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*HLAREM VANUATU: THE LIMINALITY AND
COMMUNITAS OF PORT VILA AND ITS
YOUNG PEOPLE*

Rebecca Silverstone

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Sociology & Anthropology

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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ABSTRACT

HAREM VANUATU: THE LIMINALITY AND COMMUNITAS OF PORT VILA AND ITS YOUNG PEOPLE

Rebecca Silverstone

Based on 8 months of fieldwork, this thesis attempts to look at the role of anthropological thought and methods in empowering young people in Port Vila, capital of Vanuatu. In Port Vila, a group of young Ni-Vanuatu researchers are using many of anthropology's methodological tools to conduct research on urban and more recently, rural youth. Using qualitative field research; action-oriented advocacy in the form of newsletters, videos, and health workshops, business and post-educational training have been developed to help young people. Towns throughout Melanesia are experiencing some of the most rapid urban growth in the world and during this substantial transformation; youth are in the process of negotiating identities for themselves. Using Victor Turner's notion of 'liminality', and with regards to the concept of 'kastom', this thesis examines why life in town may bring about liminality, which young people seem to be particularly affected. Due to the work done by the Young People's Project, a unifying voice (a sense of 'communitas') for young people has emerged and resolved several of the stereotypes which cast youth in a negative light. This thesis also examines the history of Vanuatu from its ethnographic origins and colonization, in order to document the various tensions that urbanization has caused to personhood and notion of place. Place is a key and defining quality of identity, which has been dramatically altered in urban space. How young people establish a sense of personhood when so many of the major qualities that attach person to place have been marginalized, is a central focus of this research.

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To the members of my graduate program cohort and the Anthropology faculty of Concordia University, I cannot thank each and every one of you enough for the enormous amount of support and challenge you have provided, both personally and professionally. This is especially sung out to Dr. Christine Jourdan, Dr. Chantal Collard, Kasia, Rania and Jessica. Further, I thank Dr. Jean Mitchell, an anthropologist whose own time in Vanuatu taught me the invaluable lesson of why anthropological method should be shared, rather than just used, to learn.

And of course to my friends and family who never lost faith in me, even when it meant seeing me go to the other end of the world, I thank you.

To serendipity... being in the right place at the right time.

I dedicate this thesis to my two moms. To my mother Alison, who has time and again shown me what it is to respect others and find faith in myself, and to my momma Alice who took it upon herself to give me a source of family, place and faith in Vanuatu.

God could not be everywhere and therefore he made mothers. —Anon. (Jewish Proverb)

