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**AN EXAMINATION OF CULTURE AS A PROTECTIVE  
MECHANISM AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE:  
A CASE STUDY IN MT. BOSAVI, PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

A THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
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## **Abstract**

Development literature has not accorded sufficient attention to culture as a positive aspect of development until recently. Hence, in terms of using culture as a protective mechanism against gender-based violence, not much has been investigated or reported, since most studies on gender-based violence have focused more on cultural influences as the cause or effect of violence against women. However, in the case of Papua New Guinea (PNG) culture has always been the focus in regards to gender-based violence, portrayed as the cause of violence against women. Occasionally sources state there are traditional customs or beliefs that protect women from violence, but further explanation is not provided. Hence, this research investigated the question, “How can culture address gender-based violence in contemporary, rural Papua New Guinea?” This study offers an opportunity to view PNG culture as a solution to a problem, instead of as merely a problem to be solved.

To investigate how culture can be used positively as a strategy to address gender-based violence, a case study was conducted among the Sulamesi people of Mt Bosavi in the Southern highlands province of PNG. This research was conducted in a rural area because in general Papua New Guineans perceive people living in the villages as the ones living a traditional lifestyle, where established cultural norms and behaviours prevail. Using a qualitative research approach, the research investigated whether there were any traditional protective mechanisms in PNG used to address gender-based violence. This thesis concludes that through the identification of culture-driven protective mechanisms, it can be demonstrated that culture can be used as a strategy to address gender based violence. However, caution must be applied, since not all the protective mechanisms identified are desirable or constructive.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved *tete* Wagira, you will always be in my heart; and to my parents Gerard Dogimab and Eileen Dogimab whose endless love and continued support made all this worth it. Finally, to my two sisters Georgina Dogimab and Esther Dogimab, I hope with all my heart that you don't ever have to experience violence against women.

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## Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
COVAC	Collective to Fight Violence Against Women
ECPNG	Evangelical Church of Papua New Guinea
EU	European Union
FGC	Female Genital Cutting
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FMA	Forest Management Agreement
GAD	Gender and Development
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
ICDP	Integrated Conservation and Development Project
KI	Key Informant
KJV	Kutubu Joint Venture
MYWO	Maendeleo Ya Wanawake
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PATH	Programme for Appropriate Technology
PNG	Papua New Guinea
SSI	Semi-structured Interviews
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WID	Women in Development
WMA	Wildlife Management Area
WWF	World Wildlife Fund for Nature

## Local terms

Kisim meri long rot	‘Get a woman on the road’ – Tok Pisin expression for marrying without parental consent
Long haus	Long house
Man tru/trupela man	Real man
Pasin tumbuna	Traditional way
Rabis man	Rubbish man/worthless man
Raskol	Criminal
Trupela meri	Real woman
Wantok	One of the same language group

## **Chapter 1: Introduction: relevance, definitions and assumptions**

There must be no impunity for gender based violence. Let me be clear. What we are talking about is not a side issue. It is not a special group of concern to only a few. What we are talking about are not only women's rights but also the Human Rights of over one half of this globe's population...Violence against women concerns not only women, but above all the rest of us.

- Sergio Vieira de Mello (UNIFEM 2003:3)

### **1.1 Introduction**

The following story is a narrative concerning a girl whom I consider to be a friend. She was married when she was just 14 years of age. I want to start my thesis with her story because her experience is the reality of many Papua New Guinean girls. Moreover, her story sets the scene for my research topic.

I remember the day I was told by my father that he was arranging my marriage to this man I was dating. When I heard what he said, I was so scared. I did not want to get married — I still wanted to finish school. My father said I was old enough to get married and going to school for a girl was too expensive. He said the little education I had was enough. Besides, our family needed money and with my bride price, I would solve the family's money problems.

I cried and begged him not to arrange my marriage but he ignored my protest and held a meeting with the man's family, to set a date for my wedding. I felt my dreams running away from me with every tear that was dropping from my face. I was going to get married and become a mother, nothing more.

On my wedding day, I ran away from the village to hide myself from my family because I did not want to get married. I could hear them calling my name from where I was hiding, but I did not want to come out of my hiding place. Despite successfully hiding myself during the

day, I returned home when it was dark. That night I was beaten by my male relatives and forced into marriage. I am now a mother with two children but I still have my dreams of one day becoming an educated woman.

This story illustrates the power and control men can have over women's very existence.

However, instead of focusing on the negative implications of cultural practices and values, I would like to examine the positive outcomes of belonging to a specific culture. I believe that, despite the fact that women are sometimes violently mistreated, there are also cultural and traditional mechanisms that can work to protect them from violent male outbursts. More importantly, not all PNG men are violent and brutal towards women. This contradiction of a violent, yet gentle, PNG man has inspired me to look at the traditional protective mechanisms which are used to prevent gender based violence.

## **1.2 Gender based violence as a development issue**

This thesis focuses on gender-based violence in the context of development and discusses the relevance of using culture as a strategy for addressing gender-based violence in PNG. This is important since frequently in the Third World, gender-based violence is seen as a cultural right and is used as a justification by men to harm women. Maintaining traditional values—even those involving violence against women—are also used as a justification by some not to interfere in gender-based violence because to interfere in that way is seen as interfering in our very culture.

Women are vulnerable within certain cultures because often, “patriarchy and hatred of women are embedded in political, religious or social systems that are left unchallenged” (Parrot 2006:13). Yet rather than blaming culture and focusing on the negative implications of culture in relation to gender-based violence, I want to seek out positive expressions of culture which can be used as strategies to address gender-based violence.

In PNG, gender-based violence is a socio-cultural issue and the processes for addressing it receives substantial financial assistance and media attention. Gender-based violence is

also the focus of numerous intervention programmes. Much of the attention given to gender-based violence has been generated by a strong push from the PNG National Council of Women during their fifth convention, when they expressed their concerns about the rise in crime against women and the lack of protective mechanisms available for women. These concerns were communicated to the Law Reform Commission. Hence, in 1982 the Minister of Justice commissioned the Law Reform Commission to undertake a survey that focused on the extent and nature of domestic violence in PNG (Morley 1994). Although gender-based violence is now recognised as a serious problem by the government and comprehensive strategies aimed at addressing violence against women have been put in place, it can be argued that women (compared to men) in PNG still do not experience equal citizenship and human rights privileges.

Within the global community, and particularly in Western societies, there have been many studies conducted on gender-based violence (Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Lewis 1998:383; Kenway 1997; Umberson 2003). However, in the Third World gender-based violence is a relatively recent concern (Ellsberg 2000; Heise 2002; Koenig 2006; Martin 2002; Parrot 2006). Previously, gender-based violence went unrecognised and unreported in many communities where it was accepted as normal behaviour. However, with growing interest from researchers and policy-makers on women's health and empowerment, gender-based violence has begun receiving global attention as a significant health and human rights issue (Ellsberg 2000:1595; Heise; Koenig 2006:132; Krantz 2002:242). Gender-based violence is now recognised as having a profound impact on development within some countries. Violence against women has inhibited women's capacity to work outside the home because it undermines their dignity and their sense of self-belief, which in turn increases their poverty while decreasing their mobility and their access to information and social participation. For example, if women are unable to plant gardens due to the danger of being raped, then their families will not be able to eat nutritious food. Therefore, recognition that women's health and socioeconomic status are vitally important to a country's sustainable development is becoming increasingly realized (Krantz 2002:242).

Ever since women around the world united and called for a global society in which men and women share equal partnership and freedom from gender stereotypes (via the

establishment of conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, or CEDAW), women's groups have also been working to bring the global community's "attention to the physical, psychological and sexual abuse of women and continue to demand for actions" (Heise 2002:S5). Moreover, women's advocacy groups have provided safe houses for abused women, pushed for legislation reforms and "challenged the widespread attitudes and beliefs that support violent behaviour against women" (Heise 2002:S5). The tireless efforts of these women's groups have now been rewarded with the contributions of international organisations that have joined their voices with women's to speak out against gender-based violence and to increase available information relating to gender-based violence in the Third World. They have also increased awareness of the profound impact of violence against women on a given country's development (Heise 2002:S5; Krantz 2002).

### **1.3 Definitions of gender based violence and women's rights**

This section focuses on establishing a working definition of gender-based violence for this thesis.

In 1979, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This convention consists of a preamble and 30 articles which define what exactly constitutes discrimination against women. The convention also establishes agendas for state parties to action in order to end discrimination against women (United Nations 1997). The Convention defines discrimination against women as:

Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of men and women, of and fundamental freedoms in political, economic, social cultural [contexts] (United Nations, 1997:2).

The CEDAW is often described as the ‘International Bill on the Rights of Women’ (United Nations 1997). However, it has been argued that its successful establishment has “in practice failed to significantly alter the structural inequalities experienced by many women around the world” (Tanguay 2000:45-46). Hence, in 1994, many state parties had reservations against CEDAW on the grounds of culture and religion. Charlesworth (1995) argued that despite the fact CEDAW was valuable for women’s advancement (through the creation of an exclusive women’s rights law), it had in some respect facilitated its own marginalisation. Charlesworth further explained that establishing a specific body within the United Nations in order to address women’s rights issues had in fact isolated women’s rights issues from mainstream human rights.

Although the fundamental principles of human rights goals guarantee protection for everyone, this very protection is seen as lacking a gender perspective. This shortcoming was highlighted in the Global Tribunal on Violations of Women’s Human Rights that was held in conjunction with the United Nations Vienna Conference on Human Rights (Tanguay 2000:37). As a result of intensive lobbying efforts by feminist groups, the Vienna Declaration added gender-based violence as a human rights issue, to be addressed by states through the elimination of “all forms of sexual harassment, exploitation, trafficking of women and the harmful effects of traditional or customary practices, cultural prejudices and religious extremisms” (Ilkharacan 2007; United Nations 1993:par 38). Today, the Vienna Declaration is considered the starting point at which people began viewing women’s rights as human rights (Tanguay).

Two years after the Vienna Declaration, at the International Women’s Conference in Beijing, China, state parties were challenged to demonstrate their commitment to and reaffirmation of gender issues by signing the 38 articles of the Beijing Declaration. The Beijing Declaration is a reflection of the principles contained in the United Nations Charter of Universal Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Declaration on the Right to Development and, in particular, the CEDAW (United Nations 1997). Hence, the Fourth World Conference on Women’s Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration states:

Gender based violence (is)...any act which results in, or likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women. (In particular), physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation (Made and Matambanadzo 1996:72).

The Beijing Declaration is considered to be the first international document which pointed out a relationship between culture and gender-based violence. It went further than other international conventions and declarations by specifically naming a number of cultural practices, such as dowry and female genital mutilation, as harmful to women. (This will be further elaborated upon in later chapters.) Furthermore, attention was given to the Vienna conference on Human Rights and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, which also emphasised the lack of recognition of gender-based violence that was occurring in public and private lives. Overall, these documents have given priority to the issue of gender-based violence in a country's development (United Nations Population Fund 2000).

Gender based violence is an issue that concerns both men and women, but unfortunately women are the ones most at risk of experiencing its dangerous effects. Paradoxically, they are also the ones handed the responsibility for stopping these harmful behaviours. For example, a greater focus has been put on instructing and training women to behave safely in order to avoid rape, than has been put on changing the behaviour of men to stop raping.

For the purpose of this thesis, gender-based violence will refer to the definitions developed by the Beijing Declaration and by Heise (2002:S6). These two definitions complement each other in that they provide, in a snap shot, the different types of cultural practices that are harmful to women, while also showing that gender-based violence is distinctively concerned with violence against women.



Gender-based violence is specifically about violence against women which includes acts of verbal or physical forces or life-threatening deprivation, directed at an individual woman or girl that causes physical or psychological harm, humiliation, arbitrary deprivation of liberty and that perpetuates female subordination (Heise 2002:S6).

## **1.4 Research focus**

This section establishes the purpose of the study and then highlights the theoretical framework used to analyse the research question.

### **1.4.1 Theoretical underpinnings**

Violence against women is more than just a health and human rights issue. It is about integrity and self-worth, which are values that are integrated into the cultures of most Third World women (Krantz 2000; Parrot 2006). This has drawn me to research gender-based violence from a cultural perspective. While there are many different theoretical perspectives which examine gender-based violence, such as psychoanalysis, social bond theory and social learning theory, I have chosen to work within a feminist theoretical framework. This particular framework argues that, in a given culture, the more restricted the gender roles and the greater the male dominance over women, the higher the odds of gender-based violence occurring (Parrot).

The purpose of this study is to therefore examine how culture can positively influence the elimination of gender-based violence. Hence, my research question is: *How can culture address gender-based violence in contemporary, rural Papua New Guinea?* The objectives of the study are:

- To explore the ways in which cultural beliefs and practices may provide strategies for addressing gender-based violence

- To investigate traditional protective mechanisms in contemporary PNG that can prevent the occurrence of violence against women.

The study examines the levels at which protective mechanisms occur. It assumes that women, in addition to men, can use or exploit these types of mechanisms, whether systematically or spontaneously. In order to achieve a thorough analysis, I have explored the concepts of patriarchy and masculinity, and the ways in which these two concepts sanction men's violence against women. More importantly, this research seeks to understand cultural practices which promote harmony between men and women and condemn violence, especially violence directed towards women.

The most recent research concerning patriarchy and masculinity in PNG was carried out by Sai (2007), who investigated the traditional and modern characteristics of these concepts, including the ways in which patterns of masculinity have undermined and continue to undermine women's status. Sai's research was focused on contemporary, senior men of authority in PNG and their perceptions of their own masculinity as well as others'. The relevance of her work to this study lies in how these senior or contemporary 'big men' conceptualise their masculinity and others' in relation to gender-based violence.

However, Sai's research did not explore rural men's perceptions of their masculinity and how this influences gender-based violence in rural areas. Therefore, I chose to look at the masculinity of grassroots men (in particular, rural men), who are perceived by the modern big men as unproductive, potentially violent and always aggressive. Moreover, since this study has its focus in addressing and preventing gender-based violence, it does not attempt to examine all of the influences that trigger violence against women, particularly as this area is very well researched (Amnesty International 2006; Eves 2007; Kewa 2007; Morley 1994). Instead, this study explores the types of cultural practices that promote healthy relationships between men and women, such as love, care and kindness. In addition, this research offers an opportunity to view PNG culture as a solution to a problem, instead of as merely a problem to be solved.

In order to gain information that could help me answer my research question, I chose as the main target groups for data collection the women and men living in Mt. Bosavi in

the Southern Highlands of PNG. This data has been gathered via focus group discussions and individual semi-structured interviews with married couples and single young people.

## **1.5 Chapter outline**

This thesis is divided into several chapters. Chapter Two begins with a brief description of the history of PNG, examining the cultural changes that have been taking place since the first contact with Europeans. It moves on to discuss the traditional protective mechanisms for women, by looking at anthropological accounts of masculinity in PNG.

Chapter Three explores the concepts of culture, gender-based violence and development. It focuses on the Western notion of culture and how this has influenced development policies aimed at addressing gender-based violence in the Third World. It moves on to explore the concepts of patriarchy and masculinity and examines the relationship between these two concepts and violence against women.

Chapter Four is a brief narrative of the research methodology used in this thesis. It covers study type, the approach used to select the participants and methods used in the process of gathering information from the research participants.

Chapter Five presents the findings of the study. It examines gender roles and the expectations placed on women and men. It also focuses on the terms ‘trupela man’ and ‘trupela meri’, which reference the social process of being a ‘man’ or a ‘woman’ in PNG. The different levels of protective mechanisms that have been identified as part of this process are divided into three groups: individuals, family and the community.

Chapter Six analyses the findings of the study. It discusses the different types of mechanisms that are used according to severity of violence, and goes on to focus on the gender and cultural implications of the protective mechanisms identified in Chapter Five.

Chapter Seven is the overall conclusion of the thesis. It revisits the research question and objectives to ascertain if the thesis has achieved what it sought to do in the

beginning; that is, to highlight the relevance of using culture as a strategy to address gender-based violence in PNG.

## **Chapter 2: Papua New Guinea, cultural changes and gender based violence**

I cannot imagine what horrific event it must be and particularly for young girls who have never been married and been with a man in their lives. We have to find out what is causing it and we have to stop it. And I ask every MP on the floor of parliament to speak out against the increased incidence of rape in Papua New Guinea

- Dame Carol Kidu (Kewa 2007:16)

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter begins with a brief historical account of PNG from the perspectives of both the colonisers and the local people in order to obtain a balanced view of the changes which have transformed PNG from independent tribal societies into a united nation. The discussion then continues with examination of the changes, which have occurred in relation to two traditional practices, namely, bride price and polygamy. These two cultural practices are given special attention because they are the practices which have been used to justify violence against women as a cultural right. A brief overview of the type of violence women in PNG face will be presented in order to provide a context for the thesis. The chapter concludes by delving into anthropological accounts of masculinity in PNG which reveal that there are traditional mechanisms used to protect and value women in society.

### **2.2 Brief history of Papua New Guinea**

PNG occupies the eastern side of the island of New Guinea (which it shares with Indonesia) and includes numerous islands and atolls. With a population of 5.6 million, the country is home to 800 distinct language groups with diverse traditions and customs (World Bank 2007). This vast diversity means it is difficult to make generalisations about the people and culture of PNG. Moreover, prior to gaining independence from Australia in 1975, the people were governed by independent tribal laws and they lived a

subsistence life based around gardens, forests and their sea (Amnesty International 2006).

The first European contact with PNG was made in 1526 by the Portuguese navigator Jorge de Meneses, who discovered the main island of New Guinea and named it *Ilhas dos Papuas*—*papua* being a Malay word meaning ‘frizzy-haired’ (Sillitoe 2000:14-15). It was not until 1884 that the country was officially colonised by the British and German governments, who divided the island. The south-eastern part of the island was known as the British Protectorate (Papua). It became a colony of the British Empire out of fear and pressure from Australia and New Zealand in their response to enemy threats from Germany, Russia, France and Japan. The north-eastern part of the island was known as German New Guinea, since this belonged to the German Imperial Government who were attempting a belated ‘cash in’ on colonialism. They left the administration of this area to the *Neuguinea Kompagnie* (the New Guinea Company) in 1899 (Sillitoe 2000:24-25). In 1906, the British Protectorate came under the administration of Australia, who renamed it Papua.

During World War I, Australia took over German New Guinea and administered it under a military government until 1920, but both New Guinea and Papua remained administratively independent. World War II united the two colonies into the single Territory of ‘Papua and New Guinea’ and in 1975 Australia granted the Territory independence, thus making Papua New Guinea an independent Commonwealth nation (Sillitoe 2000:27-28).

The people of PNG viewed their first contact with the Europeans and the resulting colonialism quite differently from the European’s account of the same historical events. For example, it was the Europeans who divided the island into three discrete parts as if there were an ocean separating one from another. That is, one part of the island was claimed by the Dutch and later taken over by Indonesia, another part was claimed by the Germans, and a third part by the British. Contrary to the notion of separation, the island of New Guinea had always been connected through relations between its independently governed tribes and through trade, barter and marriage. The people’s extensive network of relationships between the island’s tribes was never split it was always united (Narokobi 1980:20).

Another way of viewing colonialism is to examine the people's reactions during this period of time in their history. The following are some quotations from the Narokobi's personal experiences of colonialism and the *Wola* people concerning their first contact with the Hides and O'Malley's patrol into the Highlands of PNG:

'Oh, there's something coming, something very strange approaching from over there. They say that it is ancestor spirits, arrived to eat us.' That's the kind of thing we said, when we heard about those first whites. Some of us fled in fear, into the forest, while others said they would go and have a look at them (Sillitoe 2000:35).

'They've come to eat us', we said. And so only men remained behind. Women and children were sent off to remote places to hide (Sillitoe 2000:35).

You had to say "Yes Sir" before and after talk with them. Throughout your talk you had to recite the "Yes Sir". Eventually, the "Yes Sir" became "Yesah!" and later still "Yesa Masta!" (Narokobi 1980:23-24).

The experiences of the *Wola* people are an example of how Papua New Guineans felt and what they were thinking when they made their first contact with Europeans. It was an experience filled with confusion, mayhem and terror towards these white intruders, whom they believed were the spirits of their dead ancestors (Sillitoe 2000). Furthermore, during the colonial period people lived in fear of and under domination from the colonial power (Narokobi 1980). Narokobi recalled how he and others had a great fear of colonial officers, missionaries and business officials such that they would run and hide when they saw them approaching.

The colonial time was a period of repression and dominance which were represented by the power and authority of the colonial officials. This fear created by dominance suppressed Papua New Guineans from developing their own sense of confidence and stopped them inquiring into the changes which were taking place in their country (Narokobi 1980).

