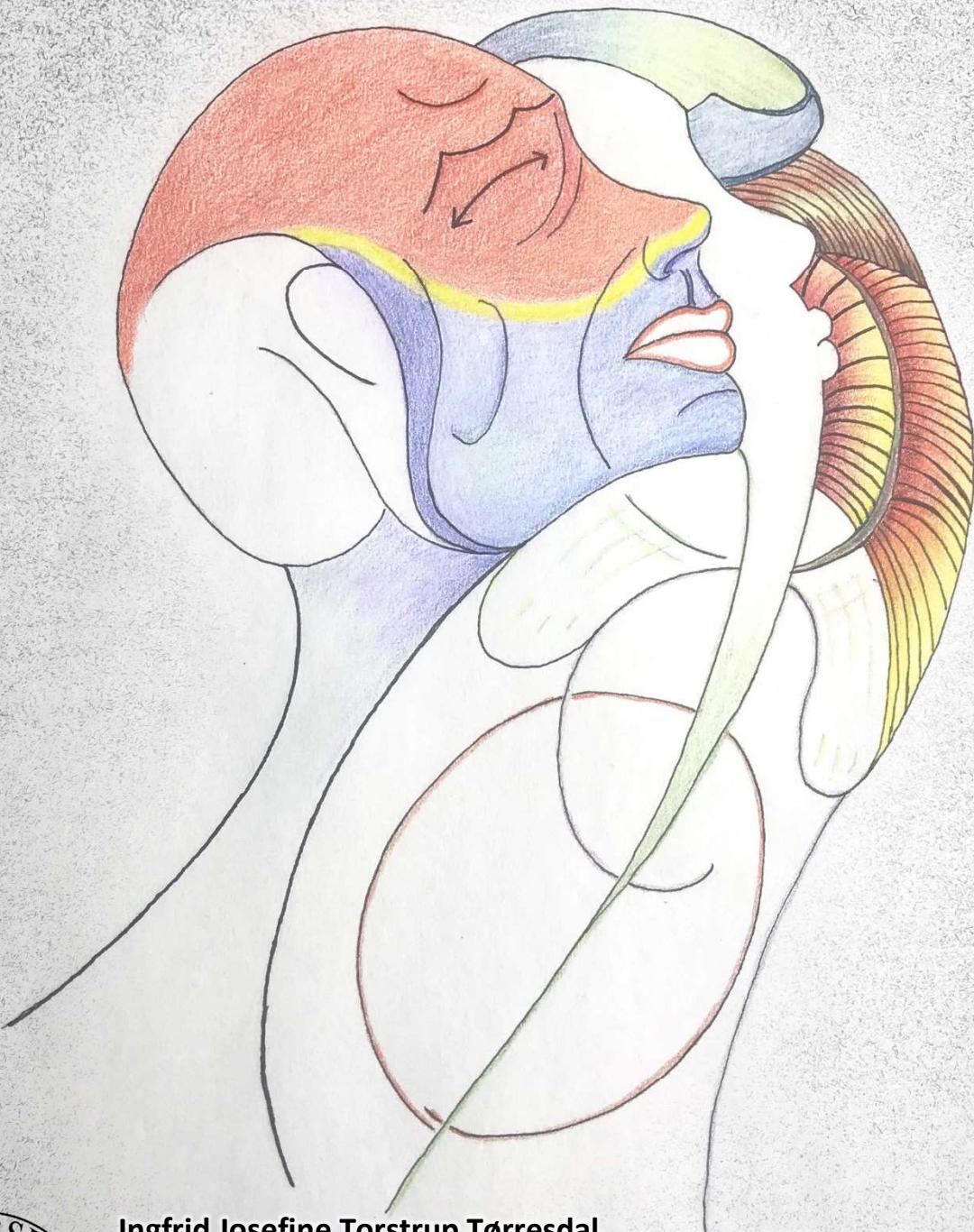


# The Faithful Servant

Practicing Science and Religion Among  
PNG University Students in Australia



Ingfrid Josefine Torstrup Tørresdal

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the M.A degree  
Department of Social Anthropology  
University of Bergen  
2020



My friend Kirolos Nathan, made the artwork for the cover of this thesis. Thank you very much, Kiro.

I asked him to incorporate the colours from the attire worn by the PNG students during the 43<sup>rd</sup> celebration of the independence of PNG. Moreover, I asked him to use blue, the colour of the ocean, and the combined blue and green which hold meaning to the specific university which the PNG students attend. Besides the colour blue, there are other symbols from the ocean, I personally see a stingray. He drew two faces, one which is partly coloured in with red, yellow and blue, and one which is left blank. I want to note that I will never argue that in the constructing of the self, one leaves oneself behind. I would rather say that one of the faces is left blank to symbolise a connection to Pentecostalism and the holy spirit.

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## ABSTRACT

# The Faithful Servant

## Practicing Science and Religion among PNG university students in Australia

Based on a fieldwork in a rural city in North Queensland, this thesis explores the everyday lived realities of transient Science students from Papua New Guinea (PNG). Ethnography on higher education in PNG show that studies in Science and mathematics historically have been male dominated fields, and that this is largely due to the missionary structure on which it is built. Moreover, Science and Mathematics educations in PNG are underfunded and scares, leading PNG peoples to travel internationally to obtain such degrees- especially women. The thesis examines how PNG students in North Queensland navigate the complexities of neo-colonialism, gender norms, notions of morality, and the relationship between Science and Pentecostalism to serve their nation and become closer to God. I draw on combined theories such as feminist methodologies, Indigenous methodologies, forms of anthropology- medical, political, cultural and social, and sociology, to study the construction of *self*, as the PNG students navigate a politicized and temporal status.

In short, I have structured the thesis to holistically study Christian devotion, educational merit, the sociality of wantok networks, gender, perspectives of homeland, and political agency. PNG has over 200 registered Christian denominations, despite the majority not being raised in the Pentecostal church, the PNG students attend services, religious book clubs and volunteer for a neo-Pentecostal church whilst they study in North Queensland. Further, I study the wantok network, in which the PNG students have a form of fictive kinship based in reciprocity and solidarity. The network practices “One Nation” ideals, which promotes a unified national identity, constituting a break from provincial preference. PNG prime minister, James Marape, typifies these ideal, therefore I study the special election of 2019, which secured him the seat. I add to the classic anthropological definition of ‘positionality’ in fieldwork to my analytical framework, - to enable the study of the political positionality of the students. “Political positionality” is studied as a set of microlevel interactions in every day lived realities. With this thesis I seek to contribute to discussions surrounding the little before studied diaspora Papua New Guinean and expand the focus on women in diaspora studies.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the process of writing this thesis I have learned many great lessons, but most importantly that of daring to lean on the shoulders that offer themselves to you in life. I have never said and will never say that this has been an easy two years, but then again, I would never trade this experience for anything. At times when I felt like giving up I was lucky enough to find inspiration and motivation in the beautiful people around me, such as through the conversation I had in my dear friend Ida's garden, when she looked me in the eye and said "it will be fine. First it will be ugly, exhausting and not at all fun, but it will be fine in the end". And indeed, she was right as she is about most things in life.

Firstly, I want to thank the PNG students who let me into their lives and let me share in their journeys in North Queensland. This thesis exists because of you and your valuable time. Thank you for taking me in, praying for me and being such a welcoming crowd. Thank you for making me a wantok.

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my best friend Astrid, who makes me wonder if there truly is a better person in the world than her sometimes. To Kirolos for being a dear friend and for making the beautiful artwork for the cover of this thesis. To Geirmunn (and the group) who has been a large part of my support system for years, who made it possible for me to do anything, finish my bachelor's degree, my fieldwork and my thesis. I also want to give a shout out to the poetry group for being the amazingly talented and kind people you are.

I want to thank my Aussie mates, Kristen, Ted, Sam, Rachel, Daniel and Nickium. You are all such beautiful people, thank you for sharing that with me. I also want to thank Sydney Jones for helping me all the way from Texas. Thank you to my classmates, I have needed the laughs and the stressed-out tensions at “the office” at different times during all this. Thank you to the best hugger in the world, Ole! I also want to thank my other “office”, Eiganes Skole, and Colin for letting me sit and write when the university was closed.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to Espen Gunvaldsen, who passed away, of natural causes, in September 2019. In your 28 years on this earth you were able to experience so many of your dreams coming true. You were patient, kind and all around an amazing human being. Though it broke my heart to lose someone who had become a part of our family, you will continue to be an inspiration for me to follow my dreams and live in the moment.

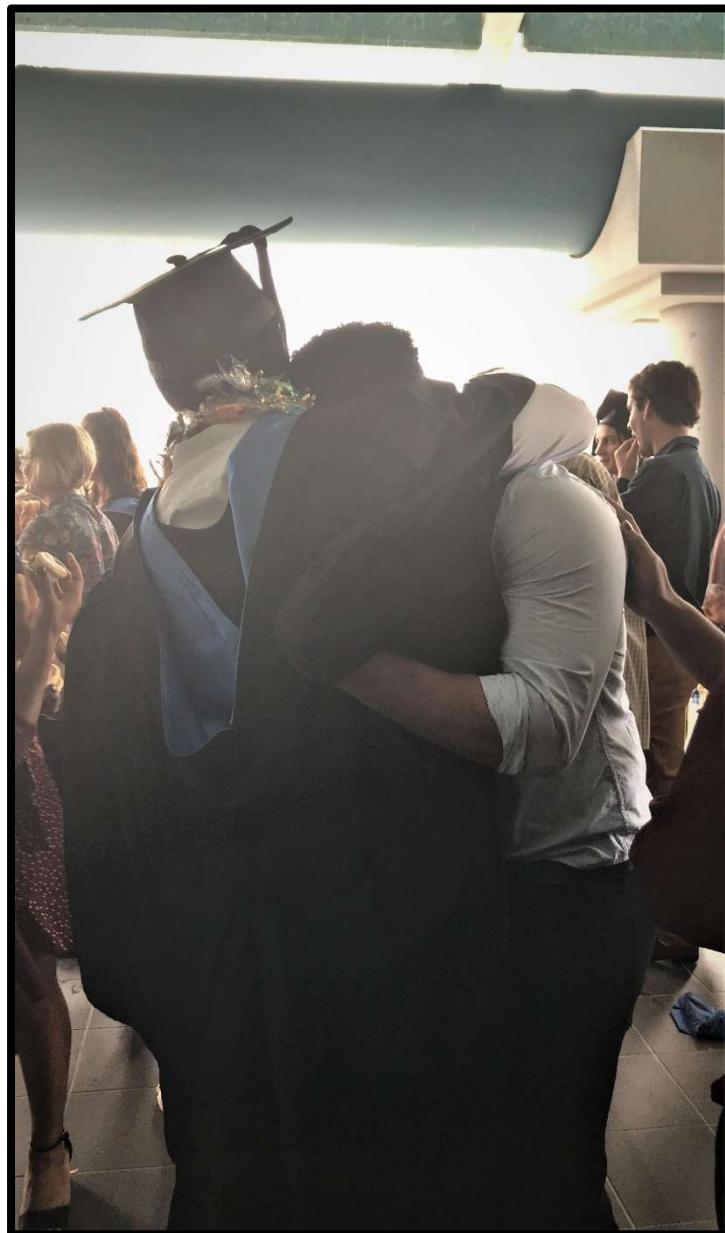
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## INTRODUCTION:

### A study of Papua New Guinean Science students in North Queensland, Australia



*Caption: Proud friends at graduation*

*The sun is beaming in through the kitchen window as six of the PNG students and I are preparing the last meal for the food drive- a charity event put on by the association for PNG students in North Queensland. Papua New Guinean dishes such as boiled green banana and Sago- a pudding from the Sepik region, made from banana, coconut and sago bark, are packed and driven to members of the student association. By the time we are finished its midday and the 35-degree heat has made us all tired and hungry. “Let’s have a cup of tea and some chicken”, one of the PNG students say. Further asking me if I like hearts. We gather around a large frying pan filled to the brim with tiny, fried chicken hearts. They tell me how to eat it, picking them up by hand and sprinkling powdered chicken stock on top. It has the consistency of a sausage I say, and they laugh.*

*During our meal an older woman walks in, she is greeted as “auntie”, and given a cup of tea. We all sit down with her as she has something to discuss. She explains how there has been an attempted kidnapping outside of a church in PNG, that she is worried the younger students don’t know what to do if it were to happen to someone they knew- if they are kidnapped. The mood shifts swiftly in the room, fear falls over our faces, but auntie remains calm and collected. She has a sip of her tea and asks us what we would do. One of the PNG students says “call the police”, another suggests calling the prime minister, and a third jokes about going after the kidnappers himself. Auntie is stern in what she says next. She explains how in these times of police brutality, political corruption and increased violence on women we have no one to help us but each other, our wantoks. We have our faith, in wantoks and in God. Without that we will not survive. Not here in Australia, and not in Papua New Guinea.*

I begin this thesis with an excerpt from my fieldnotes which illustrate everyday sociality of this particular diaspora community- referring to the pool of PNG students depicted in this thesis. The two paragraphs are quite different in tone, where the first represents the cheerful, including and giving dimensions of the community. And the second which depicts that which was described to me as an embodied fear- and part of the underpinning of their political involvement.

In this thesis I study the members of a Papua New Guinean (PNG) student associations affiliated with a high ranked university in North Queensland, Australia. I refer collectively to the PNG students as being part of a diaspora community, a student association and a wantok network, all of which are correct. The PNG student association was established by diaspora students to establish a wantok network in North Queensland. Today, the student association specifically cater to students who either hold PNG citizenship or recognized citizenship of both PNG and Australia. The students vary from ages 18-49 years old and reflect PNG's multiplicity in its approximate 200 Christian denominations, not including unregistered denominations. They further reflect PNG's multiple societies and approximately 800 languages. The majority are currently undergraduate students in fields of Sciences such as medicine, marine biology, chemical engineering and biomedicine. However, a number also conduct studies in levels such as honours, masters and PhD's, and study psychology, law and tourism studies. The research participants are primarily women- as most of the active members of the student association are women.

Situated in North Queensland is an industrial city with a population of approximately 180 000 residents. In this rural part of a famously tropical state a university has built a campus, hidden away between mountains and thick forest. Currently, in 2019 there are approximately 700 000 international students in Australia. Of these, 1211 hold Papua New Guinean citizenship, where 1004 study in Queensland<sup>1</sup>. The city in which the PNG students' study was established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has later become known for its heritage sites, such as official buildings connected to the establishing of the Queensland Government. Surrounding these historic monuments are vacant lots with broken windows and trash-filled stoops- a dissonance to the big yachts and sailboats in the harbor.

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from the Australian Government, department of Education.

<https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/datavisualisations/pages/default.aspx> (Read 07.11.2019)

Over the last years the city has experienced an increased crime rate, therefore, domestic and international students are advised by the university to not walk alone after dark. Industrial areas are scattered within the city limits creating large distances between populated areas. There is a lack of sidewalks and crossings which makes people dependent on cars, public transport and rideshare services- such as Uber. As the university is located in a secluded area, so most of the PNG students live in share houses<sup>2</sup> with other students in a suburb surrounding the campus. The majority live with other PNG students and international students from other nations. Those who do not live close to campus grounds live in the CBD<sup>3</sup>- an approximate half hour drive from the university.

## Used identifiers

The PNG students often refer to each other was wantok. “Wantok”, meaning “one talk” in the Melanesian language Tok Pisin, relates to reciprocal solidarity amongst people in PNG. PNG is a nation consisting of multiple languages, each connected to different PNG societies. In his study of urbanisation within PNG, Schram (2015) stated that the use of this social system most often is in correlation to uncertain situations as means of creating familiarity. This transforming the nature of kinship from biological to social- meaning familiar and kinship bonds, manifested in social connections, and not blood relations. Schram (2015,04) argues that the connotations of the wantok system is distinct from other social relationships, as it includes an egalitarian bond of social equals. Schram (2015) utilises the term “wantok system” in his article. However, the PNG students use “wantok network”, and therefore, so will I. In North Queensland the wantok network operates as a social bond, consequently allowing the PNG students to feel more connected to the PNG way of life. Moreover, it can act as a medium in accessing resources and networking possibilities, such as help in the process of relocating to North Queensland, secure safe rides home after dark and gaining positions on the executive team of the student association.

The PNG students refer to each other as *wantoks*. Other used identifiers are “*fellow PNG student*”, “*sista*”- a term used socially between young women and “*Mari*” -Tok Pisin for

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<sup>2</sup> A share house is a house where residents rent individual rooms and share common areas such as kitchens and living rooms. These properties are owned by private landowners or real-estate companies. This type of housing arrangement is common for students.

<sup>3</sup> Central Business District

“woman”, used as an engendered signifier and in speaking of the unofficial national dress of PNG- the meriblouse. “*Auntie*”, referrers to a respected older female and “*uncle*”, refers to a respected older male. The two latter terms refer to both biological and non-biological relations. In this context “*aunties*” and “*uncles*” often were people who helped with guidance relating to the church or studies, as well as practical issues in coming to North Queensland.

The word “luksave” directly translates to “to acknowledge” in Tok Pisin. This is a reciprocal system that has been interpreted by the PNG students as “showing kindness” or “passin luksave” in Tok Pisin. In showing kindness or “passin luksave” one creates familiar, reciprocal relations i.e. wantoks, and in doing so, one is said to provide a guarantee of help, if needed, in the future. Acknowledging PNG peoples was in its essence a way in which to pass “luksave”. This could be in the act of saying hello or helping out when one sees the need for it. I draw from an experience of one of the PNG students, a young female undergraduate student. She described the act of “passin luksave” in North Queensland as written below;

*“I was waiting at the bus stop; I was late for my class in my first year living of campus. I was waiting for the bus and I missed it. Then this lady drives by and saw me at the bus stop, this PNG lady, and parks to the side. She goes “hey, are you trying to get to uni?” and I was like “yeah” and she says “Ok, hop in”. And yeah, you might think; oh my gosh, a stranger, you got in a stranger’s car. But I don’t know, I just felt safe with her. She had that motherly concern. So, she got me, and we got to chatting, then we found out that oh, we know each other, I mean, she knows my mother. And that’s the good thing because, (...) wantoks have this word called “luksave”, and if you are a wantok you have to show concern for someone. It’s a big thing back home too, and it goes a long way. If you show “luksave” to others, they’ll remember that. “Luksave” is basically just showing kindness”.*

## Vannah’s categories

I met Vannah, during an event named “Harmony day”- celebrating art forms as expressed around the world. She would become the first PNG student to partake in this thesis. This event was organised by the international studies team, which was part of the university the PNG students attend. During a performance of a K-pop dance she described three categories of PNG students. These were 1) Government sponsored students, 2) self-sponsored students

and 3) students who hold dual citizenship, both PNG and Australia. Two partly grew up in Australia.

The first of these, the government sponsored students. They were recipients of scholarships such as the AusAID scholarship for students from the Asia Pacific region, the PNG LNG scholarships<sup>4</sup>- awarded to students in ocean and marine related studies, and the “Australia awards”<sup>5</sup> funded by the Australian government. Samuel, a PNG student on such a scholarship arrangement, explained how these were obtained through fierce competition, and that one had to have extremely high grades.

The second of these categories, the self-sponsored students, receive funding from both family members, older siblings (firstborns), and from own savings. Several of the PNG students representing this category came from families who owned businesses, such as coffee plantations and timber plantations. Some had parents who held high-powered positions in larger corporations in PNG- such as port authority and major news stations.

Lastly, Vannah described a third category, students who hold dual citizenship, both PNG and Australia. These were eligible for funding from the Australian government’s financial schema “study assist”<sup>6</sup>. All PNG students were however eligible to receive funding from the PNG student associations own funding program. This program is dependent on what the student association obtain from collecting donations throughout each semester (see chapter five).

Through the thesis, I will give examples to these categories. However, I note them in the introduction chapter as to situate the economic backgrounds of the PNG students. The majority of the students are dependent on Scholarships from Australian owned organisations i.e. the first of Vannah’s categories. In the field, I noticed that the dependency on scholarship influenced the way in which the students expressed themselves politically whilst in North Queensland, such as refraining from posting political opinions about their host-nation on social media. A pool of the PNG students is self-sponsored. Because of this, as the thesis will elaborate, I study reciprocal connections and how it’s common to take a semester or two of to travel back to PNG for work. The last of Vannah’s categories describe students with dual citizenship. This included only two of the PNG students presented in this thesis. One of which

<sup>4</sup> PNG LNG scholarship <https://pnglng.com/Opportunities/Scholarships> (read 26.05.2020)

<sup>5</sup> The Australia awards program <https://www.australiaawardspng.org/> (read 26.05.2020)

<sup>6</sup> Student funding program for Australian students <https://www.studyassist.gov.au/> (read 26.05.2020)

had an Australian born father, and the other had parents who had relocated to Australia for work when she was four years old. As I will argue, the majority of the PNG students wish to perform remittance and permanently move back to PNG. The two students who had both PNG and Australian citizenship were not clear on their position on this. However, this could also be due to the fact that they both were in the first year of a six-year education in medicine.

## **Central argument**

I have constructed both research questions and main arguments for all chapters of this thesis. Posed in this chapter is the central argument for the entirety of the thesis. My central argument is as follows; I argue that the PNG students construct and deconstruct notions of self through the utilization of Science and Pentecostal practice- challenging the contemporary socio-political system of PNG. As per the central argument the PNG students are not to be studied as fixed entities, but rather from a dynamic perspective of co-existing temporality within social structures and processes. Through the thesis I ask in which way studying in North Queensland affect the PNG student's construction of self? This pertains, highlighted in the coming chapters, to elements such as, Christian devotion, educational merit, the sociality of the wantok network, constructions of "womanhood", perspectives of homeland, and "political positionality".

## **Methodological framework of the study of diaspora**

In this thesis, I study the emic construction of boundaries, forms of belonging and the deconstruction and construction of self. Simultaneously acting through ideologies of homeland, religious doctrine and temporality, due to the expressed desire towards remittance. The heterogeneity of diaspora experience, considering attributes such as those relating to gender, ethnicity, generation and space and study the interplay of said attributes as embedded in the formation of diasporas (Amelia & Barglowski 2018,32).

Though the PNG students express a large number of what I refer to as "collectively echoed or voiced opinions or arguments", it should not be construed to mean they are a homogeneous or uniform group. However, as I will discuss further in chapter four, the strong connection to ideas of homeland, with the lived emic temporality due to the plan of future

remittance, produce an emotionally embedded diaspora community within the student association. The phenomenological lived experience is reflected and observed by the PNG students individually as well, which the thesis includes.

Amelia & Barglowski (2018) and Pinto (2016) shed light on the lack of research on women in diaspora studies. In an effort to disrupt this pattern, Pinto (2016) argues for the use of feminist methodology, which allows for a study of the different manners in which women are “doing” diaspora (178). Understanding how, and through what, the female PNG students deconstruct, construct notions of “womanhood” and express gender in North Queensland allows us to trace how gender norms here both are flouted and yet, reaffirmed- a focus for this thesis. The social link between women in Pentecostalism can be interpreted as “counter-hegemonic cultural forms”- which is representative of how Pentecostal women express and experience social relations in opposition to prevailing societal norms (Sider 1980, in Gill 1990,709). How the female PNG students express themselves through Pentecostal practice through bible groups and religious book clubs- both of which they organise and host, and further, how they possess roles on the student associations executive team are forms of engendered empowerment. Most notably, however, is the obtaining of degrees in fields of Science- which in ways challenges the social mobility of women in PNG.

## **Different experiences under colonialism**

As a thematic focus, I note the different experiences under colonialism, as depicted in studies of both PNG and Indigenous Australia. The colonisation of Australia began with the declaration of *Terra Nullius*- meaning “land belonging to no one”, and consequently led to the indigenous population not having the ability to govern for themselves- or have bureaucratic legal documents, declaring them without property. This ideology was heavily based on Social Darwinism and biological racism and the consequences were dire. In the modern state of Australia, the discourse on suffering and sacrifice is a narrative argued to belong to the white-Australian, where Australian nationalism traditionally celebrates the ‘Anzac’ legends, historic “bush” legends on ‘pioneers’ who overcame hardship by first fighting nature and natives, then in the world wars (Kapferer, Morris 2003,87). However, in contemporary Australian politics there exists a “counter-history movement” visible in Indigenous academia, and political movements, to fight the hegemonic stand of history as ‘written by the victors’. Post-colonial discourse examined by Smith (2005) explores the understanding of experiences

under imperialism from a local context, allowing for lived realities of subjugation to be voiced. In these expressions there is a clear unevenness to the way in which imperialism is, and has been, experienced for the subjugated. This unevenness influences the diaspora as the PNG students enter a space where colonialism has become embedded in a different way than that of their homeland. Australia abolished the “White Australia policy” (or immigration restriction act of 1991) in 1973, replacing it with the “policy of multiculturalism”. The “White Australia policy” made it possible for non-European migration to Australia, but the process proved difficult, as Australia had a strong egalitarian sentiment built on ‘Anzac’ legends and “bush-comradery”.