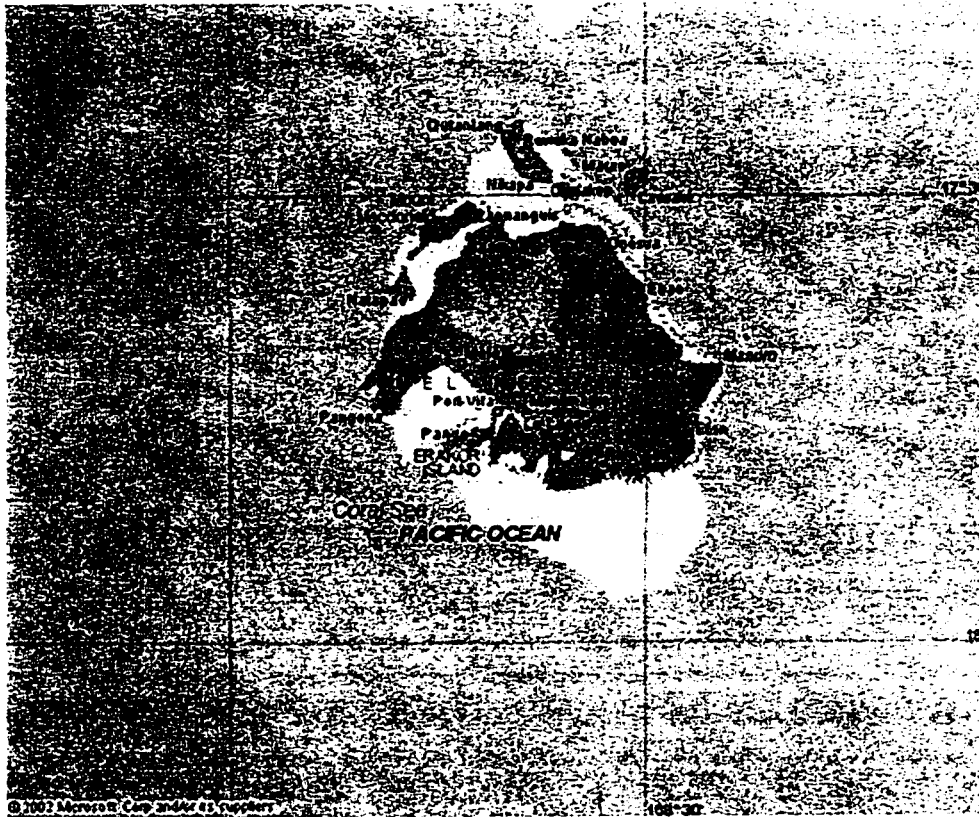


Table 2. Map of Efate

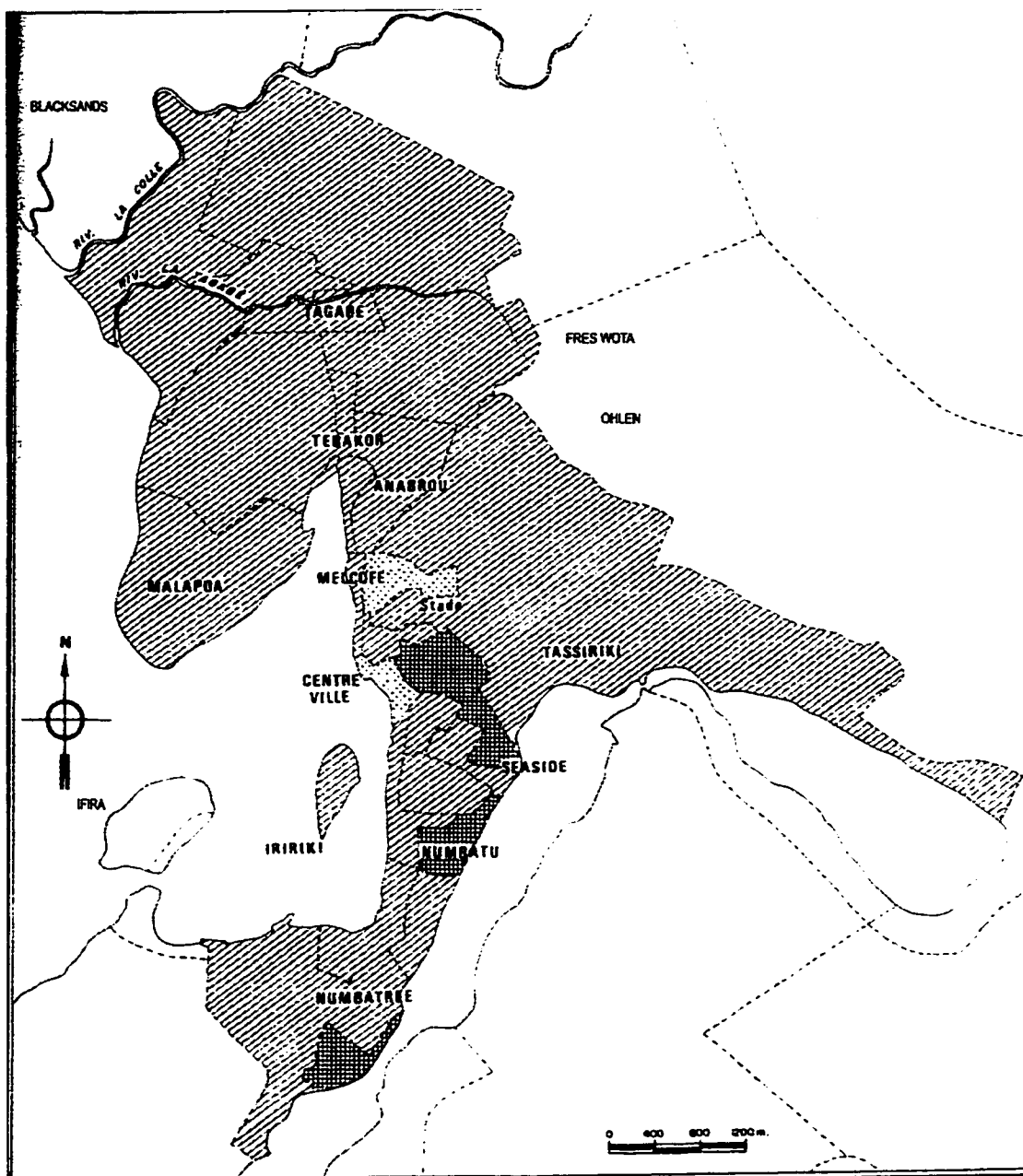


Table 3. Map of Port Vila's Settlements

Chapter 1

Introducing “*Harem Vanuatu: Liminality and Communitas of Port Vila and its Young People*”

“The world does not go backwards, it develops and goes forward”—young man, Kilim Taem

1.1. Introduction to the Project

Based on fieldwork conducted from January to August 2000 in Vanuatu, an archipelago of islands in the South Pacific, this thesis uses Victor Turner’s notions of liminality and *communitas* (1967, 1969) to examine how modernization¹ and *kastom*² are impacting and shaping adolescent³ identities in its capital town of Port Vila.

The notion of liminality is used to emphasize the blurring of place and personhood that urban ‘anti-structure’⁴ generates. Victor Turner introduced the concept of ‘liminality’ in his

¹ Modernization implies “changes in social and technological form, away from the perception of “tradition” as the basis of culture, towards Western capitalism and bureaucracy. (Taylor, n.d. unpublished paper)” People in Vanuatu call anything to do with modernization, colonialism and urbanization *fusin blong waetman* (white man’s ways).

² “*Kastom* is a Bislama word which loosely translates as tradition, but evokes not so much the totality of ancestral practices as a particular selection of such practices for the present. (Jolly 1998: 139)” Placing *Kastom* into a dialectic relationship with Modernization is a contrast which has impacted this study as it was often encountered when speaking to youth about town living.

³ The terms “adolescent”, “youth” and “young people” will be interchanged throughout this paper to describe the category of person between the ages of 13 to 25. This age set has been selected, as to reflect the category of persons working with an indigenous youth program in Port Vila (documented throughout the text) while conducting town and outer island fieldwork. In Amit-Talai and Wulff’s introduction to *Youth Cultures: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, Wulff (1995:6) states: “Youth culture is often associated with teenagers, people between the ages of 13 and 19, yet cultural boundaries separating youth from children on one hand and from adults on the other, may differ. Not only is ‘youth’ consequentially a construction, as is the term ‘children’, but in fact so is ‘adults’.”

⁴ “I have used the term “antistructure” for many liminal events and relationships not because I consider liminality to be essentially chaotic or amorphous... but because its general manner of organization or construction seems to rest on principles different from those governing quotient social life. This is not to say that everyday social structure is essentially static, for it is constantly being influenced and modified by antistructure, just as antistructure is continually being curbed and penetrated by structure which sets limits on its capacity for experimentation and critical reflection (Turner 1978:133)”

1967 work with the Ndembu in Northwestern Zambia entitled The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual.