### 2.3 Changes in traditional practices

Apart from colonialism, Christianity was another force that exercised a strong influence on traditional PNG practices and beliefs. One illustration of the ways in which Christianity influenced PNG culture and history involves the *Fore* people who lived in the highlands of PNG. They were connected to the main government station by a government road and the consequent settlement of missionaries in their villages. When the government and missionaries moved in, they quickly eradicated warfare and cannibalism and other very important traditional rituals over the following decade (Lindenbeum 1979). The number of new rules which undermined traditional practices is depicted in the following quotation:

The New World Mission would not baptise new polygamists. The Seventh Day Adventist refused those who ate pork, possum, rats or snake. Government representatives discouraged infanticide and child marriage, and the missions forbade the traditional privilege of premarital sex with matrilineal cross-cousins. Lutheran missionaries undermined traditional beliefs by revealing the men's sacred flutes to women. The government and Lutheran allowed singing (feasting and dancing) to continue, whereas the New World Mission and Seventh Day Adventist disapproved of the practice (Lindenbeum 1979:83).

The influence of Christianity was contradictory and confusing, and it apparently created chaos in the choices people had to make when trying to accept the new way of life. Different churches had different interpretations of the changes the people of PNG had to make.

To gain an impression of these changes, I will discuss two cultural practices, namely, bride price and polygamy, which have changed over time. These practices are considered to be a trigger for gender-based violence in contemporary PNG society that may be due, at least in part, to the ways in which they are practiced today.



### **2.3.1 Practice of bride price and violence against women**

In PNG culture, the community is the unit that provides an individual's security, acceptance and meaning. Basically, a Papua New Guinean's perception of self is defined and identified through his/her community. As a result of this, the community does not merely refer to a group of people living together in a particular area, but rather it is the formation of relationships in which people have "established, strengthened and mended through giving and receiving of visible goods" (Mantovani 1987:1). Marriage is the channel through which a community enters into a relationship with another community, or sub-tribes within one community establish their bonds.

Traditionally, marriage was a service to the community, since the economic, social and political needs of the community determined the type of relationship that needed to be established by a marriage (Brown 1978; Mantovani 1987; Morley 1994). For example, marriage into an unfriendly tribe brought these two groups together as friends. From a political perspective, bride price reduced hostility between communities by bringing them together through the union of marriage. Moreover, "traditional Melanesian cultures have an economic system based on exchange", where the bride price was the channel through which the exchange of wealth took place (Mantovani 1987:158). This was symbolically shown through the sharing of food, including pork, which indicated trust, kinship and respect between the two groups (Hayano 1974). The exchange of food during a marriage ceremony was an imitation of the regular exchange of visits and food sharing the marriage had secured; the new marriage had "renewed or initiated friendly exchanges, visits, and trade" (Brown 1978:173). Since marriage was a community affair, a marital dispute would have had a political, social and economic implications because the interests of large numbers of people would have been at risk (Morley).

Bride price is the public act which sanctions relationships. It is very important to understand the process that is referenced by the symbolism of ceremonial exchange. In the past, bride price was a commitment made by the husband and his clan to the woman's parents and clan that she would be looked after. Traditionally, marriage was a clan affair whereby the "husband's clan makes a payment to the clan of the wife as an expression of the whole family's involvement in the relationship" (Mantovani 1987:154). Consequently, in Simbu, when a young man was considered ready for

marriage by the elder men, his sub-clan would begin to assemble goods for the bride price payment and negotiate with a young woman's sub-clan concerning marriage (Brown 1978). Given this context, even if he could independently afford the cost of bride price, a man could not exclude the participation of his clan since this would have been considered improper (Mantovani 1987:154). More importantly, if the woman was mistreated in her new home, she could return to her parents without any repayment of the bride price. As noted by Sillitoe (2001), a woman could take her children and leave her husband if he was too forceful and her natal kin thought her rights had been abused by the husband. Moreover:

A woman who returns to her kin can seriously embarrass a man.... and settling such differences and persuading his wife to return can further cost a man if he has to offer her relatives something in compensation for his ill-judged behaviour (Sillitoe 2001:176).

Another significance of "bride price is (it was) considered to enhance a woman's value. A girl is considered cheap and worthless by society if bride price is not demanded" (Mantovani 1987:159).

Nevertheless, as a result of both internal and external influences, PNG traditional practices and beliefs have been altered since the introduction of a Western lifestyle and the Christian model of an ideal family. Western economic and legal systems have also had an impact (Morley 1994). Mantovani reported "Changes from subsistence, good-based economy to a cash crop, money-based economy with an influx and imposition of Western ideas and practices, have tended to either alter or destroy traditional values and practices" (1987:161). In this vein, bride price has been transformed into 'just money', which has become the determining factor in the bride wealth exchange. From serving as an important symbol in the sealing of a new relationship between communities through "exchange of mutual gifts", bride price has shifted to become an independent transaction of "payment aiming at profit" (Mantovani 1990:150). This change has distorted the traditional meaning and appreciation of bride price, thus "putting pressure on the whole system" (Mantovani 1990:150).

It appears that “bride price is a symptom of a change in society” (Mantovani 1990:150). Most importantly, this transformation from symbolic to concrete cash makes bride price a bad cultural practice. Women have come to be viewed as objects to be sold and the anticipation of the goods to be received from bride price payment ensures that women are seen only as a commodity to be exchanged for the desired goods (Eves 2007). Moreover, the greatest negative impact of bride price is the ever increasing inflation in the amount of money demanded for bride price. This trend has made bride price today unattainable for the poor. In fact, the increased cost of the goods and money demanded for the bride price has made it difficult for the average young man to afford a wife and hence those who are unable to afford bride price “show their frustration by turning to rape, etc.” (Dickson-Waiko 2003:67). Mantovani highlighted a very important point, relating to the demands placed on men, due to the inflation of bride price:

High bride prices may also force a man to look elsewhere than his own language group, or district for a potential bride. When this is done, the marriage may be one of expediency rather than affection, having less familiar constraints and potentially having more intrinsic problems due to cultural and language differences between the couple. With inter-ethnic marriages the man may not often know what is expected of him by the woman’s culture and vice versa (1987:160).

Marriage outside the familiar boundaries of the expected roles and responsibilities of women and men, can create misunderstanding between couples, which can then lead to violence. Urbanisation of PNG has brought together people from different language groups and has weakened and redefined traditional kinship relations (Morley 1994:28). Moreover, it has created economic pressure on city families who find they have new and different needs for money that are not present in a rural lifestyle. Thus, families respond by choosing money over family and communities ties and bride price practice becomes something quite different from what it once was in its original form and purpose.

### **2.3.2 Practice of polygamy and violence against women**

Show each wife that you care for her. Provide each wife with a house of her own, and be sure to rotate among them as regards to meals and sex. But always remember that the first wife is special; she may be older and less pretty than the others, but she is the most important, and if you treat her thus, the others will understand and respect you. Sleep with the wives in turn, but live with – keep your belongings in the house of - the senior wife (Tuzin 1997:46).

Traditionally, polygamy equalled power and status—that of being a ‘big man’. Big men’s political power depended on the ceremonial exchanges involved in multiple marriages and these events depended on the labour of women (Gelber as cited in Dickson-Waiko 2003:64; Morley 1994). Moreover, traditional polygamous marriage performs the same function as a new marriage—“to serve the community” (Mantovani 1990:148). A polygamous marriage was arranged if there was a benefit to the well-being of the whole community, because “service was an integral part of traditional polygamy”. This marriage arrangement was mostly reserved for chiefs and headmen, since the community as a whole contributed to the bride price payments (Mantovani 1990:148-149). Polygamy increased the status of a man within his community, but it also demanded time and effort on his part to ensure there was peace within his household.

A man who had two or more wives was able to contribute to community feasts and other young men’s marriages. This was possible because “[Many] wives are a social and economic asset, providing garden produce and pig care to support a man’s ambitions and exchange relations” (Brown 1978:176). A big man needed many wives as an indication of his wealth because the productivity of these women maintained their husband’s position in society (Brown). In other words, a man’s status was determined by the number of women he married because of the wealth these women generated for him (Morley 1994).

Today, however, it is the businessmen and educated men—those able to afford bride price independently from their communities—who are now practicing polygamous

marriages (Eves 2007; Sai 2007; Mantovani 1992). In this context, polygamy is not about service to the community but about personal gratification; it has become “an empty cultural shell which is used to cover up personal egoistic purposes and to justify blatant sexual discrimination” (Mantovani 1990:149). The traditional significance of polygamy has been lost in its shift into a negative cultural practice. Polygamy in modern times is nearer to “serial marriage”, whereby the man abandons one woman for another, without the first wife even knowing about the next (Eves 2007:29). Moreover, because today’s marriages are held to be based on personal preferences or immediate family needs, there is no pressure from the community to ensure that a man meets societal expectations by providing and caring for the women and children of his household.

It is important to understand the cultural value and practice of bride price and polygamy, because they are the two main cultural practices used by men as a justification for gender- based violence. They are also seen by women as a major barrier to eliminating gender-based violence. Bride price and polygamy have changed in their practice, their meaning and their value, but their traditional labels are still used. Hence, as Morley pointed out “bride price and polygamy together constitute a strong framework for male dominance and female subordination” (1994:27).

## **2.4 Contemporary Papua New Guinea men**

This section explores the construct of the modern PNG man. It will achieve this by drawing on Sai’s (2007) work on contemporary senior<sup>1</sup> PNG men and examining how these men perceive their own masculinity as well as that of other men. Senior PNG men are comprised of men who hold senior positions in educational, public service, non-government and government organisations within contemporary PNG society. In order to develop a comprehensive analysis of gender-based violence, it is important, to obtain an understanding of how modern men in PNG view their responsibilities and relationships, and how these views influence their attitudes towards violence against

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<sup>1</sup> Senior is a term Sai (2007) uses to refer to PNG men who are in positions of authority and power in both the public and private sector of society.

women. Moreover, this section will also examine the ways in which cultural change has affected men's perceptions of masculinity, from traditional to modern times.

### **2.4.1 The modern construct of masculinity**

Sai (2007:160) reported that the socialisation of every modern PNG men is focused on the goal of becoming the 'ideal man', as expressed in *tok pisin*, meaning *man tru* – 'real man'. Another term used to describe this ideal man is *trupela man*, which also translates as 'real man' (Eves 2007). In other words, *man tru* is the socialisation of Papua New Guinean masculinity (similar to what is referred to as *machismo* in Latin America), in which a man's identity is embedded within the roles he is expected to perform as a man. Hence, all PNG men are expected to be protectors and providers of their family, clan and the community. These responsibilities, along with the undertaking of initiation rites, enable a man to be considered *man tru*. Although all men are expected to be *man tru*, only a few become big men; thus, a "big man is one type of *man tru*" who gains leadership status in the community (Sai 2007:160). Throughout this discussion, *man tru* is used to reference men who are unable to attain big man greatness in modern PNG. These are the men Sai (2007:229) referred to in her description of the male PNG hierarchy as "village man, grassroots man, *rabis* man and *raskol*". All these men occupy the bottom rungs of the ladder, with the big men at the top.

#### **2.4.1.1 Modern big men**

Modern big men consist of businessmen and politicians, educated and employed men, all of whom display the attributes of traditional big men and at the same time possess the modern qualities—education, employment and money—which define the position and status of a big man in today's society. Generally, they are seen as having power because of the money they have to spend on modern goods and services (Sai 2007). Moreover, the strength of these modern big men is not measured by the number of enemies they have killed in warfare, despite this still being a demonstration of status in some areas of the highlands region.

Contrary to a traditional big man, the modern big man has adopted the concept of individualism and therefore, unlike his forefathers, he shares less of his wealth with his relatives and clan. The modern big man has also shifted the meaning and cultural values inherent in the practises of bride price and polygamy. Since he can afford to generate his own bride price, he is able to have more than one wife, without the assistance of his community or the consequent need to serve that community (Sai 2007). This change creates a disadvantage for young men whilst it benefits men who have wealth and can take advantage of their situation to marry more than one wife (Dickson-Waiko 2003:67).

#### **2.4.1.2 Grassroots men**

On the other hand, a grassroots man, including village men, *rabis man* and *raskol*, are described by modern big men in contemporary society as those who are not employed in the cash economy, are uneducated and are unable to speak English—a villager or an urban dweller at the bottom of society, who is unproductive, potentially violent and always aggressive (Sai 2007:229). These men are perceived by contemporary big men as poor and struggling in their attempts to attain the benefits of a modern lifestyle. They fail to attain the marks of modern greatness such as formal employment, and hence, according to Sai's research (2007), they are seen as resorting to violence against women, children and ethnic enemies in order to express their strength, status and power.

The extreme of this violent behaviour by grassroots men is said to be committed by the *raskols*, who are urban-based young men in search of new meaning for their personhood through engaging in violent activities. *Raskols* are the modern day Robin Hoods<sup>2</sup>, who steal from the rich to give to the poor (stolen items are shared with their families and the communities in which they live), as a way of attaining big man status. On the other hand, the *rabis man* is characterised as the laziest and most unproductive of the grassroots men (Sai 2007). This *rabis man* is also referred to by Silverman (2001) as the

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<sup>2</sup> While the notion of *raskols* as Robin Hood may be contested, the practice is a result of poverty. Stealing is a survival mechanism and a way for young men to support their families and attain big man status.

lazy man who is ashamed, and who is considered to be just a child and therefore not a man.

Contemporary big men have come to view grassroots men as the ones with problematic violent masculine traits. Sai's (2007) analysis of the big men and her own portrayal of the big men themselves seemed to concur with this perspective; she appeared to ascribe to the view of a big man as a blameless, non-violent man, while portraying grassroots men, as the violent male deviants of contemporary PNG society. This perspective ignores the dynamics operating in the larger social context—specifically, the fact that grassroots men are unable to attain modern big men status and therefore have become the big men's scapegoat for any and all negative masculine attributes. Ironically, the data reported in Sai's own study revealed that big men are by no means blameless when it comes to violent behaviour. She highlighted that two of the senior men who participated in her study were convicted of crimes against women - one raped a minor and the other shot his wife (Sai). As they were pointing their fingers towards the grassroots men as being the cause or the perpetrators of gender-based violence, the modern big men failed to state that they, too, perform violent misogynist acts. Sadly, this illustrates how little the so-called 'modern big men' have done to recognise their own negative actions and beliefs about women, and to acknowledge the consequences that these perceptions might have on grassroots men, who look up to their big men for leadership.

#### ***2.4.1.3 Women's status***

Another aspect of masculinity involves the socialisation of women—*trupela meri* or a 'real woman'. In the past, a *trupela meri* would be a woman whose life was for the most part limited to performing duties such as "cultivating the garden, preparing food, looking after pigs and other wealth, looking after and feeding relatives, giving the husband sexual access, contributing to general family welfare and performing ritual functions when necessary" (Toft & Bonnell, as cited by Morley 1994:27). These duties have caused women to be seen as "passive and submissive beasts of burden" by earlier anthropological studies of PNG societies; however, the cultures themselves held



women's roles as equally important as men's in maintaining the community society—"gender relations were complementary and interdependent, women were not, in fact dominated" (Morley 1994:28). Women influenced the social affairs behind the scenes, such as herding pigs to generate wealth for men's political aspirations (Brown 1978; Morley; Sillitoe 2001). Furthermore, as Sillitoe (2001:173) points out, "the work of pig women makes big men". On the other hand, women did have autonomous power through sorcery, although this practice was viewed in a negative light (Morley). These aspects of women's experience will be explored in more detail in a later section of this chapter.

As masculinity underwent changes with the first contact (Colonialism), so did femininity. In urban contexts, women's productive status and activities have changed. Some women work outside of the home in offices, while others depend on their husbands for material support (Morley 1994). In comparison, many rural women continue with traditional roles since they live where traditions remain strong. Since some of the changes experienced by urban women—and in particular, educated women—have brought new freedoms, they may experience some real measure of independence. This, in turn, has brought an awareness of and concern for equality in marriage and public life (Morley 1994:29). According to national statistics gathered in 2000, the literacy rate for females between the ages of 15-24 was 50.8%, while for males in the same age range; it was 59.1% (National Statistical Office of Papua New Guinea, 2003). This points to the truth that, in spite of statistics indicating more boys than girls are being educated, girls are, in fact, getting an education. Even though social changes in women's lives might not be obvious judging by their economic, social and political status, there have been improvements.

One area where there has been a definite change is in the consciousness in which "concerns for equality and women's rights may clash head-on with competing traditional values supporting male superiority and rights, including men's right to beat their wives" (Morley 1994:29). For example, at present there is a monthly magazine called 'Newagewomen' specifically targeted for the modern PNG women, with articles covering issues which concern women's rights and equality. In addition, it features articles on changes in women's roles, as illustrated in the titles of some recent articles

from the December, 2008 issue: “Handi Meri...Meet PNG Power’s First Female Apprentice”, “PNG Women in Politics” and “Women in Arts” (Wari 2008). These are just a few examples of how women are changing their roles in contemporary PNG.

## **2.5 Violence experienced by women in PNG**

The following is a brief snapshot of the types of violence women experience in PNG. There are numerous cases of violence and exploitation of women reported daily in the media. The intention of this study is to look at protective mechanisms which prevent gender-based violence from occurring. Hence, the following summary offers a context for the examination of protective mechanisms against gender-based violence in PNG by showing that violence is a significant problem and a challenge to development.

### **2.5.1 Physical violence**

Physical violence is commonly referred to in PNG as wife bashing and it is perhaps the most common form of violence against women (Amnesty International 2006:12). Common forms of physical violence include acts such as “kicking, punching, burning and cutting with knives” which result in injuries such as “broken arm, facial bruises and fractures, kick marks on the back and lacerations caused by bush knives” (Amnesty International 2006:13). These account for 80 – 90% of the injuries to women treated by health workers (Amnesty International).

Eves (2007:25) stated that violence against women is viewed by men as an appropriate way to correct any failures by wives who do not fulfil their marital duties. This is also supported by data collected by Sai (2007:55), who reported that traditional custom allowed a man to beat his wife if she was found to be in the wrong (not fulfilling marital duties). Moreover, Sai stated that physical violence against women was used by men to express their physical strength and control over women. Wife bashing can, sadly, be viewed as an expression of men’s masculinity within PNG society.

### **2.5.1.1 Alcohol**

It is understood that alcohol consumption can lead to physical violence. In PNG, alcohol can be purchased or it can be brewed at home (Eves 2006). Moreover, alcohol consumption and brewing is increasing within communities, both in urban and rural areas. This is “resulting in risky sexual behaviours of males such as having unsafe sex with girlfriends and multiple partners” (Boog 2006:20). The PNG Youth Commissioner told the media, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October, 2008, that alcohol consumption is a serious problem for the country’s young people. The Commissioner was also concerned that the rate of suicide amongst young people was increasing as “many disillusioned young people throughout the country” kill themselves because of low self-esteem (Arek 2008). This disillusionment was described by Sai (2007) as a symptom of modernisation. Within the context of modernisation, Morley (1994:33) cites a number of examples: “a breakdown of traditional culture and values, disappearance of traditional outlets of male aggression, influx of cash and availability of alcohol”. In PNG alcohol consumption is currently seen as a symbol of modern wealth.

Moreover, along with being identified as a symptom of modernisation, in PNG domestic violence is often attributed to the consumption of alcohol. In an urban survey conducted by the Law Reform Commission, 71% of women believed alcohol was a major problem in their marriage; however, only 26% said the violence they experienced was a result of alcohol consumption (Eves 2007:29).

### **2.5.2 Sexual violence**

Sexual violence, similar to physical violence, is another major form of aggression against women and girls. More common forms of sexual violence reported are “rape, incest, pornography and sexual harassment” (Sai 2007:56). According to UNICEF, “PNG has one of the world’s highest rates of sexual violence. Nearly half of the reported rape victims are under age 15 and 13% are younger than age 7” (2008:3).

Furthermore, Eves (as cited by Haley & Muggah 2006), revealed that in a household study conducted in the Southern Highlands province, 8% of respondents reported a

member of their household had experienced sexual assault and/or rape. Amnesty International (2006:17) stated that most of the rape cases in PNG involve perpetrators within the family. That means that the majority of raped women know their attackers. Often, they are raped by their husband or partner, or a family member who is meant to be a trusted and close relative (Kewa 2007). In a needs assessment conducted in PNG for a peer education programme, it was revealed that there is a degree of tolerance in society towards sexual violence. According to Boog (2006:18):

Some women stated that women are created to please men and that women should not jeopardise their children and therefore should give in. Other women reported that women have no right to refuse unless due to pregnancy or recent childbirth. Male respondents suggested that sometimes men need to force a woman to have sex due to male sexual feelings.

This type of perception towards sexual violence, added to the fear of retaliation, means most of these types of incidents are never reported to the proper authority (Amnesty International, 2006; Boog, 2006; Eves, 2007; Kewa, 2007; UNICEF, 2008).