Australia assumed control over the eastern half of New Guinea in 1905 and named it British New Guinea. The lieutenant governor of the new colony of British New Guinea Sir William MacGregor set on a quest to create a hospitable environment for a future colonial society to be built. He did so through Christianity, using missionaries as colonial agents (Barker 2012,150). This would become the beginning of the state-church relation in PNG, two close-connected, yet individual domains, argued to be “irreducibly constructive” to each other (Tomlinson, McDougall 2013,02). Barker (2013, 152-153) argues that instead of overthrowing local customs, the missionary’s presence and work modified forms of local leadership, which affected the perception of community in PNG. In many ways Christianity would come to solidify the colonial rule and Christianity would be vowed into the very fabric of the nation. In obtaining independence in 1975 the Papua New Guinean constitution was written acknowledging both “traditional wisdoms” and God<sup>7</sup>

At the time my fieldwork was conducted it had been 44 years since independence. Leading up to the celebration of this, I examined the way in which the PNG students related to their former colonial rule and to the process of independence itself. The lived reality of the diaspora, as represented in this thesis, navigates through layers of tension within the socio-political climate in Australia, as well as their own colonial past and contemporary political schema. The relationship between the two nations today is promoted as bilateral, however I

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<sup>7</sup>In the constitution of The Independent State of Papua New Guinea it states as follows; “We the peoples of Papua New Guinea-

- acknowledge the worthy customs and traditional wisdoms of our people- which have come down to us from generation to generation.
- Pledge ourselves to guard and pass on to those who come after us our noble traditions and the Christian principles that are ours now.

<http://www.parliament.gov.pg/constitution-of-the-independent-state-of-papua-new-guinea> (read 07.11.2019)

argue that neo-colonialism still renders PNG dependent on Australia today. This is visible through medical treaties and Aid-programs where PNG is the largest recipient of Australian aid through the aid and relief program AusAID<sup>8</sup>.

Moreover, it is visible through the Australian refugee policy of 2013, where Australia established a detention centre for asylum seekers on Manus Island, PNG. The detention centre was deemed illegal by the PNG Supreme Court in 2016. The Australian government abandoned it, instead of shutting the centre down or relocating it, and ceased to support it financially and supply it<sup>9</sup>. The Australian refugee policy of 2013 was largely critiqued on the basis of its seemingly neo-colonial symbolism (ABC News 2014), critique which Ferns (2015) suggests points to the post-independence relationship between PNG and Australia as portraying a “master-servant” dynamic. As international students the PNG students symbolise a form of interdependency between Australia and other nations, as a significant part of the Australian national economy is a result of international education programs<sup>10</sup>.

## **Political dynamics – politically produced subjectivity**

To study this diaspora group in relation to political and power dynamics I utilise interpretive and critical medical anthropological theories on subjectivity within the political body, (also named body politic or the Foucaultian body). As a note, interpretive medical anthropology includes the re-examination of normalised ‘common sense’, utilising relativism to examine social practises. Whilst interpretive medical anthropology studies structural issues surrounding inequality and how distribution of wealth and power influences global health politics from a socio-political reference point. This relates to post-structuralist forms of subjectivity as constructed through relations of power, in an analysis on how the diaspora construct and regain subjectivity in the reality they are situated within. The political body is highly influenced by Gramsci’s theory of hegemony. Moreover, it is argued to be struggling

<sup>8</sup> AusAID – Australian agency for international development. Government run agency in charge of Australia’s overseas aid and relief program- where PNG is the largest recipient. They also offer scholarships for students from the Asia Pacific region, such as PNG students for short- and long-term studies.

<sup>9</sup> See 2018 report from Amnesty International

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ASA3477812018ENGLISH.pdf> (Read 05.06.2020)

<sup>10</sup> From a report from 2015, we see that the 2014-15 international education sector contributed approx. 18.8% billion AUD to the national economy of Australia, not including income generated from tourist affiliated with the international students. <https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/research-papers/Documents/ValueInternationalEd.pdf> (Read 05.06.2020).

through an embodied dialectic relationship between alienation and belonging (Schepers Hughes 1994,232-233). Through this thesis I study this embodied dialectic relationship considering proponents of status, politics and gender as situated in the emic argued temporality in which the PNG students operate.

The PNG students are subject to forms of economic power, which impacts the construction of diaspora, or how one “does” diaspora, through measures of the state- in relation to practical aspects of diaspora existence such as visa requirements and financial aid. Agamben (1998) draws on Foucault’s ‘processes of subjectivation’ in depicting the body of Homo Sacer and the politicization of life. Here Agamben (1998,71) argues that the political body is a result of politics and life- biology, sexuality as interlaced. The centrality of the body in the study of state structure emphasises the bio-political power over construction of self. I utilise the theory of “the Mindful body” by Schepers Hughes and Lock (1987) in chapter three, focusing largely on the interlaced social and political bodies or body politic. Studying the body related to gender illustrates influences such as those studied by Stewart and Strathern (2007); Christianity and other colonial influences on perceptions of the body.

## **Methodology – main methods**

The data collected for this thesis was obtained using the methods of participant observation and unstructured, informal and life history interviews. I further draw from social media both as a method as well as content collection. Prior to arriving in the field, I reached out to a few of my PNG friends from my time on exchange in North Queensland, one of which set up a meeting for me with the executive team of the student association. This was to take place in late January/early February, however, because of the February flood- a two-week record-breaking flood closing down roads and airports, it was postponed. During this time, I did as much fieldwork on the layout of the city as I was allowed to by the military and the police. Later, in February 2019, I met with the executive team of the student association at a market day, organised by the university to promote social organisations, student associations and sports teams.

A few days before the marked day I had met with a professor of Anthropology, Rosita Henry, who gave me valuable advice on how to approach possible PNG students. Per her suggestion I sat down with the executive team of the PNG student association explaining how I wanted to make the research collaborative with an emphasis on it being overt. Transparency

would allow me access; therefore, I shared some information about the history of Norway and of the city where I grew up. This helped me establish a relation through a shared connexion to place and history. When the PNG students asked me about my own religion, I quickly learned that my growing up in a Christian household would help me gain access to religious activities and rituals. My goal was to examine how the PNG students position themselves to the current socio-political and economic climate of PNG, its bilateral relationship with Australia and study its correlation to the motivations of the PNG student association. To accomplish this, I had to conduct research through both the educational aspect of their lives and their religious activities. I do this because religion acts as a highly encompassing element in the way the PNG students experience, live and “do” diaspora- the how and why of their educational and political motivations.

O'Reilly (2012, 106) studies participation and observation as a dialectic relationship, the former allowing the researcher to immerse herself into the study and the latter approaching the study in an objective, critical way. Finding a balance between the two seemingly contradicting terms requires constant work. In conducting interviews, I primarily used informal and unstructured formats to allow the PNG students to express themselves more freely. After establishing rapport, I conducted life history interviews as well. I conducted individual interviews, group interviews and informal conversations. Most interviews were recorded, but in some only notes were taken. Some of the younger PNG students felt it more comfortable to be interviewed in pairs. I collected data through interviews with male PNG students on their activities and discussions, as well as conduct participant observation in settings with both genders present. However, I did not conduct participant observation on all-male bible groups, all-male seminars, sports activities and social events due to gender restrictions.

A few of the PNG students were PhD students, where one, Sarah, was currently constructing an Indigenous research methodology, creating a research framework for Melanesians to “conduct studies within their own culture, in a culturally specific way”. She made me aware of what she described as a non-acknowledgement of time in Melanesian social interactions and how that would also affect situations such as interviews. She phrased it as such;

*“What is time? You and me are talking, that’s quality”.*

Time became a subject of importance to obtain access and build rapport in the field. As O'Reilly (2012, 92) discusses, time allows for the building of trust and enables the data to become a more accurate representation of the field. In this study it was not only important to consider the time it took to obtain access and over time even be acknowledged as a wantok, a part of the network of contacts, and/or friends connected through sociality. But also, the individual time schedules of the transient university student and the phenomenon of the joking relationship of "PNG time" (also named Island time). I depict the structure surrounding this joking relationship in chapter four, how it appears in the form of satire through Melanesian societies, and the parodic nature in which it is formed between the PNG students. Due to the argued significance of time, I conducted several unstructured interviews with the same PNG students. This heightened the quality of data collected, as it allowed the PNG students to become more comfortable with the surroundings. Securing the "quality" which Sarah spoke of.

Smith (2005) wrote "*The talk about our colonial past is embedded in our political discourses, our humour, poetry, music, storytelling and the other common-sense ways of passing both a narrative of history and an attitude about history*" (19) The focus on the interview process is therefore visible through the excerpts presented in the thesis. As the study was presented to the PNG students as collaborative research, I feel it is important to highlight the lived reality through the PNG students own wording.

The data collected through participant observation has been gathered from social settings where the PNG students either took part in organised events, or informal gatherings. The organised events where either orchestrated by the student association or the church which the majority of the PNG students attended, a Pentecostal church. These were events such as all-female seminars, church services, bible groups and volunteer work. The student association organised a series of fundraising events for their student fund initiative- hosting BBQs, sporting events and food drives to collect funds for members of the PNG student association in need of financial support. The student association also organised forums, where guest speakers spoke on subjects such as balancing studies, financials and spiritual connections and the empowering process of studying oneself- presented by Sarah.

Focusing on these organised events allowed me to study how the PNG students constructed their everyday lives "doing" diaspora, as well as how they expressed "luksave" as means to strengthen and expand the wantok network- in order to challenge the dominant narratives together. I also found it very useful to study the informal settings where the PNG

students would e.g. make food together or sit and have iced coffee at the university. These settings where more relaxed and social dynamics such as gender relations would appear less restrictive. Together the informal and formal events therefore created a more holistic perspective and deeper understanding of how the wantok network materialized and what role religion played in its social expressions.

Lastly, I also use social media platforms, such as “Facebook” and “WhatsApp” as method and content. Social media is used by the PNG students as a source of information on political matters and to keep in contact with family and friends, in North Queensland and in PNG. Further it is used by the student association to post a monthly newsletter and promote activities for wantoks. I used social media as a method to understand what influences the PNG students are exposed to such as PNG news sources, political parties and individual politicians. The information they obtained there would correlate with what they discussed relating to the contemporary political climate of PNG. As content I draw from the social media presence of the PNG student association and of PNG politicians which the students followed.

I have anonymized both individuals- by changing names and approximate ages, and their city of study in this research. This is because of rumours regarding religion, views on taboo subjects and based on an argument made by two of the PNG students on how fast word spreads between the different PNG networks in Australia. The PNG students have shared information on past and present employers, family members and other hardships that, although pertinent to the study, is private and can have negative consequences if made public. I have changed the names using only names from the bible, this is because biblical names are very common in PNG.

## Thesis outline

In the introduction chapter of this thesis I present the theoretical and methodological focus for this thesis. I then outline the chapters of this thesis, presenting their chapter specific main arguments. For my overarching argument I argue that the PNG students deconstruct and construct notions of self through the utilization of Science and Pentecostal practice- challenging the contemporary socio-political system of PNG. To holistically explore this, I have constructed the thesis as depicted below.

In chapter one I present a socio-historical contextualisation of the relationship between Papua New Guinea and Australia. The ethnographic history represents the knowledge of the PNG students. Following the ethnographic history, I describe the wantok network and the field site. In this chapter I ask how the relationship between PNG and Australia has been carried out historically, and in what ways this impacts the PNG students operating in North Queensland. For my main argument in this chapter, I argue that the PNG students seek to reframe the relationship between the two nations from neo-colonial dependency to a bilateral cooperation.

Chapter two examines the Pentecostal practice and specific Pentecostal church attended by the majority of the PNG students. It further depicts the correlation between Christian morality and the fields of Science studied by the PNG students. The chapter further studies the all-female seminar which a pool of the female students attended. I utilise the methodological framework of “Going to Pentecost” by Annelin Eriksen (2017). I study the ways the PNG student’s identity relating to Science and Pentecostalism. I argue that the PNG students operate utilizing their scientific inquiry and Pentecostal devotion as means to serve their nation and to become closer to God.

In chapter three I will explore the element of gender and constructions of “womanhood”. Further analysing the ways PNG women perusing Science flout gender roles. Structuring the chapter through the theory of the mindful body by Scheper Hughes and Lock (1987) to study the individual body, the social body and the political body, or body politic. I argue that through their scientific inquiry, the women are flouting gender norms- and consequently accessing socio-economic mobility not obtainable in PNG.

In Chapter four I draw the experience of the diaspora, to analyse how the PNG students relate themselves in North Queensland. I study the asserting of temporal agency through joking relationships and how they secure social proximity and connection to PNG. I further describe their motives for performing remittance. I argue that the PNG students operate as ‘temporal’ diaspora, not to be constructed with a process of assimilation, but from the emic perspective of the PNG student’s expression towards future remittance.

In Chapter five I add to the classic anthropological definition of ‘positionality’ in fieldwork to my analytical framework, - to enable the study of the political positionality of the students. “Political positionality” is studied as a set of interactions in every day lived realities. I further study the 2019 special election in PNG and the current PM James Marape. The figure

of Marape typifies “One Nation ideals” which breaks with provincial preference. As a main argument for this chapter, I argue that the PNG students navigate political positionality through “One Nation” ideals.

In chapter six, the last chapter of the thesis, I summarize and present a conclusion. As a last chapter-specific main argument, I argue that the PNG students operate as faithful servants, practicing Science and Religion to serve their nation, and become closer to God. As last remarks to the thesis, I note possibilities for future studies.

## CHAPTER ONE:

### History, Independence, and the Field



*Caption: climbing up a Buai tree*

*“Our democracy is being compromised. With all this happening, how are we supposed to move forward? Obviously, there is corruption. There is no good governance. Ethics is out the window. And, if we keep continuing on that path, I don’t know. We will probably be taken over by all these major investors and all these people that we have been borrowing from. They become our dictators. They won’t be there sitting in parliament. They won’t be. But we will be dancing to their music- because they will be the ones pulling the strings.”*

- Sarah, Ph.D. candidate in Tourism studies

Sarah illustrates a fear echoed by the PNG students pertaining to the future of their nation. A nation that has been dependant on international aid since the independence in 1975- specifically from Australia. She further typified the fear of losing control, a fear that had become embedded in her as an individual. She depicts two forms of control, one which sits in the PNG parliament, and another which she sees as a faceless puppet master. I therefore find it fitting to begin this chapter with a quote from an interview with Sarah- as it narrates what she found to be the contemporary aftermath of the long-standing ambiguity affecting PNGs relationship to Australia. This interview was conducted in the midst of the special election in PNG, which took place 2019.

In the introduction chapter I presented the central argument for the entirety of the thesis as follows; I argue that the PNG students construct and deconstruct notions of self through the utilization of Science and Pentecostal practice- challenging the contemporary socio-political system of PNG. I therefore find it fitting to depict the colonial history, as presented to me by the PNG students, to examine the ways in which ‘constructions of self’ are influenced by both the internalised notions of history, but furthermore, in the navigating reality situated in Australia- their nations former colonial ruler. I do this to study how the PNG students “do” diaspora, as Pinto (2016) phrases it. However, in this chapter I include male subjects, whereas Pinto’s (2016) study highlights women.

This chapter is structured into two larger sections. Firstly, I study how the relationship between PNG and Australia has been carried out historically and analyse the process of independence and the manner in which it was procured. The historical timeline presented is aligned with the present knowledge of the PNG students, thus reflecting and emphasising their emic understanding of their nation’s past. History is quite contentious in its alignment,

with the example of the ‘counter-history movement’- the bottom up movements which highlights the issues surrounding the Western-centric doxa in colonial historic writing, noted in the introduction chapter. I examine the impact of colonial inheritance and Christianity in the contemporary educational sector of PNG, and how educational merit is viewed in relation to social mobility and power. I study how the PNG students relate to and situate themselves within the historical relationship between the two nations-consequently influencing the way in which the PNG student’s express identity, sociality and Christian morality. Secondly, I depict the wantok network and the student association that the PNG students are affiliated with. Lastly, present the field and the PNG students city of study.

As I note, the historical timeline presented here represents the present knowledge of the PNG students. Issues obtaining to the depiction of the colonial history of PNG derive from the lack of a holistic data collection on the era it was a colony. This lack of data collection was due to what MacWilliam (2013) refers to as ‘terms of colonial rule’ where the lack of insight into specific areas of PNG led to the first census collection only occurring in 1966. Furthermore, there was a lack of consistency in which enumeration strategies were utilized (2013,249), and a 30-year rule of official restrictions on access to legal documents by the Australian government (2013,251). Moreover, the PNG students explained how, in their opinion, first and secondary educations in PNG displayed a shortage of historical depictions of PNG, moreover, highlighting the exclusion of the history of West Papua all together. In contrast, the PNG students were well versed on the contemporary relationship between PNG and Australia and argue that it is a neo-colonial dynamic. On the basis of this I present the main argument for this chapter; I argue that the PNG students seek to reframe the relationship between the two nations from neo-colonial dependency to a bilateral cooperation.

## **Ethnographic history**

*“It may seem rather ridiculous that New Guinea natives should ever be independent- yet we contemplate the independence of the Philippines, and in a hundred years the New Guinea natives might easily be the equal of the Filipinos of today”*

— Sir Hubert Murray, 1939 (in Nelson, 1982,209)

Australia assumed control over what is now known as Papua New Guinea in 1906. This was the eastern half of New Guinea, which previously had been under German possession. From the beginning the relationship between the two now sovereign nations was quite ambiguous, where PNG was explicitly defined as a territory- an expansion of the Australian frontier, and not as a colony (Nelson 1982,12). PNG's relation to Australia, and why it was pertinent for Australia to annex the land to the north, has been argued as a means to obtain to control maritime areas above Australia - a deliberate and tactical move for the British military power in the event of a war (Nelson 1982). Here PNG was to function as an expansion of the Australian defence frontier. However, the reason for the annex has also been studied as a means to access cheap labour as a result of Queensland planters' portrayed interest in multiple islands surrounding Australia (Denoon 2005,02).

In 1901, a mere five years before the annex of eastern New Guinea, Australia stated independence from Britain and was in the process of establishing its own government. Through governing another population, Australia was able to solidify its own national power and thus manifest Australia as an individual government. Thus, Lattas (1996,141) argues that the colonization of what would become the "Australian territory of Papua" was a consequence of the Australian nationalisms moral value in the process of expanding the British civilization. In his article the author describes this process using an anthropomorphistic metaphor of a child growing up and becoming an independent man- commonly used imagery in contemporary Australian nationalist rhetoric (Lattas 1996,142). Through becoming a colonial administrator Australia sprung into maturity and discovered its capabilities as a nation. The pioneers behind this process are celebrated today as 'Anzac' legends.

The promulgated complexities surrounding the ambiguity between the nations were translated into the process of self-governance and independence of PNG in the 1960s-1970s. According to the work of Papoutsaki and Rooney (2006,423) Australia was pressured by the United Nations to make PNG sovereign. Weisbrot (1988,01) argues that the decolonisation of PNG created pressure for Great Britain, amongst other colonial rulers in the region, to give independence to other colonized Islands. However, most Australians at the immediate time before, and during the independence did not believe self-governing was something the native

peoples of PNG were capable of doing<sup>11</sup> (Nelson 1982,210). As the above cited quote by Sir Hubert Murray illustrates an example of (Murray 1939 in Nelson, 1982,209).

Sir Maori Kiki, founder of the Pangu party- PNG's oldest political party, stated “*Independence, was given on a plate. There was no real struggle*” (Nelson, 1982, 211)- indicating that the manner in which PNG achieved independence was not through a battle or a war. This does not mean there never was any form of “real struggle”. During the second world war there occurred struggle and disruption as New Guinea became a battle ground during the time of 1942-1943. Little has been written of the New Guinea perspective of Australia’s recorded histories of the war, with the exception of the “fuzzy-wuzzy angels”. The “fuzzy-wuzzy angels” were indigenous New Guineans who served in the Allied service and are celebrated today, by some, as Anzac heroes- e.g. the PNG students. However, many served unwillingly, and thus, as Spark (2019) explains, local men and women of the area would go into hiding to avoid fighting the “white man’s war”. Nelson (1982,211) notes that because of the way in which PNG obtained independence; “*Papua New Guinea escaped the destruction, the unifying effect, the myth-building power of a fight*”. Mythic narratives can be part in forming and developing national identity (Korostelina 2013), yet it cannot be argued that there exist no mythic narratives or national identity within PNG - only that the process of independence may impact the way in which the national identity of PNG was shaped.

In 1966 Australia rejected a proposal from a PNG delegation which petitioned PNG to become Australia’s seventh state (Denoon, 2005,04), this was declined. Furthermore, the White Australia policy of 1901 (Immigration restriction act), an act not properly replaced until the ‘policy of multiculturalism’ act in 1973, prevented PNG peoples to migrate to Australia prior to then. In 1975 former Australian PM Whitlam stated that colonialism was demeaning both to the colonised and colonisers and argued that Australia never would be truly free until PNG became free (Denoon 2005,01). Today, they are both sovereign nations, but I argue they are very much connected. As argued by Lattas (1996) symbolically, PNG was part and parcel of the solidification of Australian national power. As argued by Ferns (2015) by neo-colonialism in the form of AusAID and the Manus Island detention centre. And lastly,

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<sup>11</sup> This did not include the former Australian prime minister, and leader of the Labour party, Gough Whitman who declared the future event in 1970 during a visit to PNG, even predicted its occurrence a year before it eventually took place (see Nelson, 1982,211).

by the reliance Australian national economy has to international education- which in return the PNG students are dependent on, especially women in scientific fields, as there is a lack of scientific educational opportunities in PNG.

## **Colonial heritage and neo-colonialism**

Western law as received from the colonial regimes was acknowledged as the formal legal system, while a *de facto* traditional ‘custom’ system was allowed to operate in small scale law disputes such as family law. This interim solution was known as a “two spheres approach” (Weisbrot 1988,4-5). Administrating colonial regimes in “two sphere approaches” were not unheard of, rather it was implemented to avoid what Lattas (1996,158) calls “symbolic death”, where “cultural destruction” and destruction of identity eventually could lead to depopulation. Papoutsaki and Rooney (2006,422) argue that the inherited Western models including the educational systems, are at a ‘clash’ with the developmental needs of the nation, which is creating a dilemma between socio-political development and current market needs.

The role of higher education may be argued to be pertinent in nation building. However, should a government fail to define what is needed from higher education it may become impediment for development in itself. This is argued by Papoutsaki and Rooney (2006,427) to be the case in PNG, along with minimal funding towards scientific research and the narrow list of educations available, currently surrounding technical and administrative knowledge- which is based largely on the current job market in PNG. Thus, in order to obtain degrees in sciences such as biomedicine, marine biology, and chemical engineering, PNG peoples are dependent on foreign institutions. In response to this there is an increasing number of Australian institutions who offer educations on in the first, secondary and tertiary education sector. Several of the PNG students first attended secondary education in North Queensland before entering into tertiary level degrees. In PNG most schools and universities are church administrated. In North Queensland, there is a large number of church administrated schools as well, such as the schools the PNG students attended. However, the university they attend is not.

In 2018 AusAID launched a partnership with PNG to “help strengthen the nation” with educational and leadership skills. In the description of the partnership, the Australian government states that it is an investment both in the enhancement of PNGs educational

system as well as human capital<sup>12</sup>. This partnership was implemented in relation to the “Papua New Guinea vision 2050”<sup>13</sup>, a ‘visionary development plan’ declared in 2009, prominently with a focus to guarantee development from the ground up, starting with individual development for PNG citizens. The partnership promoted a transition towards a relationship between the two nations which is less dominated by aid programs and more focused on an economic partnership. However, the “Papua New Guinea vision of 2050” has in later years received scrutiny for being a ‘pipe dream’ and for its seeming lack of consistency (The National 2015).

## Defining independence

Analysis of scientific material collected on PNG- such as anthropological research, illustrates the embedded lingual logics of terminologies such as “pre” and “post”, expressions that are inherently colonial. In aftermath of the independence in 1975, ethnography on PNG has had a focus on the inheritance of Western-styled legal and political systems. A period of time would pass after the independence before the movement of PNG national politics activated. This was due to the emphasis by Australian officials to establish a strong economic base to secure production and consumption, and a seeming lack of emphasis on political reform (MacWilliam 2013,06). PNG has been discussed to be a ‘failed imitation of more established, more homogeneous Western nations’ (Foster 2002, in Walton 2013,68), as well as a “weak state” (Barker 2013,147) due to the countries religious connexion to politics on a national level. As last remarks in the introduction of his book Denoon (2005,05) asks if the word ‘independence’ is the correct term to use in regard to PNG becoming sovereign in 1975. This he relates to disagreements by locals on whether or not they felt the nation was prepared for self-governance.

Hannah, a PNG student studying law opined that she grateful for the peaceful road to independence. Though this was the general consensus expressed to me by the PNG students, both Nelson (1982,214) and Denoon (2005,05) highlight claims of PNG peoples who argued

<sup>12</sup> The Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and trade. <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/australia-partnering-with-png-through-education-leadership-supporting-growth-stability-prosperity.aspx> (Read 28.11.19).

<sup>13</sup> Government of Papua New Guinea [https://www.treasury.gov.pg/html/publications/files/pub\\_files/2011/2011.png.vision.2050.pdf](https://www.treasury.gov.pg/html/publications/files/pub_files/2011/2011.png.vision.2050.pdf) (Read 28.11.19)

it to be irresponsible of Australia to give independence to PNG in the 1970s, and of PNG peoples who concur with what the PNG students in this thesis argue. There are critical views on both the process of independence for PNG and the timing of it. These often pertain to administrative and political aspects and the formal processes of self-governance. Nelson (1982,211) sites Jack Baker- an Australian post-war officer stationed in PNG, who argues; “*Our last act of colonial arrogance was to say, “you will be independent”*”. Only a decade before independence, administrative control would be implemented in areas which before had been ‘restricted’<sup>14</sup> before, in consequence the people of PNG had varying levels of exposure to and social integration into Australian administration. This made the process of independence difficult, and demands for autonomy, e.g. by the Gazelle peninsula of East New Britain, were pressing (Hawksley 2006,164). The divide and rule strategy employed by the British colonial rule will be further depicted in chapter five.

