiness of women’s lives” (1989, 173). By starting with the everyday lives and experiences of women, rather than with theory, Aptheker aims to change ideas about “the privileging of theory as the most important or most significant way of knowing” (1989, 8). Aptheker argues that women have a distinct consciousness, based on the sexual division of labour and the institutionalised subordination of women to men, which can be better understood by “making visible the cultures it creates” (1989, 13). She also rejects the tendency toward dichotomisation in intellectual thinking, suggesting that, “To think about contrast as difference rather than as opposition is to think in terms of cycle rather than polarity; continuum rather than disruption and separation” (1989, 18). Aptheker defines ‘dailiness’ as, “the patterns women create and the meanings women invent each day and over time as a result of their labors and in the context of their subordinated status to men” (1989, 39). She promotes listening to women’s stories, poetry, and songs, and analysing their quilts and other handiwork in order to “locate women’s cultures” and make women’s consciousness visible (1989, 43). She explains that studies of women’s daily lives, work, and the products of their work are required to construct a more detailed understanding of the dailiness of women’s lives and to “see the ways in which that dailiness has structured women’s ways of thinking” (1989, 74). Aptheker identifies motherhood as a central aspect of dailiness:

“How many children a woman has, at what intervals, and under what social conditions for their provision, determine virtually every other aspect of her life. This is central to the dailiness of women’s lives.” (1989, 57)

Not all daily activities, however, comprise resistance. The daily activities that comprise resistance are those that resist the values and priorities that diminish life, and focus instead on life-sustaining goals.

Conventional ideas about resistance have been linked to notions of progress and modernisation, and assumptions about change as “social rather than individual, political rather than personal” (Aptheker 1989, 170). Resistance, as opposition, is informed by various theories of social change and strategies aimed at removing a ruling class from power. Aptheker shows that by putting women and dailiness at the centre of an analysis of resistance, it becomes clear that there is women’s resistance “that is not ‘feminist’, ‘socialist’, ‘radical’, or ‘liberal’ because it does not come out of an understanding of one or another social theory” (1989, 173). Instead, it is created and sustained by the dailiness of women’s lives. Like Scott, Colburn, and Raheja and Gold, Aptheker sees everyday resistance – in this case, women’s everyday resistance – as a key part of social transformation:

“Women’s resistance is not necessarily or intrinsically oppositional; it is not necessarily or intrinsically contesting for power. It does, however, have a profound impact on the fabric of social life because of its steady, cumulative effects. It is central to the making of history, and . . . it is the bedrock of social change.” (1989, 173)

For example, Aptheker analyses the participation of African American women in the Black struggles for education, suffrage, and against lynching, and finds that, “it was the dailiness of the labors performed by Black women that anchored the resistance” (1989, 210).

The Standpoint of Local Culture

Richard Scaglion and Marie Norman (2000) provide support for and a critique of Scott’s theory of everyday peasant resistance. They stress the need to assess the methods and processes of resistance of any particular group or individual from the standpoint of the local culture. Scaglion and Norman analyse how a Papua New Guinean tribal leader named Moll resists the predations of colonial powers during his life. The authors point out that Melanesian societies are generally more egalitarian than the European structures imposed during colonisation. They suggest that the kinds of resistance used in these relatively egalitarian communities differ from

those employed in more hierarchical settings, and need to be understood and evaluated within their own cultural contexts (2000, 123). According to Scaglione and Norman, the various forms of resistance employed by Moll – deception, persuasion, evasion, and co-optation – are not perceived in Moll’s local Abelam culture as ‘weapons of the weak’ but as “techniques of the strong” (2000, 135). The authors feature Moll making skillful use of deception and persuasion in order to resist the colonising, exploitative activities of the Japanese and the Australians, and state:

“In the Abelam context such tactics are not the last resort of the powerless, but established methods of the influential, a common means by which big-men [tribal leaders] accomplish their own objectives.” (Scaglione and Norman 2000, 130)

When Moll makes successful use of persuasion to avoid confiscation of a family heirloom spear by an Australian colonial officer, “his power is not subversive and oppositional but a skillful and publicly recognised means of establishing authority” (Scaglione and Norman 2000, 135). While Scaglione and Norman’s paper focuses on Moll, a male tribal leader, their argument holds relevance for other members or groups in Melanesian society, including women, who also make use of these same culturally-rooted kinds of resistance. Scaglione and Norman also underline the need to link theory and practice in analyses of resistance:

“Practice theory suggests that we link micro-processes of consciousness and agency with macro-patterns of society and culture by attending to change and stasis over the long term. . . Approaches that focus too exclusively on the individual miss the potential social impact of personal actions and decisions, whereas those that merely depict broad historical trends undervalue the personal implications of what has happened and what will happen.” (2000, 137)

Contrasting Forms of Resistance to Corporate Globalisation in Melanesia

It is possible to identify two contrasting forms of resistance to the neocolonialism of ‘development’ bank structural adjustment in Melanesia:

- an awareness, advocacy, and oppositional protest movement; and
- everyday forms of resistance comprised by the daily life-sustaining activities of people in the subsistence sector.

The awareness, advocacy, and protest movement is predominantly an urban-based male project (see Cox 1999, 17). The everyday forms of resistance, on the other hand, are located primarily in the subsistence sector which accounts for the vast majority of the population. What is more, it

can be argued that it is primarily women who sustain the subsistence sector in Melanesia (Bolton 2003; Cox 1999; Sparks-Ngenge 2000). At the same time, such everyday resistance is less conscious, in that many or most people in the rural areas are not aware of how their everyday lives may comprise resistance to structural adjustment (Cox 1999, 18; Sparks-Ngenge 2000). Identification of these two contrasting forms of resistance raises important questions about their relationship. That is, how do these forms of resistance work together or complement each other? Furthermore, is one form of resistance privileged over another, that is, acknowledged more and assigned more value?

The Awareness, Advocacy, and Protest Movement

The awareness, advocacy, and protest movement challenges conventional notions of development and poverty. It has been highlighted by the anti-Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) protests of 1995 and 2001 in Papua New Guinea and the anti-Comprehensive Reform Program (CRP) petition of 1999 in Vanuatu. In both countries, the movements were supported by broad-based citizens' coalitions comprising students, non-government organisations (NGOs), union members, and grassroots people. Part of the basis for the formation of this social movement has been belief in an indigenous development paradigm which features the maintenance of self-reliant subsistence and customary, communal control of land. A regional group, Melanesian Trust (MelTrust), has played a key role in facilitating a critical literacy and awareness movement and has produced revolutionary awareness materials which outline various aspects of this development paradigm (see Simo 2000). MelTrust's critical literacy programs provide an excellent example of what Paulo Freire referred to as the "dialogical theory of action" whereby "subjects meet to name the world in order to transform it" (2000, 167). MelTrust rejects the notion that the North is 'developed' and Melanesia is 'undeveloped', and points to the impressive developmental achievements of Melanesian societies – such as the full employment (in subsistence) and 'full bellies' of rural villagers – while stressing the critical importance of continued local control of land in sustaining this indigenous mode of development (Melanesian Trust 1999, 31-40).

Theorists have engaged in the debate about what constitutes development or poverty in general, and whether or not WB/IMF-style development would benefit Melanesia. Like MelTrust, Vandana Shiva has critiqued the myth that subsistence economies are 'poor':

“Subsistence economies which satisfy basic needs through self-provisioning are not poor in the sense of being deprived. Yet the ideology of development declares them so because they do not participate overwhelmingly in the market economy.” (1995, 439-40)

Environmental scientist, David Suzuki, and others assert that the land-based modes of subsistence agriculture practised today in Melanesia afford people an adequate standard of living and social safety net and are more environmentally sound (Faraclas 2001a; Sparks-Ngenge 2000; Suzuki 1998, 76-77). Father Kevin Barr of the Fiji-based Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education, and Advocacy (ECREA) emphasises the social safety net provided by communal land tenure and the subsistence economy in Melanesia:

“The communal ownership of land is still strongly adhered to, the subsistence economy continues to complement the cash economy and provides livelihoods for many, and communitarian values of caring and sharing still motivate most people. Moreover, many who are unemployed in the formal sector of the economy create livelihoods for themselves (self-employment) in the non-formal sector. Thus, in the Pacific, alternatives to an export-oriented, market-driven globalised cash economy continue to exist and sustain small participatory communities. The modern formal cash economy devalues the traditional economy because, being money-based . . . it cannot comprehend or measure production for consumption, reciprocity, sharing, and communal work without wages.” (Maclellan 2001)

Another view holds that, “if leisure time is a measure of affluence, the coastal peoples of New Guinea [and the other Melanesian islands] are among the richest people on earth” (McKenzie 1993). Even the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank admit that absolute poverty – “in terms of starvation and destitution” – is not a problem in Melanesia. Yet they cite the high proportion of poverty level cash incomes (below US\$1 per day) as the reason for imposing WB/IMF structural adjustment programs in the region (ADB 2003a, 1; World Bank 2000b).

In his 1998 critique of WB/IMF structural adjustment policies and programs in Thailand, Walden Bello points to serious environmental degradation and the “enormous size of Thailand’s sex industry” as “hard evidence of the real crisis in Thai agriculture and the rapid industrialisation process” (Bello 1998, 217-238). Joseph Stiglitz, the Chief Economist of the World Bank from 1997 until 2000, has written his own stunning critique of WB/IMF-style globalisation (Stiglitz 2002). During his years at the World Bank, Stiglitz saw firsthand “the devastating effect that globalisation can have on developing countries” and now advocates for a “radical rethinking” of the way globalisation has been managed (2002, ix-x). Stiglitz explains that IMF structural adjustment policies have caused hunger and riots in many countries, and that even when they have led to economic growth for a period, “the benefits went disproportionately to the better-off,

with those at the bottom facing even greater poverty” (2002, xiv). During the 1990s, the total world income increased by an average of 2.5 percent annually, while the number of people living in poverty increased by almost 100 million (Stiglitz 2002, 5). Stiglitz points to the tradition of the World Bank being led by an American, while the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is led by a European, and charges that the institutions are not representative of the nations they serve (2002, 19). He goes on to overview how the economic world today is dominated by a few institutions – including the World Bank / International Monetary Fund (WB/IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) – and a small group of “players”, including ministries of finance, commerce, and trade, closely linked to certain financial and commercial interests. Most of those affected by their decisions, however, are left “almost voiceless” (2002, 21-22). Stiglitz concludes by pointing to the dangers of not rethinking WB/IMF-imposed globalisation:

“For millions of people, globalisation has not worked. Many have actually been made worse off, as they have seen their jobs destroyed and their lives become more insecure. They have felt increasingly powerless against forces beyond their control. They have seen their democracies undermined, their cultures eroded. . . If globalisation continues to be conducted in the way that it has been in the past, if we continue to fail to learn from our mistakes, it will not only not succeed in promoting development but will continue to create poverty and instability.” (2002, 248)

Many recognise that structural adjustment policies and programs are not actually anything new or original, but are instead another form of colonisation rooted not just in the imperialism of a particular nation, but embedded in the imperialism of corporate globalisation. For example, in her 2001 overview of the impacts of globalisation on indigenous women in the Philippines, Victoria Tauli Corpuz describes globalisation as “the continuation of colonisation with the use of more sophisticated methods” (2001, 1). Gun boats and superior military technology have been replaced by international financial institutions such as the WB/IMF and the WTO. Claims that globalisation has benefited women by creating tens of thousands of jobs for them in factories in industrial enclaves are debatable. Tauli Corpuz holds that, “[women] were just moved from one situation of oppression to another . . . at the workplace they are subjected to other forms and more severe problems of gender discrimination” (2001, 13). She goes on to describe a range of negative impacts that globalisation is having on indigenous women, including undermining their traditional land rights and self-determination in agriculture, decreasing food security, environmental degradation and increasing environmental health hazards, worsening poverty, and increasing oppression of women. Tauli Corpuz sees globalisation as “antithetical to genuine development and gender-sensitive development, because it undermines sustainability at the local level” (2001, 42).

In his 1999 critique of development theory, economist Amartya Sen points to massive unemployment in the North and to deprivation among particular groups in the United States comparable to that in the so-called Third World (1999, 20-21). He argues that, “an adequate conception of development must go much beyond the accumulation of wealth and the growth of GNP and other income-related variables. . . development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy” (1999, 14). Sen also raises the issue of the power of western culture and lifestyle in undermining indigenous cultural diversity and modes of living, and calls for changes to the form of globalisation making it “less destructive of employment and traditional livelihood” (1999, 240).

Maori academic and activist, Makere Harawira, condemns WB/IMF structural adjustment programming in the Pacific. Like Stiglitz, she points to policies and programs that benefit the rich at the expense of the poor:

“Throughout the Pacific, structural adjustment has become a synonym for the exploitation and devastation of indigenous resources and lifestyles, for the disruption of traditional values and world views, and for development programs which bring economic benefit to those in positions of power and poverty for the majority.” (1999a, 2)

However, not all Pacific Islanders have had the opportunity to develop such a critique. As part of their justification for operating in Melanesia, the ‘development’ banks hold that “hardship is widely perceived to exist” by indigenous Melanesians (ADB 2003a, 3). Ethnobotanist, Wade Davis, explains why people buy into the belief that they are ‘poor’ and must follow the path of development of the North. In an interview with Leslie Campbell, Davis exposes why the promotion of ‘catch-up development’ is a lie:

“Evidence of the disproportionate affluence of the West is beamed into villages and urban slums in every nation, in every province, 24 hours a day. Baywatch is the most popular TV show in New Guinea. We sell this bill of goods that if people just followed the dictates of our economic paradigm, they’ll somehow acquire our level of affluence. But for everyone to have our level of affluence would take the resources of four planet Earths. . . Outside of the major industrial nations, globalisation has not brought integration and harmony, but rather a firestorm of change that has swept away languages and cultures, ancient skills, and visionary wisdom. The poor end up turning their backs on their past, only to get to a place on the lowest rung of an economic ladder that goes nowhere.” (Campbell 2005, 21)

Papua New Guinean education professor, Arnold Kukari, describes impacts of the modern development discourse in Papua New Guinea, highlighting the lack of critical literacy that affects most people's perceptions of and engagement with the 'development' process:

"Indigenous Papua New Guineans [have been] socialised into the modern development discourse, embraced, and faithfully participated in it since the colonial era without any in-depth knowledge and understanding of its psyche and idiosyncrasies. Their faith in modern development and its promises has convinced them and their political leaders that their welfare, longevity, and the development of their villages depend on the exploitation of their natural resources, their land, and the modernisation of their subsistence economies. . . In pursuing these beliefs they have not only found themselves locked in behaviour patterns and a mindset that impose long-term costs for short-term gains, but have also abandoned their cultures and philosophy of the land in preference to the modern development ideology." (Sullivan 2002, 7-8)

Rynkiewich likens Papua New Guinea's attempts to participate in the modern process of 'development' to "chasing a mirage" – a mirage based on what people imagine the 'developed world' to be like (2002a, 49). While many or even most indigenous people in Melanesia continue to chase the mirage, the critique developed and advocated by the MelTrust network and others in the region is significant. The critical literacy and awareness programs, advocacy, and protests have increased people's awareness of the issues, and have slowed down the implementation of some of the structural adjustments, particularly the passing and implementation of new land laws (Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies 1999, 145-149; Tarere 2003).

The Daily Resistance of Women in the Subsistence Sector

While the awareness, advocacy, and protest movement has done much to further a social justice agenda, the movement has limits. One of the limits is that few people can participate actively, especially women. While there are women members and even some leaders within the movement, the social movement is dominated by men, especially at the level of formal leadership (Cox 1999, 17; Sparks-Ngenge 2000). A number of questions come to mind: Is this form of resistance self-sufficient? If not, what enables and sustains it? Does the domination of the social movement by men mean that most women support 'development' bank structural adjustment and other forms of corporate globalisation? – I doubt it. So then, are there ways in which women resist the trend toward neo-colonialism? In considering these questions, it becomes apparent that the awareness, advocacy, and protest movement is not self-sufficient as it relies on the daily activities of the subsistence sector to sustain the land-based ways of life. It becomes clear that the subsistence sector in Melanesia is not only the anchor of the more public social movement –

enabling and sustaining the awareness, advocacy, and protest activities – it also provides the setting for diverse forms and expressions of less oppositional resistance that make crucial contributions to the overall resistance. Furthermore, while men participate in the subsistence sector, it can be argued that women sustain and even dominate this sphere.

How do the daily activities of the subsistence sector comprise resistance to the neo-colonialism of structural adjustment and other forms of corporate globalisation? One key aspect of this dynamic revolves around the fact that as long as the subsistence sector continues to exist in Melanesia, foreign companies and ‘development’ banks can not force people to work in the cash economy. This is the power of what anthropologist, Margaret Rodman, described as “an uncaptured peasantry” (1987, 3). In elaborating on the power of the ‘exit option’ available to such peasant communities in Melanesia, Rodman quoted Hyden as follows:

“Existing relations of dependence are still feeble. Although the peasants are incorporated into the larger world economy . . . their dependence on the system is marginal. They live in the boundary region of this system and there they have the unique prerogative of choosing to withdraw. They have a true exit option.” (1980, 32 in Rodman 1987, 4)

At present, while many Melanesian people do opt to leave their villages to go work for money, if the pay or conditions are too bad they have the option of quitting and returning to the village to work the land (Faraclas 1994, 181; Sparks-Ngenge 2000). Thus, the sustenance of the self-sufficient rural communities is a crucial component of the resistance to structural adjustment.

How and why do women sustain and even dominate the subsistence sector? Despite the rapid social change that has characterised life in Melanesia during the last century, women have continued to play many or most of their traditional roles in society – including attending to daily provisioning activities and caring for children – while the men have more often been pulled away from local subsistence activities into slave labour on colonial plantations and into low wage labour at logging and mining sites, plantations, and elsewhere (Jolly 1991, 71; Melanesian Trust 1999, 157-58; Rynkiewich 2002b, 254). While the men were the first to be lured away from subsistence and deceived by the empty promises of what MelTrust calls the outsiders’ ‘cargo system’, the majority of the women have stayed in the villages to attend to the daily business of survival – individual, family, and community survival (Melanesian Trust 1999, 157-58).

Melanesian Women, Globalisation, and Subsistence

Grace Molisa, ni-Vanuatu poet, independence activist, and women's advocate, wrote about globalisation and its impacts on ni-Vanuatu women, stressing how it is a 'man's game', little understood or participated in by women and yet its negative impacts suffered by women:

*Globalisation, politics, trade, gender
are mostly words to most Vanuatu women.
In terms of the politics of trade
Women are not there as the players.
They are there as the grass roots on the field.
Out of sight. Out of mind.*

*They don't know the game.
They don't know the rules of the game.
They don't play the game.
They don't get a chance to play the game.*

*They get trampled on.
They suffer every impact of the game. (Molisa 1999)*

It is not new for Melanesian women to suffer as a result of globalisation. Solomon Islander, Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard, and others have written about how colonisation and missionisation have undermined women's traditional spheres of power in Melanesia (de Ishtar 1994, 218; Pollard 2000, 39; Rooney in Jolly 1991, 58). Pollard quotes a female Solomon Islander elder who says,

"In the distant past, we women were on an equal footing with men. We participated equally in feasts and bride-price transactions and we participated equally with men in the decision-making processes. But just in the last hundred years, during the Second World War and colonial era, our status has dropped dramatically in comparison with that of our men." (2000, 39-40)

Women in Vanuatu describe a similar expropriation of their traditional roles in decision-making. Before contact with outsiders, traditional structures comprised channels of communication that allowed for everyone to participate in village decision-making. Now, imported decision-making bodies have taken over, traditional systems have been undermined, and "the voice of women is no longer heard when important issues are under discussion" (Women of Vanuatu 1973, 2, in de Ishtar 1994, 222). In an example from Papua New Guinea, women were the traditional family bankers and money-handlers on Lou Island in Manus Province. Before contact with outsiders, women were in charge of all traditional currency transactions during family exchanges and larger ceremonies. However, during the last generation the impacts of colonisation, missionisation, and

western education have led the current generation of young adult men to expropriate women's traditional roles in this sphere. During three years living on Lou Island in the late 1990s, I was told by several people and witnessed that Lou Island women no longer control the money – their husbands do. Many women never even handle money, except when their husbands give them small amounts to fetch store goods in the local village shop or in town (Sparks-Ngenge 2000).

Lissant Bolton writes about how colonisation and missionisation affected the general perception and status of women in Melanesia, particularly Vanuatu. She holds that while expatriates have “tended to see the status of [Melanesian] women as unacceptably low”, outsiders' perceptions have been shaped by their own views on relations between women and men (2002, 53-54). Bolton points to the work of Marilyn Strathern (1988) who argued the importance of recognising that Melanesian and Western ways of knowing and understanding are “fundamentally different” (2003, 54). Two key issues affect understandings, particularly ‘Western’ ones, of the place of women in Melanesia:

- first, the extent to which Western thought accepts and assumes the inequality in power relations between men and women; and
- second, the central place of relationships in Melanesian society, including the fact that “a person is the sum of the net of relationships in which he or she is engaged”, and so, in each of their relationships, people are named and treated differently and have different responsibilities, obligations, and access to authority or power. (Bolton 2003, 54-55)

Bolton's main point is that outsiders' perceptions misunderstood and misinterpreted oppression of women by men in Melanesia as existing “in a singular relationship between all women and all men” (2003, 55). She concludes,

“The suggestion that all men have power over all women misunderstands the specificity of each relationship in such a system – between a daughter and her father, a father's sister and her brother's son, or a wife and her husband.” (Bolton 2003, 54-55)

This dynamic was heightened by the perceptions of outsiders, especially missionaries, that women belonged in the domestic sphere only – cooking, cleaning, and doing other kinds of ‘housework’ – and that women's participation in hard physical labour outside the house comprised subjugation of women (Bolton 2003, 56; Jolly 1991, 35). Furthermore, while missionaries perceived and condemned the inferior status of Melanesian women, the structures

they introduced overwhelmingly reflected their own assumptions about male superiority as church leaders were all missionary men:

“For all the rhetoric criticizing the status of women in indigenous practice, it was expatriates who established a formal inequality between all women and all men, on the basis of a public / domestic distinction that they introduced into colonial structures.” (Bolton 2003, 56)

In this modern era of WB/IMF neocolonialism and corporate globalisation, the status of women in Melanesia and throughout the Pacific has been further undermined by the creation of an educated, urban male elite who become the first to turn their backs on traditional value systems and ways of life. In the words of Australian activist and writer, Zohl de Ishtar,

“A community’s social structure is further distorted by the creation of an educated, urban male elite who, protective of its privileges of power and wealth, support capitalist development at the expense of women and rural dwellers. This new dominating class has been educated in the US, Europe, Australia, and Aotearoa (NZ), where they’ve been well trained in the value systems of the dominant culture.” (1994, 225-226)

According to the Makere Harawira, the value systems of the dominant culture include the key principle of economic restructuring, that is, the separation of economics from social issues that means “separating the people from their lands, their resources, their sacred taonga (treasures), their livelihoods, their very being” (1999b, 27). Puanani Burgess of Hawai’i also talks about the poverty that results from separating culture and economy and the need to bring the two back together: “The modern process of development, which separates culture from economy, strips a community of its wealth. . . Real service is enabling people to recapture their economic development, taking control of their lives back into their own hands” (de Ishtar 1994, 230). In attempting to enable her people to take back control of their economies and their lives, Burgess has been involved in a program that takes indigenous Hawaiian children back to the garden to learn about planting taro, one of the most important traditional food crops in the Pacific. Recognising the importance of food gardens, “children are being educated in their own people’s spiritual, social, and political values within a context aimed at re-establishing an economic basis to the community” (de Ishtar 1994, 230). The children’s garden project in Hawai’i underlines the critical importance for indigenous communities of sustaining knowledge about and control over their means of production. However, while rural communities in Melanesia still maintain such control, ‘development’ bank structural adjustment programs (SAPs) aim to take it away.

The Subsistence Perspective

In a rejection of the contemporary form of corporate globalisation, Marie Mies and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen put forward *The Subsistence Perspective* (1999) which brings together views from feminism, environmentalism, and theory on decolonisation and dailiness. The subsistence perspective aims to counter the war against subsistence:

“In the North and, since 1945, increasingly in the rest of the world, everything that is connected with the immediate creation and maintenance of life, and also everything that is not arranged through the production or consumption of commodities, has been devalued. This includes all activities whose object is self-provisioning, whether in the house, the garden, the workshop, on the land, or in the stable. What doesn't cost or doesn't produce money is worthless. . . The present-day high esteem for wage labour obviously rests on the high evaluation of money and on its myth.” (Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies 1999, 17)

It also aims to resist “mono-culturation” – that is, the colonisation of language, culture, food, education, thinking, images, and symbols (Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies 1999, 19). The subsistence perspective utilises the lens of everyday life and its politics to demystify and reveal the weaknesses of the ‘rich country’ model of economic development, bringing to light that “this so-called good life is possible only for a minority and, moreover, that it is at the expense of others: of nature, of other people, of women and children” (Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies 1999, 3). Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen call for a “radical break with the dominant paradigm” and a search for a new vision (1999, 3). They stress that different economic systems still exist – subsistence economies – which “put life and everything necessary to produce and maintain life on this planet at the centre of economic and social activity and not the never-ending accumulation of dead money” (1999, 5).

Some people choose not to use the term ‘subsistence’ when talking about the traditional economic systems of Melanesia, as it tends to be associated with ‘primitive’ peoples on the brink of survival. Ralph Regenvanu, the Director of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, explains that it is inaccurate to describe traditional Melanesian social-economies in terms of people just subsisting:

“Traditionally there was satisfying your own requirements and then there was the very important aspect of contributing to numerous ceremonies . . . which is very big in Vanuatu, and then the *kastom* of always having to feed all and sundry who visited. As the old people say, before everyone had to have two gardens, one for their own needs and one for giving away. People have used the word ‘subsistence’ in a negative way to mean that

traditionally people barely survived/subsisted, so to avoid that connotation I try not to use the word.” (personal email, 10 February 2005)

Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen, however, claim back the term, pointing to the strengths and richness of subsistence. They stress that subsistence means not only hard labour, but also “joy in life, happiness, and abundance” (1999, 5). Linguist, Nicholas Faraclas, explains the link between subsistence and abundance in the Melanesia context: “[Melanesian] societies have . . . utilized an economy based on subsistence to create an abundance that ensures all of their members food, housing, employment, and land” (2001a, 75).

While the ‘development’ banks aims to ‘increase productivity’ by ‘drawing peasants away from subsistence’, they also talk specifically of the need ‘to use women’s labour more productively’ by moving women away from subsistence and into production of cash crops for the world market (Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies 1999, 144). Vandana Shiva (2001) pulls apart the myth of the superiority of large-scale industrial agriculture, and argues that despite modern agricultural innovations and commercialisation, it is still rural women who feed the world:

“It is women and small farmers working with biodiversity who are the primary food providers in the Third World and, contrary to the dominant assumption, their biodiversity-based small farm systems are more productive than industrial monocultures.” (2001, 58)

According to Orovu Sepoe, a Papua New Guinean woman political scientist, the situation in Papua New Guinea provides concrete support for Shiva’s claim. While women in Papua New Guinea comprise only 17 percent of the wage labour workforce, they produce 80 percent of the country’s food for domestic consumption (Sepoe 2001, 171). Despite the awesome contributions by women to global food production and other kinds of vital subsistence labour, capitalist patriarchal systems function to devalue and make invisible women’s subsistence work. In the words of Vandana Shiva:

“The most efficient means of bringing about the destruction of nature, local economies, and small autonomous producers is to render their production invisible. Women who produce for their families and communities are treated as ‘non-productive’ and ‘economically inactive’. The devaluation of women’s work, and of work done in sustainable economies, is the natural outcome of a system constructed by capitalist patriarchy. This is how globalisation destroys local economies and the destruction itself is counted as growth. (2001, 60)

Melanesian Women and Subsistence

Ni-Vanuatu poet, Grace Molisa, writes about the life-sustaining, nation-sustaining daily labours of the rural women:

*Vanuatu
village
women
work
day by day
year by year.*

*Vanuatu
village
women
carry
their country
on their shoulders (1989, 29)*

Solomon Islander, Alice Pollard, also describes the hard daily work that women undertake in order to ensure the survival of their family and community (2000, 38), while Orovu Sepoe, Elisabeth Cox, and others speak to the same phenomena in Papua New Guinea (Cox 1999, 18; Sepoe 2001, 171; Sparks-Ngenge 2000). Throughout Melanesia it is predominantly women who feed society.

Pollard explains that much of men's work tends to be conducted on a monthly, yearly, or less regular basis – for example, clearing a new garden or building a house. Women's work, however, such as cooking, childcare, and food gardening, happens on a more regular or daily basis (Pollard 2000, 39). Pollard stresses that food gardens are resources controlled by women; women's names, not men's, are associated with food gardens; and women know more about gardens than men do. Women know more about soils, crops, timing of planting, and rotating / ordering of crops (Pollard 2000, 32). Furthermore, Pollard holds that women do not rebel against their heavy daily work loads, primarily because they take great pride in being able to provide well for their families (2000, 38). Melanesian women are also the ones who produce baskets, mats, clothing, and other textiles from local materials (Bolton 2003; Rarua 1988, 81; Sparks-Ngenge 2000; Walter 1996). Bolton highlights the event-making contributions of ni-Vanuatu women to community exchange ceremonies through their production of textiles which are the media of exchange – “men merely sit on the sidelines and drink kava” (Bolton 2003, 122).