#### ***2.5.2.1 HIV/AIDS epidemic***

The HIV/AIDS disease has created an additional layer of threat from sexual violence. It is estimated that the number of people infected with HIV ranges up to approximately 80,000, representing about 2% of the total population. Moreover, “girls and women are infected at a younger age than boys and men. Girls between 15 and 19 have the highest rate of HIV/AIDS in the country” (Amnesty International 2006:5).

Amongst the most vulnerable to HIV infection are married women, who are likely to be infected by their unfaithful partners with unsafe sexual practices (Sai, 2007). Boog (2006:15) explains that “cultural and social norms prescribe how males and females are expected to behave...sexual behaviours are expressions of the underlying gender rules in the community.” Amnesty International (2007:5) also notes that “gender inequalities and the acceptability of violence against women” have obviously resulted in high rates

of sexual violence, which has been identified as one of the leading contributing factors to the spread of AIDS. Women still do not have sexual rights to protect themselves against diseases such as HIV/AIDS (Amnesty International 2006; Boog 2006).

#### ***2.5.2.2 Selling sex***

Men and women are both vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, but women and girls are considered to be more vulnerable for contracting the AIDS virus than men and boys. One dangerous practice that places women and girls at risk for sexual violence and HIV/AIDS is the selling of sex. As a result of poverty and the lack of employment opportunity in the country, “women and girls provide sex in exchange for money, food and shelter for themselves and their families” (Amnesty International 2006:18). In needs assessments conducted in PNG, I<sup>3</sup> vividly remember a participant saying that husbands take their wives to a location in town and wait, whilst their wives have sex for money. Then the couple go shopping for the family. This is also confirmed by an Amnesty International (2006:18) report, which states that “some husbands in PNG regard their wives as commodity that they can ‘rent’ to others for sexual services in order to raise funds.” Ironically, while being used as a survival mechanism, women selling sex are placed at risk of injury, disease and death through sexual violence and HIV/AIDS infection.

These experiences of violence against women are cases which demonstrate what is happening in present day PNG. However, such horrific images of women being violently beaten, raped or even killed do not represent how society functioned in the past. In traditional PNG society, there were unwritten rules relating to moral conduct and behaviour which were rigorously enforced and these rules protected both women and men. The following discussion on traditional masculinity offers a more detailed look into this subject.

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<sup>3</sup> I used to work with an EU project on HIV/AIDS prevention programs, and one of my main tasks was to conduct needs assessments and later design programs specifically focused on the needs identified in the assessments to prevent the spread of AIDS.

## 2.6 Traditional protections for women

When closely reading anthropological studies of masculinity in traditional PNG, it is noticeable that these studies include discussion of protection mechanisms for women. In fact, Kewa (2007) and Sai (2007) stated that in the past women and girls were protected by a variety of customs. Amnesty International (2006:4) noted from MacIntyre's (2003) discussion that traditional "protections included beliefs that women had supernatural powers which they could use to take revenge on people who harmed them, belief that sexual intercourse with women in many circumstances could weaken a man, and the obligations men had to provide physical protection and support to their wives and children." From this perspective, three main traditional protective mechanisms can be identified—women's supernatural powers, the sacredness of a women's body, and men's obligations to provide for and protect women and children—and each will be illustrated with a vignette to further explore how they might function successfully within a community. Since this research will focus on a patriarchal society, the illustrations below come from three patriarchal societies. Nevertheless, there are similarities between PNG and many other types of societies, including matrilineal ones.

### 2.6.1 Women's supernatural powers

The belief that women have supernatural powers is expressed in a *Murik* proverb as "it is women who take the canoe to the islands, it is women who bring it back, and the canoe travels on the strength of women" (Lipset 1997:43). Historical and traditional knowledge about women as beings who are spiritually and physically superior to men indicate that, in the past, men have felt threatened by women. For instance, in the *Murik* (Lipset), *Iatmul* (Silverman 2001) and *Baruya* (Godelier 1982) societies, women have been constructed as superior to men. Folk tales from men in these societies proclaimed that "women existed before men" (Godelier 1982:13), "all power came from women" (Lipset 1997:11) and "women were the sole trustees for scared ritual objects" (Silverman 2001:33). The perception that women were superior spiritual and physical beings was a mechanism that protected women from harm in previous times.

### **2.6.2 Sacredness of women's body**

Another protective mechanism was the belief that women's bodies are sacred. Women are the ones who are able to ensure a man completes his initiation to be truly a man through marriage and procreation. Whilst women may sometimes be dominated by, dependent on and subordinate to men, despite these seemingly weak and powerless circumstances, women's sexuality and fertility has at times been the most feared and yet powerful cultural factor. Lipset (1997:49) clearly expressed this perception when he stated that "women's sexuality is powerful and dangerous to men, who must parry it carefully and defensively". This was also supported by Silverman (2001), who reported cultural beliefs that held sexual contact with women as devastating for all men. It was thought to put at risk "men's ritual efficacy, hastens aging, atrophies the body and renders men vulnerable during warfare" (p.19). Men were fearful of menstrual blood, given their belief that coming into contact with it would contaminate their manhood. Men believed they would be unable to act as men if they were to "encounter the carnal, birthing, maternal bodies of women" (Lipset 1997:57).

These beliefs about women meant that men did not spend a great deal of time with women, but instead interacted with other men. In most traditional PNG societies, men had their own houses which were secluded from the women; even when women and men shared the same building, they occupied separate areas. On the other hand, it must be noted that this culture was also discriminatory towards women, since it viewed women as 'dirty' and suggested they should not be engaged with regularly. However, from a protective mechanism perspective, the male view of a woman's body as something dirty, yet sacred, served as a protection for women.

### **2.6.3 Men are protectors and providers**

Another protective mechanism, in traditional times, was the obligation of men to physically protect and support their wives and children. Warfare was a rite of passage to manhood and every man at his initiation was reminded that he must be prepared to fight and defend his territory (Godelier 1982). Silverman (2001) also highlighted that

while headhunting was a way of protecting the autonomy of the community, its most important function was to serve as a sign of manhood. Apart from this, warfare was a “work of desire” (Lipset 1997:31). Warriors were expected to protect women when they were in their gardens, as well as the community at large. To have a woman from their tribe or community raped was not only a challenge from their enemy, it was an insult to their manhood (Godelier).

Although warfare was a rite of passage for manhood it was also about men being protectors of women. Moreover, men in the past had to demonstrate they were able to provide for their family, or to use the Western idiom, to be the breadwinner, before they could gain a wife. A man had to grow food in gardens, hunt skilfully, and most importantly, work hard. In contrast, a lazy man was shameful and considered to be a child; even “a clumsy man is a joke” and was not thought of as a man (Silverman 2001:125). To substantiate his capability in this area, a hard working man was expected to perform numerous bride services to his potential wife’s elder brother or parents. He would have had to construct canoes and houses, dig gardens and share the bounty from his hunt with his in-laws (Godelier 1982; Lipset 1997). This service was “not a debt”, but a sign of his continued commitment to the woman he would marry (Lipset 1997:8). Such payment through labour symbolised the man’s appreciation of a woman’s reproductive potential and sexuality, but he was also compensating his future in-laws for their efforts in the rearing of his wife-to-be while she was a child (Silverman).

It is important to note that there are similarities in many other PNG societies, apart from the three traditional societies which were examined earlier, whereby there were culturally built-in protective mechanisms. These three traditional protective mechanisms have, like other aspects of culture, evolved over time. Although in the past they served as effective protective mechanism for women, today these beliefs have fallen away and women are not usually seen as beings with supernatural powers (if they are, it increases, rather than reduces, their chances of being killed) and their bodies are not typically regarded as sacred. Moreover, men in general no longer strive to be good providers for and protectors of women.



## 2.7 Conclusion

There were significant cultural changes after contact was made between Europeans and Papua New Guineans. Traditional practices, such as cannibalism, were quickly eradicated whilst other practices such as bride price and polygamy were altered and ‘made-over’ in order to be allowed to continue as part of adapting to the new way of life. Bride price has been transformed from an act of securing new relationships through the exchange of mutual gifts between two communities, to a commodity transaction between individuals. Polygamy served the same purpose as bride price, since it was a practice only reserved for big men. However, today, as Mantovani (1990:149) describes it, polygamy is “an empty cultural shell which is used to cover up personal egoistic purposes and to justify blatant sexual discrimination”. It is no longer a practice which secures relationships that are necessary for the economic, social and political needs of the community. Apart from these cultural practices, another aspect of cultural change has been reflected in the evolution of the masculine identity. Masculinity in PNG has shifted from a collective identity to an individual one. Men in the past saw the community as an extension of their own selves, which they had to fight for, or even die for, to protect. However, today, men identify themselves by their personal achievements, such as education and employment, and they strive for personal, not communal, gain.

All of these societal changes have had a significant impact on the wellbeing of women. Every day in PNG, a girl or a woman is raped, killed or bashed, and in most cases the perpetrator is known to the woman. Such a horrific environment for women in PNG is not the same as the traditional days when there were protective mechanisms related to masculinity that ensured women were protected. Beliefs relating to women having supernatural powers and sacred bodies, together with the expectation that men were obliged to protect and provide for women and children, are no longer held by many people. Such traditional beliefs and practices acted in the past as protective mechanisms for women.

Further on, this thesis will explore whether traditional protective mechanisms are still operating in one PNG community. First, however, a discussion of the cultural and

developmental perspectives related to gender-based violence will be provided in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 3: Culture, gender based violence and development**

Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful Human Rights violation. And it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace

- Kofi Annan (UNIFEM 2003:8)

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter begins by looking at Western understanding of culture in order to demonstrate that development policies and practices in the Third World are shaped by Western notions of culture. It is important to explore the Western perspective on culture, in order to examine whose perspectives are being used to scrutinise Third World culture and why it is still difficult for development strategies to change harmful cultural values in the Third World. The chapter then moves on to the cultural constructs of gender-based violence as expressed through masculinity and justified by patriarchy. It provides a number of examples relating to cultural violations against girls and women in order to demonstrate the interrelationship that exists between culture and gender-based violence. After examining the influences of culture on gender-based violence, the chapter covers protective mechanisms which have been established and developed in order to prevent violence against women. Overall, this chapter focuses on understanding the connections between culture, gender-based violence and development.

### **3.2 Western understanding of culture**

Initially, the Western perception of culture will be examined to see how it has influenced development ideology in the Third World. To be able to establish a relationship between the Western understanding of culture and development and the Third World understanding, I will use Jolly's (2002) adaptation of Schech and Haggis' (2000) dissection of the concept, with a focus on the fourth meaning of culture.

### 3.2.1 Definitions of culture

1. Culture = Cultivation of land, crops and animals
2. Culture = Cultivation of mind, arts, civilisation
3. Culture = Ways of life, meanings and values
4. Culture = Ways of life structured by representation and power

*Jolly (2002:5) adapted from Schech and Haggis (2000:16)*

Firstly, culture in mid-nineteenth century Europe was understood as the cultivation of the mind, arts and civilisations, which at that time were primarily the domain of the elite. In other words, the elite of the society were seen to be superior and therefore considered to be ‘truly cultured’, in comparison to other members of the same society (Jolly 2002:5). In Britain, this perspective on culture was the beginning of development ideology, whereby British colonial expansion was influenced by the values inherent in being cultured, whilst non-European societies were deemed as ‘uncivilised’ and black people as ‘primitives’ (Jolly). Jolly explained that this Western understanding of culture justified the British exploitation of slavery and the ‘civilising’ mission of European societies to bring progress and modernity through colonialism.

Secondly, Jolly (2002) stated that the Western understanding of “culture as ways of life, meaning and values is a continuation of culture as cultivation of mind, arts and civilisation.” The difference between these two definition of the term is that the first involves the self (Europe), whilst the second is about the ‘other’ (Third World) (Jolly 2002: 5-6). It is as Preis stated, demonstrating that the “us and them dichotomy is inherent in the cultural contact perspective” (2002:134). This definition of culture is closely associated with the discipline of anthropology, which emerged around the same time that colonialism was taking effect in the African and Asian continents. Early anthropological studies were more focused on culture in ‘native societies.’ Since Western culture was considered to be the norm, there was a fascination with other

cultures, which were “seen as exotic and exciting, and interpreted as primitive, in contrast with civilised European culture” (Jolly).

Thirdly, although this understanding of culture still continues, it has lately been challenged by contemporary anthropologists and others who embrace a new understanding of culture as the ways of life of everyone, not just the elites or Third World societies (Jolly 2002:6). According to Jolly this new perspective is important since culture can now be understood to have been “formed by internal and external influences, structured by power and influenced by representations.” Culture formed by internal and external influences is explained well by Nyamjoh’s questioning of the need to consider culture as a fixed concept:

Culture and tradition are...not frozen or stagnant; the individuals and groups partaking of any culture or tradition actively shape and reshape it in their daily endeavours. Culture changes because it is enmeshed in the turbulence of history, and because each act, each signification, each decision risks, opening new meanings, vistas and possibilities...Given accelerated flows and interactions of diverse culture products as a result of globalisation, does it make sense to still talk of individuals and groups as belonging to given cultures like fettered slaves and zombies, or confined like canned sardines (as cited in Jolly 2002:7).

Nyamjoh’s description of the problems which arise when considering culture as a stagnant element within a closed system is also supported by Rao (1995), who argued that culture is constantly contested and negotiated by its users in order to formulate a continuation of ways of life. She states, therefore, that it is important to acknowledge changes in the meaning and value of cultural practices.

Another way of looking at these internal and external influences is to examine the roles of the ‘centre’ and the ‘periphery’ culture (Wassmann 1998:3). The culture at the centre is considered to be superior, whilst the culture on the periphery is considered to be inferior. Therefore, the peripheral culture is pressured from the centre to mimic its ways (Wassman). Thus, culture is structured by power and those persons with the most power

have the ability to dictate their values to the remainder of society. Moreover, culture is only a part of a totality of power dynamics that controls our existence. Rao (1995:173) explained that the meaning of culture is only apparent within the context of the power and status of the interpreter and participant. Furthermore, the influence of culture is conditioned by representation and self-representation, by how people see themselves and treat others (Jolly 2002:7). Hence, despite the fact that in reality culture is not static, the practice and beliefs of a culture can be thought of as a fixed concept by both the interpreter and participant. Another way of considering this situation is to look at men (who are empowered) as the interpreters who have control over the participants of the culture—the women. In this context, culture is maintained as a fixed concept by patriarchy through its sometimes violent expressions of masculinity. Consequently, the notion of culture espoused in this thesis, adopts Jolly’s perspective, which addresses internal and external influences, and power and representation.

### **3.3 Cultural constructs of gender based violence**

Authors such as Parrot (2006:23) have discussed the fact that gender-based violence is influenced by values such as “education, religion, cultural values, family structure, socio-economic status, traditional beliefs, myths [which] do not happen in a vacuum.” This section focuses on what legitimises the male superiority and dominance over women that leads to gender-based violence. It provides examples of cultural practices that are likely to place females in a vulnerable position, along with practices in which females themselves are involved such as bride acid burning and female genital cutting.

#### **3.3.1 Relationship between patriarchy and gender based violence**

As pointed out above, values influence gender-based violence, thus culture is shaped by patriarchy. In its simplest operational structure, patriarchy is the rule of a father over his family. This practice is based on the Greek and Roman laws that argued that a male was the head of the household, since by nature a man was a more capable leader than a woman (Pietarinen 1990; Sai 2007). This way of thinking was influenced by ancient

Greek scholars such as Aristotle and Galen, who thought that “humans were the most perfect animals, and amongst humans, men were more perfect than women” (Fox, as cited in Parrot 2006:3). Furthermore, the biblical account of human creation says woman was created from a man’s rib, which for some people reinforces the notion of men’s superiority over women (Agonito, 1997; Fletcher cited in Parrot 2006).

Kate Millet (1970) is considered to be the first radical feminist to introduce the term ‘patriarchy’ to contemporary feminist research (Whitehead 2002). As a result of her work, radical feminist thinking argues that patriarchy is the root of women’s oppression and dominance by men (Sai 2007). Women’s oppression is a result of the power of sex role stereotypes through which women have accepted their inequality with men as an unavoidable reality of being a woman (Whitehead 2002:86). Feminists argue that women are marginalised by the “stereotyped customary expectations held by men and internalised by women,” which are further “promoted by different agencies through their development process” (Razavi 1995:3). In a wider context, patriarchy is the “manifestation of and institutionalisation of male dominance over women and children in both private and public settings” (Sai 2007:96-97).

Unfortunately, the customary expectations of men, accepted by women, are the patriarchal ideologies embedded within society’s institutions and cultural practices, whereby “patriarchy presents itself as the way of seeing the world: as entirely natural, normal and straightforward” (Edley 1996:108). In other words, patriarchy is a support system that enables men to exercise dominance and gain power over the less powerful in the “gender order” (Sai 2007:100). Although, patriarchy constructs man’s power as a natural aspect of being a man and therefore a right, it is wrong to assume that men are unable to change the cultural creations that define them as men (Edley). Therefore, although feminists have demonstrated patriarchy as a mechanism that systematically subordinates women, feminism has also been criticised as a theoretical framework that “implies a fixed state of male oppression over women, rather than a fluid relationship between men and women which is complex” and changes with time (Hargreaves, as cited in Whitehead 2002:87). Furthermore, there are concerns that patriarchy is “unable to explain and analyse male dominance and its isolations” across different cultural settings (Elshtain, 1981; Pollert, as cited in Whitehead 2002:87).

By definition, patriarchy is only about control of women by men (Joseph 1985). Hence, it has been argued that patriarchy is too abstract from reality, since it does not acknowledge the resistance, changes and differences amongst men and women as a group (Whitehead 2002). In contrast to this perspective, feminist analyses see violence against women as men's defence for their 'patriarchal prerogatives', in that patriarchy, being a belief system, views violence as a form of problem-solving. Hence, according to patriarchy, it is acceptable for men to have control over women (Pease 2002:154). Within this feminist perspective of violence, patriarchy remains a useful term to describe men's power to dominate women (Whitehead).

### **3.3.2 Relationship between masculinity and gender based violence**

Sai noted that "patriarchy is characterised by male dominance and power in social structures while masculinity is individualised" (2007:101). Hearn (1996:207) argued that whilst men's practices are criticised as subordinating women, it is masculinity that is really the problem. Whitehead defined masculinity as "... those practices and ways of being that serve to validate the masculine subject's sense of itself as male/boy/man" (2002:4). Thus, it is about how men behave and not what they are (Sai). What men do is created by the society, which ascribes their role and means of achieving agency to them. Such behaviour is not necessarily something they are born with, as part of their male being. In this perspective "dominance is an aspect of masculinity rather than something men simply do" (Hearn).

Whitehead (2002:90) reported that whilst feminists were still working through issues of patriarchy, Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985) changed the focus of the sociology of masculinity and feminist theory to 'hegemonic masculinity.' They argued that hegemonic masculinity as a concept achieves what patriarchy fails to: it provides a fine description of the process and interrelationship between "femininity-masculinity and male power, whilst staying loyal to the notions of gender and sexual ideology, and male dominance" (Whitehead). Furthermore, in Connell's extensive work on hegemonic masculinity, he explained that, unlike patriarchy, masculinity acknowledges the resistance of femininity and that not all men perform the characteristics of hegemonic



masculinity. It does, however, remain a “guarantor of men’s dominant position and the currently acceptable strategy for defending patriarchy” (Whitehead). Basically, masculinity offers a prerogative for men to have dominance over women, because they are the ones who have control over “meaning...what it means to be a man, what it means to be a woman; what jobs constitute men’s work and what jobs constitute women’s work” (Edley 1996:107). Given the fact that masculinity has the ability to control how society thinks about the gender division of labour, men are thus presented with the basis for their power (Edley). As Sai puts it, “masculinity is a socio-cultural construct of men” (2007:107). Therefore, when considering gender-based violence within this context, masculinity is seen as an expression of men’s dominance and power over women, as reinforced by patriarchy through cultural practices and values. It is “an expression of male power which is used by men to reproduce and maintain their relative status and authority over women” (Alder, as cited by Pease 2002:154). It is a cultural construct embedded within gender roles, because the more fixed the gender roles and greater the male dominance over women, the more likely it is that women will experience violence (Parrot 2006).

Another way to understand the expression of masculinity is by examining those cultural values that can lead to violence. These types of cultural values are learnt through the socialisation experiences of men and women. One such practice is commonly known throughout Latin America as ‘*machismo*’, which can be contrasted with ‘*marianismo*’:

Machismo emphasises male moral, economic and social superiority over women. It is a cult to virility in which male aggressiveness and sexual prowess are supremely valued. In contrast, marianismo refers to the spiritual devotion to the Virgin Mary, who is considered simultaneously to embody the ideals of maternity and chastity (Ellsberg 200:1606).