Both Denoon (2005) and Nelson (1982) discuss what independence actually is. Denoon (2005,01) argues that “*to decolonise is to dismantle foreign control: independence is the achievement or recovery of sovereignty*”. Discussing whether or not PNG is ‘decolonised’ and truly ‘independent’ today is pertinent to study the possible impact of neo-colonialism as well as dependency to aid. PNG is known as being the most resource-rich nation of the Pacific Island states, yet the PNG students argue that there is an existing dissonance between them being “over blessed”, with these natural resources, and having a growing poverty rate<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, the PNG students argue the seeming inability of the nation’s leaders to govern in a way that benefits the nation. Because PNG is dependent on aid, most prominently from Australia, but from China as well, the PNG students, voiced concerns, such as that by Sarah in the vignette, that indicated PNG’s self-governance is at risk of becoming an illusion. Sarah further stated; “*We are giving them [foreign investors] power, and opportunity to control over us, because we are greedy*”.

How the PNG students view achieving independence from neo-colonialism is by dismantling the foreign control and dependency on aid. This they argue can be achieved through development of the nation. Their combined definition of “development” is as follows; a progress in the economic and health sectors of the nation- also including health and

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<sup>14</sup> These areas, which were located in the Highland region, were deemed too dangerous for anyone except government officers. See Hawksley 2006.

<sup>15</sup> PNG has a poverty rate of approximately 40% of the population. See 2019 report by Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/papua-new-guinea> (Read 12.06.2020)

sustaining of fauna and flora. An increase in local businesses, less foreign control in existing businesses, and ultimately PNG being able to “stand on its own two feet”. Moreover, they collectively argued that immediate impediments for ‘development’ were political corruption and lack of transparency in political matters. In comparison their view on progress is similar to “African dream”<sup>16</sup>- a symbolic motivator for the reunification and development of Africa (Mhango 2015,428). Key points both displayed by the PNG students and Mhango’s (2015,431) depiction of the “African dream” is the impeding issue of being dependant on foreign aid.

The PNG students wish to utilize their educations and ideals of Christian morality to further the process of “development” in PNG- and in consequence obtain freedom from foreign aid. Tandon (2008) argues that “development” is constructed of two components; process of self-empowerment from structures of power and control, and, perhaps more descriptive and subjective: ‘development’ as self-defined within a nation’s framework. Together they form the ideological glue of individual understandings of ‘development’ (12). The PNG students challenged the structures of power and control and defined ideals of self-empowerment in various ways. Firstly, the female PNG students argued that self-empowerment would be obtained through education- as means to reconstruct notions of “womanhood”. Collectively the PNG students all argued that the impediments of development were directly linked to dependency on aid and issues in the contemporary political schema.

## **Identity and sociality as diaspora**

I draw from Anderson’s (1998) theory of bound and unbound seriality as socially constructed labels in which individuals identify- which he studied in an effort to reframe the theory of collective subjectivity as realised in the “modern” world. While bound seriality is studied as clear analytical lines within a state of governmentality, the unbound theory of seriality allowed for mixed affiliation, with a potentially liberating framework- meaning individuals can identity partiality and contextually (Anderson 1998,29). Per Andersons (1998,44-45) depiction of diaspora, the PNG students would represent a collective subjectivity, with a

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<sup>16</sup> The “African dream” is also an organisation which promotes socio-economic progress in African countries, by Africans. Promoting the “Africa’s global repositioning agenda” <https://www.theafricandreamgroup.com/> (Read 12.06.2020).

bound identity. Meaning, living in North Queensland still makes them Papua New Guinean. Nationalism here exists beyond national borders. Though I will expand on politics and nationalism at a later stage in the thesis (see chapter four and five), what is pertinent here is the way in which the PNG students as a collective group practice their national identity or consciousness in North Queensland- what and in which ways national identity and nationalism translates into the PNG students experiences in North Queensland.

The PNG students navigate their lived reality through Christian morality and practice. The way in which sociality is expressed in order to be practical is part of the deconstruction and construction of notions of self, further affecting the construction of identity in continuity with ‘tradition’, interlaced with Western centric modernity. Hobsbawm (1983,04) argues that “inventing traditions” is a “process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by references to the past, if only by imposing repetition”. These “traditions” refer to expressed rituals, practices and rules, and are present in all forms of societies. The process of inventing traditions happens only when a tradition is deemed impractical and when adaptation to new conditions occurs (Hobsbawm 1983,05). In North Queensland the PNG students are challenging the referred to ‘traditions of sociality’ by dismantling the idea of gendered sociality as well as women’s social and spatial mobility. Moreover, they represent a way of acting out national identity which they call “One Nation”, which is in breach with regional, provincial and lingual gaps which prevail in PNG. They do so by speaking the language Tok Pisin and referring to each other as wantoks- which symbolises a form of solidarity and reciprocal kinships.

## **The wantok network**

Shortly after arriving in the field, I began utilising the method of the ‘snowball affect’, where in order to enlarge the number of PNG students, my established contacts would introduce me to what their referred to as their “wantoks”. PNG is a nation with over 800 languages, and therefore the Melanesian language Tok Pisin, or “Pidgin English”, can be credited to act as a unifier for PNG persons. The word “wantok”, translating to “one talk”, has by native speakers been interpreted as a person, or people, with whom one has a familiarity with. The sociality of wantoks can be studied as a form of reciprocal kinship, yet the actual familiarity and bond between peoples acting out wantok relations will vary. Depictions of this form of sociality and relation has defined wantoks as “a network of mutual reciprocity and patron-client

relationships" (Okole 2005,374) -meaning a wantok is a person who can help in obtaining resources such as shelter, food and work- as well as further social connections. It has also been associated with the relationship between politicians and their voter base, as illustrated here: "*Our elections are not like yours, where you can look at a candidate's degree and policies. Here you have to vote for your wantok... If my candidate wins, I will get some benefits*" – A local voter from Goroka, in The Economist (2017)

Utilising wantok relations as a political pathway to power, has been studied by Okole (2005,374), as an ideal framework in electoral contexts such as politicians using their wantok networks to assure votes for upcoming elections. Social scientists in numerous fields have analysed wantok relations, and what we holistically take away from that is that it can create common ground through its roots in morality and solidarity between individuals or groups and connects individuals that may not have other things in common. As the PNG students would often illustrate, not only can PNG people be alienated from each other by the lingual multitude of the nation, but also by the abundance of religious denomination and politics. Throughout this thesis I therefore focus on how the sociality of wantoks is acted out North Queensland, such as in the way the PNG students included non-PNG peoples in their wantok network. However, before doing so, I will illustrate the wantok network through the political schema of PNG. In doing so the social system is put into an example very relevant to the political environment as it was during the time of my fieldwork.

It is not uncommon for ballots to go missing or be destroyed, politicians to join opposition parties, or for voters to expect benefits in return for voting for wantoks. Aru & Eka (2002) published an article on the 'biblical perspective' of wantok networks, where they argue that the social system promulgates social injustice to the point where it affects not just the church but the nation as a whole (7). Though they acknowledge Wantokism as a way of life- impacting social relationships and benefits, they do argue that in a modern perspective it also allows for individuals to 'satisfy one's own desire for selfish gain' (Aru & Eka 2002,9). The way in which the system affects the reciprocal benefits in work and political relations are pointed out by Aru and Eka (2002) and exemplified by the quote from The Economist (2017). A consequence of these networks involvement in politics may be that it lessens the importance of qualifications such as educational merit. However, the PNG students express a different interpretation of both the value of educational merit as well as the value and morality of the wantok network. Moreover, they argue both to be beneficial to national development.

In her analysis of merit and its relationship to social identity in India, Subramanian (2015) illuminates the historical production of cast intersected with colonial and post-colonial heritage (293). The seeming lack of autonomy surrounding educational merit in PNG as argued by Aru and Eka (2002) can be analysed in the historical production of Wantok sociality, a traditional social system which has deeper roots compared to the educational system in PNG. In both the cases of PNG and India, claims to merit are argued to be modernist ideals, however, where merit and caste belonging are understood as commensurable in India, Merit in PNG is argued to be subaltern to Wantokism as of now. It is notable to disclaim that caste belonging and Wantokism are not equivalent systems. However, both do factor into social mobility, social identity and economic opportunity.

One can deliberate on whether the PNG students are establishing a new “common sense” in favour of merit as commensurable to Wantokism- doing so by re-articulation wantok sociality in North Queensland. This re-articulation could affect the constituted Christian identity of PNG, both as part and parcel of national identity and as highly politically embedded. Christian identity articulated in political relations are common occurrences in political campaigns and campaign speeches. These narratives of devotion have obtained power since independence (Tomlinson, McDougall 2013,11). Schram (2015,04) has argued that “holdovers”, such as Wantokism, from the “traditional era” is the main impediment for development. However, the data collected for this thesis illustrates a strong belief by the PNG students that without the wantok network, and God, development cannot be realised.

The PNG students would often express issues with navigating what they depicted as a duality of “third world” and “modernity”- relating to the incorporation of ‘tradition’ and colonial inheritance in state affairs and educational systems and in the manifested construction of the self. I suggest that the struggle of navigating this duality becomes more visible in North Queensland as the diaspora navigates Western centric expressions, and institutions as individuals. Consequently, this is why the wantok network and path of Christian morality has become so pertinent to the individual PNG students. The majority of the PNG students expressed the issues of “modernity” were aspects of immorality. As retold from one of the PNG students; “I was told before I left for Australia to not become “too modern”, to have sex or forget the words of God”.

The wantok network was in a sense a tool the PNG students could use to navigate this “duality”. As individuals would travel to Australia, they were dependent on help with practical issues such as finding living arrangement, but more so the PNG students stated that

they were dependent on wantoks for social and emotional needs- a community. Moreover, members of the wantok network were expected to help newcomers, and established members- e.g. by raising funds for medical expenses and transporting people to events and church.<sup>17</sup> Towards the end of my fieldwork I began being referred to as a wantok and interpreted this as a way of being accepted. I asked why I would be considered a wantok, and to this PNG student Naomi, an undergraduate student in biomedicine, answered; you do what we do. You eat what we eat. You go to church. You are like us. You are a friend.

## The PNG student association

I use the terms “wantok network”, “diaspora group” and “student association” in describing the social relations established between the PNG students. These terms are overlapping descriptions which illustrate how sociality is structured in North Queensland. However, this does not mean they all consist of the same members. The peoples presented in this thesis are all part of these three ‘categories’, but to varying extents. To illustrate; one can be a wantok and perform the act of passin luksave (showing kindness) by acknowledging people you pass in the street, but there is no degree to which you have to be involved in the everyday life of your wantoks. I utilise the term “diaspora group” in the analytically to study the framework in which the PNG students navigate- emphasising on the aspect of remittance. Lastly, I refer to the PNG students as belonging to a PNG student association. It is voluntary to join this association, but most chose to do so. When first arriving at the university all students are invited to a marked day hosted by the university, there various organisations and associations have stalls set up to attract members. I was first introduced to the association here, and so where most of the PNG students.

The PNG student association is one of many nation specific associations at the university. These associations have little affiliation with each other but are all sub-associations to “the student association”- which is an association for all students at the university, both international students and domestic. The PNG student association has over 200 members on their social media and email list, however, some are former students or

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<sup>17</sup> As of March 2020, the PNG students are also assisting each other with supplies and support during the Covid-19 pandemic. The PNG students have not as of now returned to PNG, so for those in quarantine or self-isolation, they are dependent on wantoks to purchase and deliver food and medicine.

students currently on break from their studies<sup>18</sup>. Approximately 30 members would actively partake in organised activities and social gatherings such as sporting events, fundraisers and dinners. The majority of these members also attended the Pentecostal church and studied Science. The executive team is composed of a president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, social media and events director and forum liaison. Currently the president is male, but last term the position was held by a woman. Each year, the association would schedule a democratic election to determine who would sit on the six-person executive team, and during my time in the field four out of these six positions were held by women.

In an email, sent to me by the executive team at the beginning of my fieldwork, there was the mission statement which illustrated why the association existed. It stated as follows;

*"We are a community created by the PNG students to stay connected, due to the main reason that we are individuals studying away from home in an environment that is new to us. A big part of PNG culture is staying connected with people. Staying connected benefits, us as individuals to establish new friends and social groups- weather it would be academic or outside of academic pursuits. As a result, it creates that atmosphere of comfort with people who we all share the same circumstance of studying away from home. As a part of staying connected, the association established social and academic pursuit platforms to stay connected. Those events add to keep the community alive."*

In the email they highlight the key focus of connexion amongst wantoks and argue its empowering impact on social and academic life. Later in the email they further depicted the aim of the 2019 semesters, namely to "*inspire academic and life progress; to facilitate all generations of students. To appeal to the notion of improving and doing better if it be academic or life related*". This aim was written in relation to a dialog with the university about an academic regression concerning PNG students as seen over the past two years. The PNG student association therefore put on 12 events throughout the semester and sent out a monthly newsletter via email and a Facebook group. The newsletter included an activity itinerary for the coming month, success stories- portrait interviews of former students, and suggestive reads and films, such as the film "Power Meri" (which follows PNG's first national women's rugby league team). The second to last event of the semester was a ball, where funds were to be collected to use on a financial initiative for struggling students, where

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<sup>18</sup> It is not uncommon for students to take breaks from their studies, most often this break lasts for one year. Most commonly the students move back to PNG for work so they can save up funds to pay for tuition and other university related expenses.

members of the association were able to apply for financial support from the association. The criteria for applying were that the funds were to be used e.g. in visa finance assistance, rent and accommodation, school supplies and health emergencies for oneself or close family members.

## Presenting the field

A part of the associations ‘staying connected’ initiative was gathering in a nearby park to celebrate the beginning and end of each university semester. Here they prepared a variety of foods such as sausage and cooked onion in a piece of white bread- a staple in any Australian BBQ, and food which they had learned to cook in PNG, such as cooked green bananas and Sago pudding. This celebratory ritual would begin and end with collective praying; for the semester, for the productivity of the organisation and for students they knew were sick or struggling. In between they would eat, play basketball and some would chat over a zip lock bag of ‘buai’,<sup>19</sup>.

The field site is largely composed of arenas of study and worship, but further includes social arenas as well. As distances are long between the university, Pentecostal church and social arenas, I would travel with the PNG students in the means of transport available. In North Queensland it is not uncommon for students to own vehicles, yet few of the PNG students own or have access to private motor transport. Therefore, they are dependent on wantoks with cars, the ride-share service ‘Uber’, and public transport. The majority of the PNG students live on little money left over after payment of tuition and rent and therefore pocket money is scares. In general, the student population in North Queensland have few job opportunities, a consequence of the generally high unemployment rate of the state (Bavas 2019). Few of the PNG students have part-time jobs to supplement income, the ones that do have part-time jobs work picking produce on farms or as teaching assistants in secondary schools with a large PNG student pool. Most have unpaid volunteer work connected to the Pentecostal church- such as cooking for the congregation, serving snacks and water to young adults at music festivals and outside of night clubs, and other community work.

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<sup>19</sup> ‘Buai’ is the Tok Pisin word for betel nut, a seed which when chewed acts as a stimulant which gives the chewer a mild sense of euphoria and alertness. This is consumed with a mustard stick and lime powder. In PNG ‘buai’ is commonly sold in small stalls at markets or by the roadside. In North Queensland one can acquire ‘buai’ from individuals who grow them at a steeper price compared to PNG prices. The few PNG students that would chew would do so on special occasions or use it as a stress reliever when studying for exams.

Most of the cities and towns in North Queensland were established towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The layout for my field site is spread out within the city limits but has a primary base around the rural area where the university is placed, surrounded by mountains, forests and large motorways. It's not uncommon for dense areas to be spread out in North Queensland, connected by flat, dry lands accessible only by car or public transportation. Therefore, most of the PNG students lived within walking distance to the university, often in share houses with each other. These living situations were beneficial for two reasons, firstly it was economically feasible, as share houses in the outskirts of the city were more affordable. Secondly, it allowed for living with friends, and having room for larger gatherings. A few of the PNG students had or were currently living in campus housing provided by the university. However, this was significantly more expensive and often came with meal plans, which meant that they could not prepare their own food. Living on or close to the university further meant being close to the free transport to and from the Pentecostal church most of the PNG students attended. The students attending the Pentecostal church would travel there either by the free church bus, or with friends who owned cars.

They refrained from taking the busses and walking alone in the evenings, and though they did use Uber, they refrained from doing so too often because of the cost. Due to an increase in petty crime in the city they were limited as to how, where and when they could move about. However, in comparing it to Port Moresby, the capital of PNG, the PNG students often expressed a feeling of freedom being in North Queensland, that they had not felt before—particularly the female PNG students. The female PNG students often argued that North Queensland existed as a safe space more so than home, where they were empowered to study and live more freely regardless of gender. Living in North Queensland challenged everyday sociality, such as dating rituals and friendship between genders. In PNG befriending someone of the opposite sex often sparked rumours of sexual relations. The PNG students explained that friendships and/or dating would commonly be kept secret not to create such rumours or disrespect elders in the communities. The strictness and controversy towards friendships between genders and dating varied but it was opined that Port Moresby was more liberal. The controversy and taboo surrounding these social relations had translated to the sociality in North Queensland as well. Though there was less secrecy attached to dating, it was still implied to be shameful and disrespectful to a certain extent. The few PNG students who dated did this very privately and did not show any public displays of affection.

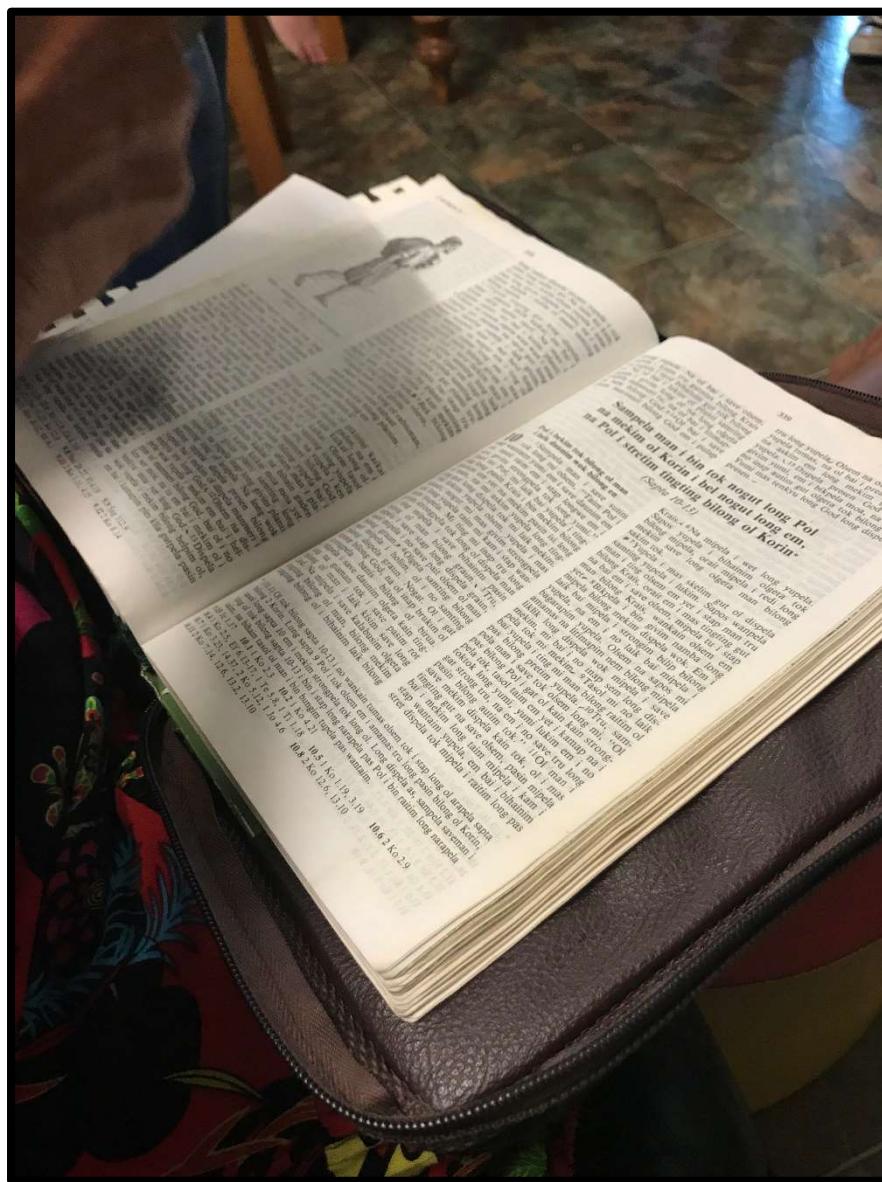
## Summary

In sum, the PNG students present a knowledge of the history between PNG and Australia which illustrates a form of ambiguousness that has become present in their lived realities today. I have situated the PNG students in the colonial history represented by the present knowledge of the PNG students. They utilise the wantok network, the student association and Christianity to navigate a form of duality- which they explain as grappling with dialectically being caught between the “third world” and “modernity”. The wantok network acts as a safe space where the PNG students are free to discuss ideas of power and political reform. They wish to utilise educational merit to develop the nation to the point where it can be economically self-sufficient, and where the majority of local businesses are PNG owned and run. The PNG students argue that “development” in PNG can be procured using both wantok networks and Christian morality.

In chapter two I use Eriksen’s (2017) analytical framework “Going to Pentecost”. I analyse how the PNG students feel what they depict as being caught between two worlds; “third world” and “modernity”, against employing modes of Christian doctrine to distance oneself from moral impurity- as is believed to be a downfall of modernity. I will explore how God and Science intersect, such as where the PNG students find God in science.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### “Going to Pentecost” Studying Science to connect to God



Caption: Bible in Tok Pisin

The PNG students operate within a self-described duality, grappling with what they describe as feeling caught between two world- navigating their own comparative understandings of Australia as a symbol of “Western modernity” and their nation of origin as “third world”. In the previous chapter I argued that the PNG students construct and deconstruct *self* through the wantok network and student association. That the diaspora community of PNG students in North Queensland has established a bound seriality beyond national borders (Anderson 1998,29). That collectively the wantok network emphasizes practices of national consciousness- building, in particular, ‘one nation ideals’- through the language of Tok Pisin and “passin luksave” (acknowledging and showing kindness to wantoks. In this chapter I wish to expand on Pentecostal praxis which the PNG student’s practice, utilizing the methodological framework of Annelin Eriksen (2017), which she calls “going to Pentecost”.

In her methodological framework, Eriksen (2017) argues that the study of Pentecostalism can be constructed through the un-siting and re-siting of fieldwork, thereby challenging the hermeneutical habits of the researcher. To enable the study of “Pentecost” as *place*, she presents two methodological steps to this framework. The un-siting of the field, which refers to the de-territorialized form of ideas, concepts and values, and the re-siting of the field, which situates the field with specific peoples and their lived realities i.e. situating the field “somewhere”, however, not in a geographical sense (2017,166). “Going to Pentecost” allows the researcher to overcome methodological challenges, like historical continuity, as the author uses as an example, to study emerging forms of sociality (Eriksen 2017,164). By establishing “Pentecost” as an analytical construction, a *place*, she argues “Pentecost” becomes a “*place* where the immediate experience of the Holy Spirit is a defining feature of everyday life” (2017 2017,166).

In this chapter I will use this methodological framework to study how the praxis of Pentecostalism and the ideals of “the faithful servant” manifests itself in the everyday lives of the PNG students. At the specific church which the majority of the PNG students attended the pastors would preach the church vision as follows; “Well done good faithful servant” (Matt 25:14-30). This meant serving both God and serving others. The PNG students would often express the ideal of being the faithful servant in relation to me asking why they volunteered or why they, as they put it, wanted to “develop” and serve their nation. They would argue that serving God and serving others was, to paraphrase the students; “the right way to dedicate your life to something”. Therefore, I study the scientific and religious practices of the PNG

students from the framework of “going to Pentecost”. I argue that the PNG students operate utilizing their scientific inquiry and Pentecostal devotion as means to serve their nation and to become closer to God.

The chapter is structured as follows: I describe the specific Pentecostal church which the majority of the PNG students attend. I then study the interconnectedness of Pentecostal praxis and Science from the emic perspective of the PNG students- how scientific inquiry is not a result of departure from religion, nor a form of resistance to religion, but rather on behalf of religion and God. I analyse the PNG students through shared values, “self-identifying” with one another- in relation to Science and Pentecostalism. I do this, by distinguishing the rituals and values of the church they congregate and by presenting the emic understandings of God’s existence in Science. Lastly, I reflect on the empirical data of the PNG student’s Pentecostal practice using “going to Pentecost” (2017) as context.

## Saying yes to Jesus

Pentecostalism derived from Protestant Christianity, and dates back to the first century when the Holy Spirit had visited some of the followers of Jesus (Miller & Yamamori 2007,17). According to the bible “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:4). Modern-day Pentecostalism was established in 1901 and has since then been subject to “charismatic renewals” in the 1960’s and 70’s (Miller & Yamamori 2017,18). Forms of Pentecostal practice include many different permutations. The form of Pentecostalism practised at the church congregated by the PNG students is what Eriksen (2017,165) calls neo-Pentecostalism, which includes spiritual warfare, healing, and as they practice in the church attended by the PNG students, gospel- or spiritual music. Miller & Yamamori (2007,132) argue that the underpinning of Pentecostal social engagement is collective worship and building community through “serving others”.