While women work day by day sustaining their families and communities, they also play major roles in passing on traditional indigenous knowledge about the work they do to their own and other village children (Molisa 1987, 14; Pollard 2000, 52; Sparks-Ngenge 2000). Annie Walter explains that it takes years of tutoring and practice for ni-Vanuatu women to master complex designs in the plaiting of mats and other textiles (1996, 103-104). In contemporary Melanesia, the traditional processes of passing on subsistence knowledge are now interrupted when children go to school, especially residential schools located far from their home villages (Bolton 2003, 116; MelTrust 1999, 21-30; Regenvanu 2002; Sparks-Ngenge 2000). Furthermore, according to Pollard, although women do most of the work associated with the perpetuation of traditional subsistence knowledge, “in recent times, their knowledge and their wisdom have been ignored – or at least underutilised – by the leaders and decision-makers at community and national levels” (2000, 52). Grace Molisa makes similar calls for the recognition and respect of women’s daily labours as “valuable, essential, and integral input by women into nation building” (1987, 15). Molisa also raises the critical issue of women themselves needing to recognise the importance of being the “teachers of society”, especially in terms of the potential for shaping the consciousness of the next generation (1987, 14).

Research Rationale: The Need for a Focus on Women and Dailiness

Despite the vital contributions of the less oppositional, more female forms of everyday resistance to corporate globalisation in Melanesia, such everyday resistance is both less acknowledged and a less critically conscious engagement. When people talk, theorise, or write news stories about the resistance to corporate globalisation, they tend to focus on the awareness, advocacy, and protest movement. Movement leaders, mostly men, are quoted in the newspaper, but the vital contributions of their mothers, sisters, and wives in the rural areas are not mentioned. According to Scott, this is predictable: “everyday forms of resistance make no headlines” (1985, 36). Over 30 years ago, Hobsbawn and Rude pointed out that everyday resistance was overlooked not only by “conservative elites”, but also by the “urban left” and academics, who “tended to be unaware of [the resistance] unless and until it appeared in sufficiently dramatic form or on a sufficiently large scale for the city newspapers to take notice” (1968, in Scott 1985, 36). It would appear that little has changed, as today even when feminist, culturally sensitive scholars discuss the role of women in the social movement in Melanesia, they highlight women as leaders of women’s groups who participated in the protests (Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies 1999, 148) or as vocal participants in the demonstrations (Faraclas 2001b). Not surprisingly, most

people in Melanesia are unaware of how the subsistence sector comprises a crucial component of the resistance by attending to the daily activities associated with provisioning and cultural continuity.

In 2001, a student leader of the anti-structural adjustment movement in Papua New Guinea spoke of social injustice and a vow to struggle for government accountability (personal email, 7 September 2001). The student went on to cite the fact that “we have the entire rural masses behind us” as a major strength of the social movement. But how true is this? That is, what proportion of the rural masses, especially the women, actually support or are even aware of the social movement? And more importantly, what is concealed by framing the resistance in this way? Have this and other urban activists in Melanesia ever considered that perhaps the reverse is more true – that is, that public protest movements are actually ‘behind’ the subsistence sector which is staging its own forms of daily resistance?

In sum, in Melanesia today there are two complementary forms or spheres of resistance to corporate globalisation, with one more male form being privileged over another more female form in terms of awareness and acknowledgment of the crucial contributions that it makes. This is a potentially dangerous dynamic, as the awareness, advocacy, and protest activities of the more public social movement actually depend upon the daily activities of the subsistence sector. Rather than be ignored or remain obscured from view, the contributions of the subsistence sector need to be made visible, and to be acknowledged, valued, and supported.

Despite the unbending position of the ‘development’ banks, I remain motivated by the strength of indigenous resistance to structural adjustment in Melanesia and set out to do research that supports this movement. Lofland says, “the study of social movements is the study of a special form of conflict in which the parties are highly unequal in several respects” (1996, 15). I hope that by doing research that supports the lesser-resourced indigenous resistance movement, I might make a contribution to a balancing of knowledge and power – that is, to what Lederach describes as “a recognition of mutual dependence increasing the voice of the less powerful and a legitimization of their concerns” (1995, 13). Given continuing conflict between the ‘development’ banks and civil society in Melanesia, and a predominant focus in the media and academic literature on the popular education and protest movement, I researched other potential forms and expressions of resistance – that is, I considered how the everyday activities of rural women fit

into the conflict and whether or not they can be shown to constitute and contribute to resistance to structural adjustment and other forms of corporate globalisation.

The thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What do rural women in Melanesia do in their everyday lives, particularly those activities that work to maintain traditional land-based ways of life and communal value systems, and how do the women perceive, understand, and value these activities?
2. Has the popular education and protest movement regarding structural adjustment affected the women's daily activities or their perceptions of what they do?

To this end, I document and analyse the daily subsistence activities of rural women in Melanesia. I pay particular attention to women's activities on the land, as well as their understandings of and relationships with the land; that is, women as keepers, users, and modifiers of certain kinds of community knowledge related to key aspects of the dispute over structural adjustment, namely control of land and labour. The study also documents activities and customs pertaining to maintenance of strong self-sufficient communities, such as the work that women do in the raising and socialisation of children which features them as "the primary guardians and perpetuators of traditional knowledge" (Langill 1999, 14). The study results are then used to analyse and debate whether or not the women have ways of being and knowing which constitute resistance or opposition to structural adjustment. This involves examining what this knowledge is, how it relates to the structural adjustment policies, and how rural women use and reproduce this knowledge.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, METHODS, AND ETHICS

In the words of Maria Mies, “research, which so far has been largely the instrument of dominance and legitimation of power elites, must be brought to serve the interests of dominated, exploited, and oppressed groups” (1983, 123, in Kirby and McKenna 1989, 15). To this end, I aim for my research to be meaningful, useful, and empowering for those who work with me directly and for the broader community and indigenous resistance movement as well. I also intend to privilege the standpoint of women, by making visible what has up to now been invisible – that is, the contributions of rural women to the resistance. I, thus, use a feminist research methodology, which requires a focus on gender, gender inequality, and the everyday experiences of women. Two key aspects of my feminist methodology are the use of both participatory methods and reflexivity as a source of insight (see Taylor 1999, 10).

Decolonising Methodology

Maori academic, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, charges that, “the term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism” (1999, 1) and that,

“research is implicated in the production of Western knowledge, in the nature of academic work, in the production of theories which have dehumanized Maori [and other indigenous peoples], and in practices which have continued to privilege Western ways of knowing, while denying the validity of Maori [and other indigenous] knowledge, language and culture.” (1999, 183)

Tuhiwai Smith points to a shift in indigenous peoples’ struggle against imperialism:

“While the language of imperialism and colonialism has changed, the sites of struggle remain. The struggle for the validity of indigenous knowledges may no longer be over the recognition that indigenous peoples have ways of viewing the world which are unique, but over proving the authenticity of, and control over, our own forms of knowledge.” (1999, 104)

The struggle of indigenous Melanesian peoples to maintain their land-based ways of life and customary systems of land tenure provides an excellent example of this new kind of struggle. Tuhiwai Smith also identifies research as, “a significant site of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of the West and the interests and ways of resisting of the Other” (1999, 2), and, from her perspective as an indigenous woman, has developed decolonising methodologies which aim to reclaim control over indigenous ways of knowing and being. Given that this thesis

research is based on implicit support for the right of Melanesian peoples to maintain their land-based ways of life, I use decolonising methodologies which are informed by both critical and feminist critiques of positivism (Lather in Tuhiwai Smith 1999, i) and involve an analysis of colonialism and a struggle for self-determination. According to Tuhiwai Smith, “self-determination in a research agenda becomes something more than a political agenda. It becomes a goal of social justice” (1999, 116).

Tuhiwai Smith outlines 25 approaches to decolonising research (1999, 142-161), one of which, *Celebrating Survival*, provides a useful methodological perspective for this research. *Celebrating Survival* is about documenting the survival or vitality of indigenous communities and their ways of life. The approach emphasises “ordinary human level resistances” (1999, 145) making it particularly relevant to this project. In the words of Tuhiwai Smith:

“While non-indigenous research has been intent on documenting the demise and cultural assimilation of indigenous peoples, *Celebrating Survival* accentuates not so much our demise but the degree to which indigenous peoples and communities have successfully retained cultural and spiritual values and authenticity.” (1999, 145)

I used this approach to guide me in documenting and analysing the everyday contributions that rural women make to resisting corporate globalisation in Melanesia, and also in feeding back the data to the community. Despite this approach, not all of the findings could be used to Celebrate Survival and had to be accounted for in other ways.

While decolonising methodologies are intended to be used primarily by indigenous researchers, Tuhiwai Smith outlines Graham Smith’s models by which culturally appropriate research can be undertaken by non-indigenous researchers (Smith 1992, in Tuhiwai Smith 1999, 177). My goal was to conduct this research within the context of the Empowering Outcomes Model, which refers to research that, “addresses the sorts of questions [indigenous] people want to know and which has beneficial outcomes” (ibid.). With the support of two host organisations, one national and one local, as well as interested and helpful research participants, this goal was realised. The first indication that I may indeed be able to do research that was welcomed and valued by ni-Vanuatu was the letter of approval I received from Ralph Regenvanu, the Director of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, my national host organisation. In this letter, Regenvanu said:

“We are pleased to approve your research in Vanuatu as outlined in the submitted proposal [as] the research is indeed very important and potentially very useful for Vanuatu. . . . The topics of research are sometimes too academic to be useful to ordinary

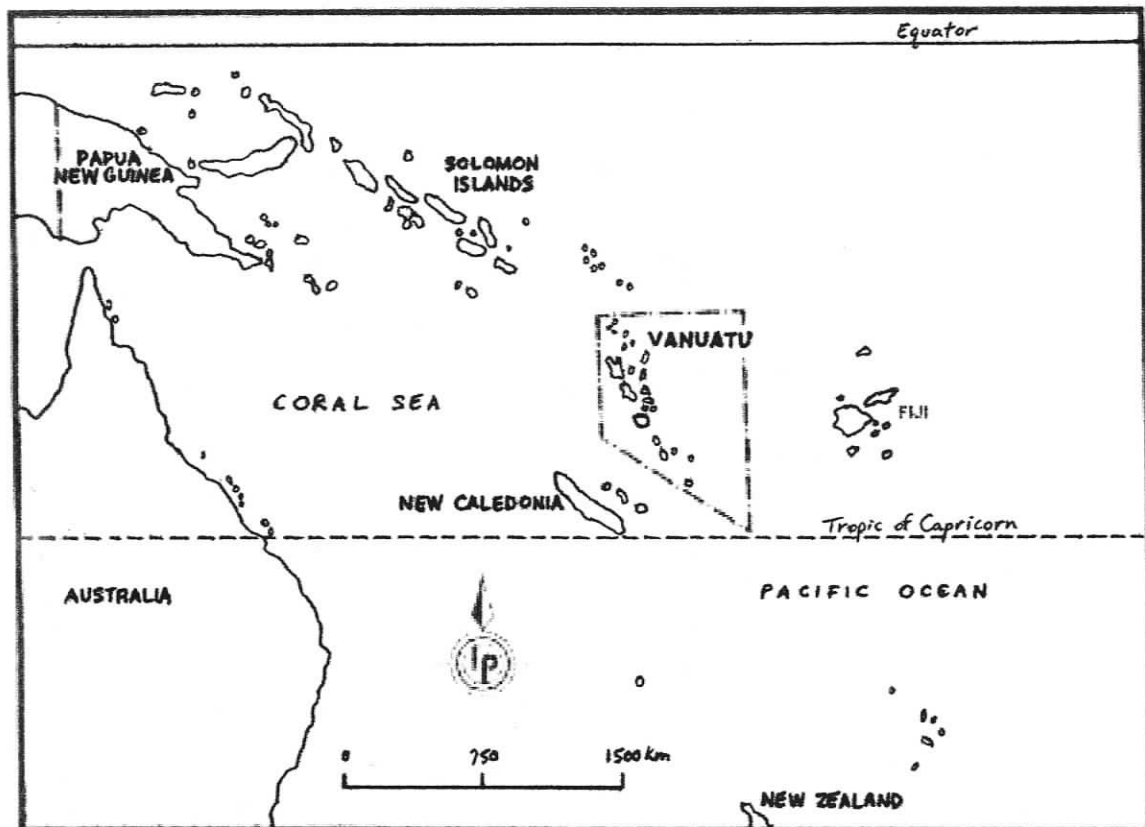
people anyway, but in your case, the topic is extremely relevant and useful.” (email correspondence, 8 April 2002)

Researcher’s Relationship with the Region

I came to this research project after over a decade of solidarity work with people’s organisations in the Pacific, and with experience, practical knowledge, and files of participant observation data gathered during over six years living and working in Papua New Guinea (see *Figure 1: Map of the Southwest Pacific*). In 1990, I worked with the South Pacific Peoples Foundation (SPPF) of Canada – a non-government organisation which does development education and advocacy on contemporary issues in the Pacific, as well as cooperative project work with Pacific Island organisations – compiling a fact-sheet on ‘Colonialism and Militarism in the Pacific’. From 1991 to 1993, I was Associate-Director of the Indonesia-Canada Research Project, which worked cooperatively with a West Papuan people’s organisation to investigate the impacts of Canadian involvement on indigenous peoples and the environment in West Papua (the west side of the island of New Guinea). During my first three years in Papua New Guinea, I worked with a women’s group in the rural Highlands, and then the Melanesian Environment Foundation and the National Research Institute in the national capital, Port Moresby. In 1996, I moved to live and work in a rural village on Lou Island in Manus Province in the New Guinea Islands region. Based there, I worked as a subsistence farmer and as volunteer Administration Officer / Trainer for the Lou Island Community Development and Awareness Team, a community-based group which was doing environmental and social justice awareness in Manus. From 1999 through 2001, I served as Board Secretary for the Pacific Peoples Partnership (PPP, formerly SPPF), in Victoria, B.C., Canada. I also facilitated sessions about Melanesia at several orientations for Canadian CUSO volunteers bound for the Pacific.

Before my arrival in Vanuatu, I was already fluent in Tok Pisin, the Papua New Guinea dialect of Melanesian Pidgin (also referred to as Neo-Melanesian). This fluency made it relatively easy for me to become fluent in Bislama, the Vanuatu dialect of the same language. After four weeks of immersion, I was communicating effectively in Bislama. Furthermore, upon arrival in Vanuatu I already had a good understanding of many aspects of Melanesian culture, which facilitated the gathering and interpretation of research data.

Figure 1: Map of the Southwest Pacific



Upon my arrival in Vanuatu, and particularly in the rural community where I did my research, I was an outsider. I was not part of the community. However, as Tuhiwai Smith points out, “there are multiple ways of both being an insider and an outsider in indigenous contexts” (1999, 137). With me, my host family and others in the community quickly recognised that I was different from other outsiders the community had hosted in the past. I had lived in a Melanesian village as the wife of a local man for three years and this was apparent to people in numerous ways. I was already fluent in one of the local languages. I knew how to cook on a fire and work in the garden and was used to the local foods. Most importantly, I had lived in rural Melanesia long enough to see not ‘noble savages’, but regular people with regular, rather than exotic, lives. When, during my first week in the village I got up before everyone else and lit the fire to cook breakfast, one member of my host family said to me,

“We thought you were going to be a lot of work, but now sitting here eating together with you, I look over and see a local woman, not someone from far away. You won’t be hard work at all. I was told that you had lived in Melanesia but now I know it’s really true.”

I was also a mother, and the mother of a Melanesian child. When I arrived in Vanuatu, my daughter, Kireni, was two years old. Only a few months prior to my arrival in Vanuatu, difficult family circumstances had led Kireni's Papua New Guinean father and I to separate. As we got to know each other, the women I worked with as research project participants learned that I wanted my child to live in Melanesia for at least a few years so that she would be bicultural to some degree. The women came to see that I had a high regard for life in rural Melanesia, so much so that I wanted my daughter to experience and know this life. This location connected me in a special way with the research project participants, who were also all mothers of Melanesian children and who wanted the best for their children.

As I write and revise this thesis paper, over two years have passed since I did the research. After completing the research and returning to Canada, I ended up getting paid employment in Vanuatu and returned to start work in February 2003. Since completion of the thesis research, Kireni and I have been back to our host community in North Ambrym four times. We have been adopted into that community and have strong ongoing relationships with people and families there, including the families of the women I worked with as research project participants. Thus, I write this thesis paper not as a complete outsider, but as an outsider / insider – someone who is both an outsider and an insider depending on the context of any particular moment. Tuhiwai Smith explains that,

“Insiders have to live with the consequences of their processes on a day-to-day basis for ever more, and so do their families and communities.” (1999, 137)

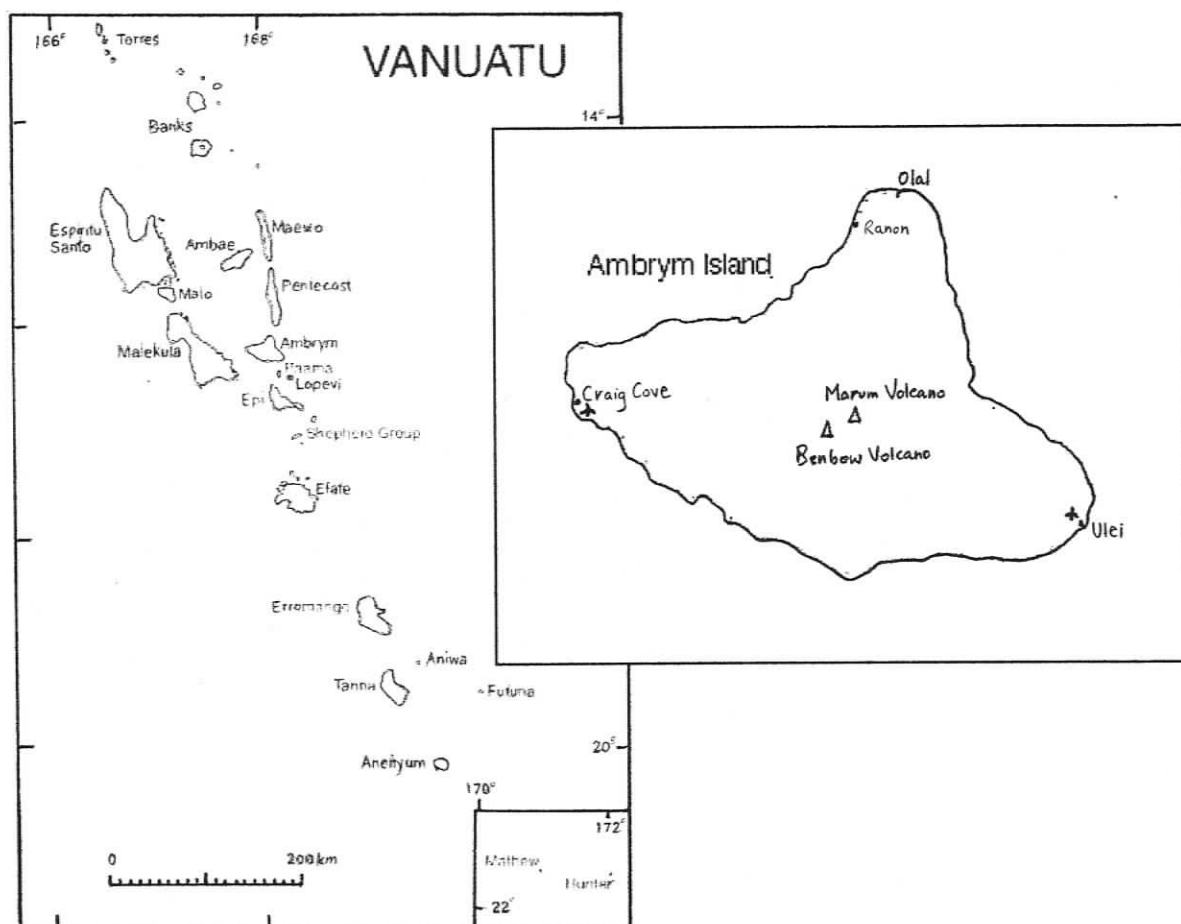
Given that I plan to continue living in Vanuatu for the next few years at least, I am keenly aware that Kireni and I will have to live with the consequences of the research process I initiated more than two years ago, particularly whatever aspects of that research process are made public in this paper. I am keenly aware that I will be perceived and treated like a quasi-insider when the research participants and other members of my host community read this thesis. It is clear to me that I am not just an outsider. I am sometimes an insider as well.

The Research Site

I conducted this research with village communities in the Lolihor region at the northern end of Ambrym Island. Ambrym is one of over eighty islands in the country of Vanuatu, which is located in the Southwest Pacific. Ambrym is an active volcanic island with settlements on the

north, west, and southeast sides of the island. The total population of Ambrym is approximately 9000, over 40 percent of which lives in North Ambrym. North Ambrym comprises three watershed areas – Lolihor, Lonali, and Wowan. I was based in the Lolihor region, which includes seven large villages and several smaller villages as well. (See *Figure 2: Maps of Vanuatu and Ambrym Island.*)

Figure 2: Maps of Vanuatu and Ambrym Island



The traditional staple foods of Ambrym people include yams, taro, bananas, and pig. The people of North Ambrym are renowned wood carvers, producing *tamtams* – fantastic slitgong drums that stand upright in the ground and are traditionally beaten for ritual purposes. There are seven distinct vernacular languages spoken on Ambrym. Two of these languages are spoken in Lolihor – the original vernacular language of Lolihor, which is spoken by everyone living there, and the vernacular language of Northeast Ambrym, which is spoken by a smaller group of people whose

ancestors moved from Northeast Ambrym to Lolihor a generation ago. Many Lolihor people also speak or understand one or more of the languages spoken in West and Southeast Ambrym. Furthermore, most people in Ambrym (and the rest of Vanuatu as well) speak Bislama in addition to one or more vernacular language.

Beginning in the mid-1800s, ni-Vanuatu were taken to work on sugar cane plantations in Queensland, Australia. In Australia, these indentured labourers were introduced to Christianity. By the late 1800s, some indentured labourers returned to Ambrym from Queensland as practising Christians. Presbyterian missionaries arrived in Ambrym in the first decade of the 20th century and within a generation most people on Ambrym had become Presbyterian. In the 1940s, another denomination of Christianity, Seventh Day Adventist (SDA), set up a base in the northern-most village of Lolihor. While a number of newer denominations have been brought to Lolihor in recent years, Prebyterian is still the most popular church. Today in Lolihor there are five different denominations of Christianity: Presbyterian, Seventh Day Adventist (SDA), Neil Thomas Ministries (NTM), Apostolic Life Ministries (ALM), and Word Christian Fellowship. There are also a few older people who have not been converted to Christianity; these people continue to live according to traditional *kastom* only.

Connections to the Site

My host family in Lolihor was the Salong family. I was connected with the Salong family through one their sons, John Salong, who I had known since 1990 when we worked together at the South Pacific Peoples Foundation in Victoria, B.C., Canada. John has been based in Australia since 2000. He has a Masters degree and experience doing research and was willing and able to help me set up various logistical aspects of the research project. John facilitated my communication with the two host organisations – the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and the Lolihor Development Council. He arranged for me to conduct the project in Lolihor and to live with his family while I was there (his family included his mother, father, brother, sister-in-law, and nephew). He also recruited a childcare provider for me. Even before I traveled to Vanuatu, John had helped me to identify a list of potential research project participants. He also arranged for these women to be informed about the research project and about my interest in their participation, so that they were already considering taking part before I arrived in Lolihor. John provided me with feedback and advice as I reviewed and revised the proposed research methods, and also provided me with orientation regarding Lolihor.

Host Organisations and their Requirements

I had two host organisations for the research project – one national organisation, the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, and one local organisation, the Lolihor Development Council.

The Vanuatu Cultural Centre

The Vanuatu Cultural Centre (VCC) has existed in various forms since the 1960s. In 1988, the Vanuatu National Cultural Council was established by an act of Parliament as the highest national policy-making body responsible for management of Vanuatu's cultural heritage. In the same act, the Vanuatu Cultural Centre was named as the principal national institution responsible for executing the policies of the National Cultural Council. As part of its work, the Vanuatu Cultural Centre is the national organisation responsible for screening, facilitating, and administering all research projects in Vanuatu and also for ensuring feedback on these projects to national government and non-government organisations. Ralph Regenvanu, a ni-Vanuatu social scientist with a progressive social conscience, has been the Director of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre since 1995. The VCC is well known throughout the country, even in the rural areas, due largely to its national network of 'field workers' who initiate cultural affirmation programs in their communities and work with outside researchers as local counterparts / trainees.

Tuhiwai Smith points out that it is not always easy to find a host community or to attract research project participants because indigenous peoples tend to be cynical and suspicious about research as it has for centuries been used as a tool of imperialism:

“In Maori communities today, there is a deep distrust and suspicion of research. This suspicion is not just of non-indigenous researchers, but of the whole philosophy of research and the different sets of beliefs which underlie the research process.” (1999, 173)

This is also true in parts of Melanesia as people here have become increasingly aware of the potential for exploitation by foreign researchers, especially since attempts by the United States National Institute of Health to patent a member of the Hagahai community in Madang Province, Papua New Guinea (Tuhiwai Smith 1999, 100). My significant personal relationships with family, friends, and communities in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu have provided me with deep insights into indigenous perspectives on this issue. Indeed, as Tuhiwai Smith says, “It is difficult

to convey to the non-indigenous world how deeply this perception of research is held by indigenous peoples” (1999, 118). However, in my experience in Vanuatu, the Vanuatu Cultural Centre is widely perceived by grassroots ni-Vanuatu people to be an indigenous organisation working in the interests of Vanuatu as a trusted screener and facilitator of outside researchers. Coming as I did with the approval of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and John Salong, I found North Ambrym communities to be relatively trusting and willing to work with me, even as a newcomer to their community.

In order to be permitted to do research in Vanuatu, I had to submit a proposal to the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and then wait up to two months for approval. Once my proposal was approved, I had to pay a 25,000 vatu (\$250-) administration fee to the Vanuatu Cultural Centre before I could proceed with the research. Furthermore, I was informed that there were three main requirements or obligations that I would have to fulfil as an outside researcher. These requirements included: (1) working together with a local counterpart / trainee; (2) provision of a product (or products) of immediate benefit and use to the host community; and (3) provision of a product of benefit to the country. I elaborate on each requirement below.

(1) Local Counterpart / Trainee: In a letter approving the research, Director Regenvanu explained why the Vanuatu Cultural Centre required me (and all outside researchers) to work with a local counterpart / trainee:

“We like to have one person at least spend substantial time with you in order to be able to experience, learn and understand the research process, methodology, and rationale. This will mean that some of the understanding / expertise remains in the community after you leave. Then in the future we will know that we can utilise this person in future relevant local activities because they have an understanding of these issues.” (email correspondence, 8 April 2002)

While Vanuatu Cultural Centre local field workers are usually recruited to work with outside researchers, in my case the Director suggested that John Salong identify an appropriate person from the community. The Vanuatu Cultural Centre also informed me that I was required to compensate my local counterpart for her time at the rate of 1000 vatu (\$10) per day or 500 vatu (\$5) per half day. John Salong arranged for a woman originally from Lolihor to work with me as my local counterpart / trainee. This woman’s name is Emma. While Emma had grown up in North Ambrym, she had moved to Luganville town on Santo a few years earlier and travelled back to Ambrym especially to take up this local counterpart position.

We arranged for Emma to be available to work with me every day (except Sundays) for the three months that I was in Lolihor. Emma worked with me to do pilot interviews – which allowed me to gauge the cultural appropriateness and effectiveness of my interview guides – for each of the different kinds of interviews that I conducted. She also provided language training support during my first four weeks as I made the adjustment from speaking and writing the Papua New Guinea to Vanuatu dialect of Melanesian Pidgin. We always traveled together, by foot or boat, as we conducted interviews and other aspects of the research project. Emma also participated in the interviews and other project activities. Emma and I also debriefed after every research project activity in order to discuss process issues, the data, and emerging / evolving ideas and concepts. Emma was an excellent research counterpart. She is smart and thoughtful, and was able to engage with me in analytical discussions. She had also had significant personal experience with outsiders, as one of her brothers was married to a Canadian, and so was not intimidated by me. For me, the fact that Emma was not intimidated by me and was able to interact with me as a relative equal was of critical importance as I needed someone who could provide me with regular critical feedback on my work and on the project. After my first couple of meetings with Emma I made a journal entry that expressed how pleased I was because, “Emma is not afraid to tell me when something needs to be corrected or changed.”

(2) *Products of Benefit and Use to the Community*: The Vanuatu Cultural Centre also requires outside researchers to provide one or more product(s) of immediate benefit and use to the community. In the case of my project, the VCC wanted me to find ways to help the community understand the issues underlying the research. In the words of Director Regenvanu:

“An important issue is how to make the research topic understandable to the people and community you work with. Sometimes we do not insist on this, as the topics of research are sometimes too academic to be useful to ordinary people anyway, but in your case, the topic is extremely relevant and useful. Accordingly, you should think of some way to be able to engage in awareness-raising activities (workshops?) with the community to talk about the ideas and issues that are the basis of your research. . . . We would consider this a product of immediate benefit to the community.” (email correspondence, 8 April 2002)

In consultation with Director Reganvanu and John Salong, it was decided that John and I would facilitate an awareness-raising workshop involving mapping of community issues in relation to global trends to initiate the research project in the community. I was initially concerned that running such a workshop would bias the community, including the participants, toward a

particular perspective and bias the data as well, but this did not appear to happen in a significant way (for more on this, see below under 'Bias').

The Vanuatu Cultural Centre also indicated that it would be appropriate for me to provide each research participant with something that she would consider a product of immediate benefit. After consulting with both John Salong and Emma, I gave each research participant a machete and several yards of cloth. At the request of the women, these gifts were presented to them in a public way at a community feast that followed the final group interview. I also took a generator to Ambrym, which I used to run my computer and printer. I had purchased this generator with scholarship funds awarded to me by the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE). When it was time for me to leave Ambrym I donated the generator to the community as another product of benefit and use to the community. It is a CBIE requirement that any equipment purchased with CBIE scholarship funds be donated back to the host community / organisation following completion of the research.

(3) Products of Benefit to the Nation: As a product of benefit to Vanuatu, the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and I negotiated that I would provide assistance to a local researcher working at VCC who was conducting research on impacts of imposed land laws. I committed to assist with methodology and methods development, as well as translation from Bislama into English and editing of the final research report. This work has been completed. I also donated the computer printer that I had used while doing my research on Ambrym (which had also been purchased with CBIE funds) to the Vanuatu Cultural Centre.