“If our basic model of society is that of a “structure of positions,” we must regard the period of margin or “liminality” as an interstructural situation.”(p.93)

Although liminality in its original usage is found within the context of ritual and initiation amongst young boys in an African village, here it underscores the “betwixt and between” of living in Port Vila. While this impacts all residents of town, it is especially poignant in the case of young people, where within this climate of liminality, they are in the process of constructing their identities.

Port Vila’s origins are rooted in Vanuatu’s colonization. French and English interests set up a dual administrative centre and in 1907, the Anglo-French Condominium proclaimed Vila the capital of the New Hebrides⁵ (former name of Vanuatu) (Brown 1970). Over the past 22 years of independence (1980) *ni-Vanuatu*⁶ have lived with the consequences of this history while reshaping it to include pre- and post-colonial narratives to establish their identities⁷. On a supranational level, Otto and Thomas define ‘Postcolonial’ in Narratives of Nation in the South Pacific (1997:4)

⁵ Paula Glick Brown offers one of the only accounts of life in Port Vila pre-Independence in her paper “Melanesian Mosaic: Plural Community of Vila” Plotnick & Tuden (eds) Essays in Comparative Social Stratification. It is an extension to the first census undertaken in Vila by H.C Brookfield and P. Glick Brown. It focuses primarily on the colonists residing in Vila with little description given to the indigenous population.

⁶ *ni-Vanuatu* (or its colloquial abbreviation *ni-Vanuatu*) is a term used in Vanuatu to describe its citizens. The ‘*ni*’ in Bislama means ‘belonging to or of’, and thus; “man / woman of Vanuatu” (see Crowley 1995 and O’Byrne & Harcombe 1999).

⁷ Margaret Rodman (1992:648) discusses this in “Empowering Place: Multilocality and Multivocality” where she writes: “For the people of Vanuatu, independence became associated with regaining their land as well as their cultural past. As Jolly puts it, “*kastom* was expressly the reclaiming of place, against European occupation of the land and the reclaiming of a past which had been lost or expressly abandoned.”(1990:17).”

“not to a critical transcendence of colonial ideologies, but rather the confusion of narratives, authorities, and loyalties that mark the colonial aftermath.”

As such, these tensions of narratives, authorities and loyalties provide youth with a plethora of choices when building their identities; from ‘traditional’ *kastom fasins*⁸ to ‘modern’ Westernized ways of living.

Attempting to document and learn from these processes, is a non-government organization working with young people living in Port Vila, looking at aspects of urbanization and social change. The *Vanuatu Yang Pipol's Projek* (YPP in its abbreviated and colloquial form) was created in 1997 with the help of anthropologist Jean Mitchell, to conduct large-scale qualitative research on issues surrounding youth in town. As a youth-oriented branch of the *Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta* (eng. trans. Vanuatu Cultural Centre), the Vanuatu Young People's Project (eng. trans.) has conducted fieldwork around town and more recently, across the islands; collecting interviews, video-footage, fieldnotes and questionnaires from young ni-Vanuatu men and women. Part of the group's mandate is to study, negotiate and communicate the effects of social change on young people. While another aspect is exploring how and whether *kastom* maintains value and identification for young people living in town. The means by which they distribute this research consequentially provides a voice for youth within the rest of society, creating a sense of *communitas* for young people, where marginality was previously located. For Turner (1977:46) *communitas* underscores:

⁸ Although *Kastom fasin* (singular) has become a key construct to idealizing a nationalistic and distinct patterning of culture in Vanuatu and at the supranational level, in combining all Melanesian culture (see Bernard Narokobi's *The Melanesian Way*), in town *kastom fasins* (plural) are generated from the unique features of *ples* which abound. This aspect represents a crucial distinction that *fasin* incurs between *ples* and *kastom*, more fully examined in this text.