In anthropological research, Pentecostalism has been studied as an American phenomenon turned Global religion (Austin-Broos 1997)- which spread through missionary practice. Compared to earlier forms of Christian churches, Pentecostalism is argued to be more interlaced in the everyday life and social life of the practicing (Rio, MacCarthy & Ruy 2017,07). Eriksen (2017) distinguishes between “old” and “new” forms of Pentecostalism, and furthermore, presents the form practiced in her article as “neo-Pentecostalism”. Though it includes many of the same elements, the form of neo-Pentecostalism practiced by the PNG

students has many distinctions from Eriksen's (2017) ethnography, despite also representing a form of neo-Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism is very much an umbrella term for a continuous developing of independent churches, such as the one congregated by the PNG students. Two aspects of the Pentecostal movements depicted in research which are present in the church which the PNG students congregate are; the serving of others (Miller & Yamamori 2007,132) and practising the denouncing of regionalism and pluralism, and instead engaging in unification (Rio, MacCarthy & Ruy 2017,06; Bundy 1999). Comparatively to the way in which the PNG students practice the unifying nationalistic expression of "One Nation", we might see a correlation to what is practiced in Pentecostalism.

In PNG the students would congregate different forms of Christian denominations such as Lutheran, Presbyterian, 7<sup>th</sup> day Adventists and Catholicism. However, the majority started attending this specific Pentecostal church soon after arriving in North Queensland. The exceptions to this attended Catholic services or no service at all. The latter was found to be a taboo subject and was often refrained from being discussed. Samuel, a PNG student in chemical engineering, told me that from what he had experienced in PNG, being atheist, or non-practicing- such as not attending church regularly, was "as bad as being homosexual"<sup>20</sup>, contrary to homosexual relations being illegal in PNG, it is not illegal to be atheist or to not attend church. However, Samuel explains, one becomes subject to gossip from the community and scolding from family members.

In the field I attended the Pentecostal church with the PNG students. During the sermons, the pastors would often preach of the church vision: "the faithful servant". The pastors would often highlight that all people, regardless of which Christian denominations they had followed in the past, were welcome there. Stating that the church accepted anyone who would "say yes to Jesus". This relates to an ongoing ecumenical quest in Pentecostalism, which promotes a global Christian unity (Bundy 1999). During every Sunday service the light would be dimmed, and the pastor would ask people to raise their hand if they were ready to "say yes to Jesus". After the sermon, these people would be given bibles and pamphlets about the church and about water baptisms. During my time in the field none of the PNG students were new to the church, and thus I cannot depict them "saying yes to Jesus". However, they

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<sup>20</sup> In PNG, homosexual men are criminalised under Criminal code 1974.  
<https://www.equaldex.com/region/papua-new-guinea> (Read 15.06.2020).

explained that when they had said “yes to Jesus”, they had become “the faithful servant” and allowed God to lead them in life.

The PNG students attend a Pentecostal church which has multiple locations across Australia, and South Africa. Pastors and other speakers, such as Australian Christian sexologist Patricia Weerakoon, from outside of the church would conduct seminars and sermons over a livestream. The church was popular with both domestic and international students from the nearby university, as it offered free transportation and an after-sermon dinner. This created easy access both in the terms of transport to and from the church, and further, access to a network of Christian students. Both at church events, such as sermons, workshops and dinners, and in connect groups, the majority of PNG students sat together, but others interacted with other attendees as well. The vast majority of parishioners were Australian families, specifically non-Indigenous peoples, but the youth population would consist of multinational students from countries such as Australia, America, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Sweden. The sermons, workshops and seminars were held in a large auditorium, fitting approximately 500-600 peoples. On average, 50 youths, including the PNG students, would gather in a room next to this auditorium for the dinner.

The church states itself as self-governing, in affiliation with Australian Christian Churches (ACC)- a cooperative movement of Pentecostal churches in Australia. Each of the locations that have expanded from this church are fast growing, where some can be defined as a megachurch- with both a significant number of parishioners of as well as its own streaming service and record label. Founded in the 1920s as a church preaching Pentecostal doctrine from a tent, the church expanded its growth in the 1970s and from there has become a global church which promotes itself as an inclusive Christian church- acknowledging its Pentecostal status in a few sections of their pamphlet and social media presence. Common reoccurring rituals within the church service were prayers, communion, the act of “saying yes to Jesus” and performing hill songs- a form of spirituel worship through music. Moreover, the church would hold water baptisms and conferences where parishioners would travel to other church locations within Australia. I did not attend water baptisms or out of town conferences, but throughout my time in the field I would attend church every Sunday, bible study on Saturdays- named ‘connect groups’ here, volunteer work and an all-female seminar.

Spiritual worship through music was a large part of all gatherings at the Pentecostal church, and in meetings like this all-female connect group. Not only were the singalong sessions the most frequently reoccurring ritual, it further functioned as sound cues between

prayers and to mark the start and end of each sermon. Throughout my time in the field I would join in circles of singalongs to worship songs from Australia and PNG and was asked to sing Christian songs in Norwegian as well. Their interest in hearing Christian songs in Norwegian came from a general interest in hearing songs about God from across the world. The PNG students would listen to the songs from the church at university, in their cars or on the bus- and only a few days after the church band released new songs, they would know them by heart. During connect groups participants in the singalongs would raise their hands to the sky, pray out loud, and a few times start to speak in tongue. The act in Pentecostal worship where one reaches out to the sky or raises one's hand as a "*sacred moment where one can touch God*" (Miller and Yamamori 2007,139) Speaking in tongue is a way of communicating directly through God, through the Holy Spirit. Below is an excerpt from my field journal to illustrate this;

*From out the window you can see glimmers of the sunset and the lampposts slowly warming up. The light inside is dimmed but if you squint your eyes you can make out the shadows of people sitting in a circle- on chairs, the hard floor and the beige, old sofa in the corner. Outside cricket's chirp to the sound of a faint wind, a dog barks, a car starts, but inside there is silence. Alice stands up, we all follow, eleven of us. As we form a circle around the living room, our hands interlock and our bodies start to sway. From her phone Alice plays a song that has become familiar to all of us. The synth slowly introduces a woman's voice singing "Unexpected love, you knew where I would be, you filled my life with living water. Never ending grace, you took away my shame, and my soul knows very well". As we sway, the others start to sing along to every word. Soon, the hand in mine let go and reaches to the sky. I look around to find that people have one or two hands reached up to the sky. The sound of the song becomes loud as the drums enter. Some of the girls sing, others have started to speak in another rhythm, silent prayers are uttered as tears fall from their faces.*

## The all-female seminar

Through the Pentecostal church, the PNG students were subject to forms of intersection between Christianity and Science, firstly by Christian sexologist Patricia Weerakoon, evangelist and MBBS (professional degree in medicine and surgery). This was an all-female seminar in the church, a meeting between biology, sexual health, the psyche and Christianity. I attended this seminar with four of the female PNG students, and as in other church related

events such as sermons, connect groups and volunteer work, I utilized participant observation as my research method. The PNG students arrived at the church for the seminar held by Patricia Weerakoon with a Bible and a notebook in which they would write out the key points. This seminar was attended by approximately 500 women sitting in the church campus auditorium; however, it was streamed online from one of the other connected churches and therefore the number of total participants is unknown. In the next paragraph I draw from my field journal which I brought to the seminar;

The focus of the seminar was on what Patricia Weerakoon called a “*post-truth culture*”, and an “*ideology of independence*”. These were symbols of “modernity” and consequently “immorality”. According to her, we (the participants in the seminar) were all living in a modern world which promoted the idea of “my body, my right”. The “truth” in “post-truth culture” referred to God’s word, and the referred to “culture” and “ideology of independence” she argued represented the modern rhetoric of the world. The “rhetoric of the world” meant the modern worlds influence on our bodies and our sex life. How in “modernity”, we didn’t treat our bodies according to Gods word. In Weerakoon’s words “*women should honour God with their bodies, as their bodies belong to Jesus*”. She argued that the women in the seminar needed to counteract to this “post-truth culture” and “ideology of independence” with a “counter-culture”, by promoting the following of Christ. She argued that this was the only way to true happiness. Weerakoon spoke about “post-truth culture” and associated it to an undefined “modern world” where there was access to pornography, transgender peoples and lesbians- all examples of what she argued symbolised the most problematic issues of modernity; the acceptance to follow one’s own desires. These desires, she argued, were forms of “immorality”, that would keep you away from Gods love. The idea of “immorality” as a staple of “modernity” was often promoted during the seminar, such as in Weerakoon stating “*the rhetoric of the world is the same as Satan’s to Eve in the garden*”, and “*Heaven will be better than the best orgasms you have ever had*”.

It should be noted that Weerakoon never specifically defined “modernity”, only its “immoral” factors. She explained how this age of “post-truth culture” and “ideology of independence” promoted the idea of “my body, my right”, which she claimed was quite a dangerous path away from God and the word of the bible. As the PNG students and I gathered after the seminar was over, we discussed the seminar and its content. The discussion between the PNG students highlighted a fear of immorality as part and parcel of “modernity”, and consequently “the Western world”. This became a commonly repeated concern amongst the

PNG students, where they defined the “West” as countries without “traditions”, long histories or “roots”- and used Australia and America as examples. Immediately their argument included every country in the world with a European/Western civilization, Norway included. However, one of the PNG students had seen the HBO show “Vikings” and consequently countries such as Norway and England were taken off of their “list” of Western countries. They did not specifically opine that it was due to a lack of “cultural transmission”- the inter-generational and social reproduction of praxis and information (Ellen et.al 2013,03), but rather, that Christianity, “traditions” and “roots” helped guide peoples away from “immorality”.

## **Mediating tension through the female body**

After I was invited to attend my first service with the PNG students I dressed in long pants and a long top and wore little make-up. Having researched Pentecostalism, such as Austin-Broos (1997), I was under the impression that this attire would be most fitting for when I was to attend church. When I arrived at the university bus stop, where we were to wait for the church bus, I was met by the PNG students wearing short summer dresses, big braids and jewellery. When we had arrived at the church, we were preached to by a married couple who were both ordained preachers. The woman was wearing a leopard print skirt paired with a white tank-top, and the man was dressed in light coloured shorts and a short-sleeved button-up. The congregation wore similar attire to the preachers and to the PNG students. Later, I asked a PNG student named Lucas if his fellow congregants in PNG wore this form of dressing and accessorising. He said, laughing, “*no, absolutely not*”. In PNG, he stated, women wore long Meri blouse dresses and men wore their finest shirts. He proceeded to say that this was one of the many differences between going to church in Australia and going to church in PNG. I asked him about the other differences. He said the size of the church, the music, the lights and the large following. He didn’t like to attend church here, in his words, it was just *too* different.

All of the female PNG students attended church, whilst a few of the men, such as Lucas, chose not to. The majority of the PNG students attended the Pentecostal church despite many not being raised in the Pentecostal practice. Those who did not go to a catholic church, this they stated was because of practical reasons, such as it being closer to where they lived, calmer and having more options for services during the week. Hannah, the PNG student

studying law, argued that consequently to women being more communicative with their parents whilst in North Queensland, they are more likely to abide to their expectations as well. In her opinion, going to church and living in accordance to what was being preached was a large part of those expectations.

Weerakoon stated; «*women should honour God with their bodies, as their bodies belong to Jesus*». The centrality of the body, specifically that of the female body, in Weerakoon's seminar, illustrates the embodiment of the dialectic relationship between morality and immorality. Where the tension between “morality” and “modernity” was mediated through regulatory measures of the female body. Not only did this pertain to abstinence of sexual relations, it further related to the attending of church itself. As Stewart and Strathern (2007,240) note “*the body as stage is a platform on which displays of desires, ideals, morality, self-worth and many other dimensions of action and emotion are played out in the day-to-day as well as the ritual and ceremonial context*”.

The body as encoded, can signify different forms of power and self-expression. The way in which Weerakoon relates to the body illustrate the multi-faceted regimes of “morality” surrounding it. I suggest that this politicizes the bodies of the female PNG students, in the form of the political body, which Agamben argues (1998,71) depicts as a result of politics and life- biology and sexuality as interlaced. The mediation of the tension between “morality” and “modernity” through the politicizing and regulating of the female bodies can be seen as a restoration of moral and social stability as practised by the PNG students - reflecting the flux of identity deconstruction and construction in North Queensland. I base this in what Stewart and Strathern (2007,262) argue, that in times of uncertainty the church offers a form of “anchoring influence” on this flux.

## **The idea of Westernizing**

As I elaborate on in chapter one, the PNG students are navigating what they describe as being caught between two worlds, “openminded modernity” in the “West”, and “the traditional PNG way”. Finding God in Science, and using those tools to serve their country, is where they find some resolution to the tensions. Matt, 21-year-old PNG student in psychology, expressed how he saw his generation as a hybrid of what he called “openminded modernity”- meaning there was a general acceptance of all possibilities within scientific discoveries, and

what he referred to as the “traditional PNG way”. He explained how he believed the main differences between the “openminded modernity” and the “traditional PNG way” were notions of self, specifically the individual’s ability to choose paths of life. In following the “traditional PNG way” one was subject to what he named “cultural rules”. He stated that these “rules”, such as codes of conduct with the opposite sex, attending church and acknowledging and helping ones wantoks<sup>21</sup> were important both to not become “too westernised” and that it made it easier to perform remittance.

Different students, at different times, vacillate between these positions. I study this as internalized logics of old colonial and missionary tropes on which the contemporary school system in PNG was built. From a functionalistic point of view, Malinowski (1936, in Stambach 2010,363) equated the adaptive education of Christian schooling with social development. Both Malinowski and Comaroff & Comaroff (1991) studied the educational system in South Africa. The latter authors argued that Evangelism and education were inseparable, because both “*aimed at the systematic, moral reconstruction of the person in a world in which individuals were increasingly viewed as capable of being formed and reformed by social institutions*” (Comaroff & Comaroff (1991,233). Moreover, Sukthankar (1999) argues that historically, boys have had more access to the “West” through video games and television, and women less due to “social customs”. Due to its connection to the “West”, Science and mathematics are argued to historically be male subjects. What I study as internalized logics of old colonial and missionary tropes, influence the way in which the students see themselves relating to their education. Thus, I argue that the PNG students grapple with the feeling of being caught between two worlds due to these internalized logics of both the school systems influence on PNG peoples, and specifically it’s influence on gender in education. This feeling of being caught between two worlds, is further intensified in North Queensland.

Collectively the PNG students argue that traveling to North Queensland to obtain degrees and work experience comes with the risk of becoming to “Westernized” e.g. by participating in the Australian ways of life to the point of losing touch with the homeland. They argue that to serve their country, and influence the “development” in it, they have to do so in a “moral” way. Per their definition “the West”- and its notions of “modernity”, and

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<sup>21</sup> The wantok network is interpreted as peoples who one has a familiarity with through forms of reciprocal kinships. How one plays out a Wantok relation is varied, but common denominators between forms of Wantok relations are help in obtaining resources- may it be food and shelter, obtaining votes in political schemas, or as exemplified in chapter one; help raising funds for medical expenses.

“morality” are not natural equals. “Morality” here is linked to religious perspectives on purity and danger as described by Douglas (1966) on religious beliefs correlating with social awareness. Ideas on ‘morality’ is not just a focus in relation to dating, sex or individuals own bodies, but are further influenced by understandings of greed.

I wish to illustrate this idea of “Westernizing” with an excerpt from an interview with one of the aunties in the wantok network. She is studying nursing and would often help the younger students with adapting to life in North Queensland. In our interview she expressed her concern towards the younger students potentially adapting “Western” lifestyles as such:

*“They don’t need to have the Western ideology, that particularly belongs to the West, and then lose out on the flavour of who they are. Cause it’s attractive, you know. Whether you come from Egypt, or Africa or the Pacific. It’s ok if it doesn’t work for a “civilized world”. [Saying “civilized world” jokingly] Civilization is built upon an idea that we are going to get better and better and better. But when we do, if we can do it in love and do it for love, to help others, that will be great. I believe that taking roads, sealed roads into the villages would help, but then not definitely helping wildlife when you are killing of the bird of parades, you know, maintain. It just gets out of control, you see, the motive is pure but then someone else comes on in greed”.*

The excerpt illustrates a performance of postcolonial subjectivity, which Vieira (2018,145) argues is constructed of a hybrid postcolonial understanding of self- where “Western” and “non-Western” identity is merged. The hybrid colonialised self represents a subjectivity which is ontologically unstable between not being “the West” and not being “non-West” (Vieira 2018,151). Scholars such as Comaroff & Comaroff (1991) argue that “the West” and “non-West” are dialectically produced. Thus, they can not ‘truly’ be studied as separate from each other. To study colonial encounters- precolonial and postcolonial contexts, the authors argue to equally study “the first” and “third” world (1991, xiv). The PNG students are operating within this ontological instability, which is influenced by both the colonial history of the nation, but further by their contemporary realities. As Indigenous scholar, Smith (2005,19) wrote *“Imperialism frames the Indigenous experience. It’s is part of our story, our version of modernity”*. The PNG students construct self-biographical narratives and subjectively position themselves influenced by this history and, as I argue in this thesis, the current neo-colonial relationship between PNG and Australia.

## The serving of others

The PNG students study Sciences, they say, as a way of contributing to the development of their home country and to come closer to God. Their combined definition of “development” is as follows; *a progress in the economic and health sectors of the nation- also including health and sustaining of fauna and flora. An increase in local businesses, less foreign control in existing businesses, and ultimately PNG being able to “stand on its own two feet”*. Moreover, they collectively argue that immediate impediments for development” are political corruption and lack of transparency in political affairs. Chapter five will offer a more substantial depiction on the political environment of PNG and how the PNG students’ expression of political agency in North Queensland- and how this enacts with PNG. However, the PNG students do associate political corruption with greed and this they conclude comes from politicians not operating through Christian morals but rather on the basis of personal gain. I study this in comparison with the ideals of Christian morality, as interpreted and practiced by the PNG students- which is dedicating one’s life to serving others and God. In this comparison, I suggest that the faithful servant ideal is the underpinning of why the PNG students voice that political corruption is the most immediate impediment for the specific forms of development they wish to see transpire in PNG. They argue that operating outside of Christian morality can create paths to greed and as associated the “West”, the potentiality of immorality. As for example, in the discussion between the PNG students after the seminar with Patricia Weerakoon, they highlighted a fear of immorality as part and parcel of “modernity” and consequently “the Western world”.

Through the emic perspective of the PNG students there is a common understanding that they are to return to PNG post obtaining degrees and relevant work experience. What I found conducting participant observations was that PNG students often would ask if others had expressed a desire to settle in Queensland, or elsewhere in Australia, after obtaining their degrees. Why this was a curious topic was due to a variety of reasons, such as family obligations and work or income potentiality. Several of the PNG students were firstborn in their family, and, as the PNG students explained, regardless of gender there is an obligation in PNG upon the firstborn child to help younger siblings financially. Therefore, many found it difficult to navigate their financial futures after they had conducted their studies.

The argument posed to me during interviews with PNG students who were the eldest of the siblings was that remitting to PNG meant helping out with housework and work the

land- for those whose family had large gardens or e.g. ran lumber or coffee plantations. On the other hand, working in Australia would potentially mean higher incomes which they would spend funding higher education for one or more siblings. Two of the PNG students had parents who wanted them to stay in Australia after university, namely due to job opportunities. To this they both expressed ambivalence as they wanted to utilize their degrees in chemical engineering in the health and agricultural sector of PNG. Though they never expressed to have found a resolution to this, they said that an eternal debate they had with themselves was whether remittance or staying would serve the nation more.

## Utilizing Science

PNG peoples are dependent on foreign institutions in order to obtain degrees in fields outside technical and administrative knowledge. Though there are institutions in PNG that offer degrees in Sciences, the PNG students chose studying in North Queensland for the quality of education and access to funding towards research. To paraphrase Alecia, a second-year biomedicine major; there are institutions in PNG that offer degrees in fields such as medicine and biomedicine, but she argues they suffer from outdated curriculums and poor laboratory facilities and are therefore lesser options.

Though their fields of study span from Science to psychology, law and tourism- fields that can be argued as being quite distinct from each other, the PNG students see these fields as interconnected in the way they see God in relation to their studies. Utilizing their degrees in aid of “development”, as defined above, is a shared or collective motive, identified inter-subjectively through this shared goal- based in morality and value ascribed scientific knowledge. Both whilst conducting participant observation and conducting unstructured-, and semi-structured interviews, these collective motivations would frequently become the main topic of conversation. The conversations played out in varied context and with specific points of view- often in relation to specific fields of science, but most pertinently the focus would lie on how they saw other student’s degrees in relation to their own.

By creating continuity within the wantok network they had established in North Queensland, and additionally discussing how the network would function after remittance, they were able to make long term plans. For instance, students who were in the fields of medicine, biomedicine and psychology would focus on access to medical centres in rural

areas of PNG. What these discussions would include was not only availabilities of land, staff and equipment to build and run medical centres, but also boats, roads and walking paths that would make them available for patients in surrounding villages.

Yanet, a third-year medical student currently volunteers for a non-profit organisation called “PNG Health Project”, founded in 2017 by PNG born medical student Eve Golma. The organisation, which is run by medical students, tackles medical inequalities and the gap in health literacy by educating youths on issues such as nutrition and exercise, mental/sexual health and oral hygiene. Their vision is to empower youths to become advocates for the next generation of PNG peoples<sup>22</sup>. Yanet travels with the organisation to PNG in between semesters to educate youths in their schools, where the location depends on which schools they can connect with.

Collectively the PNG students have the joint goal of development, as they have defined through the development of sectors including, but not limited to, the health sector. There is large focus on rural areas within on Provinces, which often are areas where the PNG students are from. Yanet expressed a wish to utilise her medical degree to assist in the health sector of the East New Britain Province. In an interview, she explained the issues in this province relating to lack of staff, equipment space at hospitals and health care centres (Kokopo 2020)<sup>23</sup>. She believes educating youths will have a large impact on the currently struggling health services of the Province. Yanet believed that by teaching youth about health, it would eliminate the need to immediately expand the resources of the health sector in that specific province.

The PNG students would join the knowledge from their individual degrees and navigate how their networks in PNG and North Queensland would be of use. The peoples they referred to were not only current or former students at this or other Australian universities but extended to friends and family members of people they grew up with. In the evenings they would gather in share houses to make foods and continue the discussions. Matt, the 21- year old student, would draw lines in the air, as if connecting dots, and although currently metaphorically, point to people and give them specific tasks in projects he wanted to realise. Drawing from his degree in psychology, his plans for “development” in PNG surrounded the establishment and sustainability of businesses owned and operated by PNG

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<sup>22</sup> Website for the “PNG health project” <https://www.pnghealthproject.com/> (read 20.05.2020)

<sup>23</sup> This issue has increased in facing the epidemic Covid-19, where the second case of Covid-19 in PNG( the first case where the patient had not travelled abroad) was located in East New Britain Province.

peoples in Port Moresby of the Central region of PNG. He argued the importance of the availability of mental health professionals as vital for sustainability of the PNG workforce, and added that the lack of mental health professionals was a problem that span across the nation<sup>24</sup>.

## God and Science

Throughout the semester several of the PNG students took part in a book study with other congregation members, reading and discussing the work of Dr. Caroline Leaf. Dr. Leaf is a cognitive neuroscientist who utilises her scientific background as well as Christian beliefs to guide readers into their ‘right paths in life’. In the book “The perfect you” (2017) she argues for the alignment of neurological, physiological and religious belief. I draw from a section of her book on religions connection to Science:

*As we see in quantum physics, God has created a probabilistic, open-ended universe. There is an infinite set of possibilities of perception. Although this may sound complicated, it is essentially another way of describing free will and the power of Deuteronomy 30:19. We can choose life or death, blessings or curses. Quantum physics, in other words, is a mathematically based description of the open-mindedness of choice. God uses science to reveal his majesty and the gift of freedom he has given us. (Dr. Leaf, 2017,32)*

Where the two medical professionals, Christian sexologist Patricia Weerakoon (from the all-female seminar) and Dr. Caroline Leaf, intersect is a newfound validity to Christian belief being functionally sound in PNG students navigating reality in North Queensland. By employing religion and science as a natural unison, the PNG students were able to articulate the coexisting consciousness of Christian social structure and scientific inquiry. Attending church functions and social functions with other wantoks was a way to keep oneself, and each other accountable in abstaining from what they argued to be “modern”, or “Western” forms of “immorality”. This was symbolically portrayed in praying for each other, and share stories, insecurities and questions in bible studies and religious book clubs. The act of praying for others and sharing in vulnerability was intended as acts of serving others, as the vision of the church would suggest. However, it also ventured to administrate other members of the student association- e.g. it was common knowledge amongst the PNG students who attended church

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<sup>24</sup> Report from WHO (2014), largely affected by lack of reports on mental health workforce, availabilities of treatment facilities, outpatient treatment and examples of programs.

[https://www.who.int/mental\\_health/evidence/atlas/profiles-2014/png.pdf?ua=1](https://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/atlas/profiles-2014/png.pdf?ua=1) (Read: 02.05.2020)

and organised activities thereof, and who did not. Such as Samuel, a PNG student studying chemical engineering, who explained how growing up there was a church within a few minutes walking distance in every direction of his house. His family were 7th day Adventist, but whilst in North Queensland he had chosen to not attend any services, just pray and practice his devotion by himself.