The Lolihor Development Council

My local host organisation was the Lolihor Development Council, which was established in the early 1990s by the village communities of the Lolihor region with the intent of addressing various community issues and needs. Community conflict was a central concern as the rate of serious conflict had increased significantly after the introduction of the newer denominations of Christianity in the 1980s. By the late 1980s, animosity and dysfunction plagued relations between families and communities that had lived and worked together for generations. The people of Lolihor recognised and addressed this serious problem with the establishment of the Lolihor Development Council – a community council with members from each of the main villages and a women's representative as well. The Council met regularly, aiming to work across

and beyond differences in order to mend damaged relations and ultimately to undertake community development projects for the benefit of Lolihor as a whole. During the 1990s, relations between conflicting communities improved and the Lolihor Development Council also mobilised support from within and outside the community in order to establish a piped water supply for most Lolihor villages.

The Lolihor Development Council also serves as a local level screen for outsiders attempting to bring projects or other forms of 'development' into the area. When John Salong approached the Lolihor community to request permission for me to conduct my research project there, the request had to go through the Lolihor Development Council. Once approval for my project was granted by the Council, I was well placed with support from both the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and this local area council. As Tuhiwai Smith suggests:

“Whilst most indigenous communities have some form of governance organisation, it is more useful to work with such an existing governing body to establish a purpose-developed support group which brings together any outside academic or organisational people involved, the community, and the researcher/s.” (1999, 139)

While the community did not set up a support group of exactly this kind, council representatives attended the community workshop which provided a thorough introduction to the project. Immediately after the community workshop, I began receiving requests to do awareness sessions about the research project in individual villages, including two villages located beyond the borders of Lolihor in the areas of Lonali and Wowan. In response to this development, the Lolihor Development Council committed to having one of its members accompany me on such day trips. The Council also sent representatives – including the Chair and Secretary – to the final community feast. Furthermore, the women’s representative on the Council was one of the research participants.

The Women Who Participated Actively in the Research

The research participants comprised a total of nine women, including the local research counterpart. My original intent was to work with a smaller group of six to eight women focusing on quality rather than quantity of data. However, the cultural imperative to be inclusive and to respect and follow the lead of the local participants whenever possible made it difficult for me to always proceed as I wanted. My selection of research participants was made in a purposive rather

than random way, aiming to involve women from various villages and clans, and women of various ages and religious denominations.

The process of determining the sample reflected the tension between the researcher's intent, the participatory approach, and the cultural imperative to be inclusive. As mentioned above, even before I traveled to Vanuatu, John Salong had helped me to compile a list of proposed participants. John then forwarded the names of these women to the Lolihor Development Council, requesting that the council inform them about the research project and about my interest in their participation so that they were already considering the request before I arrived in Lolihor. I arrived in Lolihor to learn that two of the proposed women – including the woman selected as the youngest, unmarried participant – were not available. At the end of the first day of the community workshop I met informally with my local counterpart and one of the confirmed participants. This confirmed participant pointed out that the proposed group did not but should include a participant from the large Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) village at the north end of Lolihor. I agreed, not only because I felt it was a good idea to have an SDA participant and we needed replacements for the women who were not available, but also because it was important for me to heed the advice of this female elder. We then arranged to have a woman from the SDA village attend the next day of the workshop and this woman subsequently agreed to join the research project as a research participant. I later learned that this woman could be seen to represent two villages, because while her husband is from a different village, she and her family live in the SDA village because of their desire to reside close to their church. Furthermore, the family home is located at the upper edge of the SDA village, not far from the lower side of the husband's village and the family works on the husband's land in the vicinity of his village. At the community workshop, there was also an unexpected addition to the group when the women's representative on the Lolihor Development Council, who is also the local Vanuatu Cultural Centre field worker, expressed a strong interest in taking part. While we already had one participant from the village that this woman is from (and bringing her on would mean that at least one village would not be represented), it would have been inappropriate and disrespectful to turn away this important and keen community member. By the end of the community workshop we already had a list of seven confirmed participants.

The participant list still had sampling gaps. There was no participant from one of the main Lolihor villages, no one who was a member of the Neil Thomas Ministries church, and, most significantly, no young unmarried woman. Given that the group was already large enough, I

decided that I would prioritise trying to include a woman who was young and unmarried. I asked Emma to help me identify and approach such a woman. Within a couple of days Emma had found someone who was keen to take part. A day or two later I also found out that due to gaps in communication brought about either by my second-rate Bislama (which was still heavy with Papua New Guinea accent and vocabulary) or different cultural understandings of the meaning of 'young', this woman, while unmarried, was not as young as I had intended. However, this woman was a single mother who had been raised by a single mother, and as such she brought a unique and important perspective to the sample.

Finally, I had been in Lolihor over two weeks and had already completed the consent process with eight women when another influential community member (one that John Salong had originally identified as a potential participant, but who had been away when I arrived) returned to Lolihor and made it known that she wanted to participate in the project. While I had enough participants already, I felt obligated to include this woman as she was a senior member of the community who had taken part in many community projects in the past. I also felt constrained by the cultural imperative to be inclusive and had a strong sense that it would be a major cultural blunder to exclude this woman. Thus, this woman also joined the project, bringing the final total number of participants to nine.

Summary of Participants

The nine women research participants are all originally from North Ambrym. While I could have chosen to include women from different islands who had married into the Lolihor community, I purposely decided to work only with women who were born and grew up on Ambrym. At the time that I conducted the study, the nine women ranged in age from 20 to 74. The nine women represent six of the seven main Lolihor villages. All of the women are Christian – five of them are Presbyterian, two are Word Christian Fellowship, one is Seventh Day Adventist, and one is Apostolic Life Ministries. All of the women have children – from as many as 11 to a minimum of two – and all but one of the participants is married. I did not do systematic gathering of data about levels of formal education because I aim not to follow the conventional emphasis on measuring levels of education by the amount of formal schooling attained. To this end, I never asked the women directly how much formal education each of them had. I did find out the general level of formal education of each participant by asking my local counterpart, although she did not always know exactly how many years each woman had gone to

school for. Two of the participants – the local counterpart and one more – had completed Class 10. The other women had all attended the local primary school which had been set up by the Presbyterian Church for somewhere between one and six years. See *Table 1: Biographical Information about Research Participants* for more information. Note that in Table 1 and throughout the thesis, I have used pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Research Project Ethics

University Requirements

I conducted this research in order to satisfy the thesis project requirement of a Master of Arts degree in Dispute Resolution at the University of Victoria in Canada. Prior to undertaking this research, I went through research project approval and ethics approval processes as per the requirements of the University of Victoria. The research project approval process involved setting up a thesis committee, presenting a thesis proposal to the committee, revising the proposal, and finally being granted approval to undertake the proposed research. I was also required by my university to go through an 'Ethical Review of Human Research' process which involved completing a rigorous review form. I completed my first ethics review form in late 2001 before travelling to my first proposed research site in Papua New Guinea. A few months later I had to leave Papua New Guinea and to revise and resubmit my ethics review to reflect the new research location in Vanuatu. See *Appendix I: Human Research Ethics Committee Certificate of Approval*.

Community Consent to the Project

From my years of first-hand experience of life in rural Melanesia, I arrived in Lolihor already aware that a potential downside associated with participation in this study was the addition of another commitment to the already busy lives of the village women. Tuhiwai Smith raises this issue and suggests that researchers need to have more realistic expectations about the potential for collaboration with busy community members:

“Idealistic ideas about community collaboration and active participation need to be tempered with realistic assessments of a community’s resources and capabilities, even if there is enthusiasm and goodwill. Similarly, the involvement of community resource people also needs to be considered before putting additional responsibility on individuals already carrying heavy burdens of duty.” (1999, 140)

Table 1: Biographical Information about Research Participants

Participant	Limel	Lilin	Rachael	Athou	Woyang	Mara	Sim	Nalu	Mamae
Age	74	60	late 50s	52	48	about 40	38	32	20
Village	A	C	B	D	E	B	C	D	A
Marital Status	married	married	married	married	married	unmarried	married	married	married
No. of Children	11	8	10	6	11	2	2	4	2
Level of Formal Education	minimal	primary	minimal	primary	Class 10	primary	primary	primary	Class 10
Denomination of Christianity	D	A	A	A	B	A	A	C	D
Personal Statement	<p>"I just want to say that I like to work every day. I don't like sleeping or lazing around all the time. Even now I'm sitting here weaving a mat. Even when I go to town it's always this way, because I don't like sitting around doing nothing."</p>	<p>"For many years now, we've been trying to help women to put their heads together to find ways to improve their lives, especially the young mums. But shame and fear prevent the women from believing in themselves and their ideas, so our work never seems to come to anything. And if every mama could only see that we're all the same, and no one is better than anyone else, I think then things would improve."</p>	<p>"My pigs and chickens are important to me. I always raise more than we need so that I have some to sell to earn a little money for the family."</p>	<p>"I live in D Village, which is located in the bush up on the hill. We have three religions - A, C, and E. We have a kindergarten and Class 1 and two teachers. The community itself pays the teachers. We have a council that looks after our needs. We have two water tanks and one well that were donated by the UNDP. We eat garden foods all the time in D. We find it hard to earn money. That's my story. Thank you."</p>	<p>"I want to say that I'm glad to be a mum, because it's wonderful to watch the next generation growing up. Also, I want to say that I graduated from high school but still I'm happy to just be a village mama like the others who didn't go to school. I'm happy to work in my gardens and go fishing. I often go fishing at night."</p>	<p>"Thinking back on the work that we did together with you, I just want to say that I always feed chickens and weave mats, not only to eat and use, but also to sell to make money to pay my daughter's school fees."</p>	<p>"Here's my small story. I just want to work in my garden, feed my pigs, weave mats, and feed my chickens. I like this work because I can sell pigs, chickens, and mats to make money. Also, pig and chicken are good kinds of meat. If I eat meat when I'm sick I feel better. That's my short story. Thank you."</p>	<p>"I want to tell you a bit about my life. I want to do so many things like work for the community and the church but it doesn't happen because my husband has so many commitments here and in town too. I was president of the women's association a few years ago, but then I had to finish and now there's no more work happening with women here. Thank you."</p>	<p>"The impact this study had on the community is not small. Because every family had already really put themselves into the cargo system. If we hadn't taken part in this study, it would only have gotten worse. Me too, it's been big for me personally. Now I'm going to try to make changes in my family life that help fix the problems we learned about."</p>

Note: The names of the research participants used here and throughout the thesis are pseudonyms. The women's villages and religious denominations have also been coded in order to provide a degree of anonymity.

However, the prospective participants were all competent adults and I was not in a position of power or authority over any of them. Prospective participants were able to accept or decline my invitation to participate depending on whether or not they were interested. Furthermore, during the consent process I explained that participants were free to withdraw from the project at any time.

As mentioned above, as a required 'product of benefit to the community' the Vanuatu Cultural Centre asked me to facilitate a workshop to introduce and orient the community to the research project. The VCC made this request because it saw value in the community learning about and engaging with the ideas and issues that were the basis of the research. I saw value in having the opportunity to engage the broader community in gaining consent for the project. Thus, even before I started the actual research, interested community representatives and five of the research participants (22 people from ten North Ambrym communities) attended a two-day workshop at which I overviewed the project rationale, methodology, process, and research ethics issues, including explaining who I was and why and how I had come to Lolihor. In this way, the participants and larger community were made aware of my intent to work in a participatory, even decolonising way, and that I welcomed community involvement and feedback.

A few days after the community workshop, in response to a request by the research participants I met again with the women in order to discuss the project in more detail. At this meeting, we reviewed some of what we had discussed at the workshop, and then engaged in an interactive discussion about sampling, the process of informed consent, and the research methods and process. I was flexible and responsive to the women's suggestions about sampling and other aspects of the research process. The women recognised my sincere respect for and interest in their ideas and opinions. In this way I began a process of establishing relationships of respect and trust with the research participants.

Informed Consent by Individual Women

I worked through a process of informed consent with the research participants prior to starting interviews. I arrived in the community with a draft consent form which John Salong had helped me to translate from English into Bislama. Emma then helped me with an additional round of editing – addressing issues of language, cultural interpretation, and process – in order to

produce a final Bislama version of the form (see *Appendix II* for the English translation of this form). Emma and I visited each participant at her home to work through the consent process with her. We used two different consent process formats – one for the women who were comfortable working with written materials and another for those women who were more comfortable working in an oral format. For the two women who preferred to use an oral format, I read the Bislama version of the consent form to the participant who indicated her consent by saying either “I agree” or “I don’t agree” after each paragraph. I audio-taped this process and the resulting audio-tape is the proof of consent. With the other women who were comfortable working with written materials and signing a consent form, we still read through the consent form with them first, providing an opportunity to ask questions or discuss anything that was not completely clear after each paragraph. In almost every case, we had a group of interested family and community members sit in to listen to the consent process. A number of these people ended up participating in the process as well by asking questions and making comments. In this way, community involvement and understanding of the project were increased.

In the consent process I explained that I would endeavour to protect the participants’ anonymity through the use of pseudonyms and coding. This issue became the subject of some confusion and much discussion at one of the consent process sessions, as one community member had difficulty understanding why I would mask the identities of the participants. This man, who is a village chief, had attended the community workshop and appeared to have a relatively good grasp of the issues and to be supportive of the project. However, it was unclear to him why we would want or need to hide the identities of the participants as he felt that, given the research topic, the participants should be proud to talk about their everyday activities and to use their real names when doing so. I explained that despite what seemed to the chief like a public-oriented topic of research, it was feasible that the interviews could end up moving into areas that the women felt less comfortable being public about and that I was required by my university to protect the participants’ anonymity. The consent form also explained that I would protect the participants’ confidentiality by talking with only my academic supervisors about the content of the interviews. The participants and I also discussed what the data would be used for and negotiated what would happen to the data once the research project was complete. All of the women indicated that they wanted the tapes and interview transcripts to be returned to them once I no longer needed them. The participants were also provided with a list of names of people to whom they could go to raise questions or concerns. This list of people included three ni-Vanuatu, one of whom was a local woman (the local counterpart). As mentioned above, the participants

were also informed that they could withdraw from the project at any time if they decided they needed or wanted to.

Diversions, Burdens, and Contributions

I had predicted that the project would have perceived benefits for participants, including a welcome diversion from the daily routine, and this turned out to be true. As the project proceeded, some participants told me directly that they were enjoying participating in the study. Furthermore, I actually had difficulty limiting the number of interviews that I conducted because more women than I had planned for wanted to do 'bush' interviews with me.

Prior to doing the research, I had also thought that the project might be a positive empowering experience for the women as they became more aware of how their everyday lives had the potential to comprise resistance to the Comprehensive Reform Program and corporate globalisation in Vanuatu. With at least two of the women this happened. In other cases, I think the women may have ended up feeling somewhat burdened by this new-found responsibility as perpetrators of vital community knowledge and ways of life which would require changing certain attitudes and lifestyles. In any case, at the final group interview, all of the women talked about how they had greatly enjoyed participating in the study, including learning more about what was happening in the world around them and how they fit into this changing world.

Due to both Vanuatu Cultural Centre requirements to provide products of benefit to the community and nation, and also my own prior understanding about how people build respectful relationships in Melanesia through reciprocity, I gave back to my host family, host community, and the country in numerous ways. I paid my host family for room, board, and childcare for the three months I stayed with them in 2002. As mentioned above, I also paid my local research counterpart at rates set by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. I facilitated the community workshop to introduce and orient the community to the research project. I had a special lunch cooked for the women after each of the two small group interviews, and provided the 'meat' (that is, pigs, chickens, and fish) for the feast that followed the final group interview. I gave each of the research participants a machete and several yards of cloth as an end-of-project gift. I donated a generator to the host community and a computer printer to the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. As a service of benefit to the nation, I assisted a local researcher based at the Vanuatu Cultural Centre

with methodology and methods development and translation and editing of the final research report for a national research project about impacts of imposed land laws.

The community members and research participants who attended the workshop came away with a greater understanding and awareness of who I was and what the research project was about. Some workshop participants also came away with an increased understanding of how they might continue to be involved with the project or the underlying issues of resistance to corporate globalisation. I subsequently received numerous requests to do awareness sessions about the research and the underlying issues in individual villages both in Lolihor and in the more northern regions of Lonali and Wowan. One workshop participant, who was a church youth group coordinator on the island, asked me if I would consider running another similar workshop with youth. He felt that young people were underrepresented at the first workshop and wanted youth to have an opportunity to learn about the issues as well. While I often felt pulled between my research and these community requests, I never declined a request as I felt it was an extension of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre's request that I find ways to help the community understand and engage with the issues underlying the research project. It was also evident that the community awareness sessions were important in terms of building support and goodwill in the community. By the end of my three months in Lolihor, in addition to conducting my research I had facilitated six additional one-day awareness sessions (in five different North Ambym villages) and a three-day youth workshop (with 22 youth participants from nine Lolihor villages). At the youth workshop, the participants ended up forming and formally launching a youth group whose mandate was to do community awareness about impacts of globalisation and other related issues.

Research Design

The design and research methods proposed prior to arrival in the community were adjusted during the course of the project in response to various factors, including the need to be inclusive. In the end, I used a multiple method data collection strategy comprising community research, participant observation, individual and group interviews, and reflexive journaling.

Community Research

As a research method, 'community research' indicates that I lived in the community I worked with for an extended period of time – in this case, over three months in 2002, six weeks

in 2003, and two weeks in 2004. A community research approach allowed me to experience and gain a first-hand understanding of the everyday rhythms and dynamics of life and work in Lolihor. I use the term 'community' research rather than 'field' research because as Tuhiwai Smith explains, "'community' conveys a much more intimate, human and self-defined space, whereas 'field' assumes a space 'out there' where people may or may not be present" (1999, 127). This distinction also implies that how the research is conducted includes decision-making and validation of the research by the community:

"[Community research] relies upon and validates that the community itself makes its own decisions." (Tuhiwai Smith 1999, 127)

This meant the research procedures were as participatory, flexible, and responsive to community requests and events as possible. For example, at the end of the community workshop, the research participants who were present asked if they could meet with me to discuss the project in more detail. In response to this request, the women and I met at the end of that same week. Together we reviewed the research methodology, the proposed methods and work plan, and the process of informed consent. We also discussed the issue of sampling and the women provided me with their views on this issue. I was concerned, for example, that we did not have a participant from one particular village, but the women felt that one participant was well placed to adequately represent two villages – her village of residence and worship, and her husband's village where she works and interacts regularly as well. Another adjustment concerned my original intent to finish the research project by providing a special lunch for the research participants. One woman suggested that this proposed lunch be expanded into a bigger community feast. The other women all thought this was an excellent idea and so I adjusted my original plan. While this adjustment meant increased costs for me as I had to buy more pigs and chickens, I was delighted that the women saw the project as important enough to justify a large closing ceremony.

Participant Observation and Documentation

While my original intention was to conduct interview research, Steiner Kvale suggests that, "[if the research explores] more implicit meanings and tacit understandings, like the taken-for-granted assumptions of a group or a culture, then participant observation and field studies of actual behavior supplemented by informal interviews may give more valid information" (1996, 104). Thus, while living in the community I not only conducted interviews, but also observed

and documented the things that women did in their daily lives. Following methods of participant observation outlined by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, I focused my documentation on initial impressions, daily routines and patterns, noteworthy incidents and events, things that local people reacted to as significant or important, and different forms of or variations in patterns (1995, 26-30). In a participant observation journal, I documented my observations about everyday life, two large rites of passage ceremonies that I attended, and other significant events in the community for over three months in 2002 and eight weeks in 2003 and 2004. The bulk of my participant observation documentation, however, happened in conjunction with six 'bush' interviews – that is, semi-structured individual interviews conducted while working with each woman in her food garden for a day. In preparation for these days of combined interviewing and participant observation, I put together a set of participant observation guide questions that served to focus and guide my observations and jottings out in the gardens, and my documentation once back at my desk.

Reflexive Journal

I made extensive use of a reflexive journal to document my own thoughts about the research process, the data, and how the process was affected by my relationships in the community and by other factors as well. I made reflexive journal entries almost every day, and sometimes more than once a day. An important part of the reflexive process was regular debriefing sessions with my local research counterpart. After every interview and other research activity, Emma and I met to discuss and reflect on content and process issues. Following is an example of a reflexive journal entry regarding my experience of the pulls of community research:

“At the request of the community we went to the northernmost district today to do an awareness session about my research and the issues it's based on. It went OK but I found the experience not entirely satisfactory. Why? . . . Well, we got to a really late start because the boat transportation was late . . . and then when we arrived at the community the turnout wasn't great because we were late . . . so feelings of frustration about 'wasting time' started to bother me. The session itself went OK (I think) but the group wasn't very lively . . . there were some bright faces but few who made comments or asked questions . . . except for the local council rep who invited me in the first place . . . he made some excellent comments and is a good speaker . . . I hope that he'll continue with some kind of community awareness after I leave. At the end, the group expressed concern that my talk should be heard by more people, including more community leaders . . . so they requested that I come back and I agreed. But feelings of anxiety plagued me . . . the pulls of community research . . . pulled between my research and the requests for awareness that it's generating. This is what the Cultural Centre wanted, required in fact . . . but I'm struggling to do it all and I'm starting to worry that I'm going to have to limit it at some point . . . even though I really don't want to have to say no to any community request.”

Interviews with Women

I gathered data via semi-structured interviews – eight individual interviews and three group interviews. The decision to do a relatively small number of interviews was based on an emphasis on the quality rather than quantity of interviews and analysis. Kvale suggests that an interview study should interview between five and 25 people, depending on time, resources, and when one reaches a “point of saturation” (1996, 102). Critical parts of the interview process included the ongoing testing, adjusting, and refining of the interview guides in collaboration with my local counterpart, Emma, as well as the post-interview debrief and conceptual, analytical discussions with her. The other key component of these processes was the everyday thinking and writing that I did in my reflexive journal, as this was the place where I documented process issues and conceptual developments.

Small Group Interviews

My first interviews were two small group interviews. In addition to Emma and me, four women participated in each small focus group. My goals for these small group sessions were to map the women’s daily and seasonal activity patterns, and to get to know the research participants better. Emma assisted me with facilitation. I documented the women’s descriptions of their daily and seasonal patterns on large papers taped to the walls. After each interview, I produced a transcript in Bislama that was then circulated among the participants so that each woman had an opportunity to change or remove any data that she felt were inaccurate or that she was not comfortable including.

Individual ‘Bush’ Interviews

After the completion of the two small group interviews, I conducted six individual ‘bush’ interviews. The ‘bush’ interviews were semi-structured individual interviews conducted while spending a day with each woman working in her garden, including walking at least an hour each way to get there and back. The intended purpose of the ‘bush’ interviews was to learn more about the women’s everyday activities and work on the land, as well as their knowledge, understandings, and perceptions of the land and their work on the land. To this end, I chose to combine semi-structured interviewing with participant observation. The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that while I followed an interview guide, I was open to letting the

conversational interview follow natural digressions as initiated by the participants. I did not tape these interviews. Instead, I made notes about the conversations which I typed up as soon as possible after the interview. I also made a substantial entry in my participant observation journal after each 'bush' interview day.

Food and what is done with food – such as, feeding, feasting, and gifting – are of utmost importance in Melanesia. While I fed the participants after the group interviews and individual taped interviews, the participants all fed me during our 'bush' interviews, because with the 'bush' interview format they felt obliged to show their appreciation to me for working in their garden. We generally worked for a couple of hours – weeding, clearing and cleaning a new area, hoeing, or planting – and then had a lunch or snack break up at the garden. Some of the women carried a saucepan of food with them up to the garden, while others lit a fire and roasted root crops for us. In two cases, we had fruit and coconut up at the garden and then, once the work was done, walked back down to the women's homes to have a later lunch. In every case, I conducted at least part of the interview during the refreshment break at the garden. Every woman also presented both Emma and me with food gifts – taro or yam, and usually some greens too – to take back with us to our families (see *Figure 3: Food Gifts*).

Figure 3: Food Gifts



In-depth Individual Taped Interviews

Following the completion of the six 'bush' interviews and their documentation, my ongoing analysis and concept development processes led me to decide to conduct two (rather than just one) in-depth individual interviews, which were taped and transcribed. Emma also participated in both of these interviews. The point of these interviews was to have a more in-depth discussion and come to a better understanding of the relevant issues and to explore emerging themes as well. I picked the two participants for these interviews purposely as I saw them as representing strongly contrasting life experience locations. One of the interviewees had extensive exposure to outsiders as her husband had worked closely with the plantation boss, and this life experience was evident in many of her attitudes and actions. The other interviewee was the single mother of a single (long-time widowed) mother, and had grown up and still lived in a more remote inland village. This woman's life experience, attitudes, and actions provided sharp contrast to those of the first interviewee. I hoped I might gain some interesting and important insights by working with these two women.

The interviews were each about an hour long. They were more formal due mainly to the taping, but were still semi-structured and conversational. As with the 'bush' interviews, I followed a flexible interview guide that allowed the discussion to move in unplanned directions if initiated by the participants. Each of the two interviews followed a similar, but also slightly different, interview guide. Once the interviews had been transcribed, the participants had a chance to review the transcripts and to remove or revise the data in any way they wanted. In this way, the participants retained control over what data could be used in a public way in the research paper.

Validity Test Group Interview and Final Data Collection

Following the two small group interviews, six bush interviews, and two taped in-depth interviews, I conducted one final validity test group interview. The primary purpose of this final group interview was to test the validity of my data and initial analyses by getting feedback from the women about what I thought I had learned from them about their everyday activities and their perceptions of these activities. I prepared for this group interview in collaboration with my local counterpart by compiling a Bislama document which provided a summary of what I thought I had learned from the women. At the focus group interview we worked through the document

together, reading through and then talking about each area of work / activity. Emma assisted me with facilitation and with probing for deeper insights. I did not tape this interview, but instead made notes on large papers taped to the walls and also on my copy of the interview transcript.

I was mindful of Kvale's warning that while focus groups facilitate interaction among the interviewees which often leads to "spontaneous and emotional statements" about the topic of research, the format reduces the interviewer's control of the situation and can lead to "relatively chaotic data collection, with difficulties for systematic analysis of the intermingling voices" (1996, 101). Despite this forewarning and my attempts to facilitate the session in a way that would minimise this dynamic, I still experienced this problem. While I was delighted to find the women interested and engaged in the research topic and related issues, there were times when more than one person spoke at once or when I was busy documenting what one person had said and missed what others were saying. Despite such challenges, I was able to stay on top of the documentation process enough to gather valuable feedback about the validity of my initial findings.

Weekly Calendars

As I prepared for the final group interview by doing preliminary data analysis, I recognised a gap in the data. In particular, I had gathered data about daily and seasonal work and activity patterns, but was lacking information about the women's weekly patterns. It became apparent that this information was important in terms of enabling me to paint a complete picture of the overall pattern of women's work and activities including daily, weekly, and seasonal rhythms. Aiming to address this gap, I created a simple one-page weekly calendar form which I gave to each woman at the final group interview. I asked the women to fill out the form in their own time and to return the form to me before I left the community two weeks later. The women who were not comfortable working with written materials said that they would dictate to a family member who would note down their responses for them.

Autobiographical Statements

I started the process of piecing together and writing up biographies about each of the research participants while I was still in the community. I found this to be a challenging process for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it was not culturally appropriate to ask women who I had known

only a few weeks a list of direct personal questions, and so I found myself wondering how I was going to learn the women's ages and other important contextualising personal information. I also found myself feeling uncomfortable writing about the women. I felt that the women should have a chance to write about themselves and decided to offer the women such an opportunity. I produced a one-page biographical information form which asked only for name, age, place of birth and current residence, and religion. The lower half of the page was blank, with a request that each woman tell me anything else about herself that she wanted to tell me. I gave each woman a copy of this form at the final group interview (together with the weekly calendar form) and asked that the women complete the form on their own time. I explained that I would use the information gathered in the forms to compile participant biographies. The two women that do not prefer to work with written materials dictated their statements to others who transcribed their responses for them. The women thus had an opportunity to write about or represent themselves in whatever way they desired. While the responses were all relatively brief, they were each unique, providing a personalised vignette of something that mattered to each woman. (One exception to this individualised uniqueness is apparent in one case where one participant dictated her statement to another and it is likely not a coincidence that the two women's statements are similar.)

Community Presentation and Feast

At the request of the women, immediately after the final validity test group interview, the research participants and I hosted a community presentation and feast to officially close the research project. The event consisted of a presentation by me about the initial findings of the research, presentations of gifts from me to each of the research participants and from them to me, speeches by the Chairperson of the Lolihor Development Council and the local village chief, a feast, and then a local-style string band dance. I was seen as the main host as I provided the 'meat' – that is, two big pigs, several chickens, and some fish. The research participants and many other supportive community members provided the rest of the food.

At this event, Tuhiwai Smith's Celebrating Survival approach to community research guided me. In my presentation to the community about the initial findings, I highlighted the many enduring strengths of life in Lolihor even though the initial findings did not indicate the survival of all indigenous knowledge and ways of life. I pointed to the kinds of indigenous subsistence knowledge that do still exist, and to the enduring local control of land that enables

people to feed themselves and their families without going to work for someone else. I also pointed to the fact that no one in Lolihor was ever without food, shelter, or productive work to engage in, and explained that the so-called 'developed' countries could not boast this. After highlighting this context of community self-reliance and strength, I then went on to outline some of the findings that pointed in a different direction, but which, I explained, the community itself had the power to turn around if it so desired. For people who are accustomed to being told that they are 'poor' and 'undeveloped', and that it is outside agencies who will bring in superior outside knowledge and resources in order to improve their lives, my presentation was unusual. I was told by many people in the community that the presentation of an overall positive picture of the community was affirming, thought-provoking, and motivating.