*Machismo* is an illustration of culturally accepted expressions of the superior feelings of men over women. Men are thus expected to show society that they are superior to women by expressing dominance and aggression: “*Machismo* is an overt form of cultural male dominance” (Parrot 2006:40). Simultaneously, *marianismo* is also a

perception of masculine identity, since it concerns the socialisation of women to be subordinate to men.

In short, gender roles are learned roles, guided by the cultural context of a society or ethnic group. Therefore, during the socialisation process boys as well as girls learn how they are expected to behave. Gender roles are socio-cultural constructs to which girls and boys have to adhere. This means that boys, rather than girls, are generally associated with more culturally appreciated values.

### **3.3.3 Culturally violent practices against girls and women**

Feminists argue that patriarchy, being a belief system, views men's control over women as acceptable behaviour. Therefore, patriarchy is expressed through masculinity which gives men the right to have power and dominance over women. It maintains its power and sense of representation through acts of violence against women. This leads back to Jolly's definition of culture as structured by power and influenced by representations, in which feminists argue that patriarchy and masculinity are shaped by culture. Cultural practices, such as female genital cutting (FGC), bride price and dowry, can be seen as symbols of masculine domination. It is men who are at liberty to grant women honour and self-worth – women have to be cut and paid for—actions which reinforce the power of masculinity over women's very existence.

'Female genital cutting' is also known as 'female genital mutilation', 'female genital circumcision' or the practice of 'clitoridectomy' (Gevins 1987; Hosken 1978; Parrot 2006; PLAN 2007; Tanguay 2000). This is characterised as a traditional custom that involves the cutting and removal of the female sexual organs (Tanguay 2000:150). Currently, it is estimated that about 140 million girls have undergone FGC. Subsequently, two million girls are at risk of the procedure every year in over 28 countries in Africa, with an additional few in Asia (PLAN). FGC is performed by women themselves on girls as young as four years of age. It is important to note that this practice is done out of fear, by women who worry about their daughters and granddaughters becoming outcasts from their society if they are not circumcised (Gevins; Hosken; Parrot; PLAN). The older women worry about not performing FGC

because “if a woman is not circumcised, she is seen as unclean and promiscuous, and no one will marry her. The practice signifies the cultural and spiritual initiation of girls into their families and communities” (Jolly 2002:18).

It is a rite of passage for a young girl that signifies her chastity and her eligibility for marriage (Parrot 2006; PLAN 2007). As noted by Hosken (1978) and Gevins (1987), in many rural communities in Africa, a girl’s value is measured by the bride price received by her father. Even though women are the ones carrying out FGC, it is masculinity that demands women be circumcised, since men are the ones who refuse to marry an uncircumcised woman.

In contrast to bride price, ‘dowry’ is a traditional practice which generally takes place in Northern India, whereby women at the time of marriage bring a dowry to the husband’s family in the form of a gift of cash or possessions (Martin 2002). Traditionally, a dowry was a payment from the bride to safeguard her in the event that something happened to her husband (Parrot 2006). However, this understanding of dowry has been “corrupted and is now used primarily as payment to the groom” (Caleekal, as cited in Parrot 2006:158). Therefore, if the husband and his family are not satisfied with the initial dowry payment, they can demand additional payment from the woman and her family. Women whose families are unable to afford such high costs or additional demands for dowry are placed at risk of ‘dowry death’, either due to homicide (the bride is killed or horribly disfigured with acid by the groom and/or his family) or suicide (the bride kills herself to escape constant harassment by the groom and his family) (Martin 2002:561). These deaths are still happening to women, because of entrenched cultural values, despite being outlawed by the Indian Government (Jaising 1995; Martin; Parrot).

At its extreme, violence against women is evidenced in the fact that there are approximately 100 million women missing in the world as a result of female foeticide. In Asia alone, at least 60 million girls are missing from the population, despite laws against sex-determination testing and sex-selective abortion (Croll 2000; Parrot 2006; PLAN 2007:14-17). Subsequently, all these examples demonstrate that for girls and women, integrity and self-worth are not qualities one is born with; rather, they must be earned under rules established by men.

### 3.4 Protective mechanisms

This chapter has discussed how the concepts of patriarchy and masculinity give men power and dominance over women. Furthermore, these concepts give men the right to inflict violence against women, as demonstrated by only a few select examples of such cultural practices and values from around the Third World.

However, this thesis is interested in whether or not cultural constructs can be seen in a positive light, and more specifically, as a protective mechanism against violence. Before examining the protective mechanisms which can prevent gender-based violence, it is important to define for this thesis the premise of 'protective mechanism'. There are no clearly laid out definitions of the term 'protective mechanism', particularly in relation to the issue of gender-based violence. However, there are other contexts available, wherein a related term is used to describe the notion of protective mechanism. One such example is 'social protection', which in its broadest definition refers to "mechanisms providing economic support against economic risks and livelihood shocks" (Devereux 2004:24). Nevertheless, Devereux argued that this understanding of social protection restricts the concept and practice, thus moving it only slightly beyond the 'safety net discourse'—in other words, smoothing consumption when income is inconsistent. Hence, he expanded the concept of social protection to include the "non-economic vulnerability such as social exclusion, discrimination, and violations." This understanding of social protection enables the concept and its practice to include recognition of the social needs of vulnerable groups. One area in which this has been done is the social protection campaigns on discrimination and HIV/AIDS such as the one undertaken by the United Nations during the 1990s to raise awareness on gender discrimination—CEDAW (Devereux).

Another term related to the concept of protective mechanism is 'protective factor', which is a concept primarily applied in psychology and which "stems from the associated concept of 'resilience' the term used to describe the positive limit of the ever-present experience of individual difference in people's response to stress and adversity" (Garmezy 1984:253). Authors such as Garmezy and Brook put forward that "there are social and psychological factors that help individuals cope favourably with adverse circumstances" (Ramirez-Valles 2002). However, for the purpose of this thesis, a

protective mechanism will be defined as not just a positive or favourable method used to survive or to cope with unpleasant situations, but as a means for individuals to think or take action when confronted with difficult experiences such as gender-based violence.

### **3.4.1 GAD and masculinity**

Whilst one could look at ways in which various development strategies could serve as protective mechanisms against gender-based violence, the main focus of this thesis is to examine whether culture can be effective in such a role. To explore any possible relationship between masculinity and protective mechanisms, it is necessary to investigate debates surrounding the inclusion of masculinity in gender and development (GAD) literature. Following this investigation, the thesis will examine practical cases whereby masculinity is being used as a protective mechanism in order to prevent gender-based violence.

Although GAD, as a paradigm, is not exclusively about women, the inclusion of discussions about men, their masculinity and its relevance are relatively recent within the context of GAD. Moser argued that one must look “not only at the category women – since that is only half the story – but at women in relation to men, and the way in which relations between these categories are socially constructed” (as cited in Cornwall 2000:18). Through the process of bringing women’s issues into development, women in development (WID) approaches have sidelined masculinity. In particular, the redistribution of the unequal gender division of labour has shifted traditional male roles to women, without any consideration of the consequences this would have on masculinity. This situation, Chant and Gutmann (2002) stated, could explain how a significant cultural norm has come to be undermined by development policy. Specifically, the continuation of the role of men as breadwinners in the family has been significantly impacted by such WID policies. Basically, as more women go to work outside the domestic area and as government policies increasingly support continued development for women, men appear to be left out (Chant 2000). Ironically, neglecting men has disadvantaged women further, since women’s participation and contributions are

controlled by patriarchy and this can be expressed in masculine outbursts of domestic violence, which occur in order for men to maintain control over women (Chant & Gutmann). This is because work is perceived as central to the masculine identity and therefore, as women are moving away from the domestic areas to engage in work, masculinity is being threatened by its own sense of insecurity around losing its role as the family breadwinner (Chant). In this perspective, terms such as ‘male-blindness’, ‘men in crisis’, ‘troubled masculinities’ and ‘men at risk’ are used to emphasise the need for development policies and GAD interventions that take into consideration the involvement of men in development (Chant & Gutmann).

When examining the relevance of masculinity in development, it is important to consider how gender analyses look at the relationship between men and women. Cornwall (2000) argued that the word ‘gender’ has failed to recognise men’s needs, interests, rights and responsibilities. It has also failed to recognise men as lovers, sons, husbands and fathers to women. Instead, men are represented through this term only by their negative interactions with women. These gender assumptions also extend to gender relationships in which the positive connections of gender relationships such as those between mothers and sons, brothers, fathers or husbands are generally overlooked in gender analyses. Instead, emphasis is placed mainly on the oppressive aspects of men’s relationships towards women (Cornwall). Furthermore, Cornwall argued that not all men have or are in power, but rather some experience powerlessness and dependency on women and other men.

White (2000) emphasised that decisions to include men in GAD based on arguments that men ‘have a problem’ (they are unable to fulfil their breadwinner role) or that ‘men are the problem’ (their sexual practices spread HIV), would in the end result in the reassertion of ‘old’ rights for men and shift the blame onto women, since this scenario would place men in the crisis role that women have been occupying. The fear is that women will once again be passed over in favour of men when development assistance is offered, because despite development agencies acknowledging the importance of gender, little is done to challenge the dominant male roles in the communities in which they work (Pearson 2000). Hence, “while patriarchy may have a makeover, it has not gone away” (White 2000:6).

Despite this critique of the inclusion of masculinity in GAD, what is important about this possible step, especially in terms of protective mechanisms against gender based violence, is that masculinity could then take a stand to challenge its own negative belief systems and the perceptions it has towards women. Masculinity as a protective mechanism which takes action against gender-based violence makes the inclusion of masculinity in GAD relevant, in order to end the violence against women. The following examples show how masculinity can act as a protective mechanism against gender-based violence.

### **3.4.2 Examples of masculinity as a protective mechanism**

Save the Children UK, together with UNICEF, worked with a group of film makers in South Asia on a three year film project called 'Let's Talk Men', in order to address the issue of men's violence against women (Thomson 2001:174). The inspiration for this film project came out of a workshop on men's perspectives on masculinity, attended by film makers from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. Using the life history approach, the film makers talked about their personal pain in being a man and the pain of having power, which as individuals they expressed as a feeling of powerlessness on many occasions (Poudyal 2000). Therefore, building on their own experiences, the film makers wanted to develop country specific documentaries which gave boys role models that were alternatives to the discourse which accepts violence against women as the norm (Poudyal). The main target groups of this film project were young school-aged boys and the central message for these young boys was about masculinity and how it could reduce violence against women.

In a Mexican example, Chavez acknowledged that "changing attitudes as entrenched as *machismo* in a population of more than 90 million is not an easy task" (1999:58), and identified work that challenges *machismo* in order to reduce the incidence of domestic violence. A group for men in Mexico called 'Collective to Fight Violence Against Women' (COVAC) are working to point out the risks men face from *machista* attitudes (those requiring women to be submissive) and provide anger management techniques for these men (Chavez 1999:57). There are signs of change in the men's attitude

towards women and their belief in *machismo*, and these are particularly evident amongst the younger Mexican generation. One such change is the *machismo* belief about fathering many children to prove one's manhood. This is now not nearly as well accepted by younger Mexicans, because "having a lot of kids to prove you're *macho* is bullshit; these ideas are 40 years old" (Chavez 1999:62).

In Kenya, a project focusing on the involvement of men began with a woman called Annicetta Kiriga from Tharaka, a village just outside Nairobi. Concerned that her daughter would have to be circumcised, Annicetta joined '*Maendeleo Ya Wanawake*' (MYWO), an organisation in Kenya which is involved in research and action against FGC. In 1998, MYWO joined in partnership with 'Programme for Appropriate Technology and Health (PATH)', an international NGO, to pilot a training programme: 'Empowerment, Health and Human Rights for the FGC Rituals'. Annicetta, together with other mothers, named the project Circumcision with Words (Jolly 2002:19). Activities included:

- PATH and MYWO trained village elders to train villagers and explain the project to men
- PATH and MYWO trained boys in schools, and boys made a pact to stand by their sisters and support them
- A pact was made with the girls, their parents, religious leaders and elders, that the initiation ceremony would take place but not the circumcision. This received widespread but not unanimous support in the community
- Girls were still teased and ostracised, so PATH and MYWO organised peer support groups for girls and their families (Jolly 2002:20).

The pilot project was a success in the first village, because leaders were involved and supported the programme. It targeted men and boys, since marriage is an important issue and males would have to accept this change in their prospective brides. The project also preserved cultural traditions by not eliminating the practice but instead changing it in acceptable ways (Jolly 2002:20). Jolly also noted that, in 2000, several UN agencies signed up with PATH and MYWO to expand the programme to the



remainder of the *Abagusil* ethnic group—an ethnic group with the highest rate of FGC in Kenya.

Although legislation has been established to outlaw harmful practices against women, they still continue. However, as these examples demonstrate, masculinity as a protective mechanism can be effective if men are involved. Flood (2005:2) pointed out that once everyone is aware that boys and men are inevitably involved in gender and that gender inevitability involves boys and men, it opens the space for masculinity to be integrated into gender policy and work. For instance, Bujra (2002) stated that identifying AIDS as a gendered phenomenon has provided an opportunity to have men involved in recognising and challenging their own risky behaviours in the spread of AIDS. Applying this perspective to gender-based violence and recognising that masculinity can be a protective mechanism provides the potential for men to challenge their own belief systems about power and dominance over women.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter began with establishing that the foundation of development ideologies is influenced by the definition of culture. Culture is constructed by internal and external influences and structured by power and representations. Moreover, culture is never static but it is constantly evolving to form new meanings. Masculinity is a cultural construct, which is rooted within each society's gender roles. For this reason, feminists argue that the more rigid the gender roles, the greater the male dominance over women and the higher the probability that women in that society will experience gender violence (Parrot 2006).

However, recent GAD theorists have recognised the need to work with men to build better societies. They have thus drawn upon positive socio-cultural constructs of masculinity as evidenced in the connections of the gendered relationships between mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, brothers and sisters. Given these positive examples, it is clear that men can exhibit healthy behaviours such as kindness, love and caring for women. Moreover, these positive values may enable masculinity to become a protective

mechanism against gender-based violence. Seeing masculinity as a potential protective mechanism opens up a space for men to challenge their own masculine identity and beliefs, without the fear of being left behind or finding themselves in crisis.

The following chapter will discuss the qualitative research methodology used in this research to identify relevant protective mechanisms against gender-based violence. Explanations of the processes involved in data collection, sorting, analysis and results will be given.

## **Chapter 4: The research approach**

Qualitative researchers seek answers to their questions in the real world. They gather what they see, hear, and read from people and places and from events and activities...their purpose is to learn about some aspect of the social world and to generate new understandings that can be used by that social world.

- Rossman & Rallis (1998:5)

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the focus is on the process used to acquire information for this research. It begins with a brief description of the selected methodology, which will be presented as a guide to the overall framework of information gathering. The subsequent sections will examine the study site, selection of participants, data collection techniques and the data sorting and analysis process. Finally, ethical issues will be considered.

### **4.2 Study type**

This is an exploratory study that used a qualitative approach to gathering data. Qualitative research investigates social settings, and the people who live within these settings, in order to examine how people arrange themselves and their settings and how they make sense of their surroundings through “meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things” (Berg 2001:7). Moreover, qualitative methods provide the researcher with the opportunity to “share in the understandings and perceptions of others and to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives” (Berg).

This research focused on traditional protective mechanisms used by women and men to prevent gender-based violence. Hence, the objective of this study was to explore ways in which cultural beliefs and practices may provide strategies for addressing gender-based violence. A qualitative approach was preferred, rather than a quantitative one,

because qualitative methodology can better provide answers to how people understand their world while it “explores and documents how people interact with each other and how they interpret and interact with the world around them” (Ulin et al. 2002:26). Since gender-based violence is deeply embedded within a cultural context, a qualitative approach is relevant because the theoretical and methodological framework focuses on the relation between “personal and social meanings; individual and cultural practices; and the material environment, or context” (Ulin et al. 2002:4).

The theoretical framework of this thesis is grounded in feminist theory. Feminism is a social endeavour concerned with restoring social wrongs through a moral and political framework (Thompson 2001:7). It is aimed at expressing the issues of gendered identity which have become entangled as a result of political bias, the production of knowledge, and diverse and alternative representations of unfairness (Braidotti 2003:198). In addition, “feminist research frameworks are concerned with the gender and power dimensions of social phenomena that shape people’s lives” (Ulin et al. 2002:23). Hence, feminist research is focused on understanding different power and gender positions. Such a framework is relevant to this study because it helps identify the power relationships which are being used to maintain boundaries between women and men. Therefore, to be able to identify positive cultural beliefs and practices that can contribute to addressing gender-based violence, it is necessary to examine the differences in power relationships that place women in a subordinate position to men.

#### **4.2.1 Study site**

The people living at the foothills of Mt. Bosavi in the Southern Highlands province of Papua New Guinea are comprised of 14 language groups. The linguist Voorhoeve (1968) labelled the whole Bosavi language group as ‘Pare-Samo-Beami-Bosavi Family’ (Grosh & Grosh 2004:3). The Kasua language group, containing the language spoken by the Sulamesi people, is one of 14 languages in the Bosavi family.

Anthropologist Brunois (2004) referred to Sulamesi as the Kasua people. However, participants in this study stated they preferred to be referred to as the Sulamesi people.

Sulamesi people occupy 7 of the 28 villages located in the Mt Bosavi region and these villages are: Musula, Iwatubu, Weleyo, Iliye, Lake Campbel, Haivaro and Igiselebo.

Sulamesi people are governed under the administration of the Southern Highlands Province (Figure 4.1). In terms of basic government services, the village has no health aid post, since the villagers chased away the health worker in the belief that he was trying to claim their land. Recently, after five years of not having a school in the village, parents decided to build a one for their children. While the village now has a school, teachers who go to teach in the school typically leave after six months or a year because of its isolated location. Isolation makes it difficult for teachers to get their supplies and teaching aids, and they become discouraged by these challenges from continuing to teach in the area.

However, at the time of this study, parents had insisted on having a school for their children so they could learn; hence, they arranged for an elementary class and grades one to four. Musula primary school had one teacher and two village volunteers who had been appointed by the villagers to teach the children. Their school was not recognised by the provincial government and therefore the parents had to build the classrooms and teachers' houses, and also provide food for the teachers. Children wanting to attain more advanced education had to walk for about four days to reach the nearest higher-level school. There were no state highways connecting the villages to the nearest town, and most people walked using bush tracks. There was also an airstrip which the villagers used for emergencies, but it was generally used by outsiders visiting the village.

Sulamesi people live a largely subsistence lifestyle and they are semi-hunter-gatherers, who depend on the rainforest for their fuel, food and shelter. The staple of their diet is sago, which is processed from wild palms growing in shallow swamp and creeks (Finnegan 1995:86). Although the village is situated in a clearing in the rainforest, people also have houses away from the main village and inside the rainforest where they can collect food and fuel. Traditionally, the villagers shared one big long house, with the women's and men's sleeping area divided by a long aisle. However, nowadays couples live together with their children in small huts.

In 2006, with the assistance of the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) the Sulamesi people turned 49,800 hectares of the Mt Bosavi area into the Sulamesi Wildlife Management Area (WMA). This WMA area forms part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site located in Kikori River Basin/Great Papuan Plateau, which covers over 2 million hectares of PNG's landmass (UNESCO 2006; Wikipedia 2007; WWF 2008).

I decided to conduct my research in a rural setting which has had limited outside influence. This was important because, generally, Papua New Guineans perceive rural life as the traditional life; hence, a rural village was chosen instead of an urban setting, in order to find answers to my research questions on traditional protective mechanisms against gender-based violence. Given the fact that the Sulamesi people are located in one of the most remote and isolated places in PNG, I believed they would have experienced fewer changes to their cultural practices than people living in urban areas and thus it would be an ideal study site. I also chose Mt Bosavi as my study site because I had previously worked in this area for WWF; thus, I was somewhat familiar with the people and their culture.

Figure 4.1: *Map of the Southern Highlands Province*



Designed by Perry Fernandez (2008).

#### 4.2.2 Selection of participants

An *a priori* sampling approach was used in this study design. This participant selection approach involves “defining in advance of data collection the characteristics and structure of the sample” to be investigated in the study (Ulin et al. 2002:57). More importantly, this sampling approach was chosen because *a priori* selection does not restrict “sampling additions or changes as the study progresses” (Ulin et al. 2002:57). Participants for the study were selected using the heterogeneous samples technique, as it was deemed a good tool to “highlight variation in some complex phenomenon or to look for common themes that emerge amidst the presence of other differences” (Ulin et al. 2002:60). Further heterogeneous selection approach guides the researcher to find “similar experiences, behaviours or perceptions in an otherwise diverse group” (Ulin et al. 2002:60).