Since the independence of PNG in 1975, the nation has seen a rise of urbanisation with peoples relocating to larger cities, such as the capital, for work. Barker (2013) argues that the church reinforced the village mentality of being a single polity (153), this is further translated into the schools. Building on Barker's (2013) argument, we see a parallel to wantok networks functioning in a similar manner – acting as a unifier of the PNG students through reciprocal, familiar relations. As diaspora, religion also acts a unifier between PNG students through ideas of “morality”. Not only were the Christian practices a way in which the PNG students found community, it further intensified their relationship to PNG. This factors into what Skrbis (1999,40) refers to as “ideas of homeland”. The author presents the term “homeland” as largely dependent on individuals’ constitutional selves, and in the individuals’ embeddedness and connection to diaspora communities. Ideas of homeland are argued to have the power to evoke intense emotions that can put attitudes into action (Skrbis 1999,40). An example of ideas of homeland in action are romanticized goals to which individuals dedicated their lives. Scientific inquiry, and orchestrating plans to utilize this knowledge towards development is an example of such attitudes into action. This is depicted by Skrbis (1999) as an individual process, but I argue the network of wantoks that the PNG students act within power these intense emotions towards ideas of homeland. Furthermore, retaining the ideas of life before going to Australia allows the PNG students to more easily return to PNG, as is there emic wish- which entails staying true to religious convictions.

## God in Science

I argued that Science is not a departure from religion, but rather on behalf of religion. This is because of all the ways the PNG students claimed to see God in science, and because they argue God put them in Science- placing God as the omniscient centre of the ontological universe. In this section of the chapter, I draw from an edited excerpt from an unstructured interview with Ada, a post graduate student in Marine biology. In the interview, she was

telling me about coming back to mainland after a fieldtrip she had taken with her fellow students to an Island near the university;

*Everyone was quiet except for the motor [on the boat], and I heard this voice, it talked to me. Cause I can't swim very well, even though I'm a marine person, I don't swim very well, so I knew that limitations were there. I knew that any future role would not involve the ocean, in my mind at the time. Any form of water, not even the river, I'm going to do something in the mountains, or something terrestrial. At that moment I had someone whisper to me "you belong to the sea, you belong to the ocean" and I turned around, and looked, but there was no one. I laughed, I scoffed at what the voice told me. Yeah right, you expect this person who is not even capable to swim a hundred meters, to work in the ocean, you got to be joking. So, I totally forgot about it. But later, the voice was right.*

*I came into fisheries, I came into tuna, and oceanic fisheries, it was right. And now, I find myself going into conservation. (...) I feel that my calling is to advocate for the protection of nature, through sustainable practices. And I do that because I believe that nature has been created by God, and God himself has appointed me, (...) that's my vocation, that's his calling on my life. So, I think it's really, it's kind of like a circle, God put me on this earth to be this advocate for nature, whatever it is that we do, we do it in a sense of sustainability and not to destroy the land or the seas or whatever else that live in it. You know, we must make sure that it's done in a way where it's in harmony and we take what we need but we don't create so much destruction in the process. So, I feel that that's my role, to advocate for sustainable practices that protect the environment and what's in it, I do that because I know that it's my vocation and my calling from the God that created those things".*

Ada, who at the time was amid finishing her PhD in marine biology, spoke of many moments through her life when God had spoken to her. Where she had seen what would become her university campus in dreams and heard the voice of God by rivers near her home village. As seen through her own words, God had put her in marine biology to protect what he had created. She saw God in nature and as a driving force towards Science as well. This is a commonly echoed belief amongst the PNG students, God as a motivator towards studies surrounding environmental sustainability. The sustainability of nature would often be associated with “morality” amongst the Science students- in conversations relating “immorality” with “the West” and capitalism. The excerpt from another interview that is written below, illustrates how deep rooted the ideas of Christianity, sustainability and “morality” can be;

*“My sister has been offered millions and millions of dollars [AUD] to just sell a portion of the land and she goes: no, no, no, I can’t because I am not, it doesn’t belong to me. They respond: what? But aren’t you, oh, your other sister? Can she come up? To which she responds: it doesn’t belong to her either. They reply: But you are the landowners? [Because we own like, a significant amount of land all throughout the Eastern Highlands.] And she goes: It’s not for sale, do you not get it? They respond: But we want to give you, you know, 3,1 million. She goes: It’s not for sale. I don’t know what you aren’t getting. I’m the custodian, God is the owner. [The PNG student takes a break before continuing] That’s the kind of believe that you can’t really break through. It’s important to bring kids up with ownership of their identity, so they are not looking to fill it up with another culture and someone else’s way of doing things”.*

For the PNG students the scientific disciplines do not offer different relationships to God; however, their relationship to God presents itself depending on the field- such as in Ada’s depiction of God presenting as a voice echoing “*you belong to the sea, you belong to the ocean*”. The fields of Science were chosen by the PNG students as a result of opportunity, family and their relationship with God, in the idea of serving others. Some chose to walk in the paths of their family members. Like Peninnah, who is obtaining a degree in biomedicine, and said she was inspired by her grandfather who was a surgeon and her grandmother who has a nurse.

## “Going to Pentecost”

I use Eriksen’s (2017) methodological framework “Going to Pentecost” to illustrate how the Pentecostal ideas of “the faithful servant” animates the practices of PNG students as an un-sited (not a specific location). Moreover, the Pentecostal ideals are re-sited (non-geographical “somewhere”) “Pentecost” thus becoming a “*’place’ where the immediate experience of the Holy Spirit is a defining feature of everyday life*” (Eriksen 2017,166). The author argues that the creating of a ‘safe place’, a “Pentecost” includes creating borders and boundaries. In Eriksen’s (2017,175) empirical data, which was collected in Vanuatu, “going to Pentecost” meant seeing the struggles of making order through a war with evil- such as demons and witches, that surrounded peoples there every day. She studied the spiritual and physical borders which kept these evils away. Arguing that borders are crucial in ‘entity-making’ in all Pentecostal sociality, in that it creates a form of autonomy (Eriksen 2017,176).

I study how the PNG students operate as faithful servants within the “Pentecost”. Their borders pertained to keeping out that which was deemed “immoral”. The female body can be interpreted as a mediator for the tensions presented by Weerakoon of “the West” as “immoral” and “the church” as “moral”. Thus, I argue, it can be studied both as a spiritual and physical border, securing the body in morality, and with God. The way that the PNG students speak of God ordaining all life and everything in nature, and of God being the element giving them as Christians a purpose- given directly by him, makes it impossible for Science to be a departure from religion. The methodological framework of “going to Pentecost” thus enables the study of a lived reality where one operates within “Pentecost” and as “the faithful servant” anywhere and in any capacity. Eriksen (2017,173) argues that “in Pentecost”, borders are always present. Spiritually, materially/physically and morally. In the authors work, the material or physical borders are presented as fences, hedges and signs that say, “keep out”, however, the female bodies have no fences, hedges or signs. But I do argue that spiritually, and morally, the act of abstaining from sex is a physical border of sorts. Where the mentality is to “keep out” “immorality”, although it is proclaimed through actions and not writings.

In creating autonomy, an important feature of “Pentecost” as place is creating order. The creating of borders is implemented in a continuous effort to distinct from articulations of “good and evil, outside and inside and past and future” (Eriksen (2017,175). To become closer to God, and “morally” serve their country, the PNG students are dependant on these border making efforts to stay on what they understand as the right paths in life. This they experience as a continuous process, where they administrate who attends church and who does not, or if someone has expressed that they do not wish to perform remittance after all. Moreover, how they pray for each other and together, can be studied as means to motivate each other as well.

## Summary

The PNG students attend a neo-Pentecostal church, which promotes ecumenical Christianity and the “faithful servant” ideal. The sociality with has roots in the church, such as bible studies, or connect groups as they are called, act as a unifier in its promotion of the connection of science and Christianity. This chapter illustrates this connectedness of Pentecostal practice and scientific devotion. Both which are means to serve their nation- which they argue has to be done in line with Christian morality, and to become closer to God- who, they argue, put

them in\ Science. The methodology of “Going to Pentecost” provides a framework in which we see that abstaining from immorality, which the PNG students argue can be found in “Western” and “modern” societies, is done by creating autonomy through spiritual and physical borders. Through the church the female PNG students are subject to a seminar by Dr. Patricia Weerakoon, who promotes the idea that the body and sex can be utilised by what she calls “post-truth culture” to steer the women away from God and morality. The regulation of the female body becomes a way to navigate the tension expressed by the PNG students between aspects of “morality” and “modernity”.

Chapter three will focus on gender, specifically women in Science. In the chapter, I draw from the theory “The Mindful Body” by Sheper-Hughes and Lock (1987), sectioned off into the concepts of “individual body”, “social body” and lastly the “political body” or “body politic”. I study constructions of “womanhood” and how the female Science students both challenge and flaunt stereotypical gender norms and reaffirm them through Pentecostal practice.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### Flouting the Norms

Constructions of “Womanhood” and the theory of the “Mindful body”



*Caption: Flowers from a day in the garden with Naamah*

*After a particularly brutal public flogging Ada left her husband. This was a decision that upset their families and led her to become the recipient of backtalk, whispers and judgement. But she wanted to make it on her own, and become the breadwinner for her family, so she got a job within the maritime sector of PNG. Later, and at the same time as a male colleague, she applied to go to university in Australia. Her male colleague was told he would be able to come back to his job after his time at university and received funding to bring his wife and children to Australia with him. Ada was met with resentment, and was told she would then lose her job, and consequently the income that provided food and shelter for her children. Despite of this she decided to move to Australia to obtain her degree.*

Ada and I met under a large tree at the university campus. Sitting opposite each other on a stone bench, during an unstructured interview, she said “*empikinini man larim*” which is Tok Pisin for “*he is a man, let him*”. A member of her family had said it to her after she was beaten by her husband. The vignette is extracted from the first interview I conducted with Ada, where she spoke of her life before moving to North Queensland. She went on to tell me how a few years into her studies the voices of her family and people in her village had become increasingly silent. That she hoped, and firmly believed, that women obtaining degrees gradually would change the way women in PNG were viewed.

In this chapter I focus on gender, specifically that of diaspora women in Science. The heterogeneity of the diaspora experience is influenced by attributes such as gender, which factors into the formation of the diaspora. Nevertheless, as Amelia & Barglowski (2018) and Pinto (2016) illustrate, there is a lack of research on women in diaspora studies, and on women “doing” diaspora. Social scientists Stewart and Strathern (2007) studied forms of influence on gender and bodily awareness and expression in PNG women, in PNG. In their study they describe a desire expressed by the PNG women to dress as “outsiders”, which in their ethnography meant peoples outside of PNG such as Australia. Furthermore, the research depicted that through since the arrival of Christianity, PNG women developed a bodily awareness which affected the way in which they viewed their bodies. Research showed that this resulted in more frequent bathing and use of accessories (Stewart & Strathern 2007,241). Comparatively, the church and its influence on the female body of the diaspora, as seen the

example of Weerakoon's seminar, has kindred affects- in that it influenced the way in which the women viewed their bodies. Through the seminar, the female PNG students were subject to the idea that the body could mediate and regulate the tension between "morality" and "modernity". Building on the thematic focus of the body I draw from the theory "The Mindful Body" by Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987).

To holistically explore theoretical constructions of bodies I discuss the dynamics of gender and power, utilising the medical anthropological theory by Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987). The "individual body", as a phenomenological concept, concerns lived realities of the 'body-self'. The "social body", as a concept of structuralism and symbolism, concerns the exchange of meaning that exists between the 'natural' and social worlds. Lastly, the "political body" or "body politic", as a concept of post-structuralism, concerns the "regulation, surveillance and control" of bodies. The "political body" disciplines the individual body along with regulating populations through the social body, which further enables the study of how bodies are socially produced (Scheper-Hughes, Lock 1987,7-8). Through these embedded concepts I wish to research the ways in which diaspora women perusing Science are challenging constructions of "womanhood" and in consequence flouting stereotypical gender norms. I study the everyday lived realities of the diaspora women from PNG- examining the relation between educated, working women and marriage. I argue that through their scientific inquiry, the PNG students are flouting gender norms- and consequently accessing socio-economic mobility outside of PNG.

The pool of female PNG students is represented by women 18 to 49 years of age, some of which are currently, or have been married. A minority have children, and of those most have children who are currently living in PNG with family members. None of the PNG students brought their spouses with them to PNG, but two brought their children. As the chapter will illustrate, age and reciprocal responsibilities- such as to children or younger siblings, are attributes which influence the diaspora and the purpose for performing remittance.

## **Construction of "womanhood"**

Dickson-Waiko's (2013) article on women's roles during and after the colonial era in PNG, depicts a vast majority of female subjects exempt from the public experience of colonial rule

(2013,179). Therefore, she argues that colonisation, independence and decolonisation were simultaneous events for women in PNG, all taking place in 1975 (Dickson-Waiko 2013,177). This further coincided with a globalised movement of second-wave feminism reflecting on sexist power structures, highly influenced by Betty Friedan's book "The Feminine Mystique" (1963). The focus of the book was on American women, but it references the idea that education, independence and equality with men create unfeminine women- which leads to women's continued existence in domestic spheres- and eventually creating despair. The author argues, that this imagined "feminine" is old fashioned and should no longer have merit, because the reifying idea of "feminine" and "unfeminine" "womanhood" leaves women striving for a form of feminine fulfilment that will never arrive (Friedan 1963,26-27). The book highlights a study with graduates from Barnard College, situated in New York, where a large minority of recent graduates blamed education for "*making them want rights*" as well as vocations- consequently creating desolation in returning to domestic roles (Friedan 1963,29).

This typifies, to a degree, the dissonance currently experienced by educated women in PNG. An inability to contently exist in two roles, and further, to embody the 'transitioning' of women's status and reconstructions of "womanhood". Rhetoric situating educated women outside of "traditional" gender norms appears in ethnography on PNG, shows that educated and working women are seen as a potential threat to the uncontested patriarchal power structure which is found in the majority of PNG societies (Spark 2011,166). Qualitative data from educated women, both from rural and urban areas of PNG, illustrates that education constructed a form of "womanhood" that was "inauthentic" and "imported"- here meaning "non-traditional" or "too modern". These constructed versions of "authentic womanhood" are utilised to exclude women from entering the male dominant avenue of education and affluence- both associated with "modernity". (Spark 2011,166-167) Women obtaining educations is therefore argued to be in opposition with 'continuity of the past'. Moreover, education in PNG has historically been engendered through a system loosely based on the structure of missionary schools, where females were put in domestic sciences and males in practical trades (Sukthankar 1999,178). Sukthankar (1999,173) argues that in PNG mathematics and Science traditionally are understood as "male subjects" which she relates to its apparent connection to "the West", through the practical examples the students are given. Furthermore, women are less encouraged to pursue higher education, and therefore, the fields of mathematics and Science have become male dominated (Sukthankar 1999,174).

Following this line of logic, it's possible to argue that the female PNG students presented in this thesis are contesting and challenging constructions of "womanhood", both in relation to education, and more specifically to that of women in Science and mathematics. Moreover, Spark's (2011,167) explains, that women who obtain degrees often refrain from marriage. The challenging of constructions of "authentic womanhood" thus poses a possible threat to the uncontested patriarchal power structure in PNG. As the re-construction of "womanhood" through education and employment situates women in a reality where their status is in a 'state of transitioning'. This 'transition' generates what Jolly (2010) examines as introduced inequalities that occur in the alternating structure of a nation state. Arguably, this change leads to chaos and confusion as it challenges pre-existing forms of hierarchy and socio-economic difference (Jolly 2010,266). Krug et.al (2002,99) analyses this in relation to gender and domestic violence to find that:

*... intimate partner violence will be highest in societies where the status of women is in a state of transitioning. Where women have a very low status, violence is not "needed" to enforce male authority. On the other hand, where women have a high status, they will probably have achieved sufficient power collectively to change traditional gender roles. Partner violence is thus usually highest at the point where women begin to assume non-traditional roles or enter the workforce.*

Currently PNG has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in the world, prominently outside of the urban regions, such as the Highlands. Therefore, violence towards women in PNG has been argued to be an epidemic (Solomon 2018). As a result of the possibility of violence Spark (2011) found that the women in her study chose to stay unmarried after obtaining education and jobs. Moreover, they were opposing marriage after education because they felt they would have to relinquish their achievements and careers in order to embody the role of the "traditional" form of "womanhood". Combining the roles of an educated individual and the constructed notion of "authentic womanhood" was therefore perceived as an impossible task (2011,170).

The concept of the "individual body" concerns subjective experience phenomenologically incorporated into the 'body self'. Constructions of the "body self" can be rooted in societal perceptions and in one's relation to others. Scheper-Hughes and Lock's (1987,15) empirical examples illustrate constructions of the "individual body" as being comprised of multiple selves. The concept of the "social body" is a symbol; one connecting nature, culture and society. Scheper Hughes and Lock (1987) argue that together, the

“individual body” and “social body” collectively represent nature and culture, and moreover, power and control (23). Power and control are largely visible in the regulatory measures of the “social body”. As an example, from my empirical data, the PNG students attending the women’s seminar with Christian sexologist Patricia Weerakoon can exemplify collectively produced social bodies of the women in attendance- through restrictions and regulation of sexual relationships. The construction of the “individual body” as promoted by the church, and by Weerakoon, may then symbolise an “individual body” influenced by perceptions of “morality”.

## **Regulations, surveillance, and control over female bodies**

Post-structuralism depicts identity as inscribed by a historical context. Building on Foucault’s approach to subjectivity, Barker (2000) argues that in post-structuralism “*we are gendered through the power of regulated and regulatory discourses*” (2000,360). The “political body” or “body politics” concerns regulations, surveillance and control, essentially portraying forms of discipline embedded into the body. In depicting the framework of postcolonial feminism, Baker (2000,346) states that in a postcolonial context there exists a ‘double burden’ on women being both a colonial subject of imperial power, and subaltern to colonial and native men.

Flouting norms, in constructing a contemporary “womanhood”, can enable women to regain power over their overall “individual”, “social” and “political bodies”. The relationship between the “three bodies” concern dynamics of power and control, moreover the boundaries of the individual and body politic are blurred in an actual or imagined threat on continued existence such as rituals or production of population (Scheper-Hughes, Lock 1987,24). Exercised control of political bodies may therefore be orchestrated should a society be in crisis or threatened in relation to production and reproduction (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987,24). Thus, in a study of the deconstruction and constructions of gender norms, through the blurred boundaries of the “individual body” and the “political body”, or “body politic”, we can examine expressions of restriction through gender-based violence against women in PNG.

Barker (2013) used the term “fused movements” to illustrate the parts that make up the fabric of the national identity in PNG. These included Christianity, what he names “mythic” knowledges- witchcraft and sorcery included, and reciprocal moralities (2013,153-154). The PNG students argue that accusations of witchcraft are used as means to regulate women’s

social mobility and sociality. The consensus in the context of PNG is that a sorcerer is most often a male who in most instances uses power for good, whilst a witch can be a male or female possessed by evil spirits, who most often uses powers for evil (Stewart 2015,183). Sorcery and witchcraft are commonly blamed for illness or death before, or even as a substitute to, medical consultation. It is also used in political elections, and after the introduction of modern capitalism it has been incorporated in ‘hired killers’ (Onagi 2015,7-9).

Accusations of witchcraft and sorcery reside in PNG to this day, with articulation varying depending on provinces. For instance, Lawrence (2015) argues that matrilineal societies create a framework which often shields women from the violence’s accusations of witchcraft can result in- due to exercise of autonomy (55). Despite witchcraft and sorcery being part of the “fused movements”, few practitioners admit to partaking in accusations or ‘healing’ as it was not socially sanctioned by colonists, and is not socially sanctioned by Christianity (Lawrence 2015,58). Through the Witchcraft act of 1542, witchcraft was defined as a capital offence. The law included conjuring spirits, enchantments and sorcery for personal gain or to harm or destroy others (Keenan 2015,201). The introduced Western judicial system in PNG draws from Christian principles in trials. This was introduced to phase out witchcraft and sorcery (Stewart 2015,192). However, incorporated Christian doctrine and witchcraft and sorcery, e.g. by killing a suspected witch on church grounds or having a pastor witness the event, has appeared within the “fused movements” of PNG. (Stewart 2015,192).

Though research shows that both males and females can be accused of witchcraft, the arguments of the PNG students suggest that women more often are targeted in accusations of witchcraft as means of regulating women’s movements and sociality. Accusing someone of witchcraft has also been argued to be a ‘symptom of envy’ (Foster 1972 Scheper-Hughes and Lock in 1987,24). If we study this in relation to the high rates of targeted violence against women in PNG, we can see a link to Spark’s (2011) research regarding increased violence on women who have higher education and consequently increased opportunity for social mobility. In the excerpt below, I draw from an interview with a female PNG student who argues that false accusations of witchcraft and sorcery often comes from male expression and anger- as a form of restricting women’s sociality and movement;

*“I got news about my auntie. She was stripped naked, told that she was a witch and they killed her and threw her down a toilet pit. My niece fell on the ground, because she just lost her dad a year ago. They did this to her mum, and it was her uncle that did that to her mum. And she is screaming and crying. What do I do with that information, how do I feel? I’m*

*enraged of course. I'm angry and I'm sad. I'm broken, and I'm weeping, and so the only thing I can do, at that moment, for myself is to throw myself at the throne at the foot of the cross and say "Jesus, Jesus, I want to cry" and then I go, and I cry. Things have happened to so many women, in the villages we have lost so many. So many through false accusations by men who want to express themselves and violate life, and so they killed her that way. There was no funeral. She [the deceased aunties daughter] goes, and she gets her out of the toilet pit. She pulls her mother out of the toilet pit, washer her and then buries her".*

Expressions of violence and accusations of witchcraft can be used as a regulatory and restrictive measure towards the social mobility and sociality of women in PNG. These restrictions influence constructions of self and moreover, the reconstruction of “womanhood”, and flout norms, which the PNG students embody. Note, I do not argue that witchcraft is a constructed form of “womanhood”, but rather, building on the PNG students arguments, that accusations of witchcraft can be used should one be interpreted to flout constructions of “womanhood”.

## The hybrid generation

The female PNG students will here be sectioned of into two age related categories- “younger students”, and “mature aged students”. In Australian universities they use the term “mature aged students” for students over 30 years of age. There it is quite common for peoples to start university later in life, and therefore one hears this term often. Thus, the female PNG students aged 18-29 are referred to as “younger students” and those aged 30-49 are referred to as “mature aged students”. I construct these categories because of a notable difference which appeared in the data collected on gender and engendered issues. In my interpretation this was due to the difference in age and in established reciprocal relations.

The way in which the female PNG students view obtaining a degree, and later working in their fields, was highly linked to reciprocal relations and lived experience. The younger students, who had not been married and did not have children, did not talk about partners or marriage. They spoke of their aspirations in building medical centres, educating PNG on health, donating salaries to organisation, working in the UN and developing access to legal counsel for people regardless of economic background. The mature aged students, both married and divorced, with children, bared concerns surrounding what they argued to be naivety expressed by the younger students. One of the mature aged students’ ones asked me

why I spent so much time around the younger students. And expressed a concern surrounding their focus to “develop” and change the nation, instead of working towards being able to put food on the table for their families.

The mature aged students had a larger focus on establishing themselves as economically independent and educated, compared to the younger students. This did by no means mean they did not partake in the discussions on developing sectors in PNG. However, they would focus on obtaining resources for school fees, and such, for their children as it was seen as a more urgent and immediate priority. The younger students, especially those who were firstborn, were aware of the reciprocal duties they had towards family and members of their communities. Non the less, they claimed the ability to both reciprocate these duties, as well as serving their nation. The differences in the ages and reciprocal responsibilities of the PNG students may illustrate how the younger students can express a mentality of belonging to a new kind of generation. A hybrid generation which is intersubjectively constructed through the social body-self.

Though the pool of the younger students strongly believed theirs was a generational hybrid, constructed of the “traditional PNG way” and “modernity”, they acknowledged that the national identity had not incorporated such a contemporary PNG identity. However, they argue that the construction the individual and social self in North Queensland, was an example of a transformed form of identity, reconfigured in the idea of hybridity. This expanded to reciprocal relationships and ideas of gender and relationships between genders. The main argument for this chapter surrounds the flouting of gender norms, however, to what extent this was practiced was varied in everyday sociality. Despite the PNG students relocating to North Queensland, they were expected to keep with parental motivations. These included sociality between gender, such as dating and abstaining from sexual relationships. Here the male PNG students would tend not to keep with parental expectations as strictly as the females.

## **Navigating gendered issues**

In some sense, obtaining degrees in Science and mathematics, and in consequence entering a male dominated sphere, in entering what Sukthankar (1999) argued to traditionally be “male subjects”, is flouting constructed gender norms. However, the female PNG students would in cases reaffirm gender norms through their sociality in North Queensland, such as in not

engaging in dating, or in partying. Aunties and Uncles<sup>25</sup> would often portray the role of administrating younger students in keeping with parental expectations. They would also encourage them to prepare for life after remittance, navigating present gender norms, and gendered issues- such as the argued epidemic of violence on women (Solomon 2018).

Naamah, one of the aunties, felt it necessary to prepare the younger students for situations such as the attempted kidnapping in Port Moresby, (see chapter one vignette) should they be exposed to them. She explained her reasoning behind this ‘thought experiment’, stating that in doing so «*You start to question, why is it that I just accept what I see around me?*”. She hoped to challenge what she argued was a form of socially sanctioned violence towards women. Moreover, she wanted to display how to utilize the wantok network after remittance;

*“You grow up just accepting it. There are alarm systems going off (...) and we don’t listen to those alarm systems. The gates are flung right open and there is a stampede of unrighteous things happening all the time that you continue to accept as part of your culture, which is what we do. Yeah, my auntie was beaten half to death but she’s fine, she will learn not to go, and you know, talk to a married man. She didn’t do the act, oh, and by the way he (her own husband) has been unfaithful to her many times, but he is a man, he is allowed to do that.*

*We just accept that, because, I mean, what do you do? How can you change it? I want to challenge them [the younger students] to mend the gate, to push out the crowd and all the white noise and say “hang on, hang on, do I agree with this? Why is my heart going one million miles per second? Why am I sweating, why am I holding my breath?” probably because the checking system is now going “BEEP BEEP BEEP, THIS IS WRONG, THIS IS WRONG” but what am I gonna do about it?” Well firstly, think it through, do you want to accept what you see? Don’t you? If you don’t accept it, are you required to put an action to it? It’s your choice. If you are going to put an action towards it, think about what you would do, how you will solve it. Who would you use, what resources have you got?”*

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<sup>25</sup> Here “aunties” and “uncles” are not necessarily biological relatives. Rather they are mature aged PNG students who help the younger students e.g. when moving to North Queensland. These aunties and uncles are a part of the wantok network, the diaspora community and the PNG student association.