Issues that Arose While Doing the Research

Bias

During my first week in the community, John Salong and I facilitated the two-day community workshop in order to introduce the community to the research project and to the ideas and issues that were the basis of the research. I had concerns about the possible impact of this workshop on the bias of the participants and of forthcoming data. However, I ran this workshop at the specific request of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre as one of my required products of benefit to the community. It was the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, not I, that decided it was important for the community to have a formal opportunity to be informed about what I was doing in the community and to learn about the issues underlying the research. For this reason, my concern about the possibility of biasing the research participants and the data was overridden by the need to satisfy the reciprocity requirements of the indigenous host agency, which I saw as a vital component of doing ethical research. Five of the research participants attended the community workshop and came away from the workshop with a heightened awareness of my interests and biases.

During the first few weeks after the workshop, I was constantly trying to assess how much the awareness workshop was affecting the things that the women did and said to me. That is, did the women understand well enough the issues discussed at the workshop, and also care enough about what I thought about what they said and did, to actually adjust their words and actions? This was an issue that Emma and I discussed frequently during our post-interview debrief sessions and that I wrote about often in my reflexive journal. By the time I had completed

the small group and 'bush' interview sessions (about ten weeks into my stay in the community), it was apparent to me that even if it was their intention to impress me by saying and doing things that were in line with my world views and biases, none of the women had gained a deep enough understanding of the issues to adjust all or even most of their words and actions to this end. Occasionally participants made remarks that I suspected had been said less because they were the truth and more because the women thought the comments might impress me, but such incidents were infrequent. By the time I was ready to leave the community, I was relatively confident that the overall impact of the community workshop on the data had not been significant.

Constraints in Data Gathering

While overall I was able to gather the data that I needed in order to weave together answers to my research questions, there were various dynamics that affected the data gathering process in a constraining and sometimes negative way. As mentioned above, while conducting this research I was the single mother of a two-year old daughter, named Kireni. While my location as a mother connected me with my research participants and likely helped me to relate to and understand them better, the daily work that I did as a mother sometimes constrained my work as a researcher. For example, while conducting the research in Lolihor my daughter was sick and in need of mother's special attention for at least a couple of days each month. Every time this happened there were plans that had to be changed and deadlines that had to be moved back as the work of being a mother took priority over everything else. Yet I found my own experience of parenting helped me to see a key theme in the data, picked up as 'Mama First' (see Chapter V below for more on this).

Another constraint in data collection related to relationships of power and voice between women and men, and specifically the impact of the presence of men at interviews. Men were present without being invited at two of the 11 interviews conducted – the first half of one of the small group interviews and one of the 'bush' interviews. In both cases, the presence of men affected the data gathering process in a negative way. The men were not only present, but actually participated and even dominated the discussions, thereby limiting the involvement of the women I was attempting to interview.

There were also relationships between the women research participants – relationships of age and of what in Bislama is called *singaot*. *Singaot* refers to terms of address as well as the

codes of conduct associated with the relationship characterised by each different term of address. For example, terms such as mother, father, brother, sister, auntie, uncle, nephew, niece, cousins, and in-laws each connote a specific code of conduct for that relationship. While some relationships are formal and respectful, others are less formal and more playful; some relationships are characterised by a strong sense of obligation, while others are more egalitarian. These relationships had a bearing on the distribution of power among the research participants at the group interviews. However, *singaot* in North Ambrym works in an intergenerational way so that, for example, someone who is much older may end up referring to someone much younger as her or his parent. One effect of this intergenerational style of *singaot* is to redistribute and balance power to a degree. Power relations between the research participants were also affected by personalities and specific family histories. However, John Salong, who knew most of the women – their personalities, family histories, and relationships – suggested the composition of the groups for the small group interviews. In one group, John brought together the women who had done fairly extensive community work, both with him and/or with other agencies (such as the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and the Vanuatu National Council of Women). These women had more experience expressing themselves and were less intimidated by the interview process. The other group included women who had been less involved in such community work and had less experience with talking ‘in public’ and perhaps less inclination to speak out as well. The grouping of the women in this way worked well to create spaces for expression that were relatively well balanced.

Another tension that affected the data gathering process was the fact that some of the interview questions and issues for discussion were potentially shameful for the women. In particular, it became evident at both the small group and ‘bush’ interviews that it was not always easy for the women to be entirely open and honest about how much community knowledge they had or had not passed on to their children. In my post-interview debrief sessions with Emma, it became clear that for a woman to admit that she had not passed on all of the community knowledge that she could or ‘should’ have would likely feel to her like an admission of incompetence or failure as a mother. During some interviews there were times when the women were sparse on detail, possibly in order to avoid addressing this issue. For example, when I asked the women at the small group interviews if they had taught their daughters how to weave mats, they all said yes. I later learned through participant observation and subsequent interviews that almost none of the young women know how to weave as well as their mothers and many know

only the most basic patterns and are unable to do the more difficult parts involved in joining and finishing mats.

As already discussed above, the cultural imperative to be inclusive led me to involve more research participants than I originally intended to. As the project progressed this same dynamic led me to do more interviews than I had planned on doing because all of the women were so keen on being involved as much as possible. For example, I had planned on doing 'bush' interviews with only half of the women. At the small group interviews, however, it became clear that the women all wanted to do a 'bush' interview and were going to be disappointed if they were unable to take part in this stage of the research. In response to this dynamic I adjusted my work plan accordingly, aiming to do 'bush' interviews with all eight women. In the end, I was unable to do 'bush' interviews with two of the women due to my daughter getting sick. One of the participants was particularly disappointed and so just before I left Ambrym I did a village visit with her at which she showed and talked with me about the pigs she was raising.

The Local Counterpart

According to the Vanuatu Cultural Centre (VCC), the main point of working with a local counterpart is to ensure that, "some of the understanding / expertise remains in the community" after the researcher leaves (email correspondence, 8 April 2002). The Director of the VCC, Ralph Regenvanu, explained that, "then in the future we will know that we can utilise this person in future relevant local activities because they have an understanding of these issues" (email correspondence, 8 April 2002). As mentioned above, Emma was an excellent local counterpart, able to engage with me in analytical discussions and provide me with critical feedback on my work. Furthermore, I never got the sense that Emma had values or obligations that prevented me from seeing what was in the data. Despite Emma's effectiveness as a local research counterpart, her ability to fulfil this longer-term role as a community-based Vanuatu Cultural Centre resource person has been constrained by the fact that she no longer lives in the community. She lives in Luganville town and, as mentioned above, traveled by plane back to Ambrym especially to work with me on the project. This was a feature of the research design that some people in the community were critical of and brought to my attention. Several people asked me why I did not work with someone currently living in the community instead of flying someone in from town. Once I was made aware of this issue, I came to recognise that this was a legitimate critique. Hence, when I was asked to work together with youth to facilitate a second awareness workshop,

part of the reason I accepted was that I wanted to find ways to work with other more permanent residents of the community so that more of the understanding and expertise did indeed stay in the community after I left.

Data Analysis

My process of data analysis began while I was still in the community collecting data. While in Lolihor from July through October 2002, I engaged in a constant process that included:

- data gathering (participant observation, interviews),
- documentation (participant observation journal entries, transcribing interviews),
- reflection (reflexive journal entries, debriefing sessions with local counterpart),
- analysis (conceptual memos in reflexive journal), and
- validity checks (analytical and critical feedback discussions with local counterpart, final validity test group interview).

After I had completed my community research and moved from Ambrym back to Port Vila town, I shifted my main focus from data gathering to data analysis. I developed a data analysis process that was informed and guided by several theorists. From the start, my research and data analysis processes were influenced by the work of Sandra Kirby and Kate McKenna, who developed research ‘methods from the margins’ which aim to serve the interests of less privileged, oppressed, and exploited groups of people (1989). In particular, I incorporated Kirby and McKenna’s emphasis on the need for critical reflection on the social context and for ‘intersubjectivity’ – that is, “an authentic dialogue between all participants in the research process in which all are respected as equally knowing subjects” (1989, 129).

Grounded Theory and its Critiques

My analysis process was based in part on Glaser and Strauss’ classic Grounded Theory approach to qualitative research (1967). This involved developing categories which illuminated the data, testing the relevance of the categories by attempting to ‘saturate’ them with many appropriate cases, and then developing these categories into more generally relevant analytic frameworks (see Silverman 2000, 144). I was also mindful of critiques of the Glaser and Strauss approach. In particular, the approach has been critiqued for failing to acknowledge implicit

theories which guide work at an early stage; for being clearer about the generation of theories than about their test; and for degenerating into an “empty building of categories” if not used intelligently (Silverman 2000, 145).

Approach to Analysis

My first step in data analysis involved reading through the data. The data comprised over 350 pages of reflexive journal and participant observation notes; transcripts from the small group interviews, bush interviews, in-depth taped interviews, and final validity test group interview; and weekly calendars and autobiographical statements. As I reviewed the data, I did some initial coding and began the process of developing categories that provided focus. I generated categories and coded the data within the framework of a theoretical scheme I had developed. This theoretical scheme was a continuum of various related processes of colonisation and decolonisation centered around the rural women and their everyday experiences. I was aware of Silverman’s caution that “every way of seeing is also a way of not seeing” – that is, that a theoretical scheme can “deflect attention away from uncategorised activities” (2000, 147). With this in mind, I made a conscious effort to seek out and account for uncategorised activities as well. This initial analysis process was also informed by Silverman’s recommendation to develop a steadily more narrow focus by concentrating on data which are of high quality and on one process within the data (2000, 140). After reading through and coding about half the data, I produced charts with the data organised into areas of focus. At this stage, key areas of focus featured women as mothers first and everything else second, women doing increasingly more work than men, women’s perceptions of subsistence versus cash, and sources of oppression of women. I also produced lists and charts which outlined formative impressions about relationships in the data – that is, connections, patterns, disruptions, and paradoxes.

Validity Checks

As the analysis, conclusion drawing, and verification processes progressed, I incorporated a concurrent process of validity checks. I used the following five inter-related ways of thinking about and working with the data in an attempt to produce more valid findings: the refutability principle, the constant comparative method, comprehensive data treatment, deviant case analysis, and appropriate tabulations (see Silverman 2000, 177-78).

As I proceeded with data reduction, data display, and analysis, I also considered the *refutability principle*, meaning that I set out to refute initial assumptions about the data in order to avoid finding only what I might want or expect to find (see Silverman 2000, 178). At the same time, I used the *constant comparative method*, which involves “inspecting and comparing all the data fragments that arise in a single case” (Glaser and Strauss 1967, in Silverman 2000, 179). As per Silverman’s recommendation to employ a process of moving from smaller to larger datasets (2000, 179), I analysed an initial dataset that included my reflexive journal notes, participant observation notes, and transcripts from the small group and bush interviews. The notes I made during this stage of analysis were then used to generate categories, which were then tested out on a larger dataset including transcripts from the taped interviews and notes from the final group interview.

My set of categories incorporated various dynamics or themes in the data, as well as opposing forces or tensions within themes. While initial analysis led to the development of categories and sub-categories that fell at opposite ends of a spectrum, continuing inspection and analysis showed up a significant number of phenomena that fell somewhere in the middle between the two poles. Ristock and Pennells point to the importance of “expanding dichotomies” in order to avoid often inaccurate ‘black and white’ distinctions (1996, 84). With this in mind, it became increasingly clear to me that this middle ground data was particularly important in terms of coming to as complete an understanding of my research topic as possible.

I also aimed for *comprehensive data treatment*, meaning that any generalisations that I made applied to every piece of relevant data I had collected. As Silverman points out, “comprehensive data treatment implies actively seeking out and addressing deviant cases” (2000, 180). To this end, I paid special and careful attention to examples that disrupted patterns in the data. My attempts at deviant case or ‘disrupted pattern’ analysis led me to Janice Ristock and Joan Pennell’s principle of “appreciating discourses” through hermeneutic interpretation, in which “understanding is achieved through viewing a phenomena as a whole within its layers of context” (1996, 89). Ristock and Pennells’ approach to hermeneutics is indebted to the cultural anthropologist, Geertz, and the phenomenological philosopher, Ricoeur, which together led the authors “to search out how people within particular locales envision reality” (1996, 89). I attempted to come to a greater understanding of disrupted patterns in my data by viewing and analysing each deviation or disruption within its layers of context. That is, I considered each disruption evident in a research participant’s actions or words in the context of the participant’s

particular life story, current situation, and her relationship to the research project and the research topic. This process allowed me to better understand and account for the disrupted patterns that arose in my data. For example, one woman disrupted a pattern of serving local food for lunch during bush interviews by serving rice and tinned fish to me. I later learned that this research participant was the wife of a man who had been adopted into the Australian plantation boss' family. She had consequently taken on much of the value systems and attitudes of this adopted family, including a strong devaluation of local foods in favour of imported foods. Being aware of this woman's life experience helped me to better understand her anomalous behaviour.

In testing my initial categories and themes on the larger data set, I added to, revised, and refined my lists and charts of areas of focus and relationships within the data. I further developed a number of key themes, including that of women as mothers first and foremost which I named 'Mama First'. At this point, I presented the data analysis to my thesis supervisor for feedback. Recommendations from my supervisor led me to push a couple of key concepts further beyond the limits of binary thinking using semiotic square analysis (Ristock and Pennells 1996, 78-96). This stage in the analysis helped me to recognise ways in which the women avoid choosing to live in either a traditional economy or modern cash economy, but instead combine positively-valued aspects of both economies. I then created tables and draft text to help explicate key themes and relationships that had become apparent in the data. I produced 14 different tables about the women's everyday lives and work and their perceptions of their lives and their work, four of which are included in Chapters IV and V below.

CHAPTER IV: WOMEN'S EVERYDAY WORK IN LOLIHOR, NORTH AMBRYM

This chapter addresses the first research question: What do rural women in Melanesia do in their everyday lives, particularly those activities that work to maintain traditional land-based ways of life and communal value systems, and how do the women perceive, understand, and value these activities? Women in Lolihor, North Ambrym are the backbone of the community. They are the ones who labour, love, and laugh on a daily basis, without fail, in order to provide for their family members' needs – that is, to feed, clothe, educate, caregive, and attend to the personal health and hygiene of their children, grandchildren, and often nieces and nephews as well; and to attend to the needs and wants of husbands and elderly relatives.

Categories and Patterns of Women's Work and Activity

The women have daily, weekly, and seasonal work patterns. Six categories of work help to illuminate why and for whom women engage in the various kinds of work and activity that they take on. Table 2 serves as an introduction to the six categories – *Family Work*, *Extended Family Maintenance and Community Building Work*, *Subsistence Work*, *Community Work*, *Church Work*, and *Money Work* – and the specific kinds of work and activity that the women engage in.

Family Work is work that relates immediately to caring for children and other family members. This category includes caring and cooking for children and other family members, washing dishes and clothes, house cleaning and yard work, and sewing.

Extended Family Maintenance and Community Building Work is work that relates immediately to maintaining extended family relationships and strong communities. One prime example within this category is the work associated with rites of passage, conflict resolution, and other ceremonies. Rites of passage ceremonies are held to mark events such as circumcision, engagement, marriage, divorce, rank-taking, or death. These ceremonies take place mainly during the yam-eating season from May through August. Conflict resolution ceremonies happen any time during the year when the need arises. Each different ceremony has its own particular set of rituals, but they all involve the gifting or exchange of various important community currencies, including yams, taro, bananas, pigs, mats, and in contemporary times, rice, tinned foods, and cash.

Table 2: Women's Everyday Activities by Categories of Work*

	<i>Family Work</i>	<i>Extended Family Maintenance & Community Building Work</i>	<i>Subsistence Work</i>	<i>Community Work</i>	<i>Church Work</i>	<i>Money Work</i>
<i>childcare</i>	X	X				
<i>husband and extended family care</i>	X	X				
<i>ceremonies (rites of passage, etc.)</i>		X				
<i>garden work</i>		X	X			X
<i>cooking</i>	X	X				
<i>washing dishes, saucepans</i>	X					
<i>washing clothes</i>	X					
<i>sewing</i>	X					X
<i>house cleaning, yard work</i>	X					
<i>feeding pigs, chickens</i>		X	X			X
<i>weaving mats</i>		X	X			X
<i>weaving baskets</i>			X			
<i>production of housing materials</i>			X			
<i>collecting shellfish</i>			X			
<i>shore fishing</i>			X			
<i>copra production</i>						X
<i>kava production</i>						X
<i>church women's group</i>					X	
<i>church cleaning and decorating</i>					X	
<i>community meetings</i>		X		X		
<i>community work</i>				X	X	

*Note: While some kinds of work could have been classified under every category, each kind of work has been classified under only one, two, or at most three categories in order to highlight the main areas that the work or activity falls within. For example, cooking could be seen to fall under every category depending on what one is cooking for – for family, for a rite of passage ceremony, for a community or church event, or as a personal family fundraiser. However, here cooking is classified under *Family Work* and *Extended Family Maintenance and Community Building Work*, as most cooking happens in these two categories.

Subsistence Work is the work done to grow one's and one's family's own food, and to produce other basic needs from materials attained locally without paying for them with cash money. Various kinds of work in this category include animal husbandry, collecting shellfish, shore fishing, weaving mats and baskets, production of housing materials, and 'garden work'. 'Garden work' refers to the work done by women in their gardens, which are primarily food crop gardens, but in which they also grow the cash crop, kava. A day of garden work generally includes walking up to the garden (anywhere from five to 60 minutes one way); clearing and cleaning new areas to plant; hoeing, planting, and weeding; taking a snack break; digging up root crops, and gathering greens, fruits, and firewood to take back to the village; packing everything into bundles and baskets; and then carrying everything and walking back home. 'Production of housing materials' refers to activities such as sewing up sago palm fronds and weaving coconut palm fronds for roofing or wall materials (see *Figure 4: Weaving Housing Materials*), and carrying bamboo and other 'raw' housing materials down from the bush.

Figure 4: Weaving Housing Materials



Community Work is work done for and with the village community as a whole, including community meetings, village clean ups, and other kinds of community workdays. *Church Work* is work done for the community church, including cleaning, fundraising to maintain and build

new church buildings, and church-related meetings. 'Community meetings' are meetings called and chaired by the village Chief, open to any and all community members, at which important community issues are discussed. To call people to the meeting, the Chief blows a conch shell early in the morning before community members have gone to their gardens or elsewhere for the day. 'Community work' indicates a period of time dedicated to working with other community members for the welfare of the community as a whole. Community workdays are usually organised by the Chief together with other community leaders, often church leaders. Early in the morning, the Chief blows the conch shell to notify people that there will be a community meeting followed by community work. The work is often a community fundraiser sponsored by one family (for example, one family pays the community in cash to help them do a big piece of group work, such as 'shelling out' copra or clearing a new garden), and the proceeds usually go to the community church. It is thus evident that there is a blurry line between community and church in Lolihor villages. Another kind of community work day is a village clean up day, in which the Chief dictates that each family work at home, cleaning up thoroughly around its own family house and yard (cutting grass with a machete, sweeping up fallen leaves, etc.). The activity 'church women's group' generally includes a women's church service in the morning followed by a meeting, and then sometimes a church fundraising event or community 'Good Samaritan' work (for example, visits with the sick or elderly).

Money Work is work done in order to earn cash money for personal and family use. Various kinds of *money work* include copra and kava production, as well as animal husbandry, sewing, weaving mats, and growing food crops for sale. 'Copra production' refers to the work associated with the production of copra, a cash crop derived from coconuts. Copra production involves collecting coconuts, 'shelling out' the coconuts (removing the coconut meat from the coconut shell using a special moon-shaped knife), and then smoking the coconut meat until it becomes copra – that is, dry, transportable coconut 'meat'. North Ambrym people pack the copra in large sacks and sell it to traders who pass by in copra boats, more or less regularly depending on the market for copra. 'Kava production' refers to the production of the cash crop, kava. Kava is a plant that many people now grow in their gardens alongside their food crops. The roots of the kava plant can be processed to produce a sedative drink for local consumption or a powder for the export market. People in North Ambrym harvest, clean, and pack kava roots in large sacks ready to be sold for cash. The kava must then be transported by ship to one of the two towns, Port Vila or Luganville, to be sold.

Daily Work: Family and Garden

Basic analysis utilising the categories of work outlined above reveals the following general pattern of women's daily work and activity:

- first, five to 30 minutes of *church activity* (personal prayer and/or attending morning church service); followed by
- three to four hours of *family work* (cooking, feeding family, house work, washing dishes and clothes);
- five to six hours of *subsistence work* (walking to and from, and working in food gardens);
- about three hours of *family work* again (cooking, feeding family, bathing family, telling bed-time stories to children);
- five to 30 minutes of *church activity* (family or personal worship); and
- at night, after the children are asleep and if not too tired, an hour or two of personal leisure activity / work that cuts across two or three categories – that is, *family* and *money* (sewing), or *subsistence*, *extended family maintenance and community building*, and *money* (mat weaving).

Participant observation and small group interviews made clear that the women's most typical day was a day of garden work, and that garden work comprises from at least one to as many as five days each week. On days that the women do not go to work in the garden, they engage in other kinds of work including: washing clothes (often for a whole day if there are lots of clothes to wash); shore fishing, digging for crabs, or collecting shellfish; weaving mats (one woman said that she sometimes weaves for one full day to start and finish a mat); house and yard work (sweeping, raking, etc.); sewing; attending meetings (church women's group meetings, community meetings, etc.); sewing up sago palm fronds and weaving coconut palm fronds for housing materials; and copra production (some of the women said they often block off an entire week or two at a time for copra production).

Weekly Work: Garden, Family, Church, and Community

Analysis of the women's weekly work and activity patterns features the women doing, on average, three days of subsistence work each week, two days of family work each week, one and

a half days of church work and activity each week, and a half day of community work each week. Saying that the women spend a certain number of 'days' working or being active within a certain category does not mean that they work exclusively within this category for this many days, but rather that they see this number of days per week as being dominated by work or activity within this category. Table 3 presents the average number of days per 'typical week' the women spend being active within each category of work / activity.

*Table 3: Average Number of Days per Week the Women Spend Being Active within each Category of Work / Activity**

<i>Category of Work / Activity</i>	<i>Avg. Number of Days per Week Spent on the Category of Work / Activity</i>
<i>Subsistence Work</i>	3 days / week
<i>Family Work</i>	2 days / week
<i>Church Work / Activity</i>	1.5 days / week
<i>Community Work</i>	0.5 days / week
<i>Total</i>	7 days

**Note:* Saying that the women spend a certain number of 'days' on a category of work does not mean that they work exclusively within this category for this many days, but rather that they see this number of days per week as being dominated by work or activity within this category.

The women spend between one and five days per week in their gardens (primarily *subsistence work*), and between a half day and five days per week on various kinds of *family work*. The wide variations here can be attributed to the fact that one project participant goes to the garden much less often than the rest because she is older and no longer goes to the garden regularly. This woman now usually stays at home six days a week and her major work includes *family work* – that is, house and yard cleaning and cooking for her son and his family who she lives with.

The village church takes up between one and three days of the women's time each week. Church-related work and activity includes Saturday or Sunday church services (depending on the denomination of Christianity), a day of church women's group activities, and church cleaning and decorating. The data about women's weekly patterns introduce work and activities that fall under the category of *community work*, which was not introduced in the data on daily patterns. Up to one day per week is dedicated to the category of *community work*, that is to either 'community meetings' or to 'community work'.

A significant variation within this weekly pattern is the time spent on *money work* and *extended family maintenance and community building work*. Half of the women mentioned engaging in activities that fall within these two categories as part of their weekly pattern. Lilin said that she usually sews for at least a half day every week – sewing being an activity that falls under two categories, *family work* and *money work*. Lilin said on several occasions that sewing is the main way she makes money. Mara said that she spends a full day a week weaving mats, an activity which falls under three categories – *subsistence*, *money*, and *extended family maintenance and community building work* – as mats are a basic need produced from locally-derived materials, something that some women sell in order to make money, as well as one of the key exchange items used at ceremonies. Mara is one of the best mat weavers on Ambrym. Mara weaves to produce floor and bed coverings for her family and exchange items for ceremonies, but weaving is also the main way that she makes money. Sim spends about a half day a week collecting food for her pigs – a kind of work that, like mat weaving, falls under the three categories of *subsistence*, *money*, and *extended family maintenance and community building work* – as pigs are raised to eat and to sell to make money, but they are also one of the key exchange items used at ceremonies. Nalu spends a day a week visiting her family – both immediate and extended family members – in the village she grew up in, which is an hour's walk away from her husband's village. This activity is classified as partly *family work* and partly *extended family maintenance and community building work*.

While half of the women did not indicate engaging in *money work* or *extended family maintenance and community building work* as part of their weekly pattern, participant observation and interview data made clear that these women all do engage in these categories of work at some point every week. (In the sphere of *money work*, the oldest woman in the group may be an exception, as she no longer has money-earning responsibilities in her family mainly because she no longer has school-age children for whom she must pay school fees.) However, the data indicate that these kinds of work do not happen on a weekly basis as much as the other kinds of work. For example, with respect to *money work*, the women mentioned that one kind of *money work* – copra production – is often done by blocking off an entire week or two for this activity. Hence, copra production is a kind of work that most readily shows up through analysis of annual work patterns. Another kind of *money work*, kava production, is usually done at the garden alongside the other work associated with growing food. With respect to *extended family maintenance and community building work*, the main kinds of work that fall under this category are those associated with hosting, helping out, and contributing at rites of passage and other

ceremonies. As mentioned above, most of these ceremonies are held during the yam-eating season (May through August each year). Hence, these kinds of work are also most readily highlighted via analysis of annual or seasonal work patterns.

Seasonal Work Patterns: Yams, Mats, Rites of Passage, and School Fees

Life in North Ambrym is completely interconnected with the yam growing cycle. For North Ambrym people, yams are the most important, most highly valued food crop, and are also considered the most delicious of all the root crops. While yams, taro, and bananas can all be contributed at rites of passage and other ceremonies, yams are definitely the most highly valued food crop contribution. (Cassava and sweet potato, on the other hand, can not be contributed as they are considered lower grade, everyday foods.) Yams are planted between July and October, during the cooler, dryer season. Once the yams are in the ground and are growing it is taboo to collect shellfish, to do shore fishing, or to walk up to the volcano until the first yam has been harvested in about February. Yams are harvested from February through April in preparation for the annual ceremony season – including engagements, weddings, deaths, circumcisions, and rank-takings – which runs from May through August. Once yams have been harvested, the women plant sweet potato, corn, and cassava. Taro and bananas are planted and harvested all year round.

The ceremony season is a busy time, especially for families who decide that it is this year that they will host a circumcision, engagement, wedding, death, or rank-taking ceremony. The work involved in putting on a ceremony is enormous and generally requires the coordinated efforts of a strong wife and husband team, together with the help and support of their extended family networks. This work involves growing the necessary crops (yams, taro, bananas); raising enough pigs; weaving (or buying) enough mats; earning enough money (as contemporary ceremonies use cash money at least as much as community currencies); maintaining enough strong extended family relationships that enough people come to contribute and help at the ceremony; and usually cooking huge amounts of food on the day of the event (although at some smaller ceremonies only uncooked food is exchanged, rather than a combination of uncooked and cooked food as is the norm at larger ceremonies).

Pandanas, the plant used to make mats, is harvested in July and August, and is then dried, prepared, and wound up into large balls of weaving material. Gardens are being cleared and cleaned and yams planted from July through October. Once the big annual work of yam planting

is done, women have more time to weave and sew – November through February is considered the weaving and sewing season by many women. Women weave mats as floor and bed coverings for their families, and they weave extra mats to be used as exchange items at ceremonies. Avid weavers produce even more mats to sell to earn money. Women sew clothes for their families, and some women also sew clothes to sell to others in order to make money.

While the traditional seasonal calendar was connected to the weather and the yam-growing season, contemporary seasonal work patterns are now also connected to the perceived need to earn money to pay three terms of school fees each year. Most families with school-age kids engage in copra production at least three times a year – in January to pay first term school fees, in May to pay second term fees, and in August to pay third term fees. Hence, copra production comprises about two weeks out of every four months, or about ten percent of a family's time.

Communal and Individual Work

Lolihor women work both in groups and by themselves – it depends on the kind of work they are doing, and on other factors such as why and where they are working. Table 4 presents an overview of the kinds of work and activity engaged in by women and whether each kind is done mainly in groups, mainly individually, or is done both in groups and individually.

Women work in groups for a variety of reasons. Working in groups is a way for women and their families to pool work and resources, especially with labour intensive kinds of work that may require the coordinated efforts of a group. This happens a lot with garden work. For example, many families build wooden fences around their food gardens to prevent pigs from going inside and eating the crops. Often, a fence is built communally by members of an extended family, who then all make their food gardens inside that one large fence. It is common to see women going to help out in the garden of a relative one day – to clean a new garden in preparation for planting, to hoe and plant crops, or to weed – knowing that the woman they are helping out will reciprocate when needed. Other labour intensive kinds of work that women often do in groups include cooking for a big event or ceremony (see *Figure 5: Women Preparing Laplap for a Feast*), or 'shelling out' copra.

Table 4: Women's Communal and Individual Work

	<i>Mostly Communal</i>	<i>Mostly Both Communal and Individual</i>	<i>Mostly Individual</i>
<i>childcare</i>		X	
<i>husband / extended family care</i>		X	
<i>ceremonies (rites of passage, etc.)</i>	X		
<i>garden work</i>		X	
<i>cooking</i>		X	
<i>washing dishes, saucepans</i>			X
<i>washing clothes</i>		X	
<i>sewing</i>			X
<i>house cleaning, yard work</i>			X
<i>feeding pigs, chickens</i>			X
<i>weaving mats</i>		X	
<i>weaving baskets</i>		X	
<i>production of housing materials</i>		X	
<i>collecting shellfish</i>		X	
<i>shore fishing</i>		X	
<i>copra production</i>		X	
<i>kava production</i>			X
<i>church women's group</i>	X		
<i>community meetings</i>	X		
<i>community work</i>	X		

Childcare is another important kind of work for which women constantly pool their resources. For example, a woman's sister cares for her children for a few days while she goes to visit relatives and attend to family business in another part of Ambrym. When she returns home and goes to pick up her children, she takes her sister's children with her as well, so both sisters end up with some child-free time. Another woman knows she is going to be too busy with the work associated with an upcoming ceremony to give adequate attention to her children, so she takes her children to go stay with her mother for a few days or her mother comes to stay with her to help out with childcare.