I purposely attempted to select a mixture of participants, distinguished by differences in marital status, sex, children and number of years married, in addition to age and the cultural practices of bride price and polygamy. Other selected characteristics included elders over 70 years, and village leaders or pastors. Most participants were included based on the above characteristics. Of the 40 participants, only four were once in a polygamous marriage but were no longer so at the time of the interview. Despite having only identified four participants in a polygamous marriage, out of the 23 male participants, three were in the process of securing a second wife. Moreover, all married participants used bride price as a symbol of marriage – each married couple had gone through the bride price process (Refer to Appendix 1 for the List of Participants).

Furthermore, the study was to be conducted in three villages occupied by the Sulamesi people, but due to heavy rainfalls it was impossible to walk to two of the selected sites. Hence, I spent all my research time in the primary village, which the Sulamesi people refer to as their ‘government station’, because it is where the airstrip, church pastor, councillor and school are located. Despite not being able to visit the other two villages, I was fortunate in that there were villagers from these other two villages staying in my host village helping to clean the airstrip and build the teachers’ houses, and I was able to include them in my study.

### **4.3 Data collection**

To be able to meet the objectives of this study and to answer the research question, a multistep process was undertaken. Firstly, I decided how to build trust with the community and then I decided what kind of data I needed to collect and how that was to be accomplished. Finally, I structured the questions which I would ask the participants.

On arrival at the study site, I met with the community leaders and explained my study purpose and how long I would like to stay. This was translated into the Kasua language, since I wanted the people to clearly understand the purpose of my visit. One main concern of the participants was if they were going to be paid. In answer to their question, I told them that I was a student (not a paid government official or consultant) and I had this huge ‘homework’ that needed to be done but I could not complete it without their assistance. This made them smile and they assured me they would help me with my homework but only when they were free to do so, because they had to clean the airstrip and build the teachers’ houses for their primary school. These are not regular activities undertaken by the community but they are done when there is a need. As such, clearing the airstrip is a task the community performs every time the grass needs cutting, whilst building the teachers’ houses was a result of their need to have a primary school in their village. Moreover, the community was promised professional teachers if they built houses and made gardens for these teachers.

It was relatively easy for me to build trust with the community, understand their cultural context and create relationships with participants because I had previously worked with these people when I was employed by WWF. This historical relationship also made the participants feel comfortable enough to participate in the study. In addition, I understood my position as an outsider whom the people looked up to, given my previous working relationship with them. With all this in mind, I chose to demonstrate that I wanted to be part of their community by participating in the major community activities that were in progress at the time of my arrival—namely, cleaning the airstrip, attending school/WMA meetings and church services, and building the teachers’ houses.



Even though my working relationship was good with most of the Sulamesi people, my past role in WWF created some barriers with certain landowners in the earlier stages of my research. This was because some landowners had signed Forest Management Agreements (FMAs) to have their forest logged and they avoided me when I arrived. However, after casual chats with them during community activities they came to understand that I was just a student and no longer a WWF staff member, and grew much comfortable talking with me.

Given that my research was focused on positive cultural practices which can be utilised to counteract gender-based violence, data collection was undertaken via interviews—specifically, focus group discussions (FGD) and semi-structured interviews. The FGD were planned to comprise of 4 to 8 people, all of whom shared similar characteristics relevant to the research question (Marshall & Rossman 2006). This was important because “individual attitudes and beliefs are not formed in isolation. People need to listen to others’ opinions and understandings to form theirs” (Marshall & Rossman 2006:114). Moreover, Ulin et al. (2002:92) stated that FGD is about “group interaction” and hence it depends on the “exchange of ideas among participants” as they answer the questions posed by the interviewer. This is also supported by Morgan (1988:12), who reported “a focus group discussion is the use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group”.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with either 1 or 2 participants. This method was often used because people were busy with community work and I was therefore unable to hold many FGDs. The FGDs that were held were based on the availability and willingness of the participants. Moreover, interviews were held with key informants because during the interviews participants pointed out these individuals as knowledgeable or practitioners of certain practices (which had been discussed in the interviews). Specifically, community leaders and the pastor and elders of the village were interviewed in order to gain a more detailed description of a situation or process.

Apart from interviews, a field journal was kept to record the daily activities in which I participated as well as notes about informal conversations I had with various people. I also kept notes of observations on community and household activities in which both men and women participated.

The interview schedule consisted of three main parts. The first part was focused on gender roles and expectations, the second part was concerned with perceptions of gender-based violence in the community, and the third part investigated cultural protective mechanisms against gender based violence (refer to Appendix 2 for The Interview Guide). All questions were open-ended to allow for any new issues raised during the interview to be incorporated and explored further on within the interview process (Broughton & Hampshire 1997). After the first four interviews were transcribed, the interview guide was changed slightly in order to incorporate emerging information. The following table illustrates the number of interviews conducted and the type of participants.

Table 4.1: Participant Demographics by Types of Interview

Method	Total	Main target group		Number of Participants		Total Participants
		Women	Men	Women	Men	
Characteristics		Divorced, widowed, un/married with children. Married for more than two years				
FGD	3	2	1	8	5	13
SSI	8	3	5	4	8	12
KI	7	3	4	4	11	15
<b>Total</b>	18	8	10	16	24	40

NB: FGD= focus group discussions, SSI= semi-structured interviews, KI= Key informants

There were three FGDs, comprised of 13 participants. From these 13 participants, 8 were women in two separate FGDs and 5 were men. The semi-structured interviews, which included the key informant interviews, were comprised of 27 participants, in which 8 participants were women and 19 were men. Additionally, the eight semi-structured interviews were conducted in pairs of two and except for two interviews with a single male and female, they were undertaken individually.

### **4.3.1 Data sorting and analysis**

Interviews were tape recorded, transcribed and translated from ‘Tok Pisin’ into English verbatim, rather than adopting a summary transcription technique. This process was used in order to ensure that what the participants said was recorded accurately while ensuring erroneous assumptions were not made (Boog 2006). All transcriptions were handwritten in the field and later typed into the computer. Undertaking transcription whilst in the field enabled me to identify gaps in the responses of participants and also to seek and identify emerging ideas during the process of carrying out all of the interviews.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data because “thematic analysis focuses on identifiable themes and patterns of living and/or behaviour” (Aronson 1994:65). These themes and patterns emerged from the transcribed interviews (Aronson 1994). All transcriptions were printed out and sorted into three broad themes: individual protective mechanisms; family protective mechanisms; and community protective mechanisms. From these three broad themes, the emerging sub-themes were grouped into a further three groups which identified the protective mechanisms used at individual, family and community levels. Later analysis was undertaken based on these themes. The analysis process used data from the interviews and from field observations, and participants were grouped into sexes to ensure triangulation of the data analysis.

## **4.4 Ethical considerations**

Prior to fieldwork, an official ethics application was submitted to the Massey University Ethics Committee to ensure that the study abided by the appropriate ethical guidelines of the university (Scheyvens, Nowak, & Scheyvens 2003). All participants gave their consent to participate after I explained the purpose and process of the study and the use of the information which would be derived from their participation. Oral consent was given, since the study population had minimal education and they were more comfortable with verbal, rather than written, consent. However, information from the

consent form was discussed with them before their consent was sought (Appendix 3 provides The Consent Information Presented to Participants).

No names were used during the interviews, transcriptions or data analysis. All participants were identified only by their sex and age; if two individuals shared the same age and sex, further demographic information was added in order to distinguish them from each other.

As noted earlier, no major conflicts of interest were identified. I had worked with the Sulamesi people previously in my role with WFF, and that meant some landowners who had since allowed logging of their land shied away from me at first. However, after a few casual chats during community work, they were comfortable with participating in the interviews later on in the study.

On the other hand, given that the participants were known to the researcher, they could have been reluctant to give detailed accounts of their personal lives.

#### **4.4.1 Changes to and limitations of the study**

The initial plan was to carry out data collection for this study with both a male and a female researcher. While I was still in New Zealand, I made contact with a male researcher in PNG who agreed to assist me. However, when I arrived up in Port Moresby I learnt that he had a new job and was unable to assist me. Hence, the fact that there was no male researcher collecting data, even though initial plans called for one in consideration of gender-sensitive issues, could have limited the richness of this study.

Although male participants responded to all the questions directed to them, the quality of answers given may have been better, had they been able to talk to a male researcher rather than a female one. For example, none of the three male participants planning polygamous marriages disclosed this fact during their interviews; instead, this information was given by female participants who were their first wives. Hence, it seems that male participants were not as comfortable going into deep discussions about their personal lives as were the women.

Furthermore, three sites were initially planned for data collection but, due to flooding and heavy rains, I was only able to carry out data collection in one village. Fortunately, the community had come together to help with the cleaning of the airstrip and the building of teachers' houses at that time, and community members from the other two villages were present in the village where I was working. Therefore, I was able to include them in the study and the other villages were represented in the data in this way.

On a personal note, this research experience was very enlightening for me because I was in a position to develop a better picture of the Sulamesi people than I had when working previously in the area. When working with WWF, I was viewing these people from the perspective of that organisation and hence, in my mind, conservation took priority over the needs of the people. Later on, I was frustrated to learn they had eventually signed FMAs to have their forests logged. However, after spending three weeks with the villagers during this visit having no other agenda but to learn from them, I have come to a much fuller understanding of their situation and paradigm. I was able to see that the people sold their forest mainly because they wanted things such as money, education for their children, health care and the ability to travel to urban centres, in the same way as the other people around them.

In terms of the research approach, I have learnt that qualitative research is built on trust from both the interviewer and the interviewee. I now know that without trust, I would not have been able to collect the information I was seeking in this study. Furthermore, qualitative research is more than just stories of people's lives, it is about how they understand, make sense of and live in this world. Finally, through this field research I have gained confidence in using qualitative methods such as focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews; I have also learnt more about how to sort and analyse data using a qualitative research approach.

## **4.5 Summary**

The research methods used in this qualitative study were semi-structured interviews, FGDs, observations and journals. Overall, the study achieved its objectives. However, due to the fact that there was only one female researcher, some of the richness of the

data regarding masculinity could have been lost. Hence, information collected from male and female participants depended, to a large extent, on how confident and comfortable the participants were with a female researcher. Importantly, however, due to previous work conducted in the area, the researcher was known to many participants and this helped to break down potential barriers.

The following chapter presents the results that emerged from these methods.

## **Chapter 5: Protective mechanisms used by Sulamasi people against gender based violence**

A house is made by the man, so the man has to take care of the woman.

- Man, 17 years old, married for five years

### **5.1 Introduction**

As discussed in the literature review, feminists argue that in any given society, the more restricted the gender roles and the greater the male dominance over women, the higher the odds that gender-based violence will occur (Hearn 1996; Parrot 2006; Pease 2002; Whitehead 2002). Moreover, this male dominance is a socio-cultural construct of masculinity expressed through power and control over women (Edley 1996; Parrot; Pease; Sai 2007). If socio-cultural mechanisms trigger the occurrence of violence, then in a society such as Papua New Guinea, where masculinity is embedded within socio-cultural gender roles and expectations, there by definition, if one finds certain number of triggers for violence, then there would also naturally be certain number of protective mechanisms embedded within these gender roles and expectations to help women and men counteract or cope with such unpleasant situations. This led me to ask the following question: “How can culture address gender-based violence in contemporary rural Papua New Guinea?”

As I ventured into answering this question, I focused on answers from both women and men. This chapter begins by examining the gender roles and expectations of the Sulamasi people and then moves onto examining participants’ views about individual protective mechanisms, starting with mechanisms women use to avoid violence. This is followed by an examination of the mechanisms men use to avoid violence against or from women. The discussion next moves from individual mechanisms to external mechanisms, beginning with mechanisms used by families, and then those used by the community. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary of the findings.

## **5.2 Gender roles**

This section will focus on division of labour by sex amongst Sulamasi people, examining the perceptions of women and men towards their respective gender roles. Moreover, gender roles of both men and women will be discussed according to Moser's (1989) categories: reproductive, productive and community management roles.

### **5.2.1 Reproductive roles**

Moser (1989:1801) defined reproductive<sup>4</sup> roles as “the childbearing and rearing responsibilities”, and household duties such as cooking, which is unpaid domestic work. This role is primarily performed by women; however, Moser stated that even though there are no clearly defined reproductive roles for men, men do assist women with domestic activities. Hence, it is from this understanding that we examine the reproductive roles of Sulamasi women and men.

According to females and males participating in four different individual interviews and three FGDs, women's reproductive roles included having children, providing for the children along with the household pigs and dogs, washing clothes, cleaning the house and yard, and cooking for and feeding the children and husband. These are roles women are expected to perform in their households; a ‘lazy’ woman (one who does not perform these tasks) is a shame to her husband and family. As such, both women and men described similar duties for married women without much variation.

Men's reproductive roles were also described in similar terms by both male and female participants. Women talked about the reproductive roles of their husbands including fetching water, chopping firewood, creating children, looking after the children, hunting, building and fixing the house, and taking a sick wife to the hospital. Five men

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<sup>4</sup> According to Moser (1989), reproductive work refers to domestic work within the boundaries of the household which is usually unpaid and performed mostly by women.



in an FGD and four men in two different individual interviews also talked about the reproductive activities they perform for their wives, such as fetching water, chopping firewood, taking care of the children and tending to their wives when they are sick. Women said that when they are pregnant, the men do not allow them to carry heavy loads or go to wash sago. However, this does not mean the men take on these tasks. It was explained by the councillor (a local level government representative from the village) that being pregnant is an important time in a woman's life, so therefore the husband's unmarried sisters are responsible for helping their sister-in-law with heavy tasks such as carrying firewood or washing sago during this time.

### **5.2.2 Productive roles**

In terms of productive roles, Moser (1989:1801) stated that for women, this often involves working "as secondary income earners" which, for the rural areas refers to agricultural work, and in the urban areas refers to jobs in the informal sectors. Furthermore, she argued that in the Third World the perception remains that males are the breadwinners and therefore must be the ones to perform in productive roles, even when this does not correspond with reality. There is an assumption that men are the primary income earners of the household, and families tend to act as if this is so even when it's not, even when the woman is the one earning enough to put bread on the table.

The Sulamasi people are situated within the Kikori River Basin/Great Papuan Plateau, which is described by scientists as one of Southern Hemisphere's largest remaining areas of undisturbed rainforest (UNESCO 2006). Hence, when oil production was established in the area, WWF "made arrangements with the PNG government and the Kutubu Joint Venture (KJV, the group of oil companies financing the Kutubu petroleum project) to operate an Integrated Conservation and Development Project (ICDP) throughout the Kikori River Basin which included the Mt Bosavi area" (Schieffelin 1997:598) to protect this rainforest.

Prior to WWF's work in the Mt Bosavi area, the people had already established two or three different deals with logging companies. WWF had noted the increased pressure from logging companies in Mt Bosavi, and in response increased their ICDP activities

in the area with projects such as butterfly and vanilla farming and logging exposure tours to other parts of PNG which have had extensive logging activities (Schieffelin 1997). Despite these efforts directed at preventing increased logging in the area, some landowners from Sulamasi had their forests logged. One of the main reasons the Sulamasi people ended up agreeing to logging was that they noticed their neighbours from the Kutubu area received royalties from oil production. Their desire was to gain money for education, health services and material goods, and to benefit from logging company promises to make the roads connect to the cities (Schieffelin).

According to the participants, women's productive roles include making gardens, taking care of the vanilla farms and working for the logging company. Men work with women in the community vanilla farms and one man has a butterfly farm which is worked by himself and his wife. Although women and men are involved in these activities, access to markets where garden produce can be sold is very expensive for this community. Hence, most men and a few women with paid employment work for the logging company in order to make money. The women (in individual interviews) and the men (in a focus group discussion) both said this money is used to pay for school fees and bride prices. Some of those employed at the logging company worked full-time, while others worked part-time. However, at the time of data collection, no one was actively working there since the company had stopped logging in the area while awaiting resolution of a lawsuit with one of the landowners.

### **5.2.3 Community management roles**

Moser (1989:1801) explained that in community management roles, while women's roles are "based on the provision of items for collective consumption, men have community leadership roles". Even though both women and men have community management roles, men's roles give them power because they organise at the political level, while for women, their contribution to community management is seen as an extension of their domestic work.

According to a key village leader, the village had a committee comprised of a wildlife management area representative, a logging representative, a church representative, a

school representative and a ward representative. Men held all these leadership positions on each of the committees, whilst female committee members represented only the women's group. Hence, in this village committee, nine of the members were men whilst three were women. Leadership in the community therefore remained with the men. In the village and at school meetings, I observed that while women and men both participated in the meeting discussions, only the men had been chosen for leadership roles.

In terms of modern big men roles, this was characterised by men who were able to organise the community to perform community work, and also by men who were able to network with other communities or organisations to bring services into the community; such men are perceived as the big men of the village. Furthermore, men who held positions of leadership in community institutions such as the school, WMA and logging were also perceived as big men.

Community roles which are carried out by both women and men involved activities such as building the teachers' houses and the airstrip. These tasks are performed only once in a while and are dependent upon the effort of the whole community. Nevertheless, there was community work that only women performed, such as making gardens for the teachers and pastor, and sewing.

Every Wednesday, the Evangelical Church of Papua New Guinea (ECPNG) ran a sewing class for the women in this village. A key village leader said the women enjoyed going to the sewing class because it was the only day in the week that they did not have to worry about housework. On the three Wednesdays I spent with the women, I noticed that my hostess was very eager to attend the church sewing class and asked me to go along with her. Her husband looked after the children and I noticed other husbands taking care of their children on those days as well. At one point during the class, a child distracted his mother and the father had to come and take the child away so the mother could continue with her sewing. Sewing was done to meet the family's needs and was not sold. However, to ensure there continue to have adequate supplies of material, women who wanted to sew clothes for their families had to pay for the material they used. Hence, those who could afford to pay for the material got to sew their clothes,

while those who were unable to afford the cost either observed or had someone else pay for them.

### **5.3 Expectations of women and men**

In this section, the focus is on society's expectations of women and men. In Papua New Guinea, to be deemed worthy is to be termed a *trupela meri* or a *trupela man*, which translates into English as a 'real woman' or a 'real man' (Sai 2007; Eves 2007). This section will examine the characteristics which define a woman or a man as *trupela*.

#### **5.3.1 Trupela meri**

When women participants were asked what defines a real women, all the women answered that a *trupela meri* is one who feeds visitors or men during meetings. They said that a woman who knows how to feed and take care of people is regarded as a strong woman. According to a participant from a FGD, a women, must know *pasin tumbuna* (traditional ways), which means the ways in which to care for and feed visitors coming to your village or your house. Young women aged 25 - 33 years in the FGD said the old people told them they (the young women) were not yet strong women, because they had yet to master the *pasin tumbuna*.

The men, in their interviews, also emphasised that a woman who feeds and takes care of relatives, clansmen and visitors is a *trupela meri*. One man, in a semi-structured interview, commented that a woman who is not shy, but gives freely and helps without being asked is a real woman. Apart from this characteristic, only the men talked about the following characteristics of a *trupela meri*: she has to be an independent woman who makes her own garden, chops firewood, washes sago, takes the dogs and pigs to the bush and takes care of the house, without any help from her husband. She does not gossip or spread rumours and she is a woman who uses her eyes to see what is needed, before anyone tells her what to do. These qualities, according to the men in both semi-structured interviews and FGD, define a *trupela meri*.

### **5.3.2 Trupela man**

In two FGDs and two semi-structured interviews, women said the characteristics that define a *trupela man* are a man who helps his wife, takes care of his family by providing food for his wife and children, listens to his wife and does not get jealous of his wife. The women said that a man who has these characteristics is a *trupela man*.

Men in two semi-structured interviews and an FGD said that a *trupela man* is the one who helps his *wantoks* by feeding them or taking care of visitors. He is a man who sees the needs of others in the community and helps. Five men, aged 22 – 34 years, said that a man who helps his wife and does not expect her to do all the work on her own is a '*trupela man*'. This was also discussed by two men in an individual interview, who remarked that a man who helps his wife is considered by the community to be a *trupela man*. Only twice, in two different semi-structured interviews, did participants mention that a *trupela man* is a good leader. When asked in these instances what they meant by a good leader, four men described a man who shares his food and helps others in the community, one who does not talk but leads by his actions. They asserted that such a man is respected by the community and regarded as a leader and a *trupela man*.

During my fieldwork in the village, I was always given food by my host family and the community. I asked the pastor if his family had similar experiences and he said that for the past four years, his family had not made a garden or washed sago, because they were always being fed by the community. The pastor explained that feeding and taking care of visitors is a very important traditional belief. Sulamasi people believe that if they do not take care of their visitors they (the visitors) can make the villagers sick; additionally, with being cared for, visitors would not choose to help in return, when they themselves are in need.