“a relational quality of full unmediated communication, even communion, between definite and determinate human identities [William Blake’s phrase], which arises spontaneously in all kinds of groups, situations, and circumstances.”

Although the spontaneity of their work could be debated, as an enormous amount of time and effort has gone into the project’s reports, videos and workshops, the impact on the lives of young people as a result of their actions can not. As such, an outcome of the YPP’s work reveals how anthropological method can be used practically by indigenous researchers to collect data and create research projects that will bring a sense of agency and establish a platform where the population’s voices can be heard. Due to the nature of the Research Policy of Vanuatu that guides both internal and external research, the country has designed a structure of social development that insists a relationship between the social sciences and development be forged to benefit of all ni-Vanuatu people. This stems from a moratorium placed on foreign research from 1985 to 1994⁹.

The fieldworker program was introduced first in the 1970’s to collect and record men’s Oral Traditions and officially came to be known as the Vanuatu Cultural Centre Fieldworker Network. What is so interesting within this linkage is the evolution of this core research program, from its origins of documenting what was “in danger of being lost”; the *kustom* knowledge passed through oral tradition and several island languages, towards today’s research attempting to understand what is occurring presently to better navigate the future. These foundations of study do not stand in contrast to one another, but are complimentary features of understanding the same system. A principle aim of this ethnography is to show how

⁹ In a special edition of *Oaxania* (Sept 1999) much of the history and policy guiding the Cultural Centre is published in several papers. Two papers that highlight the Center’s history and subsequent research are Lissant Bolton’s “Introduction” and Ralph Regenvanu’s “Afterword: Vanuatu Perspectives on research”.

Vanuatu has found a way to incorporate the social sciences into a framework whereby external and internal research can foster awareness that benefits not only the ni-Vanuatu but also the future of anthropological knowledge. Ralph Regenvanu (1999:2) discusses the reason for the lifting of the moratorium, which was not to increase discourse in academic circles, but rather to generate a collaborative process between indigenous and expatriate fieldworkers.

“The lifting of the research moratorium, then, was not effected for the purpose of encouraging a rejuvenation of academic discourse about Vanuatu’s cultures and societies, although as this volume attests, this has been one of its outcomes. It remains a fact that that the great majority of ni-Vanuatu will never read this collection or other publications produced by professional researchers. While this discourse may only affect the lives of subjects of research to a limited extent (if at all), it is the objective of the VCRP [Vanuatu Cultural Research Policy] to ensure that, at other levels more directly relevant to their own lives, ni-Vanuatu can perceive research as an exercise over which they have some control, in which they can meaningfully participate, and from which they can benefit.”

As such this thesis will examine what life is like in town for young people and how the ethnographic studies being conducted at the Young People’s Project, have provided an arena where “they have some control, in which they can meaningfully participate, and from which they can benefit.”

Before introducing the YPP and their work, readers must be able to approach the case study aware of the country’s origins both historically and ethnographically so that clarity concerning youth, urbanization and *kastom* will become relevant factors in what the YPP is trying to accomplish for Port Vila’s future generations. By introducing an important debate in Melanesian studies of personhood (Marilyn Strathern 1988, Edward LiPuma 1997), the tension between aspects of dividuality and individuality will reveal liminality of not only personhood,

but of a combination of place and personhood defined by the notion of *man ples*¹⁰ (Rodman 1992, Jolly 1990). Understanding where place resides in ni-Vanuatu identity is central to recognizing diversity amongst islands of people in Vanuatu. Port Vila's youth are coming of age in town, whereas *kastom* identified by *man ples* is tied to the ground of the islands and not transferable to town. Thus some argue that Port Vila contains no legitimate *kastom* (save by the *Man Efate* who bear *kastom* rights to the land). An example of this came during an interview with the Secretary of the Malvatumauri (National Council of Chiefs). When asking him why young people in Port Vila felt as though they were losing their ties to *kastom*, he simply stated that *kastom* is tied to the ground. It remains tied to the land from which people have increasingly migrated from. *Kastom* does not travel with people; it remains bound to its *ples*. Therefore in his opinion, young people in town are divided between two worlds.