Figure 5: Women Preparing Laplap for a Feast



Women also work in groups because it is more fun than working alone and because it allows them to spend time and maintain relationships with relatives. When women work in groups they are able to combine work with pleasure, as they have an opportunity to share stories and support, and to laugh together. This social aspect of the activity functions to help maintain relationships. As such, work that is done in groups can often be classified under at least two categories – that is, the category that pertains to the work or activity itself, and the category of *extended family maintenance and community building work* which accounts for the social aspect of the activity. For example, women often go do their wash in groups. The drudgery of wash becomes fun when a group of women are able to do it together, and to shift their focus from the huge heap of dirty clothes to the latest village news or family issue. In one village, despite the fact that there is a piped water supply, the women often do their wash in groups down at the nearby creek. Working at the creek makes for a fun day for the children as well, who can easily play away a few hours in the potholes above where their mothers are washing. In another village, where the piped water supply reaches numerous individual homesteads, wash is now more often done on an individual basis.

The work associated with cooking is classified as *mostly both communal and individual*. As with wash, contemporary innovations related to cooking have led to a decrease in working communally. The introduction of a piped water system which feeds numerous individual homesteads has led to an increase in women washing alone at home, rather than working in a group at the nearby creek. So too with cooking, the introduction of the saucepan has led to an increase in women cooking on an individual basis. One main traditional method of cooking involves grating root crops or cooking bananas using shell tools (see *Figure 5*) and then cooking them in coconut cream in an earthen hot-stone oven. The dish produced is called *laplap* in Bislama. It is possible for one woman to prepare a *laplap* on her own, but this form of cooking is much better suited to working together with one or two more women – two women to grate the root crops, one woman to grate the coconut, and then two or three people working together to make the fire to heat the stones, to wrap up the *laplap* in large leaves, and to transport the large bundle to and from the hot-stone oven. *Laplap* is also eaten communally, with family members sitting around the *laplap* in a circle and eating with their hands. Today, North Ambrym women cook in saucepans more than they make *laplap*. It is now common for women to make *laplap* mainly only on the day they go to church¹ and other special occasions, and to do saucepan cooking more regularly. Because saucepan cooking is well-suited to working individually, there has been an increase in women cooking on an individual basis. Food cooked in a saucepan is also usually served on plates in individual servings and eaten with utensils. So, while a family typically sits around a *laplap* in a circle and eats together, with saucepan cooking family members more typically sit farther apart and are less engaged with each other while they eat. It is also worth noting that there are no saucepans or dishes to wash with *laplap*, as the biodegradable leaves that the *laplap* was cooked in need only to be disposed of. But with saucepan cooking, after people have eaten, someone, usually a woman, must wash the dishes and saucepans – another kind of work that is done mostly on an individual basis.

Perhaps the best example of communal work that combines work and fun is the rites of passage and other kinds of ceremonies that take place in Lolihor. In Bislama, such a ceremony is referred to as a *lafet*. These ceremonies often feature huge extended families from many villages

¹ This holds true for most Lolihor women, except for those who are Seventh Day Adventist (SDA), whose religious beliefs prohibit them from taking on any strenuous work, including cooking, on the Sabbath.

from all parts of Ambrym coming together to pool resources and work, and also to socialise and thus renew important family relationships.

Women's Perceptions about their Work

Most of the women I interviewed regard *subsistence work* as the most important and most enjoyable work, and also the category of work that they take the most pride in.

When asked what work the women view as most important, most said various forms of *subsistence work*, most often garden work. When asked why garden work was important, the women's responses included, "*Food is life*", "*No garden, no food*", and "*We need yams, bananas, and taro for ceremonies*". Some said childcare was the most important kind of work. Athou feels that childcare is the most important kind of work because, "*If you don't do a good job of caring for your kids, they'll be all over the place and won't learn the things they need to learn.*"

Women's responses regarding the least important kind of work were varied. Four of the nine women did not want to answer this question. Of the five women that did answer, the responses included various kinds of *subsistence work* and one kind of *money work* that the women saw as having superior alternatives. For example, three of the women said that fishing or collecting shellfish was the least important kind of work because, "*There are other kinds of protein to eat*". One woman said copra production – a form of *money work* – was one of the least important kinds of work because, "*There are other ways to make money*". Sim's response to this question stood out from the others. Sim said that kava production – a form of *money work* – was the least important kind of work because it was having a negative impact on the community: "*Kava is ruining the men. It's making them tired and lazy all the time.*"

When asked what work the women enjoy the most, half of the responses were various kinds of *subsistence work*. Limel, Rachael, and Nalu enjoy garden work the most. Another three enjoy weaving mats, one of them in combination with shore fishing, digging for crabs, and cooking. Two of the women said that they enjoy weaving as it is a way to make money. Both women also provided an additional reason – one said she enjoyed making mats to sleep on, and the other said she liked being ready to contribute at ceremonies. The third woman, Mara, said simply, "*I love weaving*". Lilin and Athou both enjoy sewing the most because it is the main way that they make money. Thus, the responses include a combination of *subsistence work* and

money work, and also point to an interest in creative work (weaving and sewing). Woyang said that she enjoys childcare the most.

When asked what kinds of work the women enjoy the least, the responses were varied and pointed to no obvious pattern. Two women dislike fishing, two women dislike weaving, two women dislike sewing, one woman dislikes feeding pigs, and another dislikes washing clothes. Two women said they do not enjoy copra production because it is, "*too much work for too little money*".

When asked what work the women take the most pride in, five of the nine women answered garden work. These women all talked about taking pride in seeing the food that they had planted grow. Limel takes particular pride in her local yams, while Mara takes pride in her 'water taro' plants. Nalu said that she takes pride in caring properly for her children: "*It's really important to me that my kids are well taken care of and healthy.*" Athou takes pride in raising high quality pigs. Woyang said that she takes pride in washing the dishes and clothes really well. Lilin said that she takes the most pride in her sewing, because, "*If I do a good job with my sewing, then more people will give me sewing jobs and I'll make more money.*"

Who's Doing the Work and Why

In attempting to better understand women's everyday lives and work, and their perceptions about what they do and why, it was important to gain a better understanding of the division of labour between men and women – that is, what kinds of work are done primarily by women and what kinds of work women share with men. The women were asked to look in more detail at the kinds of work that they do regularly, in order to assess whether or not they share the work with men or do it primarily themselves. There are also kinds of work that are primarily men's work that were not considered, such as hunting for wild pigs, and carving canoes and *tamtams*. Both women and men in the community, however, talked about a current trend for men, especially young men, to work less and 'play' more – for example, to drink kava, sit around and talk with friends, and sleep. This point is discussed in more detail below.

In the sphere of *family work* – including childcare, cooking, washing clothes and dishes, and sewing – women feel that they are working mostly on their own. Only one of the nine women said that her husband helped out regularly with some kinds of family work: "*I'm really*

lucky because my husband washes the dishes more than I do." In the area of childcare, one woman said, *"It's really common for our men to sit around and tell stories with other men while we do the work of taking care of the kids."* The women in one focus group explained that contact with outsiders had led to men doing less in this sphere than before:

"Some men cook, but most men don't cook very often anymore . . . now usually only the women cook. Before the white man came, all men used to do their own cooking according to a traditional custom called 'tambu faea' [taboo fire]."

In the sphere of *subsistence work*, women said that they alone weave mats and collect shellfish, but that both women and men do shore fishing, make housing materials, and feed pigs and chickens. However, in the area of garden work and teaching children about garden work, the women in both focus groups said that while both women and men do this work, women do more of it. They provided a number of different reasons for this situation. All of the women agreed that one major reason was men drinking too much kava and then not getting up in the morning to go work in the garden. Another woman said that her husband does not have as much stamina as she does to work a full day in the garden: *"My husband goes to work in the garden but doesn't stay long . . . after only a couple of hours he says he's tired and goes home."* Other reasons given included men spending more time away from the village than women, and men being more easily distracted from everyday work by things like tourists.

Regarding the division of labour between women and men in the area of garden work, it is traditional custom for the men to do the work of planting and tending to new yams. This work involves visiting the yam gardens on a daily basis for the first couple of months in order to ensure that the new vines grow up off the ground along trellises, and do not fall down on the hot ground where they would be burnt and killed. Women are expected to take on more of the responsibility for all other crops, especially taro plants. However, the women said that these days they are taking on more and more of the responsibility for even the yam plants, as their husbands spend less time in the garden.

With *extended family maintenance and community building work*, while women alone weave mats, both women and men feed pigs. Furthermore, the women said the men are equally involved in the work associated with rites of passage and other ceremonies. This statement was supported by my own participant observation at three rites of passage ceremonies – two weddings and one circumcision ceremony. At these ceremonies, I witnessed both women and men working

busily – women peeling and grating root crops and coconut for *laplaps*, and men preparing and tending to the stone ovens, cooking large pots of rice, and butchering pigs and cows as well. In the sphere of *money work*, the women said that they share much of this work equally with men. While women alone weave mats to sell to earn money, women and men both feed pigs and chickens, and women and men share the work associated with copra and kava production.

In sum, the data point to women working mostly on their own in the area of *family work* and doing more of the day to day *subsistence work*, especially garden work, than men. The data also show men taking more of an interest and sharing more of the work with women at ceremonies and in the sphere of *money work*.

Passing on Key Community Knowledge

Women see men as doing more of the work of passing on the knowledge about the land – that is, the locations, names, borders, landmarks, and oral histories of the land that a family works on. But they see themselves and other women as doing more of the work of teaching their children about growing food.

Knowledge about the Land

In most families in North Ambrym the men control and pass on more of the knowledge about the land. Men control this knowledge as it is perpetuated within a patrilineal system of landholding whereby land is passed from fathers to sons. Girls learn their own family land from their parents, but then marry and move to live and work on their husbands' land, and so have to learn about this land from their husbands and in-laws. As a result, married women's knowledge about the land that they work on is often not as thorough as their husbands' knowledge. Women often know the locations, names, borders, and landmarks of the land, but do not know the important oral histories associated with how the family came to have the right to work on the land. For example, Sim said,

“My father taught me about our family land more than my mum, because mum came from a different village . . . so she didn't know the land as well as my father . . . only he knew the stories [oral histories] about the land.”

Sim now works on her own family land, which is relatively unusual, because the members of her husband's extended family have been disputing their lands. Sim and I spent a day together

cleaning a new garden and then planting cabbage. When I asked Sim how much she knew about the land we were working on she said,

"I don't know the stories [oral histories] about the land well because I married a man from a different village and moved away from my family, from my father . . . but my brothers know the land and the stories."

Rachael, who works on her husband's land, had similar comments about her own knowledge about the land: *"I know the names and borders of the land but I don't know the stories [oral histories] . . . my husband knows the stories about each piece of land too."* So, while all of the women said that they and their husbands were both involved in teaching their children about the land, four of the six women said that their husbands or brothers knew the land better than they did. None of these four women viewed the work of passing on the more detailed knowledge about the land, including the important oral histories, as their own responsibility. Instead, the women viewed this work as being the responsibility of men.

Two of the six women were different. Lilin said that she knew as much about the land as her husband, and that she and her husband worked together to teach their children and now their grandchildren too. Nalu said that her father-in-law had passed on all the important knowledge about the land to her. She explained that her husband did not go to the garden very often as he spent much of his time away from the village working in town. Her father-in-law recognised this and had made a point of teaching Nalu everything that she and her husband needed to know about the land. Nalu went on to explain that she was doing more of the work of passing on the knowledge about the land to her children because she was the parent that they more often went to the garden with:

"My kids learn about the land and the gardens when they follow me to the garden . . . they don't learn from their father as much because he doesn't go to the garden very often . . . he's usually either away in town or at a meeting or something."

Nalu raises a key point. As already highlighted in the data regarding the division of labour between women and men in the sphere of garden work, women are the ones who more often go to work in the garden and take the children with them to the garden. Thus, women are the ones who more often walk with and work with the children on the land. So while men control the knowledge about the land through the patrilineal system of landholding, the women also make key contributions to passing on this knowledge as the children learn from their mothers when they accompany them to the garden.

Knowledge about Food Gardening

Nalu alone made the connection between her work as both primary food gardener and childcare provider, and thus as the parent currently doing more of the work associated with passing on the knowledge about the land. However, all of the women felt that not only had they learned about food gardening mainly from their mothers and other female relatives, they were doing more of the work of passing on the knowledge about food gardening to their children. Nalu said that her mother, not her father, had taught her about food gardening, because while her mother spent most of her time in the garden, her father spent most of his time on local politics: *"My mum did gardens and my father did politics."* And now Nalu is the one doing more of the work associated with teaching her children about food gardening, because her husband is more focused on earning money in town and, when he is in the village, on local politics (as he is a member of the local community council). Sim said that she does more of the work associated with teaching her children about food gardening, because her husband spends the bulk of his time working for money: *"My husband doesn't go to the garden much these days as he works full time at the local school."*

Woyang said that her mother alone had taught her about food gardening, and that she was the parent doing more of the work involved in teaching her children about food gardening: *"My husband has taught the children too, but not as much as me, because when he goes to the garden he usually goes without the children, but when I go to the garden I always take the children with me."* Rachael explained that her grandmother had taught her about food gardening because her mother died when she was very young:

"My grandmother taught me to make food gardens because my mother died when I was young. We would go to the garden together and she would teach me . . . to clear and clean new gardens, to hoe, and to plant taro and greens."

Lilin's mother also died when she was young and her grandmother was also already dead, so she said her father taught her some basic food gardening skills. However, she said she learned much more from her mother-in-law after she was married. Lilin also said that while both she and her husband worked in the garden, and her husband had done much of the work of teaching her boys about planting yams, in general she did more of the work involved in teaching the children and grandchildren about food gardening because her husband tended to focus his energies more on

growing kava: *"I do more to teach the children about food gardening because my husband is more interested in planting kava than food."* Mara, the single mother of a single (widowed) mother, said that her mother alone had taught her about food gardening and that she alone was teaching her children: *"My father died when I was young, but my mother alone taught me everything."*

In sum, both women and men contribute to teaching children about food gardening. In particular, men often teach the children about the work associated with growing yams, while women focus on all other food crops. However, in general, due to a variety of factors mentioned above, these days women go to work in the garden more than men do and take the children to the garden with them more than men do. Thus, women are doing more of the work and passing on more of the knowledge in the sphere of food gardening.

During two small group interviews, I learned that garden work is perceived as one of the most important kinds of work that women do on a regular basis. Later, during six 'bush' interviews, I spoke with six different women in more detail about their perceptions about garden work, land, and the value of passing on knowledge about food gardening and land to their children. When I asked the women if they felt it was important for their children to learn the names, landmarks, and oral histories of the pieces of land they work on, they all said that it was important. When I asked why, the women provided three different and yet related reasons. One reason provided was that this knowledge shows a connection with the land. For example, Mara said, *"If I know the name of this piece of land, it shows that I come here regularly."* A second reason is that they see this knowledge as the key to holding on to land. Nalu explained that,

"Children need to know this information in order to hold on to their land. They must know. It's dangerous not to . . . because sometimes people will try to push them off their land if they don't know the landmarks and histories of the land well."

Rachael, whose response also fell in this category, said, *"Children must know the names, borders, landmarks, and histories of their land in order to defend themselves in the event of a land dispute."* The third reason provided is again different and yet related to the other two reasons. Lilin said that she felt it was vital for children to learn the land well in order to avoid land disputes:

"It's important for us to know the names of the places where we work . . . it shows that we know our land. And children need to learn the borders and land marks to avoid land

disputes, because if you cross over a border when you work you will anger the family that works next to you."

In sum, the women's comments regarding why they see it as important for their children to learn about the land were varied and yet were all related to ensuring that their children are able to hold on to their land and to avoid disputes over land with other community members.

When I asked the women if they felt it was important for their children to learn how to make food gardens, they all said that it was important, and again provided three different reasons. The main reason why they felt it was important to learn how to make food gardens was to enable their children to feed their own families – that is, the survive or subsist. Sim and Lilin explained that it was important to them to know that if they died, their children already knew how to make food gardens in order to feed their own families. Mara said, *"If you plant, nurture, and harvest foods, you eat. If you eat, you live . . . if you don't eat, you die."* Nalu provided a different reason. Her response indicates that she views teaching her children how to make food gardens as important in terms of enabling them to feed their own families, particularly in the event that her children do not do well in school and are unable to get work in town. Her response seems to imply that she views life in town as the first-choice future for her children: *"If they don't do well in school and aren't able to get a job in town, then they can live in the village and make food gardens to feed their families."* The third reason was provided by Woyang, who said,

"It's important for my children to know how to make gardens so that they can sell their crops to make money. My husband and I put our kids through school by growing and selling food crops and kava."

Woyang's response indicates that she feels that it is important for her children to learn how to make food gardens in terms of enabling them to make money. Hence, women's perceptions about why it is important for their children to learn how to make food gardens range from viewing the knowledge as a key to survival or subsistence, to viewing the knowledge as a key to being able to make money.

Other Important Community Knowledge

The women also spoke about to what degree they are passing on other kinds of important community knowledge to their children. In general, the data reveal decreasing levels of

indigenous subsistence knowledge and other kinds of important community knowledge among younger women.

With cooking, the women all said that during the last generation there has been a sharp increase in the use of saucepan cooking and a consequent decrease in other more traditional forms of cooking. The women explained that today many young women do know how to make *laplap* and *wuwu* (a traditional breadfruit recipe), and some know how to cook in bamboo, but another form of traditional cooking – cooking in coconuts – is dying out completely in the face of saucepan cooking. Mamae, the youngest woman involved in the project, said, *“Lots of young girls almost never make laplap anymore, they only cook in saucepans, and there are lots of traditional recipes that the young women don’t know.”* When I asked the women why they thought that saucepan cooking was becoming so prevalent, one woman said,

“Saucepan cooking is taking over because our girls all go to school . . . they spend all their time at school and we don’t have enough time to teach them the things we should be teaching them.”

Woyang feels that the young women of today are less interested in spending time with and learning from their mothers: *“Lots of young girls aren’t interested in spending time with their mothers in the kitchen in order to learn from them.”*

In the area of sewing, the mothers told me that only a few young women have learned how to sew. Lilin, one of the most avid sewers of the group, said, *“We’ve tried to get the young women interested in learning to sew, but they’re not interested.”* Lilin also explained why she saw this as a problem: *“The young women today are all buying store clothes. This is a problem because store clothes are expensive and are not well made.”*

The mothers all said that most young women had learned how to do various kinds of subsistence work including collecting shellfish, shore fishing, and producing housing materials. They had also all learned how to weave basic coconut leaf baskets for transporting food and other things to and from the garden and other places. However, Limel, the oldest woman in the group, explained that there also used to be another special kind of basket – similar to the trademark Pentecost Island basket but unique to Ambrym alone – that the women no longer weave and none of the young women know how to weave. With regard to mat weaving, the women said that while almost all young women still know how to weave mats, almost none of them know how to

weave as well as their mothers and many of them know only the most basic mat patterns. In an informal discussion with one woman's teenage daughter, this young woman supported what the older women had said: *"It's true. Almost none of the younger women know how to weave mats as well as the older women."* Mara, the most proficient and enthusiastic mat weaver of the group, complained that many young women do not know how to do the more complicated work involved in finishing off or joining different sections of a mat: *"Today, many of the young women don't know how to weave well . . . they're always asking me to do the tough parts for them but don't make an effort to learn themselves."* When I asked Mara why she thinks the young women are not learning, she said,

"I've told them that they need to learn, that I can't keep doing it for them forever, even until they get married, but still they don't learn. I myself have been learning from one of my old aunts for a long time now. She's teaching me to weave words into my mats now. But so many of the young girls don't know . . . because they spend all their time fooling around . . . and they're not really interested."

Some women said that another reason why the young women are no longer as interested in learning things like weaving, sewing, and cooking is that they are spending more of their time playing team sports, such as volleyball, which were introduced by Europeans.

The mothers all agreed that the young women (and men) are all still taking on the knowledge about raising pigs and chickens, and about participating in rites of passage and other ceremonies. They said, *"The young people like feeding pigs and chickens. It's a way to make money and they can also contribute at ceremonies."* The women explained that the young women and men generally enjoy helping out at ceremonies because ceremonies are fun. Ceremonies are a time when large extended families get together to renew relationships, and so the work associated with ceremonies is coupled with a fun social side of the event. The mothers explained that when the youth help out at ceremonies, they learn at the same time about the work involved in putting on the ceremony.

The women all raised concerns about the passing on of vernacular language and the closely related practice of traditional *kastom*. (*Kastom*, from the English 'custom', includes a traditional code of conduct or indigenous set of rules of respect that guide life in Melanesian communities. Every cultural group has its own form of *kastom*. See also the official definition provided in the Glossary.) The women told me that today some parents are not speaking / teaching vernacular or local language to their children, and are speaking only Bislama (the

Vanuatu dialect of Melanesian Pidgin) to them instead. The mothers feel that is was a problem because, *“If the younger generation only speak Bislama they won’t know local language or ‘kastom’.”* When I asked why some parents no longer spoke local language to their children, the women explained that many parents think that it will give their children a head start at school if they speak with them in Bislama, as Bislama vocabulary is derived largely from English and French, the languages of instruction in schools. When I asked why these parents did not speak/teach both vernacular language and Bislama to their children, the women did not have an answer.

The mothers all said that they had tried or were trying to teach their children about the practice of *kastom*. However, the women also all agreed that the younger generation did not know *kastom* as well as the older generation. Furthermore, they said that even parts of *kastom* that the young women (and men) had learned, they often did not follow or respect well. The women said that this was an issue of concern because, *“Our youth aren’t following ‘kastom’ any more and lots of the important laws of respect are dying out.”* When asked why the young people no longer follow or respect the laws of *kastom* as they should, one woman blamed the modern school system:

“We in the community have talked about this issue and we think it’s because of school. The young people go to school and then they think that they know more than any of us in the village. And so now our traditional ways and customs are dying out.”

Perceptions about Village Life and Town Life

The women spoke about working on their own much of the time partly because their husbands are often in town². The women also spoke about wanting children to do well in school and then work in town. Such comments led me to recognise that it was important to better understand women’s perceptions about village life and town life, including who is going to town and why. On average, the data show men going to town about three times more than their wives³, despite the fact that the husband of one of the women has never been to town while she has been over ten times. The data also show that once the men are in town, they tend to stay longer than

² ‘Town’ refers to one of the two towns in Vanuatu – the national capital, Port Vila, which is located on Efate Island, and Luganville town, which is located on Santo Island. Both towns are accessible from Ambrym by boat or small plane. The boat journey averages about 24 hours one way. The small plane trip usually includes touching down at three or four rural airstrips on route and is expensive.

the women. Women tend to go to town for a specific reason – either to attend church or non-government organisation (NGO) meetings, to go to the hospital themselves or with a child, to take a child to school in town, or to attend a family event in town (such as a wedding). As young women, two of the six women had each spent a year in town employed as domestic workers. Only one of the women said she goes to town for rest and relaxation, but this is because her husband spends a high proportion of his time in town and so he brings his wife and children to town with him about once a year.

The main reason the men go to town is to make money – by selling kava or carvings, or doing other kinds of work in town. One of the men had also attended annual NGO meetings for several years. However, the women said that another main reason that the men go to town is to have a break from the village and to visit with children living in town. Both participant observation and interview data point to the men taking more ‘breaks’ from the village by jumping on the ship or plane and heading to town for a few weeks. When asked if they like it when their husbands are away in town, the three women whose husbands are away the most all said that they dislike it when the men are away too long, especially once the business of their trip is done and they stay on unnecessarily. They all said that while they can handle much of the work in the village on their own, they need the help of a man occasionally with heavy work such as clearing a new garden. One of the women said that she likes it when her husband is in the village because he is actually very helpful.

Three of the women have young school-age children only and these children are all in the village going to school there. Five of the women have older children, although some of them have younger children as well. The data on the women with older children point to a strong trend for children, especially the older children in a larger family, to leave the village to go live and work for money in town. One woman has only one adopted child left with her in the village, while her four biological children are all away working for money. Another woman has only two of her seven children in the village, and only one of those is living a typical subsistence lifestyle while the other child in the village has wage labour as a government health extension officer. Another woman has two adopted children with her in the village, two biological children in town, and one biological child who moves frequently between village and town. Conversations with this mother indicate that she thinks that the child who moves frequently should also be in town full-time working for money: *“The other child who did well in school should be working for*

³ The data compared are lifetime totals.

money in town, but I think maybe he prefers the village because he never finds a job and always ends up back here.”

While the data regarding the women’s children point to a high proportion of them moving to live and work in town, when asked if the women themselves prefer town life or village life, they all answered unambivalently that they prefer village life. When I asked why they prefer life in the village, they all provided the same reason – that is, in the village, food and other things are free, but in town one has to pay for everything. In the words of Mara: *“I like the village. Town is no good, because you need money for everything. But in the village we eat for free.”*

There were concerns raised by some of the women that the young people do not value village life highly, and that most would rather be working for money in town if they could. In one interview, Mara suggested that the majority of youth no longer feel good about village life and “believe” more in town life. Mara, however, was somewhat hesitant to speak about youth perspectives and looked to the younger Mamae to either agree or disagree with her opinion. Mamae, the youngest research participant, said with conviction,

“Most youth want town. The white people may have left at independence, but now most people look more to the money system life. They’ve held on to their land, everything’s still there, but their focus is on money and cargo . . . no question . . . the way I see it, most people don’t value village life highly, they just take it for granted.”

Mamae, thus, sees most young people as valuing and focusing on money and ‘cargo’ and not recognising the value of village life. One of the oldest research participants also said that most youth, especially those that graduate from high school, want to be in town: *“I think most young people want to be in town . . . to get work . . . because there’s no work in the village . . . well, there’s work in the garden, but those that do well and complete their schooling, they just want to sit behind a desk and work with a pen.”* The women all agreed that most young people would rather work in town for money than live and work mainly within the subsistence economy in the village. Another woman explained further how the cash economy has affected the youth and youth perspectives on village life:

“The money system has spoiled the way the youth think. They think they’re poor, poor, poor . . . because they don’t have money to pay for food. They could go to the garden and bring back greens and taro to cook [laugh], but it’s tough. It’s really tough for them to go to the garden . . . because the focus on money and money things is so strong now.”

According to this woman, most village youth today have indeed lost belief in village life, including garden work and local food.

CHAPTER V: PRIORITIES, CHANGES, TENSIONS, AND CONTRADICTIONS

During my months living, working, and researching in North Ambrym, I came to an understanding of women's everyday lives and work. I also came to see that women's everyday lives and work have changed and continue to change, particularly as a result of contact with outsiders, colonisation, and even after Independence, the ongoing forces of corporate globalisation. Women have had to adapt, assess and reassess priorities, innovate, and deal with constraints and contradictory forces as well. This chapter goes deeper into answering the first research question regarding women's everyday lives and work and their perceptions thereof. The chapter also answers the second research question: Has the popular education and protest movement regarding structural adjustment affected the women's daily activities or their perceptions of what they do? The chapter makes connections and identifies patterns, disrupted patterns, tensions, and contradictions.

Priorities, Changes, and Tensions

Mama First

All village women in North Ambrym are mothers. It is a cultural imperative to have children who will continue the family line and take care of elderly parents. No one chooses to not have children, as one might do in 'Western' cultural contexts. If a married couple can not have children, they adopt, usually from one of the woman's or man's siblings who has lots of children or one who has an 'unplanned' child (that is, from an unwed mother). For example, one of the research project participants and her husband could not have children, and so they have adopted two from relatives.

I am also a mother. While I was doing my community research in North Ambrym, I was a single mother and my daughter, Kireni, was two years old. My location as a mother connected me with the nine mothers I worked with as research project participants, and with all of the North Ambrym mothers I lived with and learned from in the Lolihor village communities that I spent time in. While doing my community research, I was often struck by, and made many reflective journal notes about, the fact that I was a mother first and a graduate student / researcher second. On evenings when I had put Kireni down to bed at 7 pm, and then settled down in my office for what I hoped would be three or four hours of productive work only to have Kireni wake up with a

stomach flu at only 8pm, I knew what my top priority was. Regardless of what kind of deadline I might have had for the next day – an interview transcript to complete or a focus group interview to prepare for – my research work would be put away as the work of caring for my sick daughter took over the night. I was a mama first and everything else second.

During evenings and days that I could not work because Kireni was sick, I contemplated my situation and thought about other women as well. I realised that all mothers face similar situations to that which I was facing. I thought about women who have five or ten children, rather than just one – such mothers likely always have one child who is sick. In this way, I came to see that we – the project participants and I, and the other mothers in North Ambrym and other parts of Melanesia – were all mamas first and everything else second. I came to see that the wants, needs, and dreams of mothers almost always come second, after the needs and wants of their children. My own personal situation of not always being able to focus on my research and achieve goals that I set for myself because my child was sick is only one example of the often hard realities and challenges of being a mother.

Story Number One: Limel – Seven Children and a Sick Husband

After supper one evening, Limel and her son, now a father himself, told me about how hard Limel had worked to raise her seven children, primarily on her own because her husband was sick and bed-ridden when the children were still young. Limel started by saying, *“Today at the small group interview I didn’t explain very well why it was so important to me to do a good job of raising my children. I just said you must take good care of your kids so that they take good care of you when you’re old. But I didn’t talk about my life in particular, about how I did the work of raising my seven children pretty much on my own, because their father was sick and couldn’t work. And so I was on my own with all the work – planting food for them, washing their clothes, finding money to pay their school fees.”*

Limel’s son supported his mother’s story by saying, *“It’s true. I remember times when I was young and wanted to drink coconut milk and no one else was there, Mama would climb the coconut tree with me tied to her back. She didn’t want to leave me down on the ground by myself in case something happened to me. It was really hard work for her to climb with me on her back like that, but she would do it . . . incredibly strong woman!”*

In this case, Limel’s desire to feed her child well and meet his needs and wants was more important than the physical pain she had to experience in order to climb the tall coconut tree with a child strapped to her back. She put her child’s needs first above her own.