## **5.4 Protective mechanisms used among the Sulamasi people**

In this section, the focus is on indentifying protective mechanisms which are used to protect against or prevent gender-based violence. The protective mechanisms identified

will be divided into individual, family and community levels, since these are the three levels of protective mechanisms identified by this study.

#### **5.4.1 Mechanisms women use to prevent or avoid violence**

##### ***5.4.1.1 Submission***

In two FGDs comprising ten women each, aged 24 – 34 years, who had been married for an average of 14 years, women talked about how they submit to their husband in order to avoid violence. Women observed they provoke their husbands when they ask them questions about their whereabouts, or when they are suspicious of them, or when they have not cooked food for their husband to eat. One man in a key informant discussion said that men get annoyed with women when they ask them, ‘What were you doing?’ and the women are suspicious of what the man has been doing without any reason. Therefore, the women explained that, to avoid triggering the men’s short tempers, they work hard to please their husbands when they come home by cooking food and also by taking care of their husbands’ relatives’ needs. According to the women, they have learnt these actions after being beaten by their husbands.

Another form of submission discussed by these women is listening to and accepting instructions from their husband. They said that for a woman the first years of marriage are painful, because she will be beaten by her husband until she learns to listen without challenging him and to perform her tasks as he directs. A 25-year-old woman, now married for eight years, explained, “[If] you do some work he will hit you, until you start listening to him and work, then he will stop hitting you. If the wife does not listen he will continue to hit her.” Women seemed to view submission through force as a form of correction. This was particularly emphasised during a semi-structured interview with two women, aged 18 and 32 years. The 18-year-old woman, who had been married for five years, said “You (the husband) are correcting your wife, so you are hitting her so that is fair”. When asked if it was fair that women get beaten for not listening she firmly answered, “Yes” and added that woman deserve to be beaten if they do not listen.

#### *5.4.1.2 Communication*

Unlike the submissive form of listening, where it is only the woman who has to listen to her husband, during communication men and women listen and talk to each other. This form of protective mechanism was discussed by both men and women in their respective interviews. Men and women said that couples who listen to each other are able to avoid arguments and fights:

If the woman says something to the man, he listens to his wife, and does his work, and the woman listens to her husband, and does her work, then they will not fight each other. If they don't listen to each other then fighting erupts (Man, 17 years old, married for five years).

The woman will stay home and tell the husband now it's your turn to go break firewood, or take care of the children. If he does not listen to the wife they will fight but if the man listens to his wife and follows her instructions then they will not fight each other (Woman, 26 years old, married for five years).

Other participants, in both the women and men's FGDs, also talked about the importance of men and women listening to each other.

Another point concerning communication, emphasised by the participants, involves the geographical isolation of the village. In a FGD, with five men aged 22 and 34 years and a semi-structured interview with a 24-year-old woman, participants talked about the importance of couples informing each other of their whereabouts and giving an estimated time frame for how long they will be away from home. A 24-year-old woman said that men instruct their wives to tell them where they are going and for how long. However, they will hit their wives if they come home late from the bush. She said that men are worried women might get attacked by venomous snakes or insects without them knowing and they would not be able to search for the women without knowing

where to look. Men in the FGD said that women also get angry with their husbands when they do not return home within the timeframe they had stipulated before leaving.

#### *5.4.1.3 Sharing household responsibilities*

Ten women, in two separate FGDs, said there are two types of husbands: one that helps his wife and one that does not help his wife. Women said that sometimes when they sit in small groups they talk about their husbands. Three out of the ten women complained that they get little assistance from their husbands, whilst the other seven women praised their husbands for always helping them with housework. The women who said they were being helped by their husbands shared stories about their husbands performing roles which were traditionally considered to be a woman's work:

I want to share my story with you. My husband, he is a good man. We both go to the bush to cut sago. He will remove the bark of the sago palm and set-up the apparatus for washing sago for me. Then he will scrape the sago. Once he completes scraping he will let me wash the sago while he goes into the bush to look for food. When he goes into the bush he will not return to the place where I am washing the sago. My husband will go directly to the house and cook our food for the night, and then he tells me and the children to eat.

We are always helping each other. My husband will chop our firewood, then he will carry some and I will carry some back to our house. He helps me to go into the bush and carry our sago or helps in making the garden. We are happy; we don't argue or fight with each other. I help my husband and he helps me in everything; whether it is big or small we do them together (Woman, 34 years old, married for 16 years).

Two women in a semi-structured interview also talked about their husbands helping them. Aside from housework, women said that one reason they ask their husbands to help them, in particular with taking care of the children, is to arrange circumstances that



minimise the chances of feeling suspicious or jealous about the activities of their husbands.

A man must not go around by himself; there must be a child with him as a witness if he goes to his cousins' house or aunties' house, then there won't be any arguments (Woman, 24 years old, married for eight years).

I noticed that, indeed, most married men walked around the village carrying with them at least one or two children to village meetings, to do community work or to just visit other family members or meet with visitors in the village.

#### ***5.4.1.4 Utilising community regulations***

All the female and male participants said that for a man to have a second wife, his first wife has to give her husband permission to marry another woman. This is a regulation set by the village committee in order to reduce polygamous marriages in the village. Most importantly, however, it also helps to avoid wives fighting each other and ensures that the man takes care of all his wives. They know that, without her permission, the man is not allowed to marry another woman. Women participants, in both the FGDs and semi-structured interviews, said that if the first wife gives permission for the man to marry another woman, then the second wife needs to know her position within the marriage and she must show respect to the first wife:

Whoever you are, the second wife must not be in charge. She must listen to me, the first wife. She must be under me. If she tries to be in charge we will fight, fight, fight and fight, there will be never-ending fights (Woman, 33 years old, married for 14 years).

This quotation comes from a woman whose husband has been pursuing a second wife and she has been strongly against the idea of him marrying another woman. She has not given him permission to marry, so therefore her husband is still unable to marry another woman.

The negative effect of giving the first wife the power to decide if her husband can take another wife is that her husband may use violence in order to force her into allowing the second marriage:

If the first wife has not agreed to the man marrying the second wife, he will continuously ask her and if she disagrees then he will hit her because he wants to marry another woman (Woman, 33 years old, married for 15 years).

Despite women supposedly having the power to decide on a second wife, the women said that men still get what they want by beating them.

#### *5.4.1.5 Separation*

Women who disagreed with their husband marrying another woman but were beaten into agreeing to the marriage sometimes later ended their marriage in order to escape from their husband's violence. In a FGD and a semi-structured interview, two women said they had ended their marriages under these circumstances. One woman said she was married twice to two different men, but she had to end the marriages because both men left her to marry other women. Her first husband started living with another woman because she was unable to give him children, so she left him and married another man, who did the same to her because she was barren.

I used to be at peace with my husband. I cooked food for him. I cooked food for his family. We lived happily then some years later we started arguing and fighting.....then my husband was interested in another woman. He started following her around and he forgot about his first wife (Woman, married twice and the marriages lasted seven years).

Another woman had to leave her husband because he decided to marry a second wife without her consent.

When my husband started seeing another woman, that is when we started fighting and arguing. We fought a lot, then I told my husband its fine you can marry this other woman but I am leaving you, so I left him and took my child with me (Woman, 32 years old, separated from her husband for four years now).

These two women, as most in these circumstances have done, both left their husbands to return to their parents and now remain unmarried. They both said they were welcomed back by their families, because it was not their fault their marriages ended. When asked about the implications of them leaving without repaying their bride price, the women said that their husbands had taken other women without their consent. Therefore, the husbands' actions prevented them from demanding repayment of the bride price when they left the marriage.

#### **5.4.1.6 Self-harm**

Another way a wife may attempt to escape violence from her husband (and to let him know she does not approve of him marrying another woman) is to inflict self-harm. This type of action was vividly described by one of the participants in a FGD. She shared her story of attempting suicide because she disagreed with her husband marrying another woman.

Our marriage was perfect until my husband started seeing another woman because he wanted to have a second wife. 'Hey,' I thought. 'I am still with you, I have not left you, and why are you doing this to me?' I thought a lot about this and I thought about committing suicide. I thought to myself maybe this man does not love me and I am forcing myself to be with him. It is alright, I will kill myself. I had these kinds of thoughts because I love him but maybe he does not love me....I thought about it for awhile, then I took action and I drank poison rope (plant extract). I wanted to kill myself but it was not God's plan for me to die, so I got sick and vomited... (Woman, 33 years old, married for 15 years).

She did not die but, through this tragic incident, her husband stopped beating her and he agreed not to find another woman. However, according to other participants in the same FGD and the FGD with the men, there were a number of other similar cases where the women did commit suicide.

Miriam: Are there lot of women who want to do this (commit suicide) when their husbands hit them?

Man, 34 years old, married for 14 years: Yes.

Man, 23 years old, married for 4 years: Sometimes they hang themselves on the rope.

Male, 22 years old, married four years: It is because of men hitting women.

This dialogue is part of a FGD with five men, whereby one of them shared the story of the 33 year old woman who attempted suicide. Apart from this group of men, the Evangelical church of PNG (ECPNG) pastor and the councillor (in two key informant interviews) said that attempted suicide is becoming a popular and very disturbing way for women to escape from violence.

#### ***5.4.1.7 Children***

Both women and men, in their interviews, said that having children is one main protective mechanism against violence and polygamous marriages:

If she has not given birth to a child, he will hit her. If she gives birth to a girl child or a boy child, he will stop hitting her. (He thinks) “I did not pay for you I paid you to have children to replace me” (Woman, 25 years old with three girls and one boy).

We men, when we think of getting married, we must have children; a child to take your place...we both must have children to strengthen our marriage. When we don't have children we hit her because I want to

marry another woman but she is stopping me (Man, 35 years old with two girls and two boys).

Four men, in two separate semi-structured interviews, said they wanted to have children so they could feel secure that their wife was not cheating on them and so they would have someone to take over their property when they died. Men said that when they do not have a boy child, they have to have a second wife to give them a son. They said that having a son is important because they can leave all their resources with him, whilst a girl child leaves the home to get married into another family.

### 5.4.2 Section summary

Figure 5.1 illustrates the different levels of protective mechanisms and the types of mechanisms that are being used within each of these levels by women. At the centre of the protective mechanisms is the individual level, which is occupied by a woman. The woman is surrounded by her family who provide the second layer of protection; and finally, the woman and her family are both protected by the community. It is important to note that there are a range of mechanisms women use to prevent or avoid violence, but some of these are quite destructive.

*Figure 5.1 Protective mechanisms used by women to avoid or prevent violence*



Moreover, the severity of the conflict dictates which layer dominates, which layers operate simultaneously, and which are mobilised to operated together. This will be further elaborated in Chapter 6.

### **5.4.3 Mechanisms men use to prevent or avoid violence**

#### ***5.4.3.1 Introduce wife to relatives***

When asked about how violence against women can be prevented, five men, aged 22 – 35 years, in an FGD, said that one way to reduce violence is to introduce the wife to the entire family when you get married. This, they said, will reduce jealousy and suspicion on the woman's part and avoid conflicts:

When I get married, I introduced her to all my relatives, 'This is my uncle, cousin, sisters, brothers'. I have told her who my relatives are so when I go to their house to eat, she will not be suspicious of me (Man, 27 years old, married for four years).

Jealousy and suspicion were issues of concern, not only for this group of men but for other men in semi-structured and key informant interviews. Even the women themselves admitted to having such feelings towards their husbands.

#### ***5.4.3.2 Communication***

In semi-structured interviews and FGDs with men, they said that talking with their wives about what is expected of them, and what the wives expect from them as husbands, prevents violence from occurring. This is similar to what the women pointed out in terms of communication, where both men and women must listen and talk with each other:

When we are married, we must love each other and not get angry with each other. That is when the woman will follow your words. And the

woman, too, will advise the man...Men, when we talk and the woman does not listen, we get angry with her. This kind of behaviour we must leave behind...when you women talk, men must listen (Man, 35 years old, married for 13 years).

In an individual interview, a 35-year-old man said that when a man loves his wife, he shows love by supporting her and not hitting her.

#### *5.4.3.3 Assistance*

Most men in the study said that they support their wives. However, when it came to how often they supported their wives, the men divided themselves into three groups (unlike the women, who viewed men in only two groups): group one did not help their wives with chores and responsibilities, group two followed traditional beliefs that there is a time to help and respect women, and the third group worked together with their wives.

Men in group one felt there were some activities which needed be performed exclusively by women. In the interviews, there were two men, aged 22 and 28 years, who had been married for four and eight years, respectively. They said that they do not like to help their wives, since they perceived a wife's work to be only for a woman.

A second group of men assisted their wives because they said custom states that there is a time when a man must help and support his wife. The times that men must help women take care of the children or perform domestic tasks such as chopping firewood, fetching water or cooking, is when she is washing sago, pregnant or sick. During these times, the men are expected to perform domestic work usually done by women:

Yes, we have custom laws. Even God's word talks about caring for women. Here we have time to respect women when it is time to wash sago, when women go into the bush we will respect them and play our part too, because she has worked hard (Man, 33 years old, married for 11 years).

This quotation is also supported by information received from eight men, aged 24 – 40 years, during individual interviews and in a FGD. These men noted that custom has allocated time for men to support women. Under this custom, most men said they supported and respected their wives.

A third group of men claim to assist their wife every day, as well as during times dictated by custom:

This is what we do in terms of food: if the woman brings home some greens, we men will go chop firewood, fetch water and bring it to the house. If a woman has not cut bamboo, we will help her cut bamboo and bring it to the house. That is how we help the woman...for a woman will also look after our children. This is how men we help our women (Man, 27 years old, married for four years).

Men in this group help to perform almost all the tasks allocated to women. Couples share responsibility and complement each other's efforts. As discussed in the earlier in the chapter, this accords with the idea that a *trupela man* is one who helps and cares for his wife and children.

#### **5.4.3.4 Avoidance**

Men in their interviews were the only ones who talked about using avoidance as a tactic to prevent violence. In an FGD of five men, it was reported that in the community there were men who chose not to argue or fight with their wife. These men walked away from their wives to avoid confrontations and returned home when they felt calm or they were sure their wife was no longer angry with them:

Some men are like this if they don't want to be cross with the woman. They will leave her and go roam around in the bush. When she has cooled down, he will come back to the house. That is what some men do (Man, 27 years old, married for four years).



If you don't want to fight, you will go stay in another place, go to the bush or go stay in your brother's house. When you come back later to see the woman, she will have cooled down with her anger and be sitting in the house cooking food (Man, 34 years old, married for 14 years).

I don't hit her. Even when am very angry, I just walk out of the house to my *wantok's* house until I have cooled down, then I return home. I go away until I have sorted out my angry thoughts, then I return to her and tell her this is not good (Man, 17 years old, married for five years).

A 23-year-old man said he does not like to fight with his wife and when they start to argue, he leaves the house to go into the bush and look for some food to bring home to please his wife.

#### ***5.4.3.5 Advice from other men***

Male participants in an FGD and in individual interviews said they sometimes sit in groups with other men and talk about why they have hit their wives. Women participants also said they sit in groups and talk about violence, but they use such times to just inform each other of what happened. Men, in contrast, said they also use this group space as a place to seek support and advice, and admitted they may be criticised by other men about their violent behaviour. One semi-structured interview with two men aged 33 and 40 years, revealed that formerly violent men can use their experiences to advise other men to think about the value of women and how they contribute to men's well being:

Another man will tell him to stop fighting: "Brother, before, I used to hit my wife too, like you. But I changed my mind because I paid for her. She helps me, feeds me, she has given me children, so I felt sorry for her and I stopped hitting her. So you are doing the same thing I used to do, don't do that."...The violent man will think "...that is true,

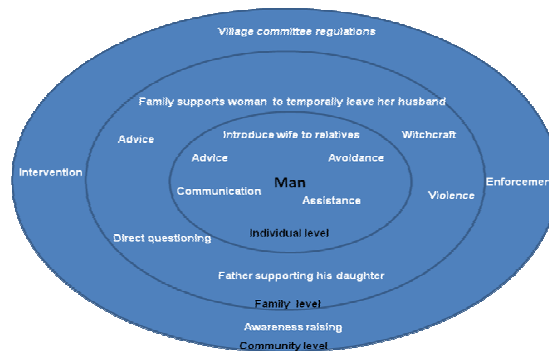
my brother has changed, so can I...I must stop fighting” (Man, 33 years old, married for 11 years).

The men in the interview said they liked to be advised by their friends if they have hurt their wives.

#### 5.4.4 Section summary

In this section of the chapter, the focus of presentation was on the different protective mechanisms men use to prevent or avoid gender-based violence. This finding of men’s protective mechanisms is summarised in Figure 5.2, which shows the different levels and types of protective mechanisms used by men.

Figure 5.2: Protective mechanisms men use to prevent or avoid violence.



Men, like women, are working to prevent or avoid violence, as evidenced by the protective mechanisms men described in discussing issues related to violence against women.

## 5.4.5 Mechanisms families use to prevent or avoid violence

### 5.4.5.1 Advice

A wedding ritual was a ceremony all couples in PNG had to go through in order to receive advice from their elders. During the wedding, the woman and man were advised of their marital responsibilities and roles in relation to each other and to the family. This was a formal process which lasted a day and a night. During the ritual, the woman sat with her family and the man sat with his. The new couple listened to what was expected of them when they were married. All the men above the age of 30 reported they had gone through this formal wedding ritual. Men under 30 years old said they instead had an informal meeting with their father, uncle or clansmen who advised them about their roles and responsibilities as husbands along with those they could expect of their wife.

When it is time to get married, all the old women will sit and they will give advice about marriage life. Woman, your role in this marriage is, you will take care of the pigs, you will take care of the house and other things. Man, they will advise him like this: you will build a house, you will work, you will have sago, you will help people...they tell a good story and leave everything on the floor...the man and woman who are now married will follow this instructions. That is what we do (Village councillor).

The formal wedding ritual is mainly undertaken with a man and woman who have had their marriages arranged by the family. If an informal wedding ritual occurs, when a man is married without his family being made aware of it, they refer to this marriage as *kisim meri long rot* (get a woman on the road). In one FGD with five men, three of the men who were in their twenties said they did not get married the traditional way, but they were advised by their own uncles and fathers after they got married.

This is when we bring the woman to the village they will tell us, okay, you must help your wife like this, and the man must listen to these words (Man, 27 years old, married for four years).

My father's brother will tell me, you must live like this when you are married. You must make gardens; help your wife look after the children. We will follow these words from our father's brother who has spoken to us (Man, 23 years old, married for four years).

As the young men in the FGD pointed out, even though they are not married in the traditional way, they are still informed about their roles and responsibilities as husbands.

#### ***5.4.5.2 Direct questioning by woman's relatives***

Direct questioning came out in the FGD with both men and women, as a means of stopping violence. In the women's FGD, they said that if the husband hits his wife continuously, the woman's relatives will question the man's intentions for hitting the woman with questions such as, 'What do you want to see from always hitting her?' Men said that the man will be confronted by the woman's father with statements such as 'You were itching to marry this woman and now you are hitting her'. Such statements coming from the woman's father are humiliating for the man and also his clan.

#### ***5.4.5.3 Father confronts the son-in-law***

The removal of a woman from her marriage is a scenario which happens simultaneously with direct questioning. This protective mechanism was only discussed by one group of men in a FGD. They said that a father has the right to take his daughter out of a violent marriage, but only if the man has not paid the bride price. If the bride price is paid, then the father can only confront the man about always hitting his daughter.

One positive aspect of the bride price, according to the men's FGD, is that the high amount asked by the father has discouraged men from marrying a second wife. Even if a man wanted to marry a second wife, the thought of working to save money for another bride price does not appeal to many men. However, the negative aspect of the bride price, according to the men's FGD and the individual interviews, is that men consider it

their right to hit a woman because they have worked so hard to pay for her with their money.

#### ***5.4.5.4 Witchcraft***

Witchcraft happens simultaneously with direct questioning from the woman's family members. Witchcraft, as a protective mechanism, was discussed by women in an FGD and one individual interview. Men talked about witchcraft in the contexts of making a woman fall in love with a man, and protection against enemies, especially during long distance travel. Women related that witchcraft was used by the wife's relatives after they have confronted the man, saying they would cast a spell on him so that his hands became too heavy to hit his own wife.

Another form of witchcraft discussed by men was in relation to the spacing of children and preventing pregnancy. In two separate individual interviews, four men talked about how men and mothers used black magic to prevent their girlfriend and daughter from having children. Furthermore, men said they have gone back to the traditional ways of spacing children, since they realised that they were having more children and there were not enough resources to support all their children. Two men described vividly and demonstrated with hand gestures how these traditional spells for the spacing of children are done. Men said that old women have the knowledge of spacing children, so therefore they have asked them to share that knowledge with them and their wives. In two informal discussions with two women, they told me how they used black magic to space children and I asked them if it was effective and they answered, "Yes". I also asked them if their husbands were aware they were practicing this and they said that they had agreed together to space their children.