She continued by arguing that talking about the issue of violence towards women was not enough. That the younger students had to mobilize and start a revolution;

*"I have watched them [the younger students] talk about it and they just say nothing, and they go home. I have watched them speak about the news. Any Papua New Guinean student will go "did you hear about this?" and go "yeah, the prime minister will do this and that, he is going to do it" and they discuss what is already happening and what he is going to do. They don't discuss how they feel, what they think about it, what they are going to do about it. They don't discuss any of that. They just talk, so it's just meaningless, unless we actually start a revolution. God says; when there is three of you, you can start a revolution, just the three of you."*

Before unpacking this, I wish to establish the definition of agency as "*a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create*" by Mahmood (2001, 203). Mahmood (2001) studied pious women in Egypt through a women's mosque movement, to find that women were asserting themselves by recoding and redeploying the hegemonic meaning of what had been portrayed as a male dominated sphere, i.e. the mosque (2001,205). Comparatively, the female PNG students are gaining agency and empowerment by recoding and redeploying what historically has been a male dominated field i.e. Science and mathematics. Thus, in my analytical interpretation, "the revolution", as Naamah names it, may have already begun. Their resistance to social norms is visible in their obtaining scientific degrees, yes, but moreover, through how they "do" diaspora. As an example, the female PNG students' agency and resistance towards gender norms are visible through them holding executive roles in the student association. By doing this, they are accessing social mobility outside of PNG.

## Diaspora women

In North Queensland, deconstructing, and constructing the body-self, also manifested in aspects of power in relation to gender. The PNG students explained that in North Queensland the power dynamics between genders were expressed very differently than in PNG. For instance, as I state above, in the student association females currently held four out of the six executive roles. Previously one of the female PNG students, a younger student studying law, had portrayed the role of president in the association. Seen from the concept of the symbolic and structuralist notion of the "social body" this exemplifies a state of transitioning of

women's sociality and social mobility. In relation to this, I asked several of the female PNG students if they saw a possibility of a female prime minister in PNG, however, the consensus on the topic was "*maybe in 20 years or so*".

As a general consensus, the female PNG students expressed similar difficulties in the structuring of combined roles as the women presented in Friedan's (1963) book. They experienced a conflictual relationship with power structures, gender norms and constructions of "womanhood" - as lived in PNG and in North Queensland. Moreover, as they are planning to perform remittance, they expressed an uncertainty to the structure of reality- to which construction of "womanhood" they would adhere. This related heavily to the political body or body politic- how they may be shaped by, or expected to adhere by, restrictions and regulations.

The female PNG students explained that when a woman is unmarried, she lives with her parents, regardless of her age or education. Thus, she was bound by her parents' rules, which they argued pertained mostly to when, and with whom, she could leave the house. The majority of the female PNG students did not want to get married, at least in the foreseeable future. Those who were divorced, such as Ada- who left her abusive husband to then study marine biology in North Queensland, did not want to get married again. This posed a possible struggle, as being unmarried could be problematic as well. Spark (2011) highlights that in Port Moresby, where many of the PNG students in this thesis are from, single women can be marginalised and deemed "deserving of sexual assault" (Spark 2011,169).

Based on the preconstructed ideas of "authentic" and "feminine" womanhood, the female PNG students questioned what marriage would look like. In her article, which depicts violence on women in the changing country of PNG, Josephides (1994) draws from Strathern to argue that violence on women is configurated in the rebalancing of male power, as they struggle to understand or realize marital expectations in a "modern", urban context (see Strathern 1994, in Josephides 1994,195). The configurated rebalancing of female power could thus be through abstaining from marriage- as Spark's (2011) interlocuters did. The female PNG students wished to gain economic independence, thus enabling them to live on their own, without parents or husbands. By doing so, they are resisting the ideals of "authentic" "womanhood" and, as they argue, challenging the gender norms of women as constructed through the political body- bound by restrictions, regulations and surveillance.

Ada hoped, and firmly believed, that women obtaining degrees gradually would change the way women in PNG were viewed. However, she emphasized the gradual nature of it. A mature aged student named Maria, explained in an interview that her father had asked her; Why should a father pay for his daughter to get an education if the future husband's family is the one who will benefit from it? This question typified the complexities of the relationship between gender, marriage and education. Years later Maria had gotten married, divorced and had relocated to North Queensland, to study medicine, on a scholarship. She explained that though she had not answered her father, in her mind she had said "because I will benefit".

## **Summary**

In this chapter I have argued that women are flouting gender norms through obtaining degrees in Science. This impacts the way the diaspora community is shaped in North Queensland, such as in women taking on executive roles, e.g. as president, in the student association. Women obtaining education and vocations are testament to a nation 'transitioning', which challenges gender norms, and constructions of "authentic" and "feminine" understandings of "womanhood". The PNG students' aspirations and goals are highly influenced by reciprocal commitment as well as spousal and familiar relations, therefore their motivations are recorded as different due to age and familiar ties. The mature aged students were more focused on immediate needs, such as having funds for food and education for their children. Whilst the younger students were more involved in the everyday conversations and planning the "development" of PNG.

As Spark's (2011) study reveals; educated and working women in PNG often choose to abstain from marriage due to the increased possibility of violence. Educated women are being ostracised and punished not only as the result of the contemporary construction of "non-authentic" and "unfeminine" "womanhood"- which relates to women entering male domains and spheres, but also as a resistance to what these women embody- "modernity".

Furthermore, women are entering what is argued to be a "male domain" in education, namely Science and mathematics, as the PNG students are examples of. In consequence, the individual body, social body and body politic as conceptually embedded, can be used as means, using violence as a tool, to regulate and control, as well as sanction "contemporary womanhood" (Spark 2011, Josephides 1994). The female PNG students embody the

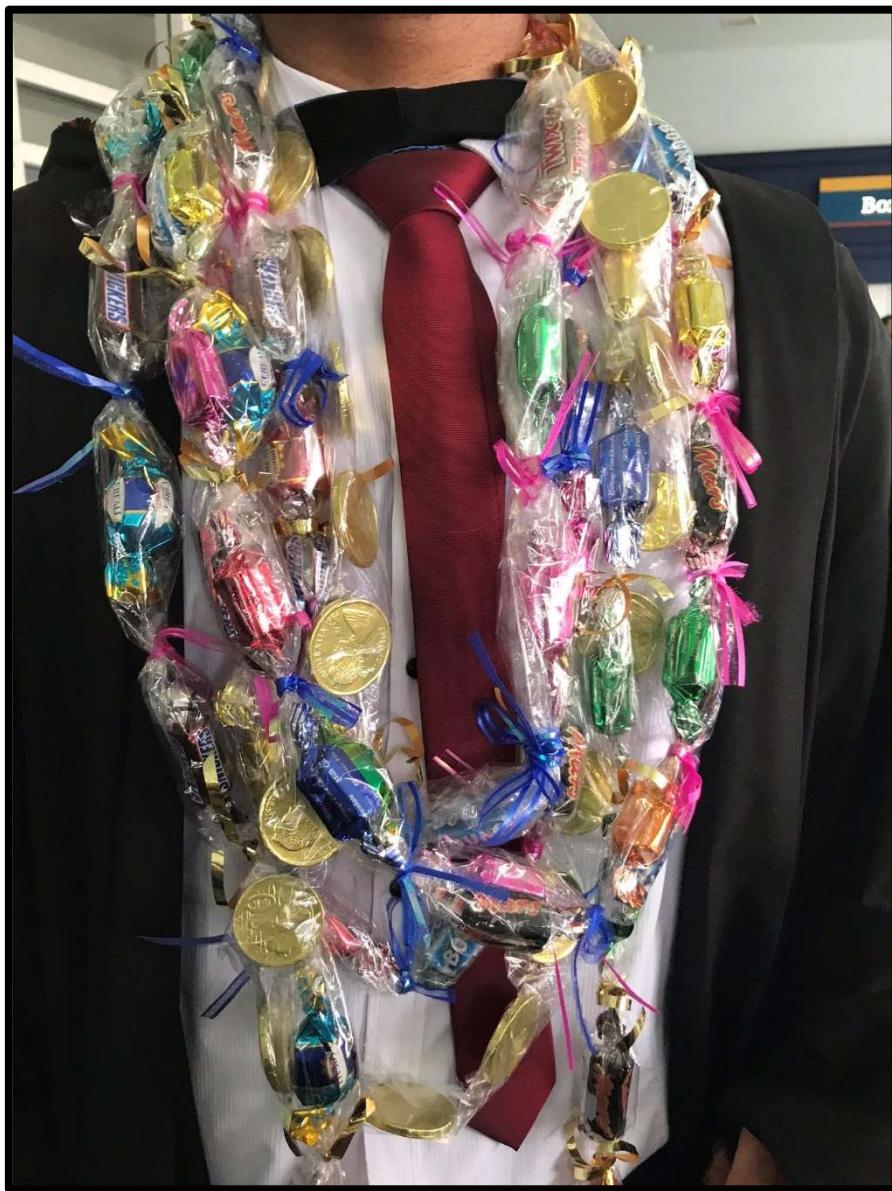
‘transitioning’ of women’s status and constructed versions of “womanhood”- which they express a struggle in navigating.

In Chapter four I draw on theoretical material on the production of and phenomenological experience of the diaspora, to analyse how the PNG students relate themselves inter-subjectively as diaspora. Furthermore, I study how they utilise joking relationships as a form of connection to PNG. The chapter will also look at political agency within aspects of temporality, in relation to PNG and Australian politics.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### **The Temporal Diaspora**

**Asserting agency as diaspora and the future performance of remittance**



*Caption: Graduation attire*

*“I keep telling my son education is the way out, like when my father would tell me, education is non-negotiable”. I think for me, education is my life. If I went back to the village I would not survive, because I don’t know how to make a garden. I don’t have the tools to go back home to my village”*

- Sarah

I begin this chapter with an excerpt from an interview with Sarah, a PhD candidate in tourism studies. She had moved to North Queensland with her son and had passed her father’s thoughts on education on to him. I find it fitting to use this excerpt as a vignette for this chapter, as it illustrates a form of ‘self-consciousness’ on the premises of education and belonging. This exemplifies what will be studied in this chapter, as I seek to utilise the framework of temporality, to study how the PNG students relate themselves as diaspora. Encapsulating the ways “doing” diaspora affects identity and construction of self or ‘diaspora self-consciousness’- I examine the effect of living and operating in North Queensland, and the effect of conducting scientific studies- which are highly linked to the performance of remittance.

In the last chapter, I established the use of Mahmood’s definition of agency as “*a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create*” by (Mahmood 2001, 203). The definition was used in relation to both Mahmood’s and my own data pertaining to gender and power structures. In that context I argued that women assert agency through their scientific studies- flouting gender norms. I wish to utilize the definition of agency in this chapter as well, however differently. Taking into consideration the layers of transient status embodied by the majority of the PNG students<sup>26</sup>- being students, and international students on student visas- who wish to perform remittance, I study how agency is enacted in relation to the Australian political schema.

The chapter is structured as follows; firstly, I define diaspora to incorporate the framework of both fluid and historical, yet refixed and stabilized diaspora identity. Secondly, I depict everyday temporalities, and the asserting of diaspora expressions, drawing from subjectively experienced observations. Furthermore, I analyse how the PNG students are acting out ‘temporal agency’, by using the sociality of joking relationships. I examine the

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<sup>26</sup> The majority of the students singularly hold PNG citizenships, whilst a few are dual citizens. These also hold Australian citizenship.

theoretical framework of remittance studies and how the PNG students reflect on performing remittance. Lastly, I incorporate notions of diaspora politics to situate the PNG students in the contemporary politics of Australia. In this chapter I argue that the PNG students operate as ‘temporal diaspora’, not to be construed with a process of assimilation, but from the emic perspective of the PNG student’s expression towards future remittance.

I include the clause pertaining to “process of assimilation” for the reason that it holds a specific historical connexion to Australia. The word assimilation- a condition in which one is absorbed into, or adjusted into, a nation, is embedded in the history of the colonialization of indigenous peoples of Australia. The Assimilation policy or ‘protection policy’, which would act as a justification of the removal of children from Aboriginal parents, was founded in the ideas of social Darwinism. The practice started in the late 1800s and was abolished in 1969 (Special Broadcasting Service 2015). These children have later been referred to as “the stolen generation”. The imagined reality of nationness through ‘racial unity’ was understood as measures to secure the egalitarian principles of the new democratic society (Moran 2005,171). Thus, I utilise the term ‘temporal diaspora’ on the premise of the emic perspective of future remittance.

## Defining diaspora

Dufoix (2008,26) distinguishes three ways of defining ‘diaspora’: “open”, “categorical” and “oxymoronic”. The “open” definitions are broad and relatively non-descriptive, such as; “*Modern diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrants of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin- their homeland*” (Sheffer’s 1986,03). “Categorical” definitions surround the concepts of ‘true’ and ‘false’ diaspora, where ‘true’ diaspora fit certain characteristics, such as a diaspora community sharing a collective memory of their homeland- which is idealized for the goal of remittance or to one day return, underpinned in the understanding that the host societies acceptance is unobtainable (Safran 1991, in Dufoix 2008,27). However, this approach has been argued to be reductive and too categorical (see Kim 2007,338).

“Oxymoronic” diaspora is defined not by society through stability. Rather, it’s through fragmentation- studying dismantled and maintained identity in dispersion. Hall (1990,235) identifies diaspora experience, metaphorically as “... *identified, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’*

*which lives with and through, not despite difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference”.*

The theoretical framework surrounding the definition of “oxymoronic” diaspora emerged from postmodernist thought- heavily influenced by the British school of cultural studies. While Hall’s (1990) definition of diaspora experience asserts an essentialist, affixed identity, the PNG students are both fluid, and historical. – stabilizing and refixing of identity. However, the definition of “oxymoronic” diaspora by Stuart Hall (1990) does enable the study of heterogeneity- of a continuous secular production and reproduction of diasporic identity through the lens of postmodernity. I again draw from Anderson’s (1998) theory of seriality and diaspora, which depicts a collective subjectivity- bound identity, to study the construction of individuality through discourse of community. In my interpretation this enables a study not only of collective subjectivity and (imagined) community, but in which ways fluidity and history is expressed through individuality and gender.

Though the PNG students represent self-dispersal through education and vocation, it should be noted that they do not identify themselves per the definition of “oxymoronic” diaspora. Rather this chapter examines the community through the conceptual lens of diaspora as the optic of constructivism allow. I argue they operate as temporal or transitory diaspora. However, not in the reifying manner of diaspora defined as transitory in which they are “destined to disappear though acculturation or assimilation” (Scheffer 1986 in Skrbis 1999,4).

## **Experiencing diaspora**

*“They didn’t think they had anything to contribute. That this culture wouldn’t validate them, or want them, or need them”*

- Naamah

Several of the PNG students, specifically the younger students, described their arrival to North Queensland as confrontational and intimidating, depicting it as a form of “culture shock”, as Naamah, one of the aunties retold, in the above written quote. Depictions of exotification and ‘othering’ of PNG peoples have by social scientists such as Michelle McCartney (2016) connected exotification and narratives of ‘othering’ to construction of self.

This is illustrated in an example by one of the PNG students explaining her socialisation with non-PNG students upon arriving at the university as “*being from the third world, talking to the first world*”. What the PNG students had experienced and observed as the most visible and tangible differences between PNG and Australia surrounded the way in which the PNG students perceived and established authority within their individual fields of study.

Perceiving and establishing authority within one’s fields was a specific issue voiced by a majority of the PNG students. Note that I do not exclude the notion that this could be related to the fact that several of the PNG students were undergraduate students. However, I recount the experience of Sarah, a PhD candidate who previous to her relocating to North Queensland had taught at a university in the capital of PNG, Port Moresby. Sarah explained that she felt as if there was a difference in perceiving and establishing authority in the student/professor relationship in PNG and North Queensland. In her work at the university in Port Moresby she was sophistically greeted with “Miss” followed by her last name, whilst professors in North Queensland expected her to refer to them by their first name. She also experienced a vast difference in the way in which she perceived her own authority, stating that she had never had difficulties standing in front of a class and teaching in PNG, yet when she was to talk in academic contexts in North Queensland she felt as if she did not have the same amount of knowledge as her Australian counterparts.

Sarah is not a Science student, but rather a PhD candidate in tourism studies. Her project entailed creating an “Indigenous research methodology” within PNG- to be utilized by PNG peoples. She referred to it as an “Indigenous framework” which eventually would be used not by foreign scholars, but by PNG peoples- to “understand and study themselves in a time of modernity”. She stated “*we are trapped in a space where we are going through modernity, in supposed cargo cults*” For her thesis it was important to note that PNG peoples did not experience this “space of modernity” in the same manner, or at the same time, but rather depending on location- rural communities, urban spaces and in diaspora realities. She conducted fieldwork in Madang, PNG, but her methodology was fitting for the study of temporality amongst the PNG students represented in this thesis, herself included; how acting in a space of “modernity”- such as they collectively argued Australia to embody, would be experienced phenomenologically.

Routledge handbook of diaspora studies (Cohen, Fisher 2019,02) asks; “Are diasporic ties likely to be weakened as countries of settlement increasingly demand cultural conformity, social integration and exclusive political fealty?” This is a vital question; thus, I study another

element that further adds complexities, namely, operating within two systems of egalitarianism- from PNG and in North Queensland. Though both PNG and Australia are egalitarian nations, the latter was highly influenced by principles of “racial unity” to secure its egalitarian political philosophy (Moran 2005,171). Today, Australia is still classified as egalitarian and the Australian peoples are argued to be instituted as internal to the state (Kapferer, Morris 2003,87). The egalitarian ethos in PNG surrounds the Big man<sup>27</sup> political systems, where leadership, the role of Big man, is earned by competitors, and not ascribed or inherited (Ryan et.al 2016,126). The underpinnings of egalitarianism here are reciprocal relations between kinship groups. Though egalitarianism promotes ideals of equal opportunity and outcomes (Flanagan 1989,248), there is a difference between the egalitarian practices.

In Australia there are economic structures surrounding egalitarianism that seek to secure the welfare of its citizens, and economic growth for the nation. Argy (2004,23) studies the underpinning of an economic egalitarian society, through equality of opportunity and participation- in society and as foundation for democracy. However, these principles become less of a given, as the Australian government arguably did not wish to create a welfare dependence (Argy 2004, 25). Another argument was that by reshaping political values, individualistic values could become more centred than egalitarian values (Argy 2004,26). Today, the ideals of equality in opportunity and participation are mostly to be found in what Argy (2004,23) refers to as ‘empty rhetoric’. This ‘empty rhetoric’ of egalitarian ethos still holds a lot of value, noticeably in political schemas.

## **Acting out “temporal agency” through joking relationships**

Flaherty (2014,176) defines *time* as a social institution, implicated in all things structural. He further argues that in temporal reality we structure and customize time through self-selected interactions in order to act out what he names “temporal agency” (2014,176). Time as a phenomenological experience acts as a unifier between the PNG students, where they are forming a space in which they can act out their “temporal agency” utilising a joking relationship surrounding the notion of time. The concept of time in Melanesian societies have been written of both by scholars and as satire- e.g. empirically illustrated in the book of satire “Tales of the Tikongs” by Epeli Hau’ Ofa (1994). In social sciences, studies on “time-

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<sup>27</sup> Sahlins coined this term in his infamous 1963 article "Poor Man, Rich Man, Big Man, Chief: Political types in Melanesia and Polynesia".

consciousness"- a concept by Shippen (2014,177), connects the individuals experienced reality of time to the totality of social relations. For the PNG students, the joking relationship surrounding time underlined an expressed experienced of such "time-consciousness", where the participants of the joking relationship use the concept of time as a way to connect to PNG.

The production of joking relationships is situated within notions of conduct, or "ground rules", such as participants having a privileged familiarity (Brant 1948,161). Moreover, joking relationship often rise in particular contexts (Diallo 2006,184), where this joking relationship is expressed in a temporal context. In the right surroundings it's a form of social bonding, where one can build rapport. Therefore, it can be understood as a reciprocal exchange between equals, or, the opposite, as an insult outside of social sanction. Consequently, the PNG students would tease people in the same temporal context, but not those outside of the privileged familiarity- or people they perceived as authority- such as aunties and uncles. The social phenomenon of joking relationships can reveal a form of structure in temporality, where the PNG students spatially positioned themselves to PNG through the terminology "PNG time". "Being on PNG time"- which was the objective of the teasing within the joking relationships, surrounded the idea that a person did not act in a leisurely manner towards time, and would arrive to social gatherings whenever they saw fit.

This specific production of a joking relationship, and what the PNG students chose to draw from, reveals a comment on the colonial relationship between PNG and Australia through time and the construction of social control. Thompson's (1967) article on time in relation to industrial capitalism, states the importance of time in synchronized labour patterns, such as industrial factories (1967,70). This time constraint is in opposition to what he refers to as 'natural' time- commonly found in farm communities where time is dependent on the growth of crop. He argues that the concept of 'natural time' is most effective in village and domestic industries (Thompson 1967,60). Scholarly interpretations of the experience of time is not only time as a re-politicised and capitalistic endeavour, but furthermore, an urbanisation of time. In his book "Taim Bilong Masta", Nelson (1982) depicts the administration of both domestic spheres and industrial areas during the colonial era of PNG. He recounts remarks from former colonial officers who supervised PNG workers at a plantation. How they would punish those they deemed 'lazy'- e.g. if they hadn't tidied their quarters yet, with a "clip over the ear" (Nelson 1982,80). I argue that the joking relationship mirrors the industrialised construction of time as constructed through the industrial endeavours, and enforced by colonial officers, in colonial PNG.

The concept of time in Melanesia has been studied through problematic frameworks, which limit and restricts the concept of time, reducing it to a homogeneous experience.

Conceptualised notions of time, specifically where it appears framed in a reductive way, can create a fixed idea of both the understanding of time and the lived realities in time. Scaglion (2000), whilst acknowledging its essentialist structure, argues that in broad terms the different approaches to time as a concept between “Western” and Melanesian societies, is based in linear and episodic perspectives- where “Western” structure employs linear perspectives, and Melanesia, specifically the Abelam village in PNG, employ episodic perspectives (2000,228). Whereas the linear perspective of time functions sequentially from a beginning to an end, the episodic perspective operates as a discontinuity between past and present- relating this theory to cargo cults and ancestral worship (Scaglion 2000,229). In studies of ‘time’, this is but one of many theories, to illustrate; structuralism argues the notion of time to be dependent phenomenological experiences within the society in which it exists (Silverman 1997,101). Episodic and linear perspectives connect to the notion between operating within structures both wishing to uphold continuity to the past and concepts such as evolution of development and technology (Scaglion 2000,229).

I have utilised Mahmood’s (2001) definition of agency in this chapter, because it enables the study of the construction and expression of agency through a historic lens. The joking relationship the PNG students have produced is set in a parodic fashion, mimicking colonial officials. Delilah, a 22-year-old undergraduate student, explained how her mother would stress about the importance of time, a topic of conversation that would be more and more prominent as she was close to leaving for North Queensland. She admitted to not believing it at first, that time could be “*such a big deal*”. Yet, quickly she had discovered that in North Queensland “*when people speak time, they are actually really serious*”. Becoming a part of the “running joke” about “PNG time”, she was able to jokingly sanction other PNG peoples on their ability to arrive on time. Jokingly lecturing them to “*learn to be on time*”. Furthermore, she was able to connect to PNG.

## **Social embeddedness and performing remittance**

This diaspora community exists in close geographical proximity to their homeland and is further strengthened through temporal diaspora sociality. What the wantok network evokes is continuous attachment to ideas, emotions and memories of homeland. And furthermore, what

Skrbiš (1999,04) names “long distance obedience”- keeping with social norms, as if still in the homeland. This extends to aspects of gender, where despite acting out scientific inquiry, and consequently flouting gender norms, the female students reaffirm gender norms through upholding ideals of Christian morality. This form of “obedience” illustrates deep-rooted social embeddedness of which I argue is highly visible within this particular diaspora community.

Lindstrøm (2011) draws on Strathern (1988) who examined Melanesian dividually to find that the dividual conjoin with others to a degree that the individual could no longer be distinguished from which it was embedded. To this Lindstrøm (2011,257) adds “*the person as society and also the society as person*”. PNG born scholar Lawrence (2015) argues this embeddedness to not be weakened by ‘Western’ education and vocation, reflecting on herself as “*shaped by mutual embeddedness, me in my culture and my culture in me*” (2015,56). Furthermore, the PNG students are linked through the wantok network a factor that Skrbis (1999,40) argues engenders long-distance nationalism, that the wantok network increases the intensity of attachment they express towards PNG.

Remittance is defined through the act of sending payment or money to someone, such as kin<sup>28</sup>. In its relation to migration it can entail migrant workers sending funds to family or other members of their community. Gendered underpinnings of migration and remittance as studied by Van Naerssen et.al (2015) created the framework for ambitious studies of women’s remittance practises. What they researched was the way in which focus on financial remittance had affected the way ‘development’ had become associated with economic growth (Van Naerssen et.al 2015,247) and overall, how migration affected gender identities.