Story Number Two: Nalu – Washing Diapers and then Dashing to the Garden

After an hour's walk along a rocky coastline, sandy beach, and then up a steep hill, we arrived at Nalu's house. She was expecting us, but was in the middle of washing her baby's diapers and clothes. She told me that since she had had Robert her daily work pattern had changed. It was now usual for her to go the garden later than the other village women and to work a shorter day at the garden. She explained: "*Now that I have Robert I'm always the last woman to go to the garden. I have to do his wash first, get him properly ready, and then I can go. And I can't stay at the garden very long any more either. I go and do my work as quickly as possible and then come back to the house.*"

She also explained that while she usually took Robert with her to the garden, today was too windy and wet to take him. So, instead, she bathed and breastfed Robert, put him to sleep, and then her father-in-law came to stay with him while we went to the garden. Just inside the garden fence, Nalu made a point of showing us where Robert sat when she brought him to the garden. She said, "*There . . . there's Robert's place. When he comes to the garden he sleeps or plays on a mat right there. If his big sisters come with us too, they play with him there.*" It was easy to tell that Robert was front and centre in Nalu's mind, even when he was not physically with her.

This story shows how Nalu's baby shapes her day. She puts her mothering responsibilities first and the garden second. Furthermore, her baby is always on her mind, and is always her responsibility, even when he is not with her and is being cared for by someone else. Nalu is a mama first and foremost.

Story Number Three: Woyang – Gardening and Childminding in the Rain

The day I spent with Woyang working in her garden, we had five children along with us – three of Woyang's children and two of her nieces. We spent the first part of the day cleaning and hoeing a new garden. The plan was to plant taro, corn, and cabbage. Once we had finishing cleaning and hoeing the area, we all sat down to have some lunch before doing the planting. But as we sat enjoying our food and conversation, the rain clouds moved in and it started to rain. As the rain intensified, Woyang and her older daughter cut giant banana leaves for us to use as umbrellas. As the rain pounded down, I shared my banana leaf with Woyang's last-born child, a four-year old girl named Relin. I was impressed by how Relin did not complain – she just waited patiently for whatever might come next. A short while later I was more amazed when I realised that little Relin was actually asleep on her feet and somehow balanced precariously up against my legs. I could not pick her up as I was holding my bag (with my journal inside) and was trying to protect it from the rain. So one of the other girls moved up next to us, she too hiding beneath a banana leaf, and picked up the sleeping child. We all stood together, huddling under our leaf umbrellas waiting and hoping that the rain would stop so that we could finish our work and then walk home without getting completely soaked.

After maybe 15 or 20 minutes, Woyang gave up on waiting for the rain to subside and moved out into the downpour to continue with her garden work. She moved with quiet determination, making the best of the situation, to plant corn and cabbage (one does not plant taro in the rain as wet taro causes an itchy skin reaction). After planting the corn that she had carried up to the garden, and also transplanting some seedling cabbage plants, she came back over to where we were standing and assessed the weather. The sky actually showed signs of brightness and the rain seemed to be slowing. A few minutes later, sun began to break up the clouds. We decided to stay on and plant taro. Little Relin was still sound asleep and there was nowhere dry enough to lay her down or even for someone to sit down in order to hold her comfortably. So Woyang had the girl lay Relin on her back. Woyang covered and tied Relin up snugly on to her back with a long piece of cloth. She then took her spade in her hand, climbed up to the top of the garden, and proceeded to plant taro.

Watching Woyang work away with her sleeping daughter on her back was another amazing example of how Woyang is a mama first. Rather than wake little Relin up or have another daughter get wet and cold sitting on the ground holding her, Woyang was willing to work with 15 extra kilos of weight on her back.

Women as Mothers and Teachers

Woyang working with her sleeping daughter strapped to her back is a good example of a woman putting her child's needs ahead of her own, a woman choosing to prioritise childcare, to be a mama first and other things second. It is also a clear example of how women in rural Melanesia combine childcare and other kinds of work on a daily basis, and in doing so pass on key community knowledge to the next generation. For example, in the case of Woyang, during our day together at the garden she combined garden work, childcare, and teaching her children about making food gardens. As discussed above, women are the main providers of regular childcare in Lolihor. Women also attend to the bulk of the daily household work and go to work in the food gardens more than their male counterparts. In the village, the work of caring for the children is usually combined with the other work that the women attend to. Children help their mothers collect firewood. They help their mothers cook. Children help their mothers feed the pigs and chickens. They also go to the garden with their mothers and help out with the work there (see *Figure 6: Children Helping Out in the Garden*). Girls weave baskets, mats, and housing materials with their mothers, grandmothers, and aunts. Older children, especially girls, help their mothers with caring for younger siblings. As the children assist their mothers, aunts, and grandmothers with these daily tasks, they learn at the same time. Hence, we see women as simultaneous childcare providers and teachers of vital community knowledge. Women

themselves recognise the multi-faceted nature of the work they do in raising the next generation. For example, Athou said that childcare is the most important kind of work that she does, because it comprises a teaching and learning aspect as well:

"If you don't do a good job of caring for your kids, they'll be all over the place and won't learn the things they need to learn."

Women's contributions to passing on vital subsistence knowledge are perhaps clearest in the work that they do at their food gardens. Women and children turn long days working and learning at the garden into fun, laughter-filled outings. Women work, talk, and laugh. Children play, help out, and learn. Mid-day, everyone takes a break to eat fresh fruits or roasted root crops. For children, the learning they do is mixed with, even camouflaged as, fun and adventure at food gardens located adjacent to forest playgrounds. The following story captures the complex and combined nature of working in gardens, caring for children, and passing on knowledge at the same time.

Story Number Four: Gardening, Teaching, and Caring for Children

The day we went to the garden with Mara we had six children with us – my daughter, Mara's two daughters and niece, and two other children as well. The youngest was two years old. The oldest were two ten-year old girls named Ella and Ariel. Ella is Mara's oldest daughter. Mara's mother also came with us.

It was about an hour's walk up-hill to the garden. On our way, we all stopped and waited while Mara climbed a coconut palm to get coconuts for us to drink. When we arrived at the garden we all sat down, rested, and drank some coconut milk before starting to work. The plan was to plant taro. Mara had already cleaned the new garden and so we were able to start hoeing right away. As Mara and I hoed, the young children played happily, and Mara's mother lit a fire and prepared to roast taro for our lunch. The two older girls had been sent to the other older side of the garden to dig yams and taro. After I had hoed for a while, I told Mara that I wanted to go see Ella and Ariel work.

When I found the two girls they were busy digging yams. I was immediately impressed by the high level of their knowledge and skills. To me, they appeared to work with their knives as well as grown women. Once they had dug up all of the yams that were ready, they moved over to harvest some taro. Once again, these two girls worked in an independent, highly skilled, and confident way. While I watched and helped out, I asked them both who had taught them to work in the garden. Without hesitation, they both answered, *"Our mothers."* I then asked, *"Your fathers too?"* They both said, *"Not much . . . mainly our mothers."*

Figure 6: *Children Helping Out in the Garden*



After learning from Ella and Ariel that it was their mothers who had taught them most of what they knew about working in food gardens, I went on to ask them some more questions. My subsequent conversation with Ella and Ariel raised more questions, which I ended up discussing in some detail with my research counterpart, Mamae. These conversations are presented in detail in *Story Number Five* below, as they are key to presenting the next theme.

Story Number Five: Girls and Mothers, Village and Town

I decided to ask Ella and Ariel another question. I first asked Ariel, as Ella was digging taro out of ear shot on the other side of the garden, “*What do you want in your life? Do you want to live here on the island or do you want to live in town?*” Ariel, a talkative, confident girl, said with certainty, “*I want to live here on the island. I like it here.*” I then moved up to where Ella was working and asked her the same thing, and she answered in the same way. I was glad to hear these two girls tell me so clearly that they were happy living in the village, and I could be sure that their answers were not influenced by my views on the world, because they knew nothing about my research or my biases. At the same time I wondered if they would continue to feel so content as they moved into their teen years, and watched more videos, and maybe even spent some time

in town. I decided that later back in the village I would ask Mamae what she thought about this.

That same evening, Mamae and I both got our kids to sleep and then met to talk about the day of work with Mara. I told her about Ella and Ariel both clearly articulating their contentment with life in the village and asked her what she thought about this. Were they telling me the truth? If so, is their contentment due mainly to their young age and lack of exposure to outside influences, meaning that their answer to the same question may be quite different in a few years time? Mamae answered like this:

"It's true . . . those young girls do like village life. I was like that. I liked life in the village when I was young too. It'll be their own mothers that'll send them away to school and then town, and then their thinking will change."

More Work: Saucepans, School Fees, and still the Garden

Analysis of women's everyday lives and work showed that women engage in many different kinds of work, falling under six different categories of work – *family work, subsistence work, extended family maintenance and community building work, community work, church work, and money work*. While my interviews did not focus directly on the issue of whether or not women feel overburdened by work, yet the women often talked about heavy work loads and complained that they carry too much of the load in relation to the men. As mentioned above, the women talked about how prior to contact with outsiders the men had done their own cooking:

"Some men cook, but most men don't cook very often anymore. Now usually only the women cook. Before the white man came, all men used to do their own cooking according to a traditional custom called 'tambu faea' [taboo fire]."

However, the women said that now, in most households, the women do almost all of the daily cooking. This change led me to think more about the impact of colonisation on women's work. I came to recognise that a number of the kinds (and even categories) of work that the women engage in regularly today did not exist before contact with outsiders. Three of the categories of work – *subsistence work, extended family maintenance and community building work, and community work* – existed prior to colonisation. Various kinds of *family work* also existed before colonisation. However, two of the categories – *church work* and *money work* – were brought to Melanesia by missionaries and traders¹. Outsiders brought Christianity, the cash economy and

¹ Prior to contact with outsiders, there was and still is work associated with the production of community currencies, such as raising pigs and growing yams and bananas. However, the introduction of cash money brought with it new forms of work required to obtain cash; that is, different kinds of money work, including copra and kava production.

store goods, and a school system with school fees. With these things came new kinds of work, a number of which the outsiders said were women's work.

Prior to colonisation the men did more of the everyday work, cooking for themselves and also assuming more responsibility for caring for and teaching the boy children, particularly after circumcision. However, the Australian and European traders who ran the coconut plantations and other outsiders who set up the Christian churches introduced a new division of labour whereby the man was the 'head of the household' and the 'breadwinner' who went to work for money on the plantation, while the woman was the housewife who stayed at home and did most of the cooking, housework, and childcare. The outsiders also brought clothes, saucepans, and dishes, and taught the local people that the work involved in washing these things was women's work. Hence, the *family work* that women engaged in was increased significantly. In addition to the daily cooking, caregiving, and other kinds of daily *family work* that women now do, they spend about two full days per week on *family work* and at least one of these two days is dedicated entirely to washing clothes. The daily *family work* that women do has also been increased by the addition of the task of washing dishes and saucepans, where prior to colonisation people usually ate on leaves which could simply be thrown away.

These new kinds of 'women's work' brought to Melanesia by outsiders – that is, washing clothes, saucepans, and dishes – also required that the women had soap with which to wash, and the only place to get soap was at the outsiders' stores. Hence, the introduction of these new kinds of work was connected to the local people's perceived need to engage in *money work* in order to buy the things they were told would improve their lives. Today in North Ambrym, people buy many things from stores, both local village stores and bigger stores in town. Store goods that are now perceived as staples include soap, kerosene, matches, knives, salt, cloth and/or clothes. People also regularly buy other store foods including rice, tinned fish and meat, sugar, tea, flour, and yeast. These days most families also raise funds to buy household items, including foam mattresses, pillows, and beddings, and store-bought tools including shovels and hoes. One common way of 'raising' such funds is by asking children and other relatives working in town to buy the goods for them. Depending on the availability of cash (or wage-earning relatives willing to spend some of their money on relatives in the village), people also buy other less basic store goods, including radios, tape decks, generators, and even televisions and video machines.

In addition to store goods, the colonisers also brought school and school fees, and church and church fees (offerings and tithes). Consequently, today in Melanesia the average village woman perceives a need for money to contribute to the church and to pay her children's school fees in addition to buying store goods. The following quote captures the need for money that some of the women spoke of:

"I think money is an important thing, a big thing . . . because of school, and store goods. The white people trained us already so that now our kids can't live without store goods. They need soap. When they go to school someone has to wash their clothes. Someone has to make sure they have food to take to school. Well, food isn't really the issue, because we can get food from the garden. But to pay school fees . . . that's the biggest thing. So nowadays we need money. If my child goes to first term and doesn't take his school fees, they'll kick him out, and then he won't know anything. So we're always looking for ways to earn money. We feel that the need for money has increased."

Hence, both women and men now spend a significant proportion of their time on various forms of *money work*. As mentioned above, women sew and weave mats to earn money, and both women and men raise pigs and chickens to sell and also engage in kava and copra production. Some families grow extra food crops to sell. Many families, especially those with school-age children, spend about two weeks every school term 'shelling out' and smoking copra to raise money for school fees, church offerings, and store goods. This accounts for over ten percent of a family's time.

The introduction of Christianity in Melanesia also involved the introduction of new kinds of church-related work and activities for both village women and men. Analysis of the women's weekly work patterns showed that the women now spend at least one and a half days each week on *church work / activity* – that is, cleaning up church buildings and yards, preparing for the 'day of rest', and attending church services and church meetings. In sum, colonisation by Christianity and the cash economy has compounded women's work as women have had to take on new forms of work – church-related work, low-wage labour, dish-washing, clothes-washing, and more of the daily cooking and childcare – in addition to existing responsibilities within the traditional economy.

'Real' Knowledge, 'Real' Work, and 'Real' Food

While women – as both mothers and teachers – make vital contributions to the perpetuation of subsistence knowledge, they also all view this knowledge as inferior to the

knowledge brought to Melanesia by the colonisers, which Melanesian children have been accessing in classrooms for the last generation. Today in North Ambrym, almost all parents send their children to school.

Mothers care for their children and teach them while they care for them until they send them to school, usually at about age six. The widespread assumption is that the knowledge that the children have been accessing from their parents for free is not as valid, as important, or as valuable as classroom knowledge, which they are all willing to pay for in the form of cash school fees. Most Melanesian people no longer recognise community-based subsistence knowledge and skills as means to a valid, good quality life living and working on the land within the traditional economy. Most people no longer recognise subsistence knowledge as valid or valuable knowledge – classroom knowledge is ‘real’ knowledge. Most people now view an elder who has lived on the land her entire life, but has never gone to school, as ‘uneducated’ and ‘unknowing’, while someone who has a university degree, but no subsistence knowledge or skills, as incredibly educated. The university professor is highly educated, while the village elder knows nothing. One kind of knowledge is ‘real’ and superior to the other kind of knowledge which is no longer valid or valuable and hence inferior. If we look again at one participant’s comments about the increasing need for money, we can see they are built on an assumption. The assumption is that a child who grows up in the village – learning for free from parents and relatives everything s/he needs to know to survive and have a quality life but never going to school – will not have attained any ‘real’ knowledge and so will be an uneducated, unknowing person of low worth:

“If my child goes to first term and doesn’t take his school fees, they’ll kick him out, and then he won’t know anything.”

Hence, mothers devalue their own subsistence knowledge vis-à-vis classroom knowledge and so send their children to school to access what is now viewed as ‘real’ knowledge. In most parts of Melanesia, children can attend a school within commuting distance only up to Class 6². After that, children that do well enough to earn themselves one of the limited places in Class 7 have to go to residential school, often on a different island or even in a different province.

Once children have been sent to school in order to attain ‘real’ knowledge, parents then send them off to town to look for ‘real’ work. In the same way that subsistence knowledge is

² What are termed school ‘grades’ in Canada, are termed ‘classes’ in Anglophone schools in Vanuatu.

devalued as inferior and less valid than classroom knowledge, subsistence work is also devalued vis-à-vis wage labour, especially money work in town. According to Mamae, it is highly common these days to hear parents say to their children, especially those who have finished Class 10, “Here in the village you’re just wasting your time. Go to town and look for work.” Village-based subsistence work is, thus, viewed by parents as of low value – ‘a waste of time’ – relative to wage labour in town. When one mother talked about youth wanting to go to town to look for work because there is no work in the village, I suggested that there is work in the village – on the land and in the garden. This woman then said,

“Well, yes, there’s work in the garden, but those that do well and complete their schooling, they just want to sit behind a desk and work with a pen. Some may come back to the village to set up a store, but most of them that do well in school just want to work in town, because there’s no work in the village.”

This research participant devalues subsistence work in the village by saying repeatedly that it is not work – “there’s no work in the village.” Her comments imply that ‘real’ work is in town, not the village. The actions of the mothers with adult children reflect these words. As discussed above, most of the older children have gone to live and work in town, often sent there by their parents. This trend for adult children to go live and work in town is evident in Table 5.

Table 5: Children in the Village and Town

<i>Eight Research Participants</i>	<i>One</i>	<i>Two</i>	<i>Three</i>	<i>Four</i>	<i>Five</i>	<i>Six</i>	<i>Seven</i>	<i>Eight</i>
<i>Location of Children: Village or Town</i>	- 2 school age children in the village	- 3 children (1 baby, 2 school age) all in the village	- 3 oldest children in town (working or going to school) - 8 younger children in the village	- 2 school age children in the village	- 2 adult children in town - 1 adult child moves between village & town - 1 teenage child in village - 2 adopted adult children in village - 1 adopted adult child in town	- 3 older children in town - 7 children in the village	- 4 biological children away from village working for money - 1 adopted child in village	- 2 adult children in village (1 has paid work) - 5 in town working for money

At the final focus group interview, the women talked more about the issue of parents wanting their children to work for money in town. One woman, who had obviously thought more about the issue since our earlier conversations, said that she now recognised that parents are responsible for pushing their children out of the village by imposing the burden of a school fee debt on the children:

"It's us, the mothers and fathers, who hurt our children [by pushing them to town], because when we pay school fees we then expect our children to work for money in order to pay back the money that we spent on their school fees."

While mothers teach their children how to grow their own food, they also devalue this local food vis-à-vis store-bought foods. If classroom knowledge is better than village knowledge, and money work in town is better than subsistence work in the village, then the food you buy at the store with the money you earn at your money job (or with the money sent to you by your children working in town) must also be better than garden foods. Interviews and participant observation made clear that consciously or unconsciously mothers are teaching their children to prefer store-bought foods, especially rice and tinned foods, over local foods, such as root crops and fresh fish and meat. The rate of consumption of store-bought foods has increased enormously during the last generation. It is now common to see mothers dish up mixed plates of local food and rice for adults, but only rice for the children who do not want local food. Mamae and Mara both told me that as children they only very rarely ate store-bought foods, but now many families eat rice and tinned foods on a daily basis and many children eat candy and other kinds of store-bought 'junk food' (such as *Twisties*) on a daily basis. Furthermore, the two women both said that in such families, the children often end up disliking local food and wanting only the store-bought foods:

"Yesterday my small niece wouldn't eat because they cooked greens with the rice, but she wanted tinned meat. At their house it's one bag of rice after another."

Mamae went on to say that she now recognises that this is a problem and is concerned about the younger generation as they will have a hard time earning enough money to feed their acquired taste for store-bought foods: *"It looks to me like this next generation will eat lots of store foods, but it's going to be hard on them to find the money to pay for it."* Lilin also talked about how people today devalue local food relative to store foods:

"We can go to the garden but we're now conditioned to want to buy food from the store. We go to the garden, come back, but then go buy food at the store. We put the garden food in the kitchen. Who's going to eat it? We all want rice."

Thus, we see the younger generation learning a hierarchy of foods that features store-bought foods at the top and local garden foods at the bottom.

Women Do More Daily Work than Men

During my three months of community research in 2002, and during subsequent stays in North Ambrym in 2003 and 2004, interviews and participant observation continually highlighted women as the ones who take on the responsibility for the daily work of providing and caring for children and other family members. The women drew a picture of their most common typical day, which comprised getting up in the morning and cooking for the family, doing some housework (washing dishes and perhaps clothes, and tidying up the house as well), heading off to the garden with the children mid-morning and returning home in the afternoon with baskets full of food, and then cooking and feeding the family again before getting children washed and into bed. Women's descriptions of weekly and seasonal work patterns introduced other kinds of work – particularly *community*, *church*, and *money work* – that they also attend to regularly, in addition to the everyday work. The women say they feel busy, and they are busy, every day.

The men also work hard, but are more able and more likely to take time off work, based on the assumption that the women will attend to the daily work, especially ensuring that there is food for the family to eat. The introduction of the cash economy and a new division of labour has meant that relative to men, women are now more family- and community-focused in general, grounded by the full-time work of providing and caring for their families. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to be outward-looking – that is, to look outside and beyond their island communities. The men tend to be more easily drawn away from family and community concerns by the glitter and often elusive promises of modernisation – that is, more likely to jump on a ship and go to town in search of cash income opportunities or excitement, to smoke and drink, to spend entire days in the village watching videos or talking about what business venture might make them rich, to plant kava (a cash crop) rather than sweet potato, or to engage in copra production rather than weed between taro plants. As already mentioned above, while all the women research participants had been to town between two and ten times in their lifetime, on average their husbands had been to town three times more than the women.

One woman told a story which exemplifies how women see men being distracted by outside influences and consequently deferring the responsibility for the daily *family* and *subsistence work* to the women. Several years ago the government decided that North Ambrym needed a road and subsequently sent a bulldozer and a couple of workers to push a road along the footpath joining the North Ambrym villages. Erosion caused by rain has already rendered this

road unusable. While the bulldozer worked in the community the men rarely went to the garden or engaged in any other productive work – instead they followed the bulldozer around watching it work. Following is an excerpt from my conversation with the woman about this phenomenon.

Story Number Six: Men Watching the Bulldozer

LL: *There was a bulldozer here for a while. Whenever the bulldozer went to work, you wouldn't see a man in the village. They'd all be sitting at the side of the road watching the bulldozer work.*

CS: *And the women? What did they do?*

LL: *The women all went to their gardens!*

CS: *Wow! The men all go watch the bulldozer, and the women all go to their gardens . . . funny, ah?*

LL: *Yes, it's really funny! The men would spend the entire day there. When the bulldozer stopped for lunch, they too would all head home to eat lunch. When the bulldozer started up again, they'd all head back again . . . staying until sundown . . . tomorrow same thing.*

CS: *What do you think about this? Why was it like this?*

LL: *Well, women know that if they don't work for even one day they'll be no food for their families to eat. Women think about the garden because they think about their kids.*

During my time in North Ambym, I witnessed countless examples of men leaving the routine daily work to the women while they went to town or did something else perceived to be more interesting, particularly an activity perceived to have potential monetary benefit. I would see a group of men watching a video – over the din of a generator – in the middle of the day, while their wives or mothers were likely at the garden. Another common image was one of a group of men sitting on the beach watching tourist yachts arrive and discussing how they might extract some money or second hand clothing from the tourists. On one occasion, a giant cruise ship anchored unexpectedly at Ranon Village. Men from all villages within walking distance flooded to Ranon to try to sell carvings and other artifacts to the tourists. Some women spent the day with the tourists as well, but only a minority. Most women still went to their gardens.

Another huge factor contributing to the dynamic of women attending to more of the everyday work than men is the consumption of alcohol and kava by men. While a small minority of younger women experiment with drinking alcohol and kava, the vast majority of community

members who use these drugs are men. With both alcohol and kava, when men are drinking or drunk or in the process of recovering from being drunk, they are unable to go to the garden or to help out with other daily work.

While living in North Ambrym, local people told me that alcohol had been brought there by the traders and other outsiders and had been a significant influence for the last fifty years at least. Before Independence in 1980, the Australian plantation boss had sold alcohol at his trade store, and a high proportion of the local men's wages was given back to the boss when they bought alcohol. In their stories, the women connected the consumption of alcohol by the men with increased rates of domestic violence. While the plantation boss left at Independence, alcohol has continued to be an influence in the community with people bringing it in from town or making their own local brews for one-night binges or even setting up village-based businesses to sell alcohol. In 2002, when I was doing my community research in Lolihor, one young man started up a liquor shop. Even before he started up this business, he was already a heavy drinker, leading other young men in multi-day drinking binges on a regular basis. Once he started up his business and had everyday access to alcohol, he was getting drunk with other young men almost continually. Despite his regular drunkenness, this young man held leadership positions on both the community council and the church youth group. Sometimes the young men drank proper drinking alcohol, but sometimes they drank methyl alcohol (commonly used to start up mantle-style kerosene lamps). In 2003, I was back in Lolihor for a few weeks over Christmas. The liquor shop was gone but other men had brought in alcohol or made home brew for the holiday season. I watched as men of various ages drank and got drunk together while the women cooked and ate with the children. In Lolihor today, while men drink alcohol, the women work – the women continue to attend to their everyday work and responsibilities, particularly caring for and providing for their children.

Despite the many negative impacts on the community of the consumption of alcohol, including increased rates of domestic violence, the women I interviewed perceive the consumption of kava by the men to be a bigger problem. Kava is not part of traditional *kastom* in all parts of Vanuatu, and was brought to Ambrym from Pentecost Island only in the 1980s. On islands where kava is indigenous, there is a set of traditional rules about when and how to drink it. In places like Ambrym where it has only recently been introduced, it is consumed without any guiding rules and so consequently is often consumed excessively. Today, a high proportion of men in Vanuatu are addicted to kava. While kava has a sedative effect and does not lead to

violence in the same way as alcohol, kava is much less expensive than alcohol and so is consumed much more regularly than alcohol. These days, many men drink kava on a daily basis. Impacts of drinking too much kava include excessive sleeping, muscle atrophy, and loss of strength. The daily impact on village women is that their husbands, sons, and brothers do not get up in the morning to help out with the work or to go to the garden. As a result, kava is also now the cause of many domestic spats and even violence. One research participant talked about the impact of kava in her family and community in this way:

“Drinking kava too much isn’t good at all. We don’t tell stories together anymore. We no longer sit down together to bless our food before eating, or to do family worship. The young kids come but only mum is there to talk. But where is dad? Where is the older brother? . . . Then, the next morning, sleep, sleep, sleep. The sun comes up high in the sky, but he doesn’t want to go to the garden. Only the women go to the garden because their husbands get drunk on kava and then don’t have the power to go up to work with the women in the garden.”

Other women made similar comments. In the following conversation, one research participant suggests that women need to take a more proactive role in knowing and teaching their children about the land because they are the ones who take the children to the garden while the men get drunk and sleep late:

MM: *Women need to know the stories [oral histories] about the land, because they are the ones who take the kids to the garden . . . while papa is drunk on kava.*

MR: *Papa is drunk and sleeps all day.*

MM: *Sleep, sleep, sleep . . . in the afternoon he gets up and goes to drink kava again. Mama alone works hard to carry the food down from the garden . . . with the children.*

As with alcohol, men are drinking excessive amounts of kava and women continue to work.

Double Oppression and Lack of Awareness

Data gathered during my time in North Ambrym show women being subjected to two forms of oppression – oppression by men and oppression by the dominant colonising culture. The contemporary marital relationship and division of labour between women and men features man as decision-making ‘boss’ or ‘head of the household’ and woman as obedient ‘servant / worker’ (see Molisa 1987, 9-13). One young mother connected men’s abuse of kava and the oppression of women by men in the following way:

“Kava has led to the rise of a kind of class system in the community with the men on top and the women down below, because now with kava the men don't work anymore, only the women work.”

The ‘man as boss’ dynamic also manifests itself in men literally bossing their wives around and trying to control their wives’ movements. Two of the research participants talked about marriage this way:

MM: *Marriage is good, but only if you marry a good man, but if you end up with a man who bosses you around, or who is jealous*

MR: *. . . or a man that beats you and wants you to stay with him or at home only, doesn't let you walk around the village . . . that's awful.*

MM: *Like I said, when you marry a good guy it's OK, but if you marry a guy who's a raskol, he'll make himself the boss with you somewhere under him.*

Men are also viewed as the main decision-makers at both the family and community level. Women themselves generally accept the division of labour and responsibilities that features men as decision-makers and women as mothers and daily labourers. Nalu described the relationship between her mother and father as follows: *“My mother did gardens and my father did politics.”* She then described the relationship between herself and her husband, a community leader, in a similar way: *“I take the kids to the garden because my husband . . . well, he's always going down to the next village to a meeting or to tell stories [with other men].”* Hence, we see two generations of women, mother and daughter, attending to the daily family-oriented work, while the men attend to ‘politics’.

Village women are also subject to another strong form of oppression – that is, oppression by the colonising or dominant culture. For well over a century European and other colonisers told Melanesian people that they were ‘uncivilised’, ‘uneducated’, ‘heathen savages’. Since Independence, the message has changed little. Today, foreign consultants run the country according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Comprehensive Reform Program (CRP) – another big development bank structural adjustment program blueprint for the consolidation and expansion of the cash economy and corporate globalisation. Furthermore, as discussed above, parents devalue indigenous knowledge and subsistence work, and so send children to school to access ‘real’ knowledge and then to town to look for ‘real’ work. Today, Melanesians suffer from endemic inferiority complex vis-à-vis outsiders. The many diverse cultures of the

Melanesian islands have been oppressed and colonised by European and capitalist culture for so long that this form of oppression has now been internalised by most local people. The people themselves now believe that their own indigenous knowledge, cultures, and ways of life are inferior to the knowledge, cultures, and ways of life of the colonisers.