1.2. Methodology

From the outset this work has taken many shapes and forms. Originally the thesis was meant to be accompanied by a short video documenting the lives of young people in Port Vila, however due in part to ethical concerns (the inability to provide my informants with anonymity and the incapacity to go through an open-ended 'participatory' editing session with the Young People's Project) and personal fears, I chose to use the video footage instead as archival fieldnotes. I will temporally outline the methods and processes that brought me to Port Vila, enabled me to find a fieldsite, the tools by which I conducted the research, the

¹⁰ "Land (tan) is thought to be the precondition of human culture, indeed the human inhabitants merge with the earth in some sense. Thus, like children, land is not so much owned as a part of one human's substance (cf. R. Lane, 1971:249; M. Rodman, 1984:69; Larmour, 1984:1-2)." (Jolly 1994:59)

informants whose lives are reflected in this piece, and finally, the writing stage that brought all of these elements together.

In recounting the details of this research, from its inception to the final stages of writing, let us begin by examining what *harem* means in the title, as it encompasses the very essence of the dissertation. *Harem* is a word borrowed from Bislama, Vanuatu's vehicular pidgin English and one of three national languages (French and English being the other two) which Terry Crowley (1995) defines in his A New Bislama Dictionary as:

“*harem* (vt) feel 2. hear...”(p.95)

During my stay in Port Vila, I often heard this word used and after asking one of my informants if she had any suggestions for a title, she told me whatever I chose to entitle my work, it should include *harem* as she could think of no word in the English language to better describe what a researcher is attempting to do. This piece is about being able to best draw from the experiences I had in Port Vila, Vanuatu and *harem* embodies that sense of ‘taking it all in’. It draws from a far more sensorial level of intuitiveness and awareness than one can appreciate simply get from ‘hearing’ another’s voice. Feeling is a much closer translation but remains on the outskirts of doing. *Harem* brings together the involvement of hearing and doing with the emotional attachment of feeling, and as such typifies what I hope to achieve in presenting this research and moreover how I hope I conducted my study and myself while in Port Vila. Bislama holds a power to imagine and describe that compared to the English language might seem time-consuming and inefficient; yet when understood it becomes more of a spoken poetry due to the nature of the limited vocabulary injecting words with diverse

meaning and rich subtexts often going unspoken. This is the best explanation I can offer for the necessity of keeping a word in Bislama to bring to life all the experiences and thoughts and lessons I've held onto from my time in Vanuatu.

By using '*Harem Vanuatu*' in the title of this thesis, the implication of me, a candidate for a master's degree having studied throughout this chain of over 70 islands, seems rather an exaggeration. It is. Perhaps it should have simply read "Harem Vila" since this research specifically stems from work in Port Vila. In contemplating this and reviewing my fieldnotes and video footage, it was obvious that so much of what I found concerning young people in town was extending itself to influence youth living on the islands. This is an important consideration as I write this paper, suggesting that if I didn't have a solid understanding of the historical and ethnographic places¹¹ of Vanuatu, this would simply be a shell of a thesis. Thus *harem Vanuatu*, explains a bit more about the project in the sense that, although in town, the measure of understanding urbanites and youth, calls first for an understanding of Vanuatu. Throughout my time there, I constantly felt invisible ties keeping people connected to one another and their 'homeland' islands (Tonkinson 1977); a major aspect related to understanding social relations of ni-Vanuatu people. I can only hope this sense of being able to *harem Vanuatu* is imparted to people when reading this thesis.