In this thesis, remittance concerns PNG students returning to PNG after their studies, where they themselves, and their knowledge, are the value they “send” or return to PNG. Here the PNG students, in utilising their scientific knowledge, become part of “development”, not limited to economic development, but as they pose it; socio-economic development e.g. in the health sectors. I refer to this as “investment education”, where the reciprocal relationships first are visible through the gift of funding and/or support study in North Queensland, then reciprocated through performing remittance- as a gift sent back.

I draw from Rubinov’s (2014) study on Kyrgyz ‘gift remittance’, where Kyrgyz migrants who relocate for work send larger sums of money or smaller gifts, back to their

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<sup>28</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/remittance> (read 12.05.2020)

households, thus securing ‘social proximity’. Keeping with parental expectations, such as Christian practice and the joking relationship surrounding time, are ways the students find connection to PNG- and what they refer to as “the traditional PNG way”. Moreover, I would like to suggest that these are means to secure a continuity of social proximity whilst in North Queensland, which in consequence creates a framework for performing remittance. This connection to homeland and family can be interpreted as means to stabilise and refix identity whilst being situated in temporality. According to Rubinov (2014,207) the Kyrgyz migrants’ income, which they use to send gifts to homeland, are integrated in social obligations and relationships. Comparatively to this, the student’s degrees are integrated into social obligations- such as the obligations of the first born towards younger siblings. Where parents pay for the first born to go to university, and in return, the first born pays for tuition fees and supplies for their younger siblings. Moreover, the student’s degrees are integrated into the social relationship of the wantok network. Visible through the plan to collaborate on serving their nation after they perform remittance.

How life after remittance would be structured was a matter of uncertainty. Most of the students wanted to live in urban areas, such as Port Moresby, as it likely would increase the possibility of obtaining a job. In his study, Rubinov (2014,187), called this “internal labour migration”, where the Kyrgyz migrants, who returned to Kyrgyzstan, settled in urban areas rather than their villages. In the vignette for this chapter, I quote Sarah- the PhD candidate in tourism studies. She illustrates how she felt education could change how one is able to perform remittance, and which tools one is able to utilise in life after remittance. In comparison, John, a 31-year-old student in veterinary sciences opined that there were more laboratories available in Australia, which he further argued were more advanced, and technologies- such as internet. However, he believed that because the students grew up with what was available to them in PNG, they would be able to return to PNG and still “do well”- as he said laughingly;

*“when you are back home, you’re not gonna get the Wi-Fi. You’re not gonna get, you know what ever “luxuries”. There are times you have to give a little so I think they will still do well, back home. Because having a childhood back home that’s the reason they can easily relate. They know, I grew up without these “luxuries”, so I can live without them (laughs). So that’s where they can contribute to make PNG a better place”.*

## Diaspora politics

During the time this data was collected, two major political events occurred. Firstly, the forced resignation of the former prime minister of PNG, Peter O'Neill, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, which followed the events of a majority of cabinet members resigning from O'Neill's political party The People's National Congress (PNC) to then join the Pangu Party. This political shift eventually led to James Marape, the former minister of finance, to become PNG's 8<sup>th</sup> prime minister. Secondly the 2019 election in Australia took place in May. During the 2019 election in Australia, there was a continuance of articulated egalitarian ethos in right-wing political platforms and policies. In Queensland an agrarian sentiment echoed in the local political platforms, specifically increased by the February flood- a two-week record-breaking flood. Berry et.al (2016, 932) argue that during climatic, or political, 'crises' agrarian sentiment increases in Australian political rhetoric. Because of the February flood of 2019, the roads and airports closed, billions of Australian dollars' worth of damage on property left families without homes, and an estimate of half a million cattle was killed.

I wish to draw from the idea of 'empty rhetoric', as presented by Argy (2004), which pertained to economical egalitarian ethos. During the February flood, and leading up to the May election, these sentiments echoed in the tune of horror. Anywhere you went the radio would be turned up, counting the deaths- five deaths total, counting the suburbs which were now under water, and narrating stories of small children being picked up by the military in boats. Political rhetoric voiced sentiments which reflected the issue of the nation sourcing out money to other countries while their own farm industries suffered. If we study this sentiment, in relation to Argy's (2004) described underpinnings of economic egalitarian societies, we can see a direct correlation to the securing of welfare for citizens and economic growth to the nation. This is relevant for the students as PNG is the main recipient of Australian aid<sup>29</sup>, through AusAID and "Total Australian Official Developmental Assistance" (ODA). Moreover, representing the first of Vanna's three categories of PNG students, the majority of the PNG students are dependent on AusAID for their scholarships towards attending university. Vanna herself is a PNG student who is dependent on a scholarship from the Australian government to conduct her studies in medical sciences.

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<sup>29</sup> <https://png.embassy.gov.au/pmsb/cooperation.html> (Read 10.02.2020)

The current political environment surrounding the election period thus created an underlying fear amongst the PNG students- pertaining to their visas and the majorities funding towards tuition, rent and food. This sentiment affects the lived reality of the diaspora in complex ways, specifically pertaining to the majority's dependency on scholarships. Several of the students received scholarships from AusAID. After the last election, the Coalition party, which would win another term, decreased AusAID's funding by millions of Australian dollars (Dornan 2017), so the PNG students feared it would happen again. As Edmondson (1986,165) argues; there is a significant difference in political involvement with homeland, and psychological identification and embeddedness. As the students devote their scientific inquiry to socio-political 'development', I pose they represent a strong notion of political involvement and embeddedness. Edmondson (1986,181) further argues, that political activeness within diaspora groups can be a reflection on the lack of political impact on the host community. This is reflected in the political activity of the students, where they are highly involved in the political schema of PNG politics, but do not, at least, voice opinions on Australian politics- nor did they follow the election in 2019.

A large political issue in contemporary Australia is the celebration of Australia day. Celebrated on the 26th of January it marks the arrival of the first British fleets to Australia in 1788. Contrary to the celebration, this date has become a symbol of mourning as it marks what has been argued by the counter-history movement as "invasion day". Indigenous activists such as Pryor and McDonald (2010) have written of the counter-history movement's deconstruction of the uncontested Eurocentric discourse, argued to have hegemonically defined the writing of Australian history. The celebration of Australia day has become an inflamed topic, where grassroot movements, supported by the major political party "The Greens", and NGO Amnesty international<sup>30</sup>, fight to change the date. Though many were prevented from celebrating the 2019 Australia day, due to the upcoming flood, a majority of the PNG students would do so each year. Taking part in the celebration analysed in the theory of Edmundson (1986), *can* illustrate an internalised reflection on the lack of political impact on one's host community. However, in Good et.al's (2008,14) study of colonial subjectivity, which moves beyond post-structuralist studies of subjectivity, one can research "that which is

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<sup>30</sup> Amnesty's petition to change the date of the national day of Australia.

<https://action.amnesty.org.au/act-now/change-the-date> (Read 14.05.2020)

not said overtly". These theories prevent any conclusion that the PNG students celebrating Australia day automatically entails any opposition to the "change the date" movement<sup>31</sup>.

## Summary

In summation for this chapter, I have used the definition of diaspora, by Hall (1999), which allows for a heterogenic understanding of diaspora identities. I have studied the students as temporal diaspora, as per their emic arguments towards performing remittance. I have studied the day to day temporalities as experienced subjective observations and encounters with acting in North Queensland. Here we find that perceiving and establishing authority appears as the most observed difference as experienced by the PNG students. Moreover, in studying how the experiences of the diaspora intervene with the complexity of identity constructions, we find that the PNG students utilise joking relationships as a form of reciprocal social bond to spatially position themselves to PNG through the notion of "PNG time". We find they appear socially intertwined to PNG through the joking relationship and through fictive kinship i.e. the wantok network, and consequently reciprocity. The emic perspective of the student expressing the plan for future remittance- and the strong, reciprocal ties to homeland and political involvement and embeddedness suggests that diasporic ties are not weakened, as the Routledge handbook of diaspora studies (Cohen, Fisher 2019,02) asks.

In chapter five I wish to build on Edmondson (1986) and the theory of political involvement and embeddedness. I will study how the students position themselves relating to the political schema of PNG, specifically to the special election of 2019. The election resulted in the instating of James Marape as prime minister of PNG. Marape is both a scientist and uses Christian rhetoric on his political platform. I analyse activism by examining definitions of corruption- depicted in scholarly work and through discussions by the students.

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<sup>31</sup> The counter-history movements goal for the protests is essentially either to remove the holiday or change the date. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jan/25/invasion-day-2020-where-you-can-find-this-years-marches-and-rallies> (Read 10.02.2020)

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### Political Positionality

#### The figure of Marape and the “One Nation” ideal



*Caption: Screenshot from news source Loop PNG's Facebook page.*

*James Marape seated on the front row, in the middle.*

*A few months after arriving in North Queensland, there was a special election in PNG. It was then I really noticed how much time was devoted to discussing politics. Having iced coffee at the university, making Sago at a share house, taking the bus to the city- it didn't matter. Politics followed the PNG students wherever they went. (Excerpt from my field journal)*

The term ‘positionality’ has been used in the social sciences and anthropology in particular<sup>32</sup>, to “unveil how the multiple positions we [the researcher] occupy both shape and are shaped by the field” (Feliciano 2017,434). Studies on this affirm the significant impact researcher positionality has on data configurations, thus making it pertinent for the researcher to be aware of their positionality vis-à-vis the researched (Hoogendoorn & Visser 2012,260). The term has also been used depicting power positionality vis-à-vis homelands in a study on Iraqi diaspora and homelands political and ideological impact on diaspora mobilization (Kadhum 2019). Kadhum’s (2019) article centres around the notion that the shift in the political reality of one’s homeland powers the re-positioning of the diaspora community, meaning that intersectional systems of homeland politics both can oppress and empower diaspora groups- such as social mobilization and diasporas roles in homeland politics (2019,172).

Scwandner-Sievers (2008,182) wrote of a ‘field persona’; a negotiated competent research identity. She included her own ethno-social and international position in researching a politically turbulent field. I drew from her work as I entered the field, knowing how to ‘position’ myself i.e. Firstly, I presented myself as a student, as I am, to make myself relatable. I did not disclaim that I was a Christian, but I was asked by a few of the students very early if I was. After I said yes, I was invited to the Pentecostal church that the students congregate. My positioning was mostly impacted by my own gender. It prevented me from entering church events and social gatherings which were for males only. Furthermore, I was driven to and from events by one of the male students- as the female students were as well. At first, I found it difficult to accept this, as I did not want them to use money on me, and I had been declined when I wanted to help pay for petrol. However, I did not want to be incompatible with what had become a norm in North Queensland, so I accepted the rides.

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<sup>32</sup> See Abu-Lughod (2008), Gupta & Ferguson (1997), Jenkins (1994) among others, who are cited on positionality in anthropological literature at large.

Overtly, the only times my race was a topic was when I would blush from the heat during sports activities. Then a few of the students would laugh and jokingly make fun of my pink skin. They would bring this joke up again as Naamah, an older student gave me a billum bag<sup>33</sup> when I was leaving. It had a lot of pink in it, “like you”, she said. I interpreted the including me in jokes as a sign that they were comfortable around me. However, I found it difficult to collect much data surrounding experiences with racism in North Queensland. This could be a way in which my own race had affected the data configuration.

I would like to add to this classic anthropological definition of ‘positionality’ in fieldwork to my analytical framework, - and to enable the study of the political positionality of the students. I define ‘political positionality’ as the individual and collective act of positioning and repositioning the self in relation to political affairs. Influenced by social categories including, but not limited to, gender, locality, age, religious practice and class. I use this term to analyse the concurrent political positionalities of the PNG students as they navigate their own complex relations to host-nation politics, reciprocal networks (wantok network), the Pentecostal church and the current political climate of PNG. I argue that the political positionality is influenced by identity, however, not the same e.g. as status. Rather as a set of micro-level interactions, which are fluid and strategic.

I use the term “locality” when discussing political positionality, where researchers might use “nationality”, because of the central importance of regional and provincial backgrounds amongst the PNG students. In Hoogendoorn and Visser’s study (2012) they specify that the researcher’s positionality, like that of the PNG students, is not stable, rather relative and as perceived in the social interaction with informants. These authors argue positionality to be a “*highly selective version of oneself that usually serves to keep academic authority intact*” (2012,264). Similar to this, the political positionality of the PNG students can be interpreted in the form of contextualised, flexible and dynamic social roles.

Elaborated in chapter four, PNG students often refrain from actively, or openly, voicing their opinions about Australian host-nation politics. That does not mean they have no opinion or political position towards their host-nation. The empirical example in chapter four surrounded the “change the date” movement, which pertains to the celebration of Australia Day. The movement wishes to change the date of the celebration, as they argue it represents what they call “invasion day”- the date British colonisers first arrived in Australia. The PNG

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<sup>33</sup> Crochet bag from PNG, handmade. Commonly worn over the shoulder by women, and on the head by men.

students celebrate this day, however, rather than subscribing a particular meaning to this, I study what Good et.al (2008,14) depicts as “that which is not said overtly”. The authors studied the writing of colonial subjectivity, arguing that research had to study that which appeared unspoken and at the margins of self-presentation in everyday realities. Analysing how not everything could be said in specific settings, such as in settings of possible surveillance or danger (Good et.al 2008,15).

In this chapter, I study the political positionality of the PNG students, specifically focusing of the special election instating James Marape as PM of PNG- a major shift in the political climate of PNG which took place during my fieldwork in 2019. For my research question, I ask how PNG students abroad position themselves in relation to each other, and to James Marape’s special election. As well as what these positions reveal about their faith in Christianity and pursuit of Science.

This chapter is structured as follows; firstly, I depict the political background of PNG, situating the political positionality of the PNG students in Australia, as they navigate the political landscape of regionalism, provincialism and “one nation” ideals. Then, I present the 2019 election where the current PM, James Marape gained his PM seat through a special election- which consequently sparked what most of the PNG students positively referred to as “new hope” relating to their work towards “development” of PNG. The figure of Marape as a scientist, a Christian and a politician structured a pathway for the engaging in their own developmental work, where the PNG students argue Marape to be the “leader of change” they need to continue their individual forms of activism. However, Marape has not been exempt from controversy. His motto to “take back PNG”- by dismantling foreign control, and pledge to make PNG “the riches black nation” has been scrutinised for appearing ‘almost impossible’ as it would require a total reform of PNG’s bureaucratic and political government (Kama 2019). The PNG students find that the figure of Marape, typifies “one nation” ideals which promote a national identity in PNG, which constitutes a break from provincial preference. As a main argument for this chapter, I argue that the PNG students navigate political positionality through “one nation” ideals.

## **Political background of PNG**

Many of the conversations I shared with the PNG students, focused on regionalism and provincialism in PNG. PNG consists of four regions, further comprised of 22 provinces. The

regions are the Highlands region, Island region, Momase region and Southern region. The PNG students represent all four PNG regions. However, the majority are from the Southern region, in which Central Province, the Province of Port Moresby resides. They represent both rural and urban locality, where a number reside in both, alternating between living in rural areas and in the city, Port Moresby- specifically women. Despite many of the students growing up in Port Moresby, they would visit or briefly live in the village where their parents had grown up. The students elaborated on this, saying it was a way to secure social proximity to extended family. A few would travel to extended families to work on their farms or plantations, to pay for university tuition. It was very common for the students who did not have scholarships, to take a year off from university to work in PNG, and then come back to North Queensland.

PNG politics and judiciary procedures carry attributes inherited from colonial overrule, as well as legal systems and conventions, such as regionalism and provincialism, more commonly practiced in local level politics and legal procedures. In their vivid discussions on contemporary politics the PNG students stated that “traditional law, such as provincialism” were impediments to democracy as it “segregated” peoples of PNG, “made claims of preference” towards specific peoples and acted “beside the law”, the law here referring to western, colonial inheritance. PNG has what Weisbrodt (1988,4-5) calls the “two sphere approach”, where the inherited Western law is stated to be acknowledged as the formal legal system, whilst *de facto* ‘traditional’ law, such as local law and tribal customs, were included per the interim solution under the process of obtaining sovereignty for PNG. The ‘two sphere approach’ regarding judiciary systems, are yet another example of how PNG operates within fused systems. Furthermore, expressions of regional identity and provincialism influence the contemporary political schema and are therefore argued by the PNG students as impediments to ‘development’ and to democracy.

The South Pacific conference which took place in Nasinu, Fiji in 1950, orchestrated by the United Nations (UN), gathered leaders and delegates from several indigenous islands to implement regimes for regional development. The conference is argued by Fry (1997,184) as an experiment in promoting self-determination and generating processes of political development and in doing so, consequently minimising the influence of colonial power and control. However, Hau’ofa (2008,47) argues that contemporary Pacific Island regionalism is a colonial creation, established by former colonial overrule such as Australia, The Netherlands, Great Britain and France. The leaders and delegates representing their nations at the

conference varied from e.g. local chiefs from the Cook Islands, members of Fiji's legislative council and the prince of Tonga (Fry 1997,187). At the time of the conference the Melanesian countries lacked an established post-colonial political structure, and the representatives from PNG were selected based on their language ability (Fry 1997,188).

PNG has approximately 800 languages, all being represented in a conference in Fiji would therefore be impossible. However, the understanding of Pacific regional identity promulgated in the conference may have impacted constructions of national identity within PNG, from centre to periphery. In 1953, three years after the conference, the UN trusteeship Council further travelled to PNG to suggest elimination of the use of Tok Pisin and promoted establishing English as the national language of PNG (Cass 2014,112). They did not succeed, and Tok Pisin would remain as the unifying language of PNG. Tok Pisin has since become a large factor in establishing a national identity, along with multidenominational Christianity and ontological beliefs such as witchcraft and sorcery.

## **Provincialism and One Nation**

In the discussions focusing on regionalism and provincialism I began to see that provincialism and regionalism marked spatial identity. I analyse it as a distinction in PNG that long achieved particular ends of colonial governance has constructed through divide-and rule-strategies. Depicting Gramsci's theory on civil society, Walton (2016) examines how the division of political and civil society in capitalistic societies allow for the ruling class to control through hegemony. In this division, political society is the state- criminal justice system and military, and the civil society- church, unions and media outlets (2016,11). Gramsci's (1999,507) theory further depicts how the church may become part of the political society, thus preserving the civil society within the political society as a way to secure hegemony of privileged groups. This political strategy of division has been depicted by sociology studies to analyse concentrations of power at the community level in colonial context. Rey (2018,368) argues contemporary inter-communal violence to be a consequence of produced inequality by the divide and rule mechanism utilised by British colonial rule. Inter-communal violence is studied by Rey (2018,371) as violence between groups disproportionality affected by colonial regime and disproportionately represented hierarchically in the colonial state apparatus, e.g. by receiving preferential status- such as those given to selected local leaders (Barker 2013,152-153).

Historically, divide-and rule-strategies have been used by state-sanctioned agents to sustain rule. These strategies are depicted in scholarly examinations of new-nation states, such as Anugwom's (2018) work on the Niger Delta conflict. In the authors work, he draws on modern-day PNG to comparatively discuss state building efforts in postcolonial contexts. Utilizing the work of Wolf (2006, in Anugwom 2018,63) he discusses how colonial imposition of historical and territorial structures have enforced issues of unification which are present in contemporary PNG. (Haller et.al 2007,134) argues that international oil companies are utilizing divide-and-rule strategies through unequal inclusion of, and compensation payment to, Indigenous groups in PNG. The authors further argue that due to the divide-and rule-strategy, which was imposed by colonial rule, groups struggle with uniting and mobilizing (Haller, et.al 2007,134) the exemption to this being Bougainville.

PNG's centralised provincial system- which is partly federal, was established in the 1980's to recognize and celebrate unity and diversity amongst the newly independent PNG peoples (Okole 2003,52). Though the provincial government was put in place to decentralize PNG, the capital Port Moresby has become the centre for power, business, and in consequence access to work. The Bougainville Province gained an independence referendum in 2019 after a civil war erupted. The peoples of Bougainville's wish to become autonomous and for Bougainville to become the world's newest country begs the question for the future of PNG; whether or not this would create a chain reaction, inspiring other provinces to claim more autonomy as well (Okole 2003,57). PNG media depicts PNG peoples waiving the flags of their provinces, rather than the national flag of PNG as a common occurrence during their annual celebration of independence. As a result of this the "one flag" campaign was created to promote the use of the national flag of PNG<sup>34</sup>. The Parliament supports the movement promoting the singular use of the national flag and the current PM has officially stated a wish to ban the celebration of 'Provincial days' in general<sup>35</sup>. Boots & Hecht (1989) argue, in a Canadian context "*Provincial government policies in combination with regional economies and historical settlement patterns, form a very broad province-building force, which has produced strong regional or provincial differenced and identities that are, in some instances,*

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<sup>34</sup> PNG correspondent Eric Tlozek for ABC news covers the 41<sup>st</sup> celebration of independence, depicting the worry of Provincialism dividing the nation <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-16/pngs-independence-day-brings-concern-of-a-nation-divided/7849578> (read 31.01.2020).

The "one flag campaign" <https://emtv.com.pg/should-we-do-away-with-the-provincial-flags-during-independence/> (Read 19.05.2020)

<sup>35</sup> Prime minister James Marape states that provincial days, and provincial autonomy prevents national unity <https://www.onepng.com/2019/12/png-pm-marape-bans-provincial-days.html> (read 31.01.2020)

*stronger than the Canadian national identity”* (1989,188). What the PNG students argue, aligning with the wish to ban provincial days by the current PM, is the idea of the “one nation” national identity to be stronger in PNG than those of individual regions and provinces.

The PNG students explain that political issues and unrest can occur, should a politician be perceived to prioritise what is beneficial for their own province, rather than the nation in its entirety. They state that this perception can create issues in national government, such as if there occurs a high number of representatives in parliament from one specific province. This may spark discussions and rumours among PNG peoples. Not only does PNG have 22 provinces, these are further comprised of villages and urban areas within the individual provinces. Strathern and Stewart (2011) studied PNG through processes of ‘nation making’, analysing the interlaced issues between non-state collectives or ‘groups’ and modern government power structures, where they argue that the issues of contemporary PNG politics mirror those of the colonial era (2011,145). The authors note that the integration of these different ‘groups’ into national level PNG politics has arguably resulted in an increase of conflict (2011, XI), which may include violence, land rights disputes and petty crime.

The egalitarian ideals of PNG as “one nation” or “one family” in close affiliation-including seceding autonomy and emerging into one state have been the underpinning of contemporary protests, where activists protest government in itself since the time of independence. (Smith 2002,66). The PNG students state that this relates to a “principle to provincialism”, which, they argue, appears as a ‘common sense’ in PNG. Adding to this the PNG students claim that provincialism and the misuse of wantok networks inhibits transparent political policies and are the main causes for corruption. The PNG students share the commonly portrayed association of corruption with politicians pocketing public funds, also known as grant corruption. Mana (1999,3) argues this to be a shared association between most PNG peoples due to media coverage, further explaining how this often results in forms of petty corruption falling under the radar. Issues surrounding reporting on corruption in PNG, are prevailing due to threats of, and actual occurrences of, violence (Kanekane 2003,109).

The utilising of wantok networks as a pathway to political power e.g. through enlarge voter bases, has led scholars to address the definitions of corruption- where Walton (2013,64) is one of few to question the binary terms of opposition. Scholars have addressed corruption in PNG in relation to studying the nation’s political system, however, few have acknowledged perceptions of corruption. Walton (2013,64) argues that the most used understanding of corruption, what he refers to as “mainstream”, is Western-centric- corruption as thought of in

binary terms of opposition, meaning corruption and law as opposites. Walton (2013) introduces an ‘alternative’ view on corruption- acknowledging cultural and communal norms, relationship to power and local response. In discussing corruption and morality he argues that corruption occurs as a result of a ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ clash in norms and expectations (2013,65). PNG has been described as a ‘failed imitation of more established, more homogeneous Western nations’ (Foster 2002, in Walton 2013, 68). Furthermore, it has been argued that the connexion of politics and religion on a national level renders PNG a “weak state” (Barker 2013,147), where Schram (2015) argues that the discourse of wantoks constructs a source of corruption making it impossible for equal opportunity in politics. Additionally, he argues that the wantok network is a holdover from ‘traditional times’ obstructing PNG from entering modernity and true national community (2015,3-4).

The PNG students navigating provincial ties whilst in Australia influences their political position, resulting in the conforming to “one nation” ideals. They explain that as diaspora, they are all “*just Papua New Guineans*”, expressing a “one nation” mentality oriented through the wantok network. The political position of the PNG students in North Queensland constitutes a break from the referred to “common sense”. Illustrating how they construct and deconstruct sociality- through operating within the wantok network, infracting the attachments of provincialism. The significance of the word “wantok” is visible both as it aligns with the “one nation” ideals- arising from the uniting language of Tok Pisin, and in its reciprocal underpinnings, creating a familiarity or relatedness. As voiced by Joanna, a 21 years old PNG student; “*we just use the word related even though we're not actually related, but we are related through what country we come from*”.

## **Case: 2019 election**

The prime minister of PNG, Peter O’Neill was forced to resign from his position following the threat of a vote of non-confidence on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019, after holding the position for almost six years. He would be one of the last people in the cabinet to step down from their post, a political movement that started with the former Minister of Finance James Marape of the Hela province stepping down from his post on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April. Marape left the Peoples’ National Congress (PNC) on April 29<sup>th</sup> and towards the end of May 2019 most of the cabinet members had left PNC and joined the opposing party. Throughout the course of a month an “alternative government” had been created and in order to be able to vote for non-confidence they had to

nominate a candidate to take O'Neill's place as prime minister. The resignation resulted in a special election for the replacement of O'Neill, where a total of three candidates were nominated- including the former minister of finance, now swearing alliance to the Pangu Party- the oldest political party in PNG, James Marape. Marape received the majority vote and was sworn in as PNGs 8<sup>th</sup> prime minister. Although this is an example of extreme measures taken in PNG politics, the alternating between parties is a common occurrence where many politicians have joined opposing parties when seeing it as a necessity.