This internalised oppression is strong in North Ambrym. Many young people are ashamed to use their local language or *kastom* names, and more often refer to themselves by 'Christian' names. If someone has not gone to school, this person is seen as uneducated and unknowing. Some parents no longer speak in local language to their children, choosing instead to speak to them in Bislama. Young people no longer play traditional music or dance the traditional dances – instead, they get drunk and dance to 'disco' music played on battery-operated 'ghetto blasters'. In North Ambrym today, the only time people do *kastom* dancing is when tourists pay to see it. In a conversation that I had with one research participant, she put down village women and elevated expatriate women in a way that exemplifies this internalised oppression and endemic inferiority complex vis-à-vis outsiders:

"It's like this . . . until recently, village mamas knew nothing . . . yes. But you [expatriate women], well you are all educated . . . but us, well . . . education has now come."

This woman paints a clear picture of uneducated, unknowing village women and educated, knowing expatriate women.

The impact of the double oppression of Melanesian women by men and the colonising dominant culture is that they are disempowered and often voiceless. Village women do not believe in themselves, their knowledge, or their potential to be knowing, active participants in their lives and their communities. They have low self-esteem and commonly defer to both men and to outsiders. Most village women find it almost impossible to voice their views in public, because they perceive themselves to be 'stupid village women', not knowledgeable enough to have a worthwhile idea. On two occasions, men attended interviews that I facilitated. In both cases, the men dominated the discussion, the women deferred to the men, and I was unable to get useful data. Furthermore, when I conducted interviews with only women present, the women were often very nervous at first and had a difficult time engaging in relaxed conversation with me. My research counterpart explained to me that they were concerned that whatever they may have to say would not be 'right' or 'smart enough' for me, the 'highly educated' expatriate woman.

This theme of double oppression of women is also closely related to the study findings that women often lack awareness about important issues affecting themselves, their families, and their communities, such as the Comprehensive Reform Program (CRP) and the land registration initiative. During interviews and informal conversations, I spoke with the women about the popular education and protest movement regarding big development bank structural adjustment programs that had been ongoing in Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea since the late 1990s, particularly the 6000 signature petition opposing the CRP that was presented to the Vanuatu government in 1999. None of the women knew anything about land registration or CRP, apart from a couple of them being familiar with the terms; and none of them had heard about the popular opposition to CRP, including the petition to government. Hence, the popular education and protest movement regarding CRP had not affected the women's daily lives nor their perceptions of what they do.

Because most people accept that decision-making and 'politics' are the domain of men, the data indicate that women generally do not take an interest in or responsibility for getting aware as they see this as part of the male sphere. For example, when I asked one woman what she knew about the CRP and land registration, she answered: *"I've heard only the terms [CRP and land registration], but don't know anything about them. I'm not interested in politics, and I'm not interested in land registration either."* In a conversation that I had with another woman, she explained that many women do not get involved enough in teaching their children about the land both because they see it as men's work and also because of their lack of belief in themselves – a lack of belief that has left many women disempowered and voiceless:

"I live with the women, and I've been working with them for years, and I know that most of them can't talk. You talk, she listens, but she's totally unable to respond with an idea of her own."

More than a year after my first three-month stay in North Ambrym, one research participant, who has been a women's leader on the island for over three decades, wrote to me about her years of working with Ambrym women. She talks about the oppression of "shame and fear" that prevents the women from working together to help themselves. She also recognises that underlying this oppression is a feeling among the women that they are not good enough – that they are inferior – and that they need to try to overcome this feeling of inferiority. In the note, this woman said:

“For many years now, we’ve been trying to help women to put their heads together to find ways to improve their lives, especially the young mothers. But shame and fear prevent the women from believing in themselves and their ideas, so our work never seems to come to anything. And if every mama could only see that we’re all the same, and no one is better than anyone else, I think then things would improve.”

Thus, shame, fear, and feelings of inferiority that come from years of oppression – both by the colonisers and by men – prevent Ambrym women from recognising their own knowledge, strength, and ability to be active participants and decision-makers in their own lives, and in their communities and country as well.

Contradictions

Land and Money

As outlined above, women in rural Melanesia combine childcare and other kinds of work on a daily basis, and in doing so function as teachers, passing on key community knowledge to the next generation. However, while women – as mothers and teachers – make vital contributions to the perpetuation of subsistence knowledge, they also view this knowledge as inferior to the knowledge brought to Melanesia by the colonisers. Mothers devalue their own community knowledge vis-à-vis classroom knowledge and so send their children to school to access what is now viewed as ‘real’ knowledge. Children who attain enough ‘real’ knowledge by completing Class 10 or higher are then usually sent off to town to look for ‘real’ work – that is, money work. Thus, a key contradiction is evident as women pass on local community knowledge, but also push children to school and then to town to look for cash employment.

This contradiction is intensified by the fact that all women interviewed on this topic said that they prefer village life over town life. The women all feel that town life is hard because one needs money for everything, while in the village one can eat and do other things for free³. However, at the same time, every one of these women either has children living and working in town already or is sending her children to school, hoping that they will graduate and end up with cash employment in town one day.

³ Research by ni-Vanuatu, Kathy Rarua, describes similar perceptions among women in Vanuatu (see Rarua 1988, 83).

Over a year after I had done my first three-month stint of community research in Lolihor, I went back for another five-week stay. During this second stay I had a conversation with Sim which again highlighted the contradiction between mothers teaching their children all that they need to know to live a quality life in the village, but then sending them off to school and then to look for money work in town.

Story Number Seven: Sim's Hopes for her Children

Today, Sim brought some corn up to me while I was working. We started chatting and I asked her if I could ask her a work-related question. She said sure. I asked her what she wanted for the future for her two children. Sim said she wanted them both to do well in school and then work in town. When I asked why, she said that she and her husband wanted their children to work in town so that they could help their parents by sending them money when they needed it. I then asked Sim, "*But if both children work in town who will look after the land, the gardens?*" Sim hesitated and then said, "*No . . . I think maybe they should both just stay here on the island.*"

I suspected Sim may have been remembering the themes that came out of our work together in 2002 and had revised her response accordingly. But I wasn't sure and also wondered if maybe she actually meant what she had said, at least in part. I then suggested that maybe it would work well if the children went to work in town for a few years only and then came back to live in the village. Sim replied, "*No, I don't think so. I don't want them to go live in town and then get hooked on town life so that they never come back to the village.*"

I was left wondering what Sim really thought. In hindsight, I suspect that Sim herself was not clear about what she thought – that she was having a difficult time rationalising contradictory forces or ideas in her mind. Her initial response says much about the dominant narrative in the village at present – that is, the narrative of mothers wanting children to do well in school and then work in town. But Sim's change of mind points to the tension between mothers wanting children to work for money in town in order to pay back school fees, but also wanting their children with them in the village and on the land.

Throughout the data – in both the stories told to me by the research participants and others in the community, and in the things I saw and heard while living in the community – there is a strong tension between people's perceptions and understandings of, and responses to, land versus money. For example, all of the research participants said clearly that it was important to them that they and their children hold on to their land in the community. I learned from the women that in order to hold on to land a person should work on the land regularly and also be knowledgeable about the land – that is, one should know the name of the land, its borders and

landmarks, and the stories or oral histories that connect the person with the land. However, at the same time, the women all want their children to go to school and then work for money in town, rather than staying in the village to work on and learn the land.

The women I worked with all recognised the value and importance of land to them in their daily lives. Mara talked about land as a source of strength to her: *"In this life of mine I live off the land, and this . . . well . . . it makes me strong. I'm strong because I live on the land."* Mara also talked about how the land enables her to feed herself and her family without using money: *"Everything is already on the land. You go [to the garden], you take away food . . . everything. And you don't have to pay for it. It's just there . . . free . . . to eat, to take home to eat."* Mara and Lilin both talked about land as a source of life. Mara said, *"Land . . . well, it's the thing that keeps me alive"*, while Lilin said, *"If we didn't have land, we'd be dead. We couldn't survive. We eat off the land. We live off the land. We benefit hugely from the land."*

Some women, however, voiced concerns that future generations will not value the land in the same way. One woman said:

"Our generation is OK, and our children's generation will be OK too, but the next generation after that will let go of their land. They'll sell it to the white men . . . because they won't be making gardens any more. They'll just be drinking kava or doing whatever else they want. So, when the white men show up with papers to sign in order to take over the land, they'll just sign them. Because now they just want money, money, money . . . any little thing, money. They'll just give up the land because they're getting a bunch of money. Sad, isn't it?"

However, this same woman went on to say:

"I think money is an important thing, a big thing . . . because of school, and store goods. The white people trained us already so that now our kids can't live without store goods. They need soap. When they go to school someone has to wash their clothes. . [and] to pay school fees . . . that's the biggest thing. So nowadays we need money."

This research participant expresses concern that her grandchildren will not value the land and so will sell it, but then goes on to talk about the increasing need for money, particularly to pay for store goods and school fees. Her comments highlight the tension that currently exists between people's varying perceptions of and responses to land and money. They also suggest a lack of analysis or understanding of the long term impact of children and grandchildren going to school in an imposed system that devalues land and subsistence vis-à-vis money and money work.

Mothers Pass on Community Knowledge but Push Children to Money Work and Town

Mothers want their children to hold on to their land, which requires knowing the land and working on the land, but they also want them to complete their schooling and then work for money in town. These two things would not appear to be compatible, as holding on to land is best accomplished by physically living in the village and working on the land and one can not easily live and work in both town and village at the same time. Hence, we see in mothers' dual desires the real life manifestation of the tension between land and money. However, mothers have adapted and innovated new ways of life that aim to ease this tension and to enable them and their children to have both land and money.

One innovation is that women now make both food gardens and also 'money gardens' – that is, in one plot they plant crops for household consumption, while in another plot they plant crops to sell for money. Many contemporary Melanesian women do this and teach their children to do this as well. Thus, young people grow up knowing that the land is a source of both food, but also a source of cash. For example, when I went to the garden with Woyang, I talked with her 11-year old niece. When I asked this young girl if she knew how to grow her own food, she replied:

“Yes, I know how to grow my own food. In fact, I have my own garden, and so does my small sister who’s only 7-years old. My sister and I have both already harvested our crops and sold them to earn the money we needed to pay for our uniforms for our church group.”

The aspect that is more difficult to assess is the contextual perceptions and values about land and money that underlie what people now plant in their gardens and what they do with what they plant – that is, how much they plant to eat versus how much they plant to sell, and what they do with the money they earn from selling their crops. Do most people value land more than money, or money more than land, or value them equally? What does it mean if a high proportion of people are now selling more than half their crops, so that they have money to pay not only school fees but also store foods? What does it mean when people spend a long hard day in the garden, carry a basket full of fresh food back down to the village, and then drop the basket in the kitchen and head straight off to the store to buy rice for dinner as some women said is now common? What does it mean when a mother says that it is important for her children to know how to make gardens in order for them to make money, and when a young girl proudly tells me

that she has her own garden and has already sold her crops for money? Does this mean that both the mother and the young girl prioritise the money potential of the land more than its subsistence potential?

Another innovation during the last couple of decades has been for mothers to make gardens for their children and other relatives living in town. All of the women I worked with who have grown children living in town do this. The women all work several plots at the same time – one or more is for family consumption, another may be a special yam garden planted particularly for an upcoming ceremony, and another may be for the oldest son who lives and works for money in town. Notably, when the woman talks about the garden she has planted for her grown child in town, who we will call George, the woman will tell you it is ‘George’s garden’, as if George himself planted the garden.

When I spoke with Woyang about this dynamic, I learned that she had one garden planted for her older son in town, and another one on her father’s land for her brothers who were also all in town. When I asked her why she did this, she explained that it is a way of holding on to land for someone who is living in town. Once again, I was struck by what a clear example this was of men going to town and women taking on the responsibility for subsistence activities in the village. Woyang, mother of 11 whose husband also spends a lot of his time in town, has taken on the vitally important job of working on the land and thus maintaining a claim to the land for both her son and her brothers as well as herself. I was left wondering if the young men in town – Woyang’s eldest son and several brothers – valued the land and their connection to the land as much as their mother and sister did, and if they appreciated the work that their mother and sister was doing on their behalf. Later, at the final focus group interview, Nalu said: *“Most kids living in town don’t know their land. They rarely come to the island too in order to learn it.”* The other eight women all agreed with Nalu. This comment calls into question the effectiveness of mothers making gardens on behalf of relatives living in town, especially when their children grow up in town and rarely visit the village.

Indigenous Knowledge and Classroom Schooling

The mothers I worked with all agreed that there had been a significant drop in the level of indigenous knowledge during the last generation. Young women still know how to cook, but they do not know all the traditional methods and recipes. Almost none of the young women know how to weave mats as well as their mothers. And few know the customary rules of respect

as well as their parents. When I asked the mothers what they thought the reason for this decline in indigenous knowledge and respect was, they blamed the modern school system. Young Mamae said clearly, *"The root cause is school."* One woman explained that children spend so much of their time at school, there is not enough time for mothers to teach and pass on traditional knowledge and ways of life:

"School takes up too much of their [our children's] time. Because they go to school we don't have enough time to teach them. 7:30am they go to school, they come home at 3pm, but I'm still at the garden. They come, and then I come, and then it's time to sleep. We just eat and go to bed, but there's no time to teach them about making mats or to do other things and to know about traditional ways."

The women also blame the modern school system for the breakdown of *kastom* and the loss of respect among the younger generation. One older research participant explained as follows:

"Now, the youth . . . the way they live and act is different than the way it used to be. We've studied this problem and we think it's because those that get too much schooling, they think that they're better and know more than everyone else in the community. And this has led to the breakdown of traditional ways. We've analysed the situation thoroughly and decided that the influence of school in the community has increased so much that it is leading to the loss of traditional ways. We decided that our community leaders, our council, must do something to ensure that people continue to have respect. There must be respect. Before the chief was a respected community leader. When he talked, people listened. But now this respect is no longer strong. Now when the chief talks people joke with him or talk back at him. They don't respect him anymore."

Young Mamae went on to explain that other traditional rules of respect, including the traditional family relationships of respect, are also dying out:

"Before, respect was strong. In our language we say, 'tangitian', which means something like 'look after and respect things well'. Before if you marked a fruit tree with the taboo marker no one would touch it. But now, if you mark your fruit trees in this way, some people will just ignore the taboo and take the fruit. We've also got some family relationships that are taboo relationships, relationships of respect, like our uncles. But now, the youth never follow the laws of respect that our grandparents followed."

Some women also make a connection between the modern school system and the abuse of kava in the community. One woman said: *"They [the young people] go to school and then try to find a job, but then there isn't one, and so they end up drinking kava all the time to stop from thinking about it."*

Thus, mothers recognise that school is causing problems in their communities – from the loss of indigenous knowledge and the breakdown of *kastom* and respect, to abusive consumption of kava among young men. However, the mothers still send their children to school, without suggesting that the school system needs to change. In one interview, Lilin talked about what might be done to alleviate the negative impacts of school, particularly the loss of traditional ways of life:

“School has come and brought about all these changes. But if we want to try to bring back some of our traditional ways, it will be up to the community and the village leaders. They must stand up strong, then we’ll be able to bring back the good ways of our traditional community system.”

However, while Lilin blames the school system for changes which she views as negative, she does not suggest that the school system needs to change. Instead she brings the onus back on the community leaders. Later, I asked Mamae why no one ever suggests that the school system needs to change. She responded in this way: *“It’s so true. It’s like the people see the school as belonging to the government, not the community, and so they feel they don’t have the power to change it.”*

While mothers recognise that school is leading to the loss of indigenous knowledge and respect, they continue to send their children to school without trying to change the school system. Children go to school for six or more years in a system that devalues their own indigenous community knowledge and ways of life, and undermines parents’ attempts to pass on key community knowledge and skills to their children. All the mothers I worked with complained that even when they do try to teach their children, their children are often disinterested or think they know better and so do not take on the teachings. According to Woyang: *“Lots of young girls aren’t interested in spending time with their mothers in the kitchen in order to learn from them.”* Lilin said that mothers’ teachings are undermined when children go to school and learn something else that does not fall in line with the customary teachings: *“Even if we do manage to find time to teach our children important parts of traditional community knowledge, they go to school and learn something else, and often it doesn’t balance with what we teach them.”* The women also talked about school undermining traditional knowledge and ways of life because graduates think they know more than everyone else in the community. At the final focus group interview, the women all agreed when one participant said,

“School takes up too much of our kids’ time and it teaches them the ways of the white man, and then even when parents try to teach their kids, often the kids don’t really take on the teachings, or at least they don’t follow them.”

Indigenous Language, School Language

A related contradiction is evident in the fact that some mothers are concerned that vernacular language is on the decline and yet they still speak Bislama to their children and grandchildren. At both the small group interviews and final focus group interview, the women all talked about the fact that some parents do not teach their children local language, and instead speak to them in Bislama only: *“Some parents, they’re both from North Ambrym, but still they speak only Bislama to their kids.”* The women also said that they saw this as a problem: *“This is big problem because if the younger generation only speak Bislama they won’t know local language or ‘kastom’.”*

When the European colonisers set up schools, they established English and French as the official languages of instruction. Even today, if a child speaks to a friend or relative in a vernacular language or Bislama while in the classroom or even on the school grounds, that child is scolded or punished (even physically sometimes). The long-term impact of this treatment is that children internalise the message that their own local languages are inferior, even wrong, vis-à-vis the European languages. While Bislama is not English or French, much of its vocabulary is derived from these two introduced languages which people were forced to learn while working on the colonisers’ plantations. As mentioned above, many parents think that if they speak to their children in Bislama, rather than vernacular language, their children will have a head start when they start school. Thus, in the perceived hierarchy of languages that has developed since colonisation, Melanesians now view English and French as being at the top, Bislama being next, and vernacular languages as being at the bottom. Not surprisingly, the phenomenon of parents speaking only Bislama to their children is strongest in town, as highlighted by Nalu at the final focus group interview:

“Most kids living in town don’t know their land. . . . What’s more, most of them don’t know local language either, only Bislama.”

This contradiction, however, was apparent even among the research participants. While all of the women agreed that the demise of vernacular language was problematic, some of them speak mainly or only Bislama to their children or grandchildren. Today in North Ambrym, when

a person marries someone from a different language group, the children of that marriage are often spoken to in Bislama, rather than either one of the parents' vernacular languages. This dynamic plagues even the research participants, most of whom speak Bislama with their children and grandchildren of mixed-language marriages. Despite voicing concerns about the decline of vernacular language, one of the research participants speaks primarily Bislama to her own children. In one interview, this young mother said:

"Some parts of our community ways of life are still strong, but some . . . like . . . I want to raise the issue of language. Like, we're here and I'm thinking about language . . . it's starting to die. Now you don't hear pure language anymore. You only hear language mixed with Bislama."

And yet, this mother speaks mainly Bislama to her two children, neither of whom can speak vernacular language.

Drugs, Drunks, and the Pressure to Have Money

Another contradiction is evident in the fact that women complain about the negative impacts of alcohol and kava on their husbands, sons, and the community, but then allow and even encourage their families to sell alcohol and kava to make money. One woman described the strong tension between the desire to make money through village fundraising kava nights, and the negative impacts of these fundraising events on the community:

"It [kava] controls them [the men]. Now, when people want to hold a fundraising it's always a kava night. Kava nights are the only way now. And when they hold one, they[the men] don't know what else to do, they go help the one putting it on. They help him with his fundraising, but you know, they're all big kava drinkers too. They end up drinking and drinking and drinking until it's finished. Then they go back up to the garden in the night, pull up more kava, come back down . . . make kava again. It's all money! The host wants to raise some money, so they all drink, drink, drink. When the sun is up the next morning and it's time to go to the garden or do something else . . . no way! They're not up to it."

The women also talked about the connection between school graduates not being able to find jobs in town and their abuse of kava back in the village. One research participant spoke of her last born son, who has the most formal education of all her children and yet has not found steady money work. He now lives in the village but is back and forth to town regularly. In a heightened contradiction, while I was doing my community research and working together closely with this woman in 2002, this young man, who we will call Freddie, started up a home

business to sell alcoholic beverages. As mentioned earlier, even before Freddie started up this business, he was already a heavy drinker, leading other young men in multi-day drinking binges on a regular basis. Once Freddie started up his business and had everyday access to alcohol, he was getting drunk with other young men almost continually. Freddie's mother, who we will call Emmy, did not object to her son's business. Instead, Emmy seemed to encourage his entrepreneurship as the following story suggests.

Story Number Eight: Selling Alcohol as a Form of Entrepreneurship

Today I learned that Freddie had ordered another shipment of booze to sell in the community. I was disappointed and concerned . . . about the young men, their wives and children, and the community as a whole. Freddie and others were already drinking themselves stupid (and sometimes violent) on an almost daily basis. I wondered how much money Freddie actually made, given how much he was drinking and how much I heard others in the community were drinking for free. I asked Emmy what she thought about Freddie's plan to bring in more alcohol to sell. She said, "*I worry a little, but it's OK. Let him try this out for a while. Let him make a bit of money for himself.*"

Her words, the tone of her voice, and even the look on her face, came off as supportive. I wondered if she was actually supportive or perhaps was not, but found it difficult to be honest with me. Perhaps she said this to cover her own disappointment and concern. Or was this my own bias affecting my reading of what she said? Emmy herself said it was OK.

My years living in a rural village on another Melanesian island, together with my three months here on Ambrym, have taught me much about the pressures that people now feel to have money – especially parents who have 'invested' in their children, like Freddie, by paying many years of school fees, and the children of these parents.

Concluding Thoughts

The findings suggest mothers still place some value on indigenous knowledge and ways of life and want both the valued aspects of rural community life and the valued aspects of town life for themselves and their children. Most mothers, however, are living a trend toward loss of land and culture. The women's self-esteem, cultural pride, and belief in their land-based ways of life has been battered and eroded, and in the contemporary context of corporate globalisation as dominant culture there are few incentives to be proud. What is more, the data indicate that this erosion and loss of belief is on the rise among the younger generation. So, for example, contemporary Melanesian mothers do not believe in themselves and their ideas enough to try to find ways to reform the education system to prevent it from killing indigenous knowledge. Yet

these same mothers complain that when they try to pass on key community knowledge to their children – an action that shows that they perceive the knowledge as somewhat valuable – the children are often not interested in learning. While most children still learn how to work in the garden, few know as much as their mothers about traditional cooking, weaving, or the practices of *kastom*. This dynamic indicates that members of the younger generation value local knowledge less than their mothers do.

The women themselves blame school for the decline of indigenous knowledge, language, and ways of life. But the women do not suggest that if school is the leading cause of this unwanted decline, the school system needs to change. As mentioned above, when I asked my research counterpart why no one ever suggests that the school system needs to change, she said: *“It’s so true. It’s like the people see the school as belonging to the government, not the community, and so they feel they don’t have the power to change it.”* This woman’s response highlights again how rural women have been subjected to colonisation and oppression that have left them suffering from inferiority complex vis-à-vis outsiders and anything or anyone perceived by themselves to be more knowing than they are. Bettina Aptheker describes the devastation of internalised oppression:

“As devastating as any overt form of physical oppression is its internalized counterpart that subjugates the life of the mind. . . The process of colonization is not only one of limiting access, of subjugation, of political domination, of racial superiority. It also involves an internal corrosion, a loss of esteem, a loss of confidence in one’s knowledge, an inability to give expression to experience.” (1989, 135-36)

In North Ambrym, the women are colonised and oppressed by feelings of inferiority vis-à-vis the central government and the imposed education system. This perceived inferiority leaves the women feeling voiceless and powerless. They find it almost impossible to believe in the validity of their own ideas, let alone act on these ideas. In this case, the women find it difficult to believe that their critique of the education system may actually be valid, let alone act on this critique by trying to mobilise the community to lobby for education system reform.

The fact is that the points of tension identified – land/money, village/town, indigenous knowledge/school knowledge, indigenous language/school language – are not necessarily contradictory. However, in order to hold on to both one and the other, community members must want to hold on to both; there needs to be the will that enables the way. And while the data point

to there being some will among contemporary women to have both one and the other in each case, the data also point to a loss of will among the younger generation who have gone or are going to school. The data point to a loss of indigenous knowledge and language, and a loss of interest in these things, among the younger generation. The data also point to the flip side of this decline – that is, an increase in school knowledge and language, and increased interest in money work, store foods, and town life among the youth. And while this increase in imported knowledge and ways of life could be achieved without compromising indigenous knowledge and ways of life, this is not happening. Instead, the data point to a rise of outside knowledge and ways of life that is happening at the expense of indigenous knowledge and ways of life.

CHAPTER VI: WOMEN'S EVERYDAY RESISTANCE

This thesis set out to answer two research questions: what do rural women in Melanesia do in their everyday lives, particularly those activities that work to maintain traditional land-based ways of life and communal value systems, and how do the women perceive, understand, and value these activities?; and has the popular education and protest movement regarding structural adjustment affected the women's daily activities or their perceptions of what they do? In sum, rural women care and provide for their children and other family members on a daily basis. In caring and providing for children, women pass on key community knowledge to the next generation including knowledge about the land and growing food. While the women value the land as their primary source of sustenance, and their extended families and communities as their primary source of support, they also place high value on money, classroom schooling, wage labour, and store-bought food and commodities. The study also found that women are often unaware of important issues affecting themselves, their families, and their communities, such as the Comprehensive Reform Program (CRP) and the land registration initiative. Interviews and participant observation data revealed that none of the research participants knew anything about land registration or CRP. Furthermore, none of the women had heard about the popular opposition to CRP, including the petition to government. Hence, the popular education and protest movement had not affected the women's daily lives nor their perceptions of what they do.

Approaches to Women's Everyday Resistance

Given the tensions and contradictions within the data, can the women's daily activities and perceptions thereof be seen to constitute resistance to structural adjustment and other forms of corporate globalisation? Following are four different ways of understanding the relationship between women's everyday lives and resistance to corporate globalisation in Melanesia. Each approach or way of understanding speaks to different women or situations; some approaches are more conscious than others; and each approach has its own costs, benefits, and impacts.

Women's Daily Work Maintains Connections to the Land

The fact remains that women in Lolihor, North Ambrym pass on key community knowledge to the next generation on a daily basis. The data show that women are mothers first and foremost. The women all have children, whether biologically or through adoption, and all

place a high priority on caring for and raising their children to the best of their ability. This means that the needs and wants of children often come before those of their mothers. The data also show that women do more of the daily family and subsistence work, including childcare and garden work – that is, caring for and feeding children and families – than their male counterparts. The men also work but their work is not as daily in nature. Moreover, the men spend a higher proportion of their time on ‘politics’ and money work, in town, and drinking and recovering from kava and alcohol. Women are, thus, more responsible for the daily, life-sustaining work. The daily work that the women do is multi-faceted in nature, as they combine the work itself with caring for children and teaching children about the work at the same time: women are mothers, daily labourers, and teachers of the next generation. The women spend more time in the village and more time with the children than the men. In this way, women do more of the work of passing on and keeping alive key community knowledge.

Women do more of the work of teaching children about food gardening. They also do much of the work of teaching children about their land – in particular, the locations, borders, and landmarks – when they go to work in their food gardens and take the children with them. However, the patrilineal system of landholding whereby a woman usually moves to her husband’s village and works on her husband’s family’s land after marriage, and perceptions that knowledge about land belongs more to the male sphere, have meant that women do not always know the important oral histories that connect a person to his/her land. Nonetheless, in Ambrym as in other parts of Melanesia, food gardens are resources controlled primarily by women; women’s names are more often associated with food gardens than men’s names are; and women know more about food gardening than men do (see also Pollard 2000, 32). Because women control gardens and work on a daily basis, women are key to maintaining a family’s connections to its land. Vandergeest (1997) discusses ‘property’ and its relationship to everyday practice and gender. Although ‘property’ is a western cultural concept, Vandergeest’s analysis underlines the importance of everyday activities in maintaining ‘claims to property’ or what, in the Melanesian cultural context, might more appropriately be termed ‘connections to the land’:

“Property minimally involves a legitimate and enforceable claim to some kind of resource. As such, property is a set of everyday practices as well as social relationships and rules. . . The importance of understanding property as practice is that it makes us more likely to see how property relations are ambiguous and constantly renegotiated. The focus on the everyday also helps us to see the overwhelming complexity of property. Everyday property practices are shaped by gender, class, kin, political, economic, legal, and many other relationships; they are ambiguous, changing, negotiated.” (1997, 4-5)

While women's everyday practices in North Ambrym perpetuate traditional indigenous knowledge and maintain connections to land, traditional subsistence routines can be transformed into everyday resistance by the State and the imposition of new laws. Scott cites the example of England, where before 1650 hunting was part of the traditional subsistence routine of the rural population – “an activity embedded in customary rights” (1989, 9). However, after 1650 this same everyday subsistence activity – that is, hunting on customary lands – became a crime termed ‘poaching’ through the imposition of laws which enforced individual titles to land and made it illegal to hunt on ‘private lands’. Everyday activities, thus, became everyday forms of resistance. In the words of Scott,

“Poaching as a crime, therefore, entails less a change of behaviour than a shift in the law of property relations. It is the state and its law which suddenly transforms these subsistence routines into everyday forms of resistance.” (1989, 9)

In the context of the land reforms being pushed by ‘development’ banks and foreign aid agencies in Melanesia – including land registration to facilitate a shift from customary landholding systems to individual ownership – women's everyday work on the land has become a form of everyday resistance to structural adjustment and corporate globalisation, a mechanism for maintaining customary systems of landholding.

Women's Unconscious Resistance

Women in Melanesia go to the food gardens with children. The children help out with feeding chickens and pigs, and with housework and cooking. Older women teach younger women how to weave. And mothers tell *kastom* stories to their children before they sleep at night. By engaging in these everyday activities women pass on vital community knowledge to the next generation, and in doing so they resist ‘development’ bank structural adjustment programming. But how strong is this resistance? The following story shows how women pass on community knowledge to the children, and also raises questions about how much they value this process.