#### ***5.4.5.5 Public humiliation***

Women and men in FGDs and individual interviews talked about sisters helping their own sister when her husband is violent toward her. This support is given when the woman has done nothing wrong to warrant beating. One woman in a semi-structured

interview said that the man will be reprimanded by his sisters-in-law if their sister is being beaten, with statements such as, 'We have given you this woman and she has fed you, given you children and now you are hitting her'. Participants said that only sisters, not brothers, intervene when a husband is the perpetrator of violence.

#### ***5.4.5.6 Family supports woman to temporarily leave her husband***

Fortunately, women are welcomed home when they are in abusive marriages, as discussed in the Individual Mechanisms for Women subsection. In a semi-structured interview with two men, married for 18 and 11 years, respectively, the men stated that women have no cultural barriers to prevent them going back to their families or seeking their families' help. The two men said that women can end their marriages or go to live with their sisters. However, during this time of separation, it is expected that the man will change his violent behaviour, a requirement that must be fulfilled before asking to have his wife and children back.

Moreover, a violent husband must pay compensation to the family for disrespecting their daughter. According to a key informant and semi-structured interviews with men, compensation must be paid if the man has not cared for his wife. Additionally, two men in individual interviews said that the hardest part about getting your wife back is the remarks she makes when she is asked to come back home, such as 'I have the right to leave you, I have the right to find another man.' According to these men, this type of statement makes the man change his behaviour and pay compensation.

#### **5.4.6 Section summary**

Family interventions are evident in serious cases of domestic conflict and in most cases, it is the woman who is being assisted by the family. Having said that, it is also important to note here that men are not the only perpetrators of violence, as even women can become violent. Interestingly, even though both women and men shared the same story of a couple fighting, only the women talked about how the brother intervened to stop his own sister from hitting her husband by violently beating her.

Men, who told the same story, only described the events leading up to the incident and the ways in which the husband was beaten by his wife.

Moreover, family support is the second layer of protective mechanisms available to women.

#### **5.4.7 Mechanisms the community uses to prevent or avoid violence**

##### ***5.4.7.1 Village committee regulation***

The village committee in Mt Bosavi has imposed regulations to prevent violence from happening. One of these regulations is in relation to the cultural practice of polygamy. This particular regulation states that when a man wants to marry a second wife, he has to get permission from his first wife.

In a semi-structured interview with a 33-year-old and a 40-year-old man, the participants asserted that a man cannot just choose to have a second wife. He must prove to the community that he is capable of taking care of both wives. He will be judged by the number of gardens, pigs, land, sago palms and money he owns. If he does not have enough resources, the old people will tell him ‘You are not fit...you just want to see the woman’ and they will advise him to take care of his first wife. However, if he is deemed fit to have a second wife, than he will be told to share his resources equally with his two wives.

One female participant explained in a semi-structured interview how a first wife will agree to her husband marrying another woman. She said that the first wife will tell her husband:

The same love you give her, you must give me, too. We must live in one house...if the second wife has children, you must also feed my children...if you kill a pig, make sure you cut it in half, so my children can eat half and the other half can be eaten by the second wife’s children (Woman, 33 years old, married for 15 years).

A female participant explained that this type of promise must be made by the husband to his first wife. This is to ensure that she is not neglected when her husband marries another woman. However, if the first wife is fighting and arguing with her husband once he is married to the second wife, then it is because he has broken his promises.

#### ***5.4.7.2 Awareness raising***

In the key informant interviews with the councillor and the ECPNG pastor, it was learned that these leaders emphasise during community meetings and church services the importance of giving respect and support for the community. This was also discussed by a 24-year-old woman in an individual interview, who said that after church services on Sundays, the pastor and councillor remind men and women to help each other and support the community. Furthermore, the pastor reported that when he preached, he sometimes gave sermons which focus on respect for one another.

The councillor stated that he and his committee tried to address small arguments and differences quickly, before they become larger issues. He explained that the community were aware that they were trying to minimise conflict in the village, so they also quickly sought assistance when they had disputes. A 24-year-old woman in a semi-structured interview said that the village was so isolated that the committee tried to ensure peace, since it would be difficult to seek and obtain help if there were serious injuries which required medical attention.

#### ***5.4.7.3 Intervention by community leaders and elders***

When participants were asked who intervenes to stop couples from fighting, all said that the councillor and his committee, along with the pastor, undertook this task. Women in their interviews said that a couple could go to the pastor for counselling, in the form of reading God's word and praying. When the pastor was asked if he counselled couples, he answered that he did not go to the couple, but instead they would be referred to him by their family or the village committee. The councillor confirmed during his key



informant interview that when they had couple problems in the village court, they referred those cases to the pastor for counselling.

Apart from the pastor, the councillor and the village committee, two men in an individual interview said the elders of the clans also kept a watchful eye on the young clansmen. They advised that the old people did not like to have the clan's name tainted and therefore they have advised the men not to hit their wives. Simultaneously, three women in two separate individual interviews said that they would go to talk with the old people if they have asked their husbands to help them, but he has refused and reacted with violence. The women said that if a woman complains to the old people about mistreatment from her husband, the old people will talk to her husband about his unacceptable behaviour.

#### ***5.4.7.4 Enforcement***

All participants in the study talked about two penalties being enforced to minimise violence, namely, mediation and compensation. When there is a fight, the council holds a village court session to mediate between the couple and resolve the disagreement. This process is explained as involving the councillor listening to the both the woman and the man's sides of the story, in order to clarify the incident from each perspective. If there was injury caused during the dispute, then compensation is paid by the perpetrator. In an incident that took place two months before I arrived in the village, participants said that the council settled the matter through this process and the woman and the man ended up paying each other compensation.

Only the women's FGD said that violence now occurred out of the earshot of the village in order to prevent community intervention. One example of such an incident was told by a 34- year-old woman who had been married for 11 years. She said that her husband told her the story. A couple went into the bush and the man asked his wife to find a cane for him. Using the cane, he violently beat his wife and she almost died. Women in this FGD cautioned that, even though there were community regulations against such behaviour, women still experienced violence.

#### **5.4.8 Section summary**

The community level of protective mechanisms covers both the family and the individual (women and men) levels of protective mechanisms. Rules and regulations which are being enforced at the community level are either determined nationally by the government through legislation, or locally by the village committee—with community-specific rules of conduct. All these rules and regulations are introduced and enforced by the village committee to prevent and avoid violence.

### **5.5 Conclusion**

There are three levels of protective mechanisms that the Sulamasi people in this study said they used to prevent or avoid violence towards women. These are the individual, family and community levels. The protective mechanisms they encompass can either occur simultaneously or separately from each other. It is important to note that not all these protective mechanisms are desirable or constructive. For example, women who resort to self-harm to make their husbands realise how badly they have mistreated them may achieve the desired effect, but the means cannot justify the end.

At the individual level of protection, it is of interest to note that not only female potential victims but also the male potential perpetrators try to avoid gender-based violence. For instance, women use submission, the presence of children or separation to prevent or avoid violence, while men use mechanisms such as avoidance, assistance or communication.

One significant finding in the family level of protection mechanisms is the fact that women are welcomed home when they leave their husbands due to mistreatment, even if a bride price has been paid. Women are not restricted to seeking help only from their own family but are allowed to access support within the community as well. Another important protective mechanism is the wedding ritual. This is where the man and the woman are informed about their roles and responsibilities to each other and the family. This wedding ritual can serve as the foundation for all other protection mechanisms used by women and men to prevent violence.

Apart from the family, the community is another external protection mechanism. Violence against women is not a taboo issue in the community, which has in fact created regulations, enforced through the village court and the payment of compensation for damage done. However, the negative impact of some community regulations is that some violence is not deterred, but is simply moved further away from the village to avoid detection.

As demonstrated in this chapter, there are protective mechanisms in place. However, their effectiveness in preventing gender-based violence depends on two factors: the influence of culture and the influence of gender. These factors will be discussed in the coming chapter.

## **Chapter 6: Influence of culture and gender on protective mechanisms**

Miriam: Do men think they have a right to hit their wife because they have paid bride price for them?

Male 40: I grew up at a time when you just kill a pig and give. So, no, we do not have such attitude towards bride price and hitting women... this money system in bride price, when young marriages fight they say I don't care I have spend thousands on you. I have the right to hit you.

### **6.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented the findings of this research. In this chapter, the focus of discussion will be on the different levels of protective mechanisms that became apparent during data analysis. This will be undertaken by examining the types of protective mechanisms used by both women and men for minor as well as serious disputes. The chapter then will move on to examine each of these protective mechanisms from a gender and cultural perspective. Gender discussion will centre on masculinity and in particular, positive gender relations between men and women. Cultural discussion will focus on bride price and polygamy, as these cultural practices appear to trigger and encourage violence against women. As the current study suggests, these cultural practices also influence which protective mechanisms are used by the individuals involved.

### **6.2 Types of protective mechanisms in relation to the severity of violence**

The type of protective mechanisms which are applied to prevent the occurrence of gender-based violence appear to be a reflection of the severity of violence experienced by the women involved in the relationship. In other words, there are minor and serious dispute mechanisms which are applied by both men and women as they attempt to work through relationship conflicts. The type of mechanism chosen depends on the severity

of the violence the couple experiences and the sex of the perpetrator. In this light, Table 6.1 illustrates these different types of protective mechanisms according to severity of violence.

Table 6.1 *Mechanisms used for minor and serious disputes*

Mechanisms used for minor disputes		Mechanisms used for serious disputes	
Woman	Man	Woman	Man
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submission</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Sharing household responsibilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce wife to relatives</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Assistance to woman</li> <li>• Avoidance of woman</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilising community regulations</li> <li>• Separation</li> <li>• Self harm</li> <li>• Children – Having children prevents man from using a childless marriage to find another wife</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice from other men</li> </ul>
<b>Family</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice from family</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct questioning by woman's relatives</li> <li>• Father confronts the son-in-law</li> <li>• Witchcraft to stop violence</li> <li>• Public humiliation</li> <li>• Family supports woman to temporarily leave her husband</li> </ul>	
<b>Community</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Village committee regulations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Interventions</li> <li>• Enforcement</li> </ul> </li> </ul>			

Protective mechanisms used by men in minor disputes are more preventive in nature, while for women they are more protective against men's violence. Protective mechanisms at the individual level can be divided into 'self' or 'external' categories. Self-applied protective mechanisms are those that are initiated by the women or men themselves on their own behalf, to either protect against or prevent gender based violence. External protective mechanisms are those that are made available to a woman or a man by their families and communities.

Family interventions are observed more often during the serious stages of a dispute than during minor stages. Moreover, once a conflict has escalated to the serious stage, individual protective mechanisms tend to occur simultaneously with family protective mechanisms. At the family level, men and women share the same protective mechanisms; however, there are differences regarding who receives protection from the family, with women receiving the majority of this kind of support. This is thought to occur because women are the ones experiencing violence most of the time.

The community level of protective mechanisms is different to that of the family and individual levels because once a community becomes involved, the same mechanisms are exercised for both minor and serious disputes. This may indicate that the community has zero tolerance towards violence; hence, with its established regulations, both minor and serious disputes receive the same amount of intervention from a community. It has to be noted also, that one unfortunate consequence of community regulations concerning the use of violence against women is the resultant push toward secrecy in order to avoid community sanction, making it all the more challenging for these regulations to be effectively implemented at the community level.

### **6.3 Gender and protective mechanisms**

In gender debate about the inclusion of masculinity into GAD, one notable argument is that men are generally represented in gender discourse by their negative interactions with and attitudes toward women (Cornwall 2000; Chant & Gutmann 2002). It is suggested that we could become more objective in our perspective on men by looking at them in their roles as lovers, sons, husbands and fathers of women (Cornwall). This, in

turn, may help us to identify useful protective mechanisms when violence against women does become an issue.

Thus, the more positive connections between men and women will now be considered as part of this study's exploration of gender relations. In the process, the individual, family and community mechanisms will be separated into gender relations by using the following categories of relationship: husband and wife, father and daughter, mother and daughter, sister and sister, and brother and sister. In addition, an examination of how masculinity plays a role in influencing these relationships between men and women will be provided.

### **6.3.1 Husband and wife relationships**

Although men and women have protective mechanisms at the individual, family and community levels, the issue at stake is who actually controls the mechanisms. As illustrated in Table 6.1, the different mechanisms used at the individual level also highlight the power dynamics which exist between husbands and wives. Hence, in the husband and wife relationship (given the fact that men are expected to be dominant and aggressive), it is the man who is in control of the protective mechanisms. This unequal distribution of power was explained by Pease (2002), who stated that patriarchy feeds the expectation that men will have control over women. Masculinity offers men the right to have dominance over women because masculinity has control over society's perception of the division of labour by gender, which gives men the basis of their power (Edley 1996). For example, in PNG wives are expected to listen and submit to their husbands and this viewpoint is based on the cultural value of 'fulfilment of marital duties' (Eves, 2007 25). This traditional power differential is the same custom that, when taken to its full extent, allows a man to beat his wife if he deems her in the wrong (Sai 2007). Even women participants in the present study accepted that men have the authority to correct them when they are deemed to be in the wrong. These gender rules have informed and defined the cultural and social norms that prescribe how men and women are expected to behave (Boog 2006). Therefore, in examining the behaviour of individual wives and husbands, it is important to acknowledge and include the influence

of masculine ideologies when studying the protective mechanisms put into practice in marital relationships.

Despite the fact that men are dominant over women, it is also important to highlight that many husbands do support their wives. As revealed in Chapter 5, there are husbands who assist their wives with household tasks such as cooking and taking care of the children. In addition, as the participants revealed, Sulamesi custom states that husbands must assist their wives. Women who are assisted by their husbands most of the time also stated that they experience less violence in their marital relationship. In contrast to a helpful husband, Sillitoe (2001) stated that an overbearing husband who demands too much from his wife can push his wife to leave him and return to her natal kin. Such situations create embarrassment for the husband; moreover, the women's relatives would demand compensation from the husband for his ill-treatment (Sillitoe 2001). Therefore, to avoid such embarrassing circumstances in the marriage men might choose to assist their wives. After all, custom states that the husband has to be the protector and provider for his wife and children (Godelier 1982; Lipset 1997; Sai 2007; Silverman 2001). More importantly, Morley (1994:28) points out that "women's roles were of equal importance to men's for maintaining society, and gender relations were complementary and interdependent, women were not dominated." This is very important to note. PNG traditional gender relations must be viewed from a complementary and interdependent perspective, with no one sex being more important than the other, but both worthy of equal importance.

### **6.3.2 Father and daughter relationship**

It was found that positive and supportive father-daughter interaction is more likely to occur when the daughter is experiencing severe bodily injury inflicted by her husband. A father uses protective mechanisms, such as 'direct questioning by woman's relatives' and 'father confronts the son in-law' to show his concern and love. Parental love as a cultural value is traditionally not expressed through words or daily embraces of affection (this is now changing for urban families), but is demonstrated when a child is in danger. In such instances the parents show affection, and in the specific case of wife



abuse, the wife's father is likely to intervene to protect his daughter. Sadly, the reality of the father-daughter relationship is that, having received the payment of a bride price, a father has restricted power over what happens to his daughter. This is because when a man pays a bride price, he is in fact paying to gain control of the situation. The wife's father loses power to his son-in-law who has paid for it, and the wife cannot leave her husband easily, even if her family would advise her to, since the husband has weakened the power of her family to be able to support her; he might even ask them to pay him back the bride price.

This illustrates well the point made by Poudyal (2000) and Cornwall (2000) that men, in fact, describe situations in which they as individuals do experience powerlessness; and that not all men have, or are in, power. Further, even if a father chooses not to accept bride price as part of his daughter's marriage arrangement, this will not necessarily allow him to retain power or control over what happens to her. Instead, the family is further disempowered because a bride without a bride price is considered cheap and worthless by a society who views women's value in terms of a payment of the bride price (Horowitz 2001; Kim 2002; Mantovani 1987). This is similar to mothers and grandmothers practicing FGC, in that it is the fear of having their daughters and granddaughters becoming outcasts of society that perpetuates these practices performed on women (Gevins 1987; Hoskins 1978; Jolly 2002; Parrot 2006; PLAN 2007). The cultural rules that generate so much fear are established by the patriarchy in order to maintain male power and control over women (Edley 1996; Sai 2007).

### **6.3.3 Mother and daughter relationship**

Unlike the father-daughter relationship in which fathers were observed to use direct interventions, mothers were found to use indirect approaches to ensure their daughters' safety. One such approach was the use of witchcraft aimed toward keeping the daughter's husband from acting violently. A variation on this involves mothers who, upon realizing that their daughters are regularly mistreated, use witchcraft to prevent their daughters from becoming pregnant. It is important to note, however, that when

mothers choose to intervene through the use of witchcraft, the expected outcome takes a relatively long time to be realized, and meanwhile the violence continues.

As highlighted in previously cited anthropological studies about masculinity in PNG, manhood is achieved when a man is married (Godelier 1982; Lipset 1997; Silverman 2001). This acknowledgement of masculinity is illustrated in the mother's use of witchcraft to prevent her daughter from pregnancy. As expressed by Godelier, Lipset and Silverman, women's sexuality and fertility were the most feared and yet most powerful parts of womanhood. In addition, witchcraft is a good example of Whitehead's (2002) citation of Connell's (1987) work on hegemonic masculinity, in which he explains that masculinity acknowledges the resistance of femininity. In other words, when women are not accepting of mistreatment, their actions are interpreted as more than just self-defence—they are interpreted as challenges to masculinity. This is demonstrated by the example of a group of Kenyan women who, wanting to ensure their daughters did not undergo FGC, joined a local NGO to form the Circumcision with Words project (Jolly 2002). On the other hand, these challenges to masculinity are inevitable because of the positive relationship which is experienced between a mother and daughter. Either mothers indirectly assist their daughter (witchcraft) or they themselves have to break their own social restrictions to save their daughter from negative experiences they have endured as women.

#### **6.3.4 Sister and sister relationships**

Sisters use both direct and indirect approaches to managing relationship violence, but unlike their parents, they may also use physical violence against their sister's husband. Sisters support their father when he uses the 'direct questioning' mechanism by joining in with him in equal measure to challenge their sister's husband. This approach is done in public, in order to humiliate the husband. Moreover, like their mother, sisters observe their sister bride to ensure she is fulfilling her marital duties; if she is not, they will then advise her. Alternatively, a new husband may ask his wife's sisters to advise her about her marital responsibilities. This is what Parrot (2006) and Ellsberg (2000) referred to when they discussed *machismo* and *marianismo*, in which *marianismo* is the

socialisation of women to be subordinate to men. Women observing each other to ensure they all fulfil marital duties is, in fact, also a cultural reality formed by the masculine perception, these actions only serve to support and enforce masculine beliefs about women's subordination to the needs of men. In contrast, the social pressure for men to "fulfil their marital duties" by keeping their wives safe (no marital violence), happy and well cared for, does not get enforced with violence by women or other men. Instead, as noted in early anthropological studies (Godelier 1982; Lipset 1997; Silverman 2001), there is an expectation of the men to be protectors and providers for the women. These marital duties are also a cultural obligation because a man who cannot fulfil these cultural expectations will not be considered a man. Moreover, as noted in this study, married men are observed by their clan to ensure that they do not bring shame to the clan's name; hence, there is also pressure on the husband to take care of his wife. Sadly, this practice is not so evident in urban situations. As more people move from rural communities into urban centres and as the number of inter-ethnic marriages increases, the boundaries that define expected roles and responsibilities (i.e., fulfilment of marital duties) are becoming blurred. This can create misunderstanding between couples and thus trigger violence (Mantovani 1987). Gender roles are socio-cultural constructs to which men and women are taught to adhere. As such, the act of fulfilling one's marital duties has become a highly valued cultural ideal, esteemed by both men and women.

Moreover, urban women also experience significant cultural change as they become exposed to Western lifestyles and the influences of education. As a result, urban women are more likely to challenge customs, such as submission and fulfilment of martial duties, than rural women. It is supported by Morley (1994) who stated that educated women were more likely to experience a real measure of independence and aspire to challenge traditional values which support male superiority and rights, even the right to hit a woman, in order to take a stand for equality and women's rights. Nevertheless, these changes are not exclusively affecting women, but also men, as discussed by Sai (2007) and Amnesty International (2006). These studies report that, due to the influence of education, Christianity, and Western lifestyle, the culture of PNG is undergoing widespread change.