This major shift in political control in PNG, sparked what was positively described by the PNG students as "new hope" in the fight against petty corruption. Yet, it created scepticism and rumours as well. The "new hope" they spoke of situated around the new prime minister's religious background, his educational background in environmental sciences and provincial background. The latter was discussed in two different manners; by some with excitement that a politician from their own province had become elected, by others with worry. When addressing the above-mentioned event, the PNG students would discuss elements such as provincialism and backroom dealings, as ways in which the event could have been affected or even pre-planned. Relating to this they defined provincialism as the concern of own regions interest at the expense of the national interest. Therefore, as members of the PNG cabinet represented different provinces this could possibly affect their vote in political matters such as in cases where there are discussions of motioning a vote of non-confidence.

During this election the PNG students were conducting their studies in North Queensland, therefore the information available to them on the matter came from sources such as news organisations' posting online articles, political Facebook pages- such as "The Kramer Report" by PNG politician, accountant and social media strategist Bryan J. Kramer. Moreover, they received information on the election through James Marape's social media presence and from family and friends in PNG. The students reflected largely on the use of social media to influence political platforms and elections, acknowledging rumours which had risen during the vote of non-confidence. These regarded the former PM and businessman O'Neill, and his alleged ownership of large media organisations. They depict the use of social media to be a dangerous affair towards people who voiced their opinions online, specifically towards peoples from other provinces than oneself. The PNG students therefore explain how people now feel the need to protect themselves on social media and create fake social media accounts to post political views and opinions.

The executive team of the student association the PNG students belong to use social media as a platform for communication. However, they do not use this platform to promote political views on either PNG or Australia. As they fear using open Facebook accounts to post political opinions may lead to detriment on the person or people which posted it. On their Facebook platform, an open like page, they promote both information on current affairs in PNG and Australian memorial days- such as the celebration of Anzac Day on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April. During the Covid-19 isolation they have proceeded, yet more frequently than before, to post videos on PNG history, such as on the history of Bougainville<sup>36</sup>- relating this back to the resignation of O'Neill, reminding the students that this had occurred before and led to changes in the political schema. However, they use the platform to promote student politics, such as the election of the university student association- where the executive team endorsed a specific candidate. And more recently, the motion to reduce tuition fees with 20% and push census dates for exams due to Covid-19.

## The figure of Marape

Current PM James Marape's political platform shares similarity to past PMs in ways such as gaining power through special elections<sup>37</sup> and in his promoting of Christian values as part of his political platform<sup>38</sup> (Tomlin and McDougall 2013). Because of this it is noteworthy to analyse why he is portrayed so differently by the PNG students.

According to the PNG students, when first instated Marape lowered taxes, fuel costs and re-negotiated contracts so oil revenue increased. To summarise, this is what they expressed about James Marape; "*he didn't talk much, he just came in and action. (...) He doesn't boast, he doesn't brag- that's the type of leader he is. He leads change*". Furthermore, he did publicly display his Christian beliefs. As collectively argued by the PNG students, James Marape is the polar opposite of former use of power and status. As one of the female

<sup>36</sup> Video shared on the PNG student association page on Facebook

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JrSTFQ99r0c&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR1q8O51r-xFCjAWdHxAcFZjFF-H\\_3zG0cMUrRTAn8fhF-CZXEJrsEO0BmY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JrSTFQ99r0c&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR1q8O51r-xFCjAWdHxAcFZjFF-H_3zG0cMUrRTAn8fhF-CZXEJrsEO0BmY) (read 21.05.2020)

<sup>37</sup> Former PM Peter O'Neill gained the position though a special election following the "2011-2012 PNG 'constitutional crisis'" Podcast by The Australian National University: <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/news-events/podcasts/png-constitutional-crisis-2011-12-and-options-constitutional-review-and-reform#.XtfCNWgzZPY> (read and heard 03.06.2020).

<sup>38</sup> In PNG the church is an integral part of the political society, where politicians such as current PM James Marape promote Christian values on their political platforms.

students noted, in a paraphrased excerpt: “*Men with power see themselves, and are often seen by other men, as closer to or alike with God*”. These argued ideas of power and Godlike natures are not unique to PNG politics, rather, they can be seen in contemporary political affairs globally, e.g. in the impeachment hearings of American President Donald Trump, where Foreign Policy named him a “self-described saviour of the nation”<sup>39</sup>.

Tomlin and McDougall (2013,12) argue that a common belief held by Pacific Islanders is the exhorting of political leaders to be good Christians- consequently leading to transparency and morality in government. The PNG students argued provincialism to be the downfall of development in PNG due to territorial disputes and codes of honour. For example, they argued that due to provincialism the media, and social media, had to a sense been censored as they feared the backlash of addressing people of certain provinces or of high status. The PNG students also discussed backroom dealings, arguing that this was the most common expression of corruption in PNG. Backroom dealings meant both politicians in the cabinet literally sitting behind a locked door discussing political matters in unofficial settings and from there creating alliances, as well as arranging business deals but presenting the payment to be higher than actual numbers. This way they would make money of the books on public deals.

The political election was discussed during most social settings, during which the PNG students would add to the analysis how belonging to Christian denominations would prevent corruption and encourage transparency. In their discussions the figure of Marape became the opposition to provincial specific impediments and corruption in politics. Arguing the issues of a collective political framework as a result of multi-layered tension due to regionalist and provincialist preference- stating that not only did provincialism separate peoples, it can create problems within structure of politics and the mobilising of activist movements. Firstly, his political platform surrounded ideals of “one nationness”, and his Christian morality and 7<sup>th</sup> day Adventist devotion were the underpinning for a good government under his leadership- as it is argued by the PNG students to be a synonym of morality and transparency. This is example of how ‘irreducibly constructive’ religion and politics can be to each other, as argued by Tomlinson, McDougall (2013,03).

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<sup>39</sup> <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/01/29/why-trump-believes-innocent-ukraine-impeachment/> (read 31.01.2020)

After the election, 7<sup>th</sup> day Adventist organisations around the world wrote about Marape on their internet pages and social media. The president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific stated that “His [Marape] Seventh-day Adventist values and heritage will hold him in good Standing” (in Stackelroth 2019). The 7<sup>th</sup> day Adventist church is a Millennialist Protestant denomination, which encourages parishioners to live by the 10 commandments. As the Pentecostal church, it was founded in the US. Adventists live by strict guidelines, for example they are not allowed to drink alcohol or use tobacco or recreational drugs, nor eat unsustainable, clean foods. There are members of the 7<sup>th</sup> day Adventist who do not believe in Scientific knowledge, such as American politician Ben Carson (Bell 2015). However, 7<sup>th</sup> day Adventist is not a monolithic church and according to the denomination in the south pacific, scientific discoveries which can be seen as harmonious to “Gods image” and biblical principles are welcome. For instance, gene therapy that can alleviate or prevent suffering are welcome<sup>40</sup>. A few of the PNG students were 7<sup>th</sup> day Adventist, but practiced Pentecostalism or chose not to attend church in North Queensland.

The PNG students navigate regionalism and provincialism through the figure of Marape and his platform based on “one nation” ideals. Marape holds an honours degree in environmental sciences from the university of PNG, his background in Science prompted another element of approval amongst the PNG students. As they use both Christianity and Science in discussing how to activate socio-political change in PNG. They argue that the ‘new generation’, which they say they represents a hybridity between the “traditional PNG way”, and “modernity”- which has enabled them to keep to “culturally defined rules” whilst allowing for what they see as a “Western open-mindedness”. Marape was argued to be a “leader of change”, which sparked the “new hope” as expressed by the PNG students. The excerpt below depicts Matt, a 21-year-old studying phycology, examining perceived differences in work structures between PNG and Australia. He spoke of this matter in an unstructured interview, in which he explained his view on the future of PNG. He believed in Marape to “clean up” corruption in business and build schools to further the education of the next generation;

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<sup>40</sup> <https://www.adventist.org/articles/human-gene-therapy/> (Read 27.06.2020)

*“I have looked at work structures here in Australia. You have major corporations; you have small companies where workers they go through schooling processes (...). It’s functioning at a level where you have confidence in them delivering results. In PNG we don’t have that and there is a lot of failure in business and our political atmosphere, that failure it created, and branched out, like an octopus, you know- because what happened here is affecting those there”.*

- Matt

Matt continued to explain that in his community in PNG (located in Hela Province) “hope” had begun to lose value, therefore his expressions towards the “leader of change” as he named Marape, and the potentiality of change occurring soon had become strong. From what Matt explained was a trusted confidant, a relative of Marape, he had been informed that Marape had built high schools and a vocational school from his own private funds, payed for educations, and confirmed that these were all recognised institutions and degrees by the Australian government.

After Marape was instated there was a clear shift in the way the PNG students spoke about politics and expressed political positionality. In social media, Marape is written of as the 7<sup>th</sup> day Adventist PM. This is not a coincidence, as we find that religious devotion is a very attractive attribute to flaunt in political platforms in PNG. However, I argue that the student’s political positionality was influenced by Marape being an environmental scientist. I stated in the introduction for this chapter, that the term political positionality was studied as a set of fluid and strategic microlevel interactions, I thus relate Marape education to the PNG students long term aim of establishing sustainable “development” in PNG. By sustainable I mean two elements, that of environmental sustainability and of sustainable practice in business. As a collective, the wantok network praised Marape, as his background functioned well with what they were aiming to procure. However, individually, and despite Marape promoting “One Nation” ideals, a few of the PNG students worried that the Hela province native would favour his own province rather than the nation as a whole. Those who expressed these concerns did so outside of larger gatherings and further stated that they did not discuss this with their families back in PNG. Marape had been the PM in PNG for around a month when I left the field, therefore it is not possible to follow the students long term positionality surrounding him. However, in the context of that month the political positionality of the PNG students was visible in discussions, following on social media and in the expressions of a positively referred to “new hope”.

## Activating Science and Pentecostalism

The wantok network and Christian morality are incorporated in the diaspora politics of the student association. They intend to activate scientific inquiry to ‘develop’ PNG through a long-lasting, sustainable processes. During an interview I asked what scientific implementations they found crucial for “sustainable development” of PNG. Where I was given an example on road construction and necessary studies classifying types of soul;

*“(...) One example I can give you is our roads in PNG. The Highlands highway. What they [current politicians] do is they just throw a bunch of gravel on top to seal the road, but they don’t actually deal with the problem. They just cover it up for the sake of, you know, have a good road so cars can travel. But six, eight months, two years pass by, the road erodes. We have potholes again. Then you waste a lot of money again into it, like what is the point? You know. You have to (...) study salinity, you know, soil content. (...) is the road in a geographical location that if there was rain, would it affect it? Those things are not taken into consideration. (...) I have seen reports [from Australia], when they fixed the roads, the roads are smooth for what five, six, ten years? That saves a lot of money”.*

As the majority of PNG students are undergraduate students, they would speak of ideas and plans incorporating Christian morality and Science in development, however, a few had begun activating their degrees to assist in political issues, sustainability and conservation praxis, and in the medical sector of PNG, such as Ada and Yanet (see chapter two).

The Sepik river is located on the island of New Guinea in the East Sepik Province and Sandaun Province. It is home to an abundance of life such as the New Guinea crocodile, amphibian species, and sharks. Ada had walked on a path by the Sepik river as a young adult and heard it speak to her. She had felt as if God was talking to her through the river, and this experience would later result in her obtaining a degree in marine biology- a degree she already had begun to utilise in her work to conserve the rivers integrity and the vast life that lived within and surrounding it. In Ada’s village they were given what she referred to as tribal names, as well as English names. The tribal names were drawn from the cosmology of her village and were all connected to life in the waters. She herself is “Crocodile Shark”. Her work did not only surround the conservation of life in the water- and surrounding it, but her villages cosmological connection to it as well.

Ada already collaborates with protest groups in her home of the Sepik river, where she shares scholarly work for grassroot movements in building a political case against larger corporations and assists in writing petitions. By the Sepik river lays an open cast mine called The Frieda mine, which is subject to large protests due to its environmental impact. This project, which is set to reach full potential production of gold and copper by 2024-2025<sup>41</sup>, is co-owned in an 80:20 joint venture by the Australian registered, Chinese government owned, PanAust and the Highland Pacific<sup>42</sup>. Environmental activist groups such as ‘Project Sepik’ protested the building of the mine and continue to fight its production through lobbying for locals situated around the river. Inspired by her children Ada wants to write a children’s book on sharks, the main focus in her thesis- and other fauna in the river, to educate children on their tribal names and on local fauna. The accumulated proceeds of this book would go towards sustainability of their heritage and life in the Sepik river. The way she explained her work was an overlap between “*conservation of fauna, specifically sharks, and conservation of culture*”.

This form of activism is encouraged by the PNG student association, where members expressed a desire to devote their lives to similar causes, however, as the majority were undergraduate students, many believed they were not yet well versed enough in their fields. Creating accessibility to healthcare such as medical centres and psychologists are other ways in which the PNG students plan to utilise their scientific degrees for the ‘development’ of the public health of PNG peoples. Implementing rural healthcare is the reason behind the scientific inquiry of a biomedicine student involved in the student organisation. She herself grew up in a rural area in a Province in the Island region of PNG, experiencing the lived reality of inaccessible health care. She explained how the current situation in her province is as of now: “*There is no easy way for people, they travel long distances to get to the nearby clinic, like we say nearby clinic, it’s pretty far. They have to either catch a boat, or walk, catch a boat then walk again. I just want to help put one in the centre that’s nearest to them*”.

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<sup>41</sup> See "Study Maps Future Path for Frieda River Project: Engineering, Geology, Mineralogy, Metallurgy, Chemistry, etc." 2016. *Engineering and Mining Journal* 217 vol (06): 16.  
<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1806223309?accountid=8579>. (read 20.05.2020)

<sup>42</sup> Overview of ownership of the Frieda river mine. <https://www.synchronicityearth.org/river-at-risk-an-alternative-vision-for-the-sepik/> (Read 20.05.2020)

## Summary

In this chapter I add to the classic anthropological definition of ‘positionality’ in fieldwork to my analytical framework, - to enable the study of the political positionality of the students. This relates to the students continuously position themselves politically- influenced by social categories. “Political positionality” is studied as a set of interactions in every day lived realities. I studied the student’s responds to the 2019 special election, which resulted in the instating of former Minister of Finance, James Marape as prime minister of PNG. James Marape is an environmental scientist, who built his political platform on Christian rhetoric- specifically that of the denomination of 7<sup>th</sup> day Adventist. Following the student’s discussions on PM James Marape allowed for a more detailed analysis of their political positionality surrounding notions of religion and Science. The political positionality of the PNG students is flexible, as an example the PNG students do not voice political opinions on PNG or Australia on social media, however, this does not mean they have no opinion. Rather, they argue that social media has become too much of a tensions space to openly discuss individual politicians, or opinions on their host-nation, Australia.

PNG’s centralised provincial system- which is partly federal, was established in the 1980’s. Later, regions dreamed of the establishing of autonomous regional governments (Okole 2003,53) and the celebration of provincialism began to symbolically overshadow the celebrating of Independence Day in PNG. The students explained that in PNG provincialism and regionalism marked spatial identity, consequently constructing a distinction in PNG. The figure of Marape, typified “one nation” ideals which promoted a national identity in PNG, constituting a break from provincial preference. He wished to ban the celebration of provincial days and ban the use of provincial flags in Independence Day celebrations. Moreover, he embodied the importance of science and sustainable praxis as included in the student’s definition of “development”, which encapsulated educational merit as politically relevant. Though a minority of the PNG students sceptically questioned the manner in which Marape had gained his seat, none openly dissented to him being instated.

In the last chapter of this thesis I summarise my findings and study the collected data against contemporary political events which have occurred after I conducted this fieldwork. The students have become politically involved in a movement to end gender-based violence in PNG and have utilized social media to voice these opinions. I relate this movement to a proposal for further studies.

## CHAPTER SIX:

### Summary and Conclusion

There has been little research conducted on PNG peoples outside of PNG. Thus, I wish that this thesis can add emic perspectives from a pool of PNG peoples to discussions surrounding deconstruction and construction of self in North Queensland. As an introduction to the thesis, I framed the central argument to enable the study of *self* as a fluid and continuous process, whilst simultaneously researching how the *self* is stabilized and affixed. I have studied this through combined theories such as feminist methodologies, Indigenous methodologies, forms of anthropology- medical, political, cultural and social, and sociology. Through utilizing theories from multiple disciplines, I have holistically researched the connexion between Science and Pentecostal praxis and the production of group mentality and the individual self- and how this enacts with PNG.

In the introduction chapter I depicted the methodological framework of the thesis. Building on the “Foucaultian body” I studied constructions of subjectivity in relation to power. This is largely relevant both individually for the students who are dependent on scholarships from Australian organisations, and nationally pertaining to relief funding as well as visa eligibility. I utilized participant observation, structured, un-structured and informal interviews, and social media as my main methods.

In the first chapter I introduced the underpinnings of the contemporary relationship between PNG and Australia. This presentation of history builds on the knowledge presented to me by the students, illustrating what, and how, they learned about PNG history in school- and how they discuss history today relating to their ‘developmental’ endeavours towards their nation. This chapter introduced the students as diaspora navigating through tensions relating to the ambiguity surrounding both the relationship between the nations historically, as well as a neo-colonial relationship. The students question if they are “truly” independent because of PNG’s dependency on foreign aid and the large number of foreign owned industries and businesses. Sarah illustrates this by comparing foreign investors to invisible puppeteers. The students are all members of the PNG student association, which was established because of the large number of PNG students who relocate to North Queensland to obtain degrees. This

association is also studied as a wantok network, built on fictive kinship based in reciprocity and solidarity. The wantok network constructs a space to discuss political reform and ‘development’, and a setting in which to connect with PNG.

In chapter two I introduced Eriksen’s (2017) methodological framework “Going to Pentecost” to study Pentecostalism as *place*. “In” Pentecost the students navigate what they depict as a feeling of being caught between two worlds; “third world” and “modernity”. They describe themselves as navigating a hybridity of what they refer to as “the traditional PNG way” and “open-minded modernity”. Indigenous scholar, Smith (2005,19) wrote; “*Imperialism frames the Indigenous experience. It's is part of our story, our version of modernity*”. I studied this as internalized notions of colonial logics, influenced by the construction of contemporary PNG’s school system. Moreover, we find that the male dominated sphere of scientific and mathematical educations is related to the fields’ connection to the “West” (Sukthankar (1999). Different students, at different times vacillate between these positions, grappling with colonial and missionary tropes which, as an example, put women in a different educational sphere than men.

“Pentecost” thus offers a resolution of sorts, where Christian morality functions as a moral compass in navigating temporality. The empirical data from an all-female seminar at the Pentecostal church the students congregate, illustrates how notions of morality are embodied through the female body. These relate to restrictions pertaining to sexual relationships, presented by sexologist Dr. Weerakoon as a “counter-culture” to “Western” “ideology of independence”. Weerakoon’s depiction of the “West” inhabits a “post-truth culture”, truth meaning the word of God, as well as an “ideology of independence” which she argues promotes a “my body, my right” mentality. Weerakoon uses the seminar to illustrate how women should counteract immoralities- such as sexual relationships, lesbianism and transsexualism, which can appear in “Western cultures”, with a devotion to the concept of their bodies belonging to Jesus. The students collectively argue that to obtain ‘development’ in PNG, it must be rooted in Christian morality.

Chapter three I argued that the female students in Science are flouting and reaffirming gender norms. I utilize the theory of “The Mindful body” by Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) to study how subjectivity is produced through the “Individual body”- as phenomenological experience and societal experience, “Social body”- connecting nature, culture and society, and “Politics body”- through restriction, regulation and surveilling measures. Interlaced, I study the “individual body” and “social body” to analyse how the

female students are deconstructed notions of “authentic women” and “femininity” through scientific inquiry. By conducting studies in Science, women are said to be entering male dominated spheres (Sukthankar 1999,174). Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) use empirical data surrounding witchcraft in their depiction of the “Political body” or “Body Politic”. Drawing from this I studied witchcraft and how the female students analyse this as means to regulate, restrict and surveil women’s social mobility and sociality. I argue that regulatory measures of the combined bodies of the “individual body” and the “Political body” or “Body politic” ensure a reaffirming of gender norms visible through the form of Pentecostal praxis which the female students are exposed to. The female students embody the ‘transitioning’ of women’s status and constructed versions of “womanhood”- which they express a struggle in navigating.

Chapter four surrounded the experiences of the temporal diaspora, and it’s influence on the construction of self. I used the term ‘temporal’ as to incorporate the emic perspective of the students, who express their wish to perform remittance. I analyse remittance as a reciprocating end of a reciprocal relationship, where parents and community payed for the studies and the students themselves- and their knowledge, are the “gift”. I draw from the Routledge handbook of diaspora studies (2019) in which the authors pose the question; “Are diasporic ties likely to be weakened as countries of settlement increasingly demand cultural conformity, social integration and exclusive political fealty?” (Cohen, Fisher 2019,02). Specific to this data, I attempt to answer this through analysing how connexion to homeland is strengthened through the wantok network, joking relationships, Pentecostal praxis, social proximity and political involvement.

The example I have drawn on is that the wantok network enforces connection to PNG through the unifying joking relationship. This surrounds the phenomenological experience of *time*, interpreted as a parody on colonial officers, and the industrialization of *time*. Devotion to Pentecostal praxis functions as means to secure continuous social proximity with homeland and familiar relations- stabilizing and affixing identity in a state of temporality. This devotion is also argued by the students to secure ‘development’ of PNG through Christian morality.

Chapter five builds on chapter four, depicting the political embeddedness and involvement of the students. Analysing involvement in PNG politics not only as citizens but as scientists. I add to the classic anthropological definition of ‘positionality’ in fieldwork to my analytical framework, - to enable the study of the political positionality of the students. “Political positionality” is studied as a set of interactions in every day lived realities. I studied the

student's responds to the 2019 special election, which resulted in the instating of former Minister of Finance, James Marape as prime minister of PNG. James Marape is an environmental scientist, who built his political platform on Christian rhetoric- specifically that of the denomination of 7<sup>th</sup> day Adventist. PNG's centralised provincial system- which is partly federal, was established in the 1980's. Later, regions dreamed of the establishing of autonomous regional governments (Okole 2003,53) and the celebration of provincialism began to symbolically overshadow the celebrating of Independence Day in PNG. The students explained that in PNG provincialism and regionalism marked spatial identity, consequently constructing a distinction in PNG.

The figure of Marape, typified "one nation" ideals which promoted a national identity in PNG, constituting a break from provincial preference. He wished to ban the celebration of provincial days and ban the use of provincial flags in Independence Day celebrations. Moreover, he embodied the importance of science and sustainable praxis as included in the student's definition of "development", which encapsulated educational merit as politically relevant.

## Conclusion

As a last chapter-specific main argument, I hereby argue that the PNG students operate as faithful servants, practicing Science and Religion to serve their nation, and become closer to God. I draw back to the central argument of the thesis, where I argue that PNG students deconstruct and construct notions of self through the utilization of Science and Pentecostal practice- challenging the contemporary socio-political system of PNG. As the thesis elaborates, the PNG students navigate lived reality in North Queensland both as dynamic and fluid diaspora and affixed and stabilized diaspora. Through the thesis I have studied the ways in which studying in North Queensland affect the PNG student's construction of self. At first glance, the notion of flouting and reaffirming gender norms may appear paradoxal. However, drawing from Scheper-Hughes (1994,232-233) and the "political body", we find that the female PNG students mediate tensions surrounding notions of "morality" in a dialectic relationship between alienation and belonging. The mediation through female bodies thus offers a form of resolution to this relationship. I argue, that the female PNG students construct a new form of "womanhood". One which seeks to challenge the contemporary sociality and social mobility of women in PNG. The deconstruction and construction of "womanhood", as

asserted in North Queensland, is a way in which we can study how women “do diaspora”. Studying diaspora through the “Going to Pentecost” framework by Eriksen (2017) illustrates how the PNG students establish autonomy by creating spiritual and physical borders. These borders are crucial in “Pentecost”, as they distinct “morality” from “immorality”. Through acting as the faithful servant within these borders, within morality”, the PNG students are able to practice Religion and Science in such a manner which ultimately can enable them to perform remittance and help in the process of sustainable development in PNG- meaning environmentally, morally and towards the economic independence of the nation.

## Future studies

Since I left the field in the end of June 2019, the students have taken part in the political movements “Black Lives Matter”. They have used social media as a platform to gain and spread knowledge on West Papuans, and the “Free Papua movement” which they argue need to be included in the “Black Lives Matter” movement. In June 2020 the students have also become part of a grassroot movement to stop gender-based violence on women in PNG, utilising the hashtag; justiceforJenelyneKennedy and the hashtag; endthesilence. Furthermore, the PNG student association have taken to use their social media platforms to promote the movement. These two movements have quickly accumulated a large following, including the majority of the PNG students. Based on this thesis, and its large number of female participants, it would be very interesting to specifically study the political movement promoting the end of gender-based violence in PNG. As of 2020, several of the students have finished their degrees and are in the midst of performing remittance to PNG. Should they use their degrees towards either of these movement it would enable the further study of Science in action.

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