Story Number Nine: Reflecting on a Day at the Garden with Woyang and her Children

The plan was for us to hoe the land and plant taro. There were three hoes. I started working with one hoe and Woyang and the children took turns with the other two. Even Woyang's four-year old daughter, Relin, helped! After a while Woyang sent 15-year old Anna and two more children to another garden of hers to dig taro that we would then plant. By the time the older children arrived back with the taro we were nearly finished hoeing. I could hardly have asked for a clearer picture of the perpetuation of traditional subsistence knowledge from mother to daughters, nieces, and son. I could actually see the process of accumulation of knowledge as I watched four-year old Relin hoeing side by side with the older children – a tangible example of the various skill and knowledge levels. The oldest child, Anna, was extremely proficient – climbing for drinking coconuts, hoeing, supervising the group that went to dig taro, and planting taro too.

But the physical passing on of such knowledge is only one part of a bigger picture, a bigger story. Another part of the story is how people feel about what they're doing – that is, whether or not people see what they're doing as important, worthwhile, and legitimate. Legitimate is a key concept. People's belief in the legitimacy of their indigenous ways of life has taken a severe bashing during generations of colonisation. And so the issue is whether or not people still see their indigenous ways of living and working as legitimate vis-à-vis the ways of the coloniser, that is, living in town and working for money. While I am seeing and documenting the physical perpetuation of subsistence knowledge, I am not sure to what degree people believe in the legitimacy and importance of the processes. And it strikes me that this kind of belief in the legitimacy and value of subsistence knowledge is a vital ingredient, a key indicator, of truly healthy, strong, self-sufficient land-based communities and hence resistance to corporate globalisation.

Getting at how the women truly feel about themselves and their subsistence work and knowledge is difficult. I aimed to get at this information through interviews and observation but it was challenging. It is not easy to talk with women about whether or not they believe in their indigenous selves and ways of life, and about what they have taught their children to believe in. It is not easy to talk with women about feelings of inferiority.

Despite these challenges, I was able to piece together information gathered through formal and informal interviews and participant observation that paints a clear and detailed picture of the devaluation of traditional indigenous knowledge in contemporary North Ambrym by both women and men. The biggest factor contributing to this devaluation is the modern day school system. Today in North Ambrym, there are no families who are content to live entirely off the land and to teach their children to do the same. All North Ambrym families now struggle to earn enough money to pay for their children to go to school in systems imposed by the British and French colonisers. Even 25 years after independence, these schools still utilise primarily European curricula and English and French as the languages of instruction. Moreover, they teach

young people skills geared toward attaining wage labour within the cash economy. Unfortunately, there are not enough waged jobs for everyone who finishes school and unemployment is now a growing problem. There is still unlimited employment on the land in rural Vanuatu, but most parents and children alike now view life in the village as the inferior second choice to living and working in town for money. So mothers care for and work with children on a daily basis and in doing so pass on key community knowledge, but they then send their children to school in a system that devalues traditional subsistence knowledge and ways of life in favour of classroom knowledge and town life. This devaluation ultimately undermines the perpetuation of community knowledge and resources.

The data show that women still value the land to the extent that they are willing to make gardens for their children and other relatives living in town, thus maintaining the claims of these relatives to the land. But the data also show that the majority of young people who complete their schooling, secure wage labour in town, and raise their families in town, do not visit their villages and their land often enough to adequately take on local knowledge and maintain their own connection to the land. This dynamic calls into question the actual effectiveness of women's innovative efforts to maintain their children's and other relative's connections to their rural land base. The cycle of perpetuation of traditional subsistence knowledge from one generation to the next is thus under strain.

The data also highlight that while women know and pass on knowledge about the locations, borders, and landmarks of their family lands, particularly when they take their children with them to work in the food gardens, most women do not know the oral histories that connect a family and its land. The knowledge of the oral histories associated with a family and its land is seen as men's knowledge. In the predominantly patrilineal communities of Lolihor, North Ambrym, most women see knowing and passing on the stories about the land to the next generation of landholders as the responsibility of men. Some research participants voiced concerns that today, with men increasingly away from the garden and the village as they sleep off hangovers and travel to town, women need to stop leaving this crucial responsibility up to the men. The majority of women, however, have not critically analysed the current and potential future impacts of such societal trends on the well being of themselves, their families, and their communities. Nor are the women conscious that their everyday work and activities comprise a form of everyday resistance to 'development' bank structural adjustment and corporate globalisation. The long term impacts of double oppression – that is, oppression by men and the

dominant culture – have rendered the majority of women disempowered and voiceless, their concept of self reduced to little more than ‘uneducated’, ‘unknowing’, and even ‘stupid’ village women.

Everyday Love and Pride in Providing

Conscious or unconscious, valued or not valued, women’s everyday activities still comprise a form of resistance. Colburn talks about how and why peasants engage in everyday forms of resistance even without a high degree of consciousness of the fact that their actions comprise resistance. By being attentive to providing for their families and ensuring that too much is not taken away from them by government and others, peasants resist:

“Peasants are anything but indifferent to the details of their harvests, communities, and government. Precisely because of this, peasants, by definition of a subordinate status, engage in persistent everyday forms of resistance. In the process of defending themselves as best they can, peasants also have an impact – unwitting, slow, and quiet as it may be – on elites and their endeavours. Peasants too are agents of historical change.” (Colburn 1989, xv)

In the same way, women in North Ambrym, by definition of their status as women, love their children, take great pride in being able to provide well for their families, and care about their crops, their pigs and chickens, their extended families, and their family’s status in the community. For these reasons, women engage in daily activities that maintain their connections with their land and strengthen the land-based ways of life and communal value systems, and thus resist corporate globalisation.

North Ambrym women, because they are women and mothers, engage in daily life-sustaining activities – planting and harvesting food, cooking, feeding people, teaching and caring for children – that keep people alive, loved, and connected to their land and community. Consciously or unconsciously, women’s daily activities loving and providing for their children resist the dominant culture obsession with what Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen called “the never-ending accumulation of dead money” (1999, 5). The following story sheds light on how consciousness of, or attention to, the ‘issues’ is not a necessary component of resistance:

Story Number Ten: Mother's Love and Unconscious Resistance

After a day of work with Nalu – weeding her garden and talking about perpetuation of traditional indigenous knowledge – we made our way back to the village heavily laden with food gifts. The entire walk home I contemplated women's everyday work and lives here in North Ambrym and whether or not what women do comprises some kind of resistance to structural adjustment. We arrived home not long before dusk and I, delighted to see my little girl, forgot all about the issues of resistance and structural adjustment for a while and became 'just' a mother . . .

And it occurred to me afterward that I too, by being here living and working with the research participants and also by being the mother of a Melanesian child, am connected to the phenomenon I seek to study and document, and that despite my temporary state of lowered awareness of, or attention to, the 'issues' I too was still resisting all the while. How? Well, even in a period of lowered attention to the issues such as that which happens when I forget about my research work and focus only on the totally engrossing and energy consuming work of being a mother – the work of feeding, nurturing, and teaching my daughter to the best of my ability; of keeping her connected to her Melanesian heritage; of taking the time to play with her and cuddle her – such moments as these comprise resistance to the cold, calculating, profit-seeking-at-any-expense machine that is corporate globalisation.

Thus, women do not have to be conscious of the political context to be resisting it. Awareness of the political context likely makes the resistance stronger, but even without consciousness women in North Ambrym still resist. Women, more than men, stay in the villages to care for and teach the children, to plant the food, and to weave the baskets and mats. In North Ambrym, women's everyday lives still "put life and everything necessary to produce and maintain life" more at the centre of economic and social activity than "the never-ending accumulation of dead money" (Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies 1999, 5). Moreover, in the dailiness of the women's lives, we find "evidence that there is and always has been an alternative to the beliefs, priorities, and values of the dominant cultures we have endured" (Aptheker 1989, 74).

Embracing the Old and New: Conscious Traditionalism

Considering the tensions and contradictions discussed in Chapter V, the data indicate that women want both sides of each contradictory relationship. That is, the women want both land and money, village and town, indigenous knowledge and school knowledge, and vernacular language and school language. The clearest indicator of this is the women's development of adaptations and innovations that attempt to bring the points of tension together and rationalise contradictions. One adaptation is women using land to both grow their own food and to grow

crops to sell to earn money, and teaching their children to do the same. Another innovation is women making gardens for children and other relatives living in town as a way of holding on to the land for these people. The effectiveness of such innovations depends, however, on the contextual perceptions and values about land / money and village life / town life that underlie the decisions people are making. For example, some women now sell a significant proportion of their crops so they have money to pay not only school fees but also store foods. It is now common for rural women to spend a full day working in the garden, carry a basket full of fresh food back down to the village, and then drop the basket in the kitchen and head straight off to the store to buy rice for dinner. This trend to habitually devalue local foods in favour of store-bought foods calls into question the effectiveness of this innovation as a means of embracing and holding on to both the old and new – that is, both traditional foods and newer introduced foods. Moreover, as mentioned above, one research participant said, *“Most kids living in town don't know their land. They rarely come to the island too in order to learn it,”* and the other eight women all agreed with her. This comment calls into question the effectiveness of mothers making gardens on behalf of relatives living in town as a means of maintaining connections to land, especially when the children of these relatives grow up in town and rarely visit the village. This innovation also appears to be compromised by the general devaluation of village life in favour of town life.

The findings suggest mothers want both the valued aspects of rural community life and the valued aspects of town life for themselves and their children, but that most mothers are living a trend toward loss of land and culture due to lack of awareness. The women have been exposed almost exclusively to a dominant culture narrative that devalues land and local knowledge vis-à-vis money and outside knowledge, and have not had enough or any opportunities to engage in critical reflection and analysis about the situation of their communities – past, present, and future. Consequently, the women are not aware of the consequences of many of their current actions. The women have not contemplated the long-term impacts of teaching their children to prefer store-bought foods, to speak only Bislama (instead of both vernacular language and Bislama), and to devalue village life and subsistence work relative to town life and money work. At this point in time, most mothers, albeit unknowingly, are teaching their children that one world is of more value than the other world. In sum, a vital missing link is belief in the value of self, community, and indigenous ways of life that could enable the women to move from being passive recipients of outside knowledge and influence, to being active, critically literate, and aware participants in their lives. Critically literate and aware women would be better equipped to analyse, assess, and

respond to the world around them at both personal and societal levels. This implies that both the uneasiness and contradictions the women perceive in their daily lives, as well as more macro level issues and conflicts such as that over 'development' bank land policy, could become subjects of critical analysis and action. The women would then be better able to respond to these local level and macro level conflicts by, for example, holding on to the useful and valuable parts of indigenous knowledge and at the same time taking on the useful and valuable parts of introduced knowledge systems. Such critical literacy enables what Mohawk scholar, Taiaiake Alfred, refers to as "self-conscious traditionalism":

"Working within a traditional framework, we must acknowledge the fact that cultures change, and that any particular notion of what constitutes 'tradition' will be contested. Nevertheless, we can identify certain common beliefs, values, and principles that form the persistent core of a community's culture. It is this traditional framework that we must use as the basis on which to build a better society. I am advocating a self-conscious traditionalism, an intellectual, social, and political movement that will reinvigorate those values, principles, and other cultural elements that are best suited to the larger contemporary political and economic reality. . . The notion of traditionalism I am promoting demands cultural give-and-take with non-indigenous people – respect for what both sides have to contribute and share. It also demands self-respect and the confidence to build on what we know to be good and right for our own people." (Alfred 1999, xviii)

Such consciousness is a process. And while prior to taking part in this research project none of the women I worked with as research participants had had an opportunity to engage with a critical literacy process, there are communities in Melanesia that have engaged in such processes for decades. There are communities in Vanuatu, for example, that have rejected the imposed system of European-style education and are instead developing their own indigenous systems of education, banking, and governance based on pre-contact principles and models; that have banned store-bought foods and limit western medicines; and that understand and actively oppose and protest against land registration and land alienation. These communities embrace innovations from outside that they decide are appropriate and have a beneficial net impact, such as solar power and controlled use of things like motor vehicles and video machines. In such communities, women do enact forms of self-conscious traditionalism as they go about their daily routines, caring for and providing for their children and other family members, and passing on key community knowledge to the next generation. These women are critically aware of the importance of their everyday activities.

Discussion

Colburn points to three important consequences of everyday forms of peasant resistance: that is, gains won by peasants improve their wellbeing; “the cumulation of peasants’ evasatory tactics can erode away unpopular customs, laws, government policies, or in the extreme, a regime itself”; and “practices of resistance can lay the groundwork for more overt political activity once the constellation of forces moves to the previously weak peasants’ favour” (1989, x). Rahaja and Gold also highlight the importance of everyday forms of resistance in nurturing the conditions necessary for social change:

“The active rebellion that may at one moment be impractical or impossible may at another moment become plausible precisely because the idea of social transformation has been nourished in proverbs, folk songs, jokes, rituals, legends, and language.” (1994, 26)

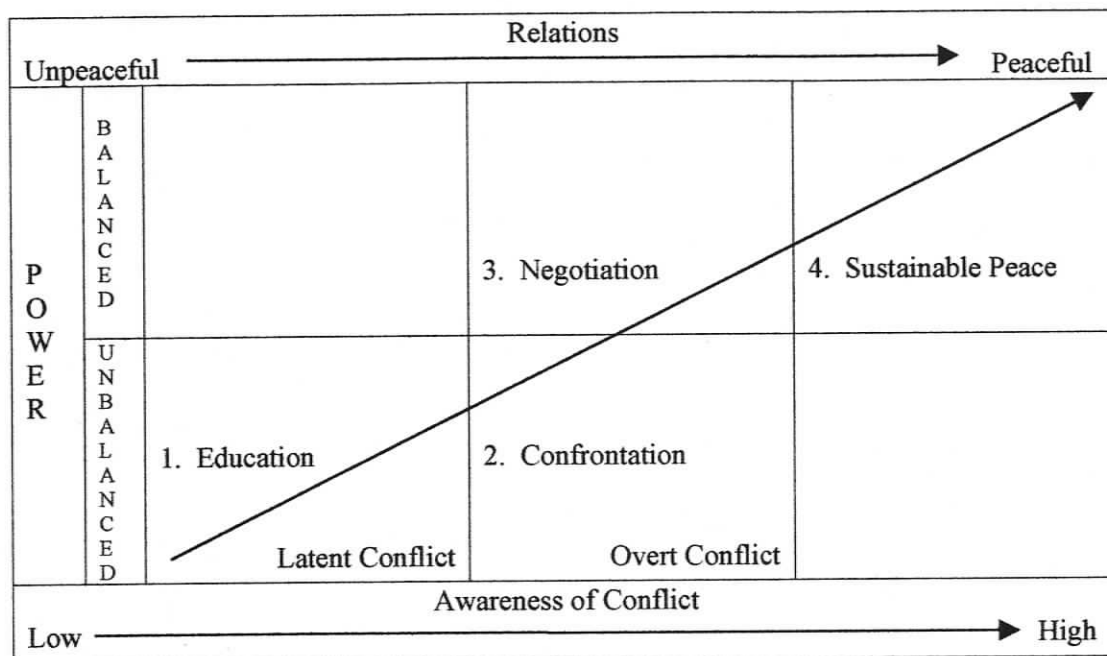
Scott (1985, 1989, 1990), Colburn (1989), and Rahaja and Gold (1994) all discuss ways in which everyday resistance can be used by oppressed groups to keep an issue, a perspective, a language, a belief system, or a way of life alive until the time is right for overt political activity and/or until the oppressing power revokes the source of contention. In the context of resistance to structural adjustment in Melanesia, women’s everyday activities on the land have the potential to keep customary knowledge and landholding systems alive while the more public movement struggles against land reform and/or until the foreign aid agencies come to see the value inherent in these traditional systems and question the validity of codification of land laws and individualised title.

Everyday Resistance and the Progression of Conflict

The Quaker conciliator, Adam Curle, charts movement between unpeaceful and peaceful relationships in a matrix comparing levels of power with levels of awareness of conflicting interests and needs (1971 in Lederach 1995, 12-13) (see *Figure 7* below). Curle’s matrix is useful in analysing the conflict between the aid agencies and indigenous peoples in Melanesia due to the unbalanced power relations between the conflicting parties and the low awareness of the conflict among grassroots people. Curle identifies three main peacemaking functions in this progression of conflict – education or conscientisation, advocacy, and mediation. Conscientisation is needed when people are unaware of injustices and power imbalances. Once people become aware of their situation, they then need to advocate for change. Violent or non-violent confrontation is required to facilitate “recognition of mutual dependence increasing the

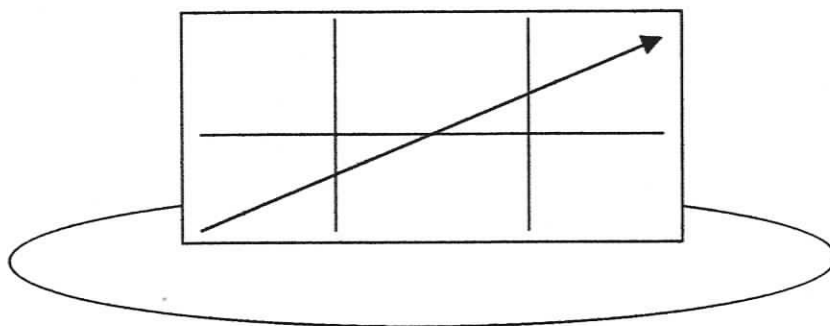
voice of the less powerful” (Lederach 1995, 13). Successful confrontation will increase the legitimacy of the concerns of the less powerful and begin to balance power. According to Curle, negotiation or mediation is now possible and should aim to restructure the relationship.

Figure 7: *The Progression of Conflict* (Curle 1971 in Lederach 1995, 12-13)



Lederach holds that Curle’s matrix is useful “for plotting where we are in a given conflict and for suggesting potential activities we might choose to undertake at a given time” (1995, 12). While this may be true to an extent, the matrix fails to take into account the contributions of everyday forms of resistance which can be seen as grounding or providing the basis for the more public education, advocacy, protest, and mediation activities. In the context of the conflict over structural adjustment in Melanesia, women’s everyday activities maintain connections to the land and keep land-based ways of life alive, thus resisting corporate globalisation and providing an anchor to the more public awareness and protest movement. Women’s everyday activities provide the basis, the *raison d’être*, for the awareness and protest movement as it endeavours to work through the steps of Curle’s Progression of Conflict – that is, to educate, advocate, and lobby against land reform, aiming to gain support and legitimacy for the cause and thus affect a balancing of power between the indigenous people and the development banks and other foreign aid agencies (see *Figure 8* below).

Figure 8: Women's Everyday Resistance Grounds the Awareness and Protest Movement in Melanesia



In North Ambrym, with men increasingly away from garden and village, it is the women who continue to go to the garden, care for and teach the children, and keep alive the basis of the struggle – that is, the land-based self-reliant communities and their traditional indigenous knowledge.

Women's everyday resistance among the tribal cultures of Melanesia is critically important for the contemporary world as it has the potential to nurture and sustain some of the last examples of societies not structured by private property; societies free from unemployment, hunger, and homelessness; societies that to this day can barely comprehend, let alone accept, one person getting fat next to another who is starving. Aptheker points to the importance of the example of indigenous people's resistance to structures of domination:

“In searching for new ways of thinking, tribal cultures are particularly important because many of them . . . before European contact, were not structured by male supremacy, racism, or the private ownership of property. They are among the few examples we have of such existence. . . Significantly, these cultures also seem not to have allowed for the institutionalized expression of hierarchy and domination.” (1989, 240)

We have seen that the daily life-sustaining activities of women in Lolihor, North Ambrym, comprise a form of everyday resistance to ‘development’ bank structural adjustment and corporate globalisation. We have also discussed factors that constrain this resistance. These factors include devaluation of traditional subsistence knowledge and ways of life in favour of introduced knowledge and lifestyles, and limited awareness of how women's everyday activities comprise daily resistance and thus provide the basis for the more public education and protest movement. This devaluation and limited awareness affects not just women or men, but society as

a whole. Almost twenty years ago, ni-Vanuatu poet and activist, Grace Molisa, called on “men and women alike” to “accept, recognise, and respect” women’s work and the products of that work as valuable contributions to Vanuatu society – its development, “prosperity”, and “perpetuity” (Molisa 1987, 14-15). According to ni-Vanuatu feminist psychologist, Andonia Piau-Lynch, Molisa’s words are no less relevant today. Piau-Lynch holds that Molisa’s poems still “ring true” today, as women and their contributions to society in Vanuatu continue to be overlooked and undervalued (2005). Molisa also recognised the role of women as mothers and teachers of the next generation and held women accountable for their own continuing oppression:

Women
are mothers
of humanity.
Women
are teachers
of Society.
As such,
Women
can not lay blame
on anyone
for their nonentity
because
Women
are party to
the maintenance
of an oppressive
macho status quo. (1987, 14)

A few years later, Molisa talked again about the critical importance of women continuing to hold on to their traditional knowledge and passing it on to the next generation, of women needing to know and to know consciously:

“We’ve drawn from culture to make the struggle for independence meaningful, but knowing who we are and where we are isn’t going to continue if present-day mothers don’t have knowledge [about culture].” (Molisa 1991 in Bolton 2003, 61)

African-American feminist, Patricia Collins, calls not for raising consciousness, but for building on the “core themes” of a Black woman’s life experience, thus “infusing them with new meaning” and “stimulating a new consciousness that utilizes black women’s everyday, taken-for-granted knowledge” (2000, 32). According to Collins, “Rather than raising consciousness, Black feminist thought affirms, rearticulates, and provides a vehicle for expressing in public a

consciousness that quite often already exists” (2000, 32). Moreover, this “rearticulated consciousness” aims to empower Black women and “stimulate resistance” (Collins 2000, 32).

Women in North Ambrym resist structural adjustment and corporate globalisation by engaging in everyday life-sustaining labours. At the same time, the cycle of perpetuation of community knowledge is under strain as village life is devalued in favour of town life. Increasing numbers of young people now choose to live in town, and many do not visit their villages often enough to take on enough of the huge body of traditional knowledge or maintain their connections to their land and community. The time is overdue for society to heed the wise words of Grace Molisa, Alice Pollard, and others who have called for women’s contributions to Melanesian society to be recognised, respected, and valued (Jolly 1991; Molisa 1987, 14-15; Pollard 2000, 52-53). It is also time for the more public awareness and protest movement to recognise that it is anchored and grounded by the daily resistance of women’s everyday labours in the rural areas, and to join hands with and lend support to this everyday resistance movement. The awareness and protest movement would gain strength by having members spend more time in the rural areas, working on the land and learning about the land. And the daily resistance movement would gain strength by having members learn more about the political context of their lives and their work and thus coming to a rearticulated consciousness of the critical importance of women’s daily labours in the rural areas. In this way, the resistance movement as a whole – both the more public education and protest movement and women’s everyday resistance – would be reinforced and strengthened.

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APPENDIX I**Human Research Ethics Committee Certificate of Approval**

University
of Victoria


Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of the Vice-President, Research
University of Victoria
Room 425 Business and Economics Building
Tel (250) 472-4545 Fax (250) 721-8960
Email ovprhe@uvic.ca Web www.research.uvic.ca

Human Research Ethics Committee Certificate of Approval

<u>Principal Investigator</u> Catherine Sparks Graduate Student <u>Co-Investigator(s):</u>	<u>Department/School</u> HUMA	<u>Supervisor</u> Dr. Marge Reitsma-Street	
<u>Project Title:</u> Rural Women and Everyday Resistance to Structural Adjustment in Melanesia			
<u>Protocol No.</u> 066-04	<u>Approval Date</u> 17-Mar-04	<u>Start Date</u> 17-Mar-04	<u>End Date</u> 16-Mar-05

Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Committee has examined this research protocol and concludes that, in all respects, the proposed research meets appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Subjects.



 Dr. J. Howard Brunt
 Associate Vice-President, Research

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the procedures. Extensions or minor amendments may be granted upon receipt of "Request for Continuing Review or Amendment of an Approved Project" form.

066-04 Sparks, Catherine

APPENDIX II

Thesis Research Project Participant Consent Form / Script

(English Translation)

This purpose of this form is to get the consent of the women who will participate in the study to be conducted by Catherine Sparks in Lolihor, North Ambrym, Vanuatu. The name of the research project is "Rural Women and Everyday Resistance to Structural Adjustment in Melanesia." The study aims to look at the everyday work and activities of village women, in order to assess whether or not they can be seen to comprise resistance to corporate globalisation and facilitating structural adjustment programs (SAPs). (SAPs are the set of reforms that big banks like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank impose in Melanesian countries, including Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, and many other countries as well, in order to facilitate corporate globalisation. In Vanuatu, SAP is called the Comprehensive Reform Program or CRP.)

Catherine is doing this study in order to satisfy the thesis project requirement of a masters degree in Dispute Resolution at the University of Victoria in Canada. This study is not a paid job for Catherine. Catherine has self-financed this degree (that is, paid her own school fees and the expenses associated with coming to do this study in Vanuatu) mainly through student loans, and also through one scholarship that she received from the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE).

There are several people that are supporting Catherine as professors and advisors. One is based in Canada – her name is Dr. Marge Reitsma-Street. Dr. Nicholas Faraclas is based at the University of PNG. John Salong is the Ni-Vanuatu Facilitator/Advisor. Emma Dingley is the Local Counterpart / Trainee. Lastly, Ralph Regenvanu is also involved as the Director of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. These people are all supporting Catherine to conduct this study.

I, _____, from _____ Village in North Ambrym, Vanuatu, agree to participate in the study being conducted by Catherine Sparks. I have been informed that this research project aims to document and analyse the everyday activities of rural women in Melanesia – especially those activities that function to maintain the land-based ways of life and communal value systems – in order to consider whether or not these activities can be shown to constitute resistance to structural adjustment.

I hereby consent to participate in this research project by taking part in three or four interviews (this means that I will take part in focused conversations with Catherine during which she will ask me questions). The reason that I am being asked to take part is that I have experience as a woman living in rural Melanesia and participating in the subsistence economy. I have been informed that participants have been chosen in a purposive way aiming to include a variety of women (that is, women of various ages, from various families, and with various levels of prior experience with the issues).

I have been informed that this research project has been screened and approved by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre (VCC). I understand the concerns and risks posed by my participation in this project, including the fact that my participation will be known by other members of the North Ambrym community. However, I also understand that VCC supports the research as it is potentially beneficial to both our community and country.

I have also been informed that it is a VCC requirement that Catherine work together with a local counterpart/trainee. I understand that by spending substantial time with Catherine in the community, this woman, Emma Dingley, will be able to experience, learn, and understand the research rationale, methodology, and process. In this way some of the understanding and expertise will remain in the community after Catherine leaves, and VCC will know that it can use Emma in future relevant local activities.

Catherine will first conduct two focus group interviews – one with women who worked closely with the Lolihor Development Council (LDC) and/or VCC in the past, and the other with women who were less actively involved with the LDC or VCC. I understand that I will take part in one of these two sessions. Catherine will use daily and seasonal calendars and a flexible set of interview questions in order to gain a greater understanding of what we, the participants, do in our everyday lives, how we feel about what we do, and also how our activities and perceptions of our activities relate to the broader context of resistance to structural adjustment. Catherine anticipates that each focus group interview will take between two and three hours, followed by a group lunch.

I understand that any identifying information, including my name and any identifying details of accounts I may tell, will be removed or coded. (To this end, I will provide Catherine with a pseudonym.) I have also been informed that in order to protect my confidentiality Catherine will not discuss the interviews with anyone other than her academic supervisors.

Following these group interviews, Catherine will do some individual interviews. These interviews will be conducted in an unstructured conversational way while she accompanies each woman to her garden for a few hours.

Catherine will then do one more interview with Emma and one more participant. At this interview, the three women will look in more depth at the issues of relevance. If Emma and the other participant agree, Catherine will audio-tape the interview so that a transcript can be prepared from the session. The purpose of audio-taping is to provide an opportunity for greater accuracy in considering the information contained in the interview discussion. I understand that if I take part in this interview, I can ask that the tape recorder be turned off at any point in the interview.

I have also been informed that if I take part in this interview, after Catherine has transcribed the interview and done some preliminary data analyses, I will meet again with Catherine and Emma to review the interview transcript, discuss the data, and get my feedback regarding their validity. If I do not read, Catherine will read the transcript to me. In this meeting, I will have the option of having Catherine delete any data contained in the transcript that I am not comfortable disclosing.

After analyses of both the focus group and individual interview data are complete, Catherine will facilitate a final group interview at which the other participants and I will have an opportunity to provide her with feedback on what she has learned about the relationship between the everyday activities of rural women and resistance to structural adjustment. If the participants (including myself) agree, this interview may also be audio-taped and transcribed. This final interview will be followed by an end-of-project party.

I am aware that all data (electronic, audio, and paper) will be stored in locked safe containers. I also understand that the data will be jointly owned by me and Catherine, and that what other uses will be made of the data (if at all), and when and how data will be destroyed (or returned to me)

will be negotiated, with Catherine ultimately deferring to my wishes. (However, I also understand that data can not be destroyed until Catherine completes and defends her thesis.)

I understand that I may interrupt the process at any time to question the procedure. If I have questions or concerns during the implementation of the project, I understand that I can discuss these with Catherine (the Researcher); Emma (the Local Counterpart / Trainee); John Salong (the Ni-Vanuatu Facilitator/Advisor) (ph: 612-6921-4445) (John has agreed to phone once very two weeks to ask if any of the participants want to talk with him in order to voice and deal with a concern); or I may phone Ralph Regenvanu (the Director of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre) (ph: 22129).

I also understand that I may withdraw at any time from participation in this project. I have been informed that if I decide to withdraw part way through the study: (a) Catherine and I will discuss what to do with the data that I have provided so far, and (b) if I do not want the data to be used, Catherine will return it to me without using it.

I have been informed and I understand that:

- (a) the research results will be written up as research papers in both English and Bislama: copies of the Bislama version will be given to participants and to VCC; an English version will be published as Catherine's thesis paper; and Catherine must also write two reports in English (mid-term and final reports) for CBIE (who provided her with a scholarship);
- (b) Catherine will be doing a presentation of the results of the research for the Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives at UVic (who provided her with a research travel grant); and
- (c) it is possible that the research might also result in published articles for academic or other journals.

Participant's signature

Date

Signature of witness

Date