### **6.3.5 Brother and sister relationship**

The brother-sister relationship appears to be quite different to that of parents and sisters, since brothers were only found to intervene when a sister is the perpetrator of violence. They do this by using violence against their own sister. Aggression and dominance are characteristics associated with men in this culture, and it is not expected that they be displayed by a woman. Apparently, being dominant includes the freedom to express one's feelings with violence. Hence, when women take on violent behaviours and traits, they are in a specific way also taking on the behaviours and traits associated with dominance, and in this way challenging the old cultural values of submission and fulfilment of marital duties. Unfortunately, since aggression and dominance are traits associated with masculinity (Edley 1996; Parrot 2006; Whitehead 2002), women who try to use these same masculine traits against their husbands are beaten by their brothers to remind them that this behaviour is only acceptable for men.

Traditional marriage arrangements among the Sulamesi people were based on an 'exchange' system, in which a man who wanted to get married must have a marriageable sister who he could exchange for his bride. In this relationship, brothers and sisters needed each other to make marital arrangements, hence, creating a positive relationship between siblings. This practice of exchange was also discussed by Godelier (1982) who reported that Bayura men have to have a sister in order to get married. Without a sister, men are unable to complete their initiation and become a man. Nevertheless, what is important in this relationship is the demonstration that both men and women need each other for survival.

## **6.4 Cultural traditions and protective mechanisms**

Earlier in Chapters 2 and 3, it was noted that cultural practices influence the exercise of gender-based violence (Amnesty International 2006; Eves 2007; Kewa 2007; Martin 2002; Parrot 2006; PLAN 2007). Using the same reasoning, it will be demonstrated that cultural practices can influence the type of protective mechanisms used against the practice of gender-based violence. The focus will be on the practices of bride price and

polygamy, both of which have had an influence on the protective mechanisms utilised to prevent and protect against gender-based violence.

#### **6.4.1 Bride price and protective mechanisms**

The cultural practice of marriage has been significantly altered in recent times, and has changed from a community affair to an individual concern. Marriage in the past was a community affair, since it was the channel through which relationships were established between two communities (Brown 1978; Mantovani 1987; Morley 1994). Hence, a couple entered into a marital agreement to serve their community. Mantovani explained that marriages were established based on the communities' economic, social or political needs.

In most PNG societies, marriage was sealed with the traditional practice of bride price. This custom symbolized and solidified ongoing exchange between the two communities who arranged the marriage (Mantovani 1987). At the same time, bride price was not the result of purchasing a bride, but rather an act of protection for the woman. Its payment served as a deterrent against desertion or mistreatment, a protective mechanism put in place to reassure the woman's family that because such a value was placed upon her, the bride would be well cared for by her husband and his family (Amnesty International 2007; Morley 1994). In this context, bride price can also symbolize a man's ability to fulfil his cultural obligations to be the protector of and provider for the welfare of his wife and children (Amnesty International; Godelier 1982; Kewa 2007; Lipset 1997; Sai 2007; Silverman 2001). This notion is also supported by Chant and Gutmann (2002), who discussed the man's role in the family as breadwinner. If men are unable to fulfil this masculine role, Chant (2000) pointed out that they feel their masculinity is threatened by its own sense of insecurity over not being the family breadwinner. In this context, the practice of bride price was never meant to give men any rights, but instead highlight their obligation to provide for their women.

Sadly, nowadays bride price has become an individualistic practice, serving the interest of only one man, the groom (Mantovani 1987; Sai 2007). Bride price is now being used to symbolize ownership and it is this dangerous shift that has led to the acceptance of a

husband's cultural right to hit his wife. Mechanisms, such as 'father supporting his daughter', 'direct questioning', and 'family supporting woman to temporarily leave her husband', are only effective if a bride price has not been paid. Hence, a father loses his power once he has 'sold' his daughter for a bride price. This is because bride price is seen as a "simple property transaction in which a woman becomes the property of the man" (Eves 2007:27).

If transacted within its traditional context, bride price can act as a protective mechanism, since a man can decide to take care of his wife because 'she was so expensive'. This perspective reveals seemingly contradictory values and meanings for the practice of bride price; on the one hand, it is about strengthening relationships and giving women a social worth, and on the other, bride price can promote the concept of women as property over which the husband has control and ownership (Horowitz 2001; Kim 2002).

In addition, bride price payment has come to be seen in modern times as a source of family income. Hence, the current practice of bride price is based more on economics than on cultural values (Mantovani 1987). Overall, the many consequences resulting from changes in bride price practices over time have led to both positive and negative outcomes.

#### **6.4.2 Polygamy and protective mechanisms**

Polygamy is a cultural practice formerly reserved for 'big-men', such as the chief or headman of a village (Dickson-Waiko 2003; Mantovani 1992). However, in current times any man who has the ability to finance multiple bride prices can marry more than one woman (Dickson-Waiko; Mantovanvi; Sai 2007). These men were categorised by Sai as businessmen, politicians, educated and employed men. They are the modern 'big-men' and display attributes similar to those of traditional 'big-men' by using modern qualities such as education, employment and money, to define their position and status (Mantovani; Sai). In some respects it can be argued that these men changed the practice of bride price and polygamy by modernizing the terms of its use. By shifting bride price from a practice of 'exchange' involving items such as pig tusks, food (pigs) and shell

money (Brown 1978; Hayano 1974; Morley 1994), to the use of cash money, they have created the context and idea of 'payment' for a bride. This has also, in some respects, eliminated the reservations that have opposed the practice of polygamy.

The practice of polygamy introduces an everyday threat for women. In order to ensure their husband does not marry another woman, many wives exploit the 'children' mechanism. This mechanism relates to the fact that culturally, children are a sign of fulfilment of masculinity (Godelier 1982; Lipset 1997; Silverman 2001). Furthermore, the presence of children has important functions: it appears that a marriage with children tends to be less violent, and children can be used by women to reduce jealousy. A woman uses children to reduce jealousy by asking her husband to take a child with him wherever he goes as a child can inform a mother of her husband's whereabouts and also can prevent the husband from cheating on his wife. This notion of jealousy by the women is related to the fact that men can choose to marry a second wife. Sadly, this is apparently a continuous threat for women, the prospect of having their husband marry another woman. To prevent their husband marrying another woman, wives want to become pregnant quickly after marriage since men use a childless marriage as an excuse to marry another woman. From the masculine perspective, children are a sign of manhood and in PNG, fatherhood is a fulfilment of being a man (Godelier 1982; Lipset 1997; Silverman 2001).

There is a cultural rule among the Sulamesi people that states a woman must give her permission before her husband can marry a second wife. This rule acts as a protective mechanism for women, as they can use 'community regulations' to defend their position if they decide against allowing their husbands to marry another woman. This rule is mainly applicable to the first wife, as she has special status in a polygamous marriage which dictates that she must be treated well. In this paradigm, the other wives will understand and respect the husband if he shows that the first wife is important in the marriage (Tuzin 1997). However, the negative implication of this mechanism is that, in holding the power to decide, women are also placed at risk for more domestic violence. As discussed earlier in Chapter 3, it is acceptable for men to have power and control over women (Edley 2002; Pease 2002). Hence, the man and his family can pressure a wife to allow him to marry another woman. When the family is involved and puts

pressure on a wife, community regulation becomes ineffective and is not able to protect the woman's interests. This might explain why, despite comprehensive efforts to end violence against women (Heise 2002; Krantz 2002), women are still not free from violence.

Another mechanism related to polygamy is 'self-harm'. Women use this mechanism when they are forced into accepting a polygamous marriage. This act of suicide is similar to dowry deaths, whereby the bride kills herself to escape constant harassment by the groom and his family (Martin 2002).

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that although men and women have protective mechanisms at all levels when dealing with marital violence, the issue at stake is who actually controls these mechanisms. As a result, complicated gender issues come to bear when addressing violence in a multi-generational, multi-level context. For example, fathers (men) help their daughters (women) defend themselves against their husbands (men), but since the husbands (men) have paid a bride price, they have control over multiple circumstances. Fathers (men) lose their power over daughters (women) in this process, which also weakens the family support available to wives (women), as their husbands (men), are entitled to request repayment of bride price if they so choose. This impacts the effectiveness of the protective mechanisms relating to gender-based violence.

In addition, as demonstrated in this chapter, culturally accepted practices can trigger the occurrence of gender-based violence. In particular, the power of men is expressed in the practices of bride price and polygamy. The ways in which these are carried out have been shown to trigger gender-based violence and direct whether (and to what extent) potential protective mechanisms can be used by women and men. On the other hand, examining the positive side of connections between fathers and daughters, and husbands and wives, reveals that protective mechanisms used against marital violence are also influenced by positive gender relations. Such as a father public humiliating his son in-law to protect his daughter or a husband helping his wife to perform domestic work like cooking a family meal. Hence, masculinity can act as a protective mechanism against



gender-based violence. This makes the inclusion of masculinity in GAD relevant, acknowledging that cultural practices are influenced by masculinity and that masculinity is not a fixed concept. This opens avenues to work positively with masculine ideologies to eliminate violence against women. All the protective mechanisms are, in fact, potentially available to both sexes; however, the contexts of certain cultural practices limit their use to men only, prohibiting women from accessing their protective power.

In the concluding chapter, the relevance of culture in gender-based violence in PNG will be discussed. Since gender-based violence is culturally constructed, the crucial question to be answered in particular is, “How can we address gender-based violence in a culturally appropriate way?”

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

Inequality between women and men limits the potential of individuals, families, communities and nations.

United Nations Population Fund (2000:1)

### 7.1 Concluding comments

I began this thesis by attempting to investigate whether or not culture could be used as a relevant strategy for addressing gender-based violence in PNG. In order to achieve this objective, the following question was asked ‘How can culture address gender-based violence in contemporary rural PNG?’ Moreover, the study aimed to identify and explore traditional protective mechanisms which address gender-based violence in a culturally appropriate way and hence, a case study was conducted amongst the Sulamesi people of Mt. Bosavi in the Southern Highlands Province of PNG.

This study used a feminist theoretical framework to guide the data collection and analysis process. Specifically, the concepts of patriarchy and masculinity were drawn upon to examine whether culture can be seen as part of the solution for gender-based violence. One limitation of the concept of patriarchy is that it is too abstract from reality and unwilling to acknowledge women’s resistance (Whitehead, 2002). In other words, patriarchy views women only as oppressed, rather than as having the ability to challenge their circumstances. However, the concept of masculinity does acknowledge the possibility of resistance by women (Whitehead, 2002). Using this theoretical framework, the findings of this study were analysed, examining different levels of protective mechanisms from the perspective of gender relations and cultural practices.

Overall the thesis identified three levels of protective mechanisms – individual, family and community. The individual level comprises of the mechanisms women and men use to avoid or prevent violence between themselves and their wife or husband such as communication, sharing of household tasks, a man keeping out of his wife’s way, or a woman sending the children with her husband when he is away from home to avoid jealousy and suspicion. Family level protective mechanisms are more evident when the violence has reached its serious stages (such as when a woman has visible injuries) however, there is one family mechanism that serves as the foundation of all protective

mechanisms: family advice given to a newly married couple about the expectations of the family and community of their marriage and more importantly, what are the woman's and man's expectations of each other. At the community level, there are community regulations, such as a ban on men taking additional wives without his first wife's permission, which aim to avoid conflict, and rules prohibiting violence. To make the identified protective mechanisms effective in combating gender-based violence in PNG, there has to be significant attention given to masculinity in the process of challenging negative perceptions of women and their place in society.

It thus became evident that rural PNG women do resist masculine control. Positive ways in which they expressed themselves and avoided violence, included women talking with their husbands when they were unhappy with men's decisions, and asking men to share household responsibilities. One disturbing way of resisting violence is through the mechanism of self-harm, in which women attempt to take their own lives to escape gender-based violence.

This study also examined women's and men's roles and identities in relation to the gender division of labour. It can be said that Sulamesi people do not have rigid gender roles and responsibilities. For example, men do sometimes perform domestic tasks such as cooking and taking care of the children. These tasks are performed by men when the women are sick or washing sago, moreover, there is a cultural expectation on men to be helpful to their wives. This is because, in Sulamesi society, for a person to be considered a *trupela man* or a *trupela meri*, s/he has to serve her/his family and community. In addition, a good leader is a man who assists his wife, and this is, in fact, a cultural expectation placed on husbands. However, given the fact that only men hold positions of power, women still view their status in society as being inferior to men. This notion of the power of sex roles was explained by Whitehead (2002) as a stereotype, which ensures that women accept inequality to men as an unavoidable reality of their sex.

An important aspect relating to the use of a feminist theoretical framework was discovered when the protective mechanisms were analysed from a gender relations perspective. In this context, it became evident there were positive relationships between men and women that came into being and survived over time. Furthermore, these

positive relationships acted as the foundation for providing protective mechanisms against gender based violence. For example, despite the fact that men are dominant, a number of husbands do assist their wives with household work, and women in these kinds of relationships said they have not experienced violence from their husband. Another example of a positive gender relation is father-daughter relationships. A father intervenes when he sees that his daughter has severe bodily injuries inflicted by his son in-law. A father would question his son in-law's intentions of hurting his daughter and if bride price has not been paid the father would take his daughter out of the violent marriage.

Bride price was not traditionally regarded as purchasing a bride, but rather an act of protection for the women. The payment of bride price supposedly serves as a deterrent against desertion or mistreatment, a protective mechanism put in place to reassure the woman's family that because such a value was placed upon her, the bride would be well cared for by her husband and his family (Amnesty International, 2007; Morley 1994). In this context, bride price symbolises a man's ability to fulfil his cultural obligation to be the protector of and provider for the welfare of his wife and children. It is important to highlight that this is one important part of the PNG masculine identity which is the man's role as the breadwinner – the ability to make numerous gardens, hunt skilfully and work hard (Amnesty International; Godelier, 1982; Kewa, 2007; Lipset, 1997; Sai, 2007; Silverman, 2001).

By shifting the practice of bride price from a mutual exchange of gifts to a transaction of money, the practice of polygamy has also changed. Traditional polygamy was only reserved for big men; however, today polygamy is practiced by individual men who are able to independently pay for their bride price. This has created a threat for women, the fear that their husband can have a second wife if they choose to. This is why, as noted above, to protect women from polygamous marriages the community has created a regulation in which the husband has to seek permission from his first wife before he marries a second wife. In addition, the community has to evaluate the man's resources to see if he is capable of taking care of another woman and her children.

## 7.2 Recommendations

As a result of the findings in this research, and following analysis of these findings with relevant literature on gender issues, the following recommendations are made in order to identify how certain useful protective mechanisms can be used within campaigns to eliminate violence against women. Recommendations are also made regarding future research topics.

1. Women use male and female family and community members to avoid or prevent violence against themselves, whilst men tend to accept the intervention of other men. Hence, campaigns should focus on using family members and the community to help to prevent or to intervene in cases of gender-based violence because both women and men would comfortably accept their involvement.
2. Campaigns should focus on prevention rather than just responding to gender based violence after the fact, and they should utilise traditional cultural values based on the roles of a *trupela man* – to protect and assist their family/community
3. The wedding ritual is the only cultural ceremony aimed at preventing gender-based violence. For this reason, it would be useful if all couples living together could be involved in this, or a similar, ritual. The people could be then made more aware of the significance and usefulness of the traditional wedding ritual.
4. Parents can be particularly effective in protecting women from gender-based violence. Therefore, Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials should focus on helping and supporting parents to not feel ashamed or frightened about the demands of bride price under these circumstances, and to be active in welcoming their daughter when she returns to her family home because of her husband's violence.
5. Given the suggestion that there are a growing number of suicides occurring at the study site, it is recommended that further studies be undertaken on this

particular escape mechanism and ways of supporting and protecting women who are experiencing violence.

6. It would be useful for future research to discover what community regulations exist regarding violence in various communities of PNG and to determine where these regulations are most effective and why?

In conclusion, I began this research by searching for any culturally appropriate ways of addressing gender-based violence and I can now confidently assert that there are indeed protective mechanisms in place in PNG society. Moreover, the identification of these cultural protective mechanisms has demonstrated that culture can be used as a solution to address the gender-based violence problem. However, these tools must be used with caution, since not all identified protective mechanisms result in a desirable or constructive outcome.

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## Appendix

### Annex 1: List of participants

Demographic information of participants						
	Sex	Age	Number of Children	Length of marriage	Education	Method
1	Male	17 years	2 boys	5 years	Grade 5	SSI
2	Female	18 years	2 boys	5 years	Grade 4	SSI
3	Female	32 years	1 girl	Separated for 4 years (First wife in polygamy marriage)	Grade 3	SSI
4	Female	24 years	0 children	Never married	Grade 10	SSI
5	Female	32 years	2 girls & 3 boys	11 years	Elementary	FGD
6	Female	25 years	1 girl & 3 boys	8 years	None	FGD
7	Female	33 years	1 girl & 2 boys	15 years	None	FGD
8	Female	26 years	1 girl & 1 boy	10 years	None	FGD
9	Female	75 years	None but cared for 2 girls & 1 boy	Fourth wife in polygamous marriage	None	KI
10	Male	35 years	2 girls & 2 boys	13 years	Grade 3	SSI
11	Male	28 years	2 girls & 2 boys	8 years	Grade 7	SSI
12	Male	33 years	2 girls & 3 boys	11 years	Grade 3	SSI
13	Male	40 years	2 girls & 4 boys	18 years	Elementary	SSI
14	Male	24 years	0 Children	Never married	Grade 9	SSI
15	Male	27 years	1 girl	4 years	Grade 7	FGD
16	Male	22 years	1 girl	4 years	Grade 3	FGD
17	Male	23 years	1 boy	4 years	Grade 3	FGD
18	Male	33 years	3 girls & 2 boys	15 years	Grade 5	FGD
19	Male	34 years	1 girl & 1 boy	14 years	Grade 1	FGD

20	Female	38 years	None	Separated for 7 years (First wife in polygamous marriage)	None	FGD
21	Female	33 years	1 girl & 4 boys	14 years	Grade 2	FGD
22	Female	34 years	1 girl & 2 boys	12 years	Grade 6	FGD
23	Female	34 years	3 girls & 2 boys	16 years	None	FGD
24	Female	25 years	2 girls & 2 boys	8 years	Grade 3	FGD
25	Male	36 years	1 girl & 4 boys	14 years	Grade 10	SSI
26	Female	86 years	3 girls & 2 boys	Second wife in polygamous marriage	None	KI
27	Male	33 years	1 girl & 3 boys	15 years	Grade 8	KI
28	Male	47 years	2 girls & 3 boys	20 years	Grade 8	KI
29	Female	36 years	2 girls & 3 boys	20 years	Grade 6	KI

KI: Key informant

**Key** SSI: Sem-structured interview

FGD: Focus group discussion

INC: Information not collected



## **Annex 2: Interview Guide**

Hello!

My name is Mirriam and I am a student at Massey University in New Zealand. My parents come from Madang and New Ireland but I live in Port Moresby. I am studying to get a Master's degree and part of that involves conducting research. I have decided to look at whether culture can be used as a way of reducing/addressing violence directed at women in PNG. This is the reason I am here talking with you. Your participation in this study will assist me to complete my qualifications but I also hope that it will provide some ways of seeing culture as having something positive to offer in terms of ending violence against women in PNG. Our talk will take about one hour.

It is important that you know now that your name will not be used in the final write-up of my research and anything you share with me is between me and you, and my supervisors. Further, you can leave the interview if you don't like my questions or you can choose not to answer a question. Having understood these terms are you willing to talk with me now or at a suitable time.

### **Demographic data**

- Name (first)
- Age
- Sex
- Education
- Marital status (how long if married)
- Children

### **Gender roles/expectations**

1. What characteristics define a real man/woman?
2. Are there any customs that you remember about how good man/woman is defined behaves?

### **Perceptions of violence in this community**

1. Are there any reasons why men are allowed to hurt women in this community?

2. Can you tell me of any incidents of violence against women/children in your community?
  - do community members discuss these issues?
  - what are your own reactions/feelings towards such behaviour?
  - do men discuss these issues with men (do women discuss it with women/ men discuss with women)
  - or is it a public secret that no-one talks about? If so how come/why?
3. Do any individuals or groups (church leaders, women's groups) ever intervene to try to stop man from acting violently towards women and/or children within this community?

### **Cultural protection mechanisms**

1. Were there any cultural beliefs or practices in the past that protected women from violence?
2. How do men today/in the past demonstrate respect and support for women?
3. How might violence be reduced in the community?
4. Who has a role to play in reducing violence (past/present)?
5. What cultural barriers prevent a violent man from resolving his violent behaviour?
6. What cultural barriers prevent a victim of violence from looking for help?

### **Annex 3. Consent form and Information sheet**

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An examination of culture as a protective mechanism against gender based violence

#### **CONSENT FORM**

I have heard the Information Sheet read and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

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

**Name (first)** : .....

**Signature** : .....

**Date** : .....

**Interview location** : .....