Vanuatu was my third choice of fieldsite, after the first two had presented serious political and social setbacks. The first was Cuba and after almost impossible dealings with government in trying to secure a research visa, I was offered the opportunity to go and study

¹¹ I use the word 'places' in plural in order to highlight the heterogeneity found in Vanuatu's many island locales. One important feature of Port Vila is that the town's residents come from diverse backgrounds and although living together in one region, their identities still remain very attached to their specific island *ples*.

in Oceania. My second choice of sites was the Solomon Islands; however upon completing an initial research proposal, a civil war broke loose in its capital of Honiara. As I'd been given a travel grant to study in Oceania I was told to select another Pacific Country. After conducting research into possible places to study, Vanuatu stood out from other suggestions such as New Caledonia, Fiji and several Polynesian islands. With its history entrenched in two simultaneous colonial encounters, the similarities to Quebec's own past fascinated me. Although the situations were far from being one in the same, I could identify with living in a contested French/English space. Moreover, I hoped that this identification might enable me to better understand life in Port Vila. In hindsight, this was an utterly naïve way to gloss over such a decision, but was in fact why I chose Vanuatu. Moreover, I hoped language barriers might be lessened being bilingual in both English and French.

Before leaving for Port Vila I was given some pijin¹² language training, which had begun when I was going to study in the Solomons. While I had formed very basic speaking skills, after a month of being in Port Vila, I took an intensive week-long course in Bislama (along with a group of volunteers from Australia) which helped enormously in communicating with youth, who rarely spoke either French or English outside of school.

Another consideration I had to deal with was the limited amount of time I would have in the field. Knowing already that I wanted to work with youth, I decided that finding an NGO or youth group would be the best way to immerse myself in youth culture. With several years of running a municipal youth program, I also felt I could offer some practical assistance

while volunteering my own time in return. So I set out sending letters and e-mails describing my intended research and past experiences with youth, hoping a group might be interested in an extra volunteer. What I did not know, is that 'volunteer' is a loaded concept in much of the developing world. Instead of finding its obvious meaning alongside the Canadian definition¹³, what it really involved was hiring a foreign employee. In Vanuatu this comprised of a salary in the form of living allowance, housing and in some cases, utilities. So understandably (yet inexplicably, at the time) I was refused by every group I'd written to. After relating this story to an acquaintance, she set me straight and I was taught my first lesson in development; nothing comes without cost. The question remained; how was I going to find an 'in' with such little time to make huge in-roads? This problem was solved when my advisor put me in contact with Jean Mitchell, an anthropologist who had just returned from a 4.5 year field experience in Vila, and thank goodness for her invaluable advice. She walked me through these notices, listened to my ideas and had me get in touch with the Vanuatu Yang Pipol's Projek and its project manager, a wonderful woman; named Emily Niras. It took a little while for Emily to reach me; I received her e-mail only days before departure, but it was inviting and friendly. My first reaction to working with this group was very positive in that it might solve the immediate need to gain access to my field of inquiry. These young researchers were already working with youth and urban issues, making wonderful gatekeepers to provide access to the youth community of Port Vila. Yet as I began to work with the group, it was their own impact, actions and relationships with young people that caught my attention. This thesis is partially

¹² Pijin is Solomon Island's version of pidgin English, very similar to Vanuatu's Bislama and PNG's tok pisin.

¹³ Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (1989:1600) "Volunteer n. 1. a person who voluntarily offers himself for a service or undertaking; a person who performs a service of his own free will[. . .] 3. Law. a. a person whose actions are not founded on any legal obligation so to act. b. one to whom a conveyance is made or promise is given without valuable consideration. . ."

the story of six researchers between the ages of 20 and 35, studying the lives of young people in Port Vila and throughout Vanuatu.

Although I had little arranged beforehand, I was able to find a weekly rental which although expensive introduced me to many of the Canadian volunteers living in Port Vila. Known as the “Canadian compound”, I knew that this would be a temporary arrangement which although provided a sense of comfort, would not suit the purposes of my stay. Shortly after, I was lucky to hear of a room coming up for monthly rental by a young couple, a British National, who’d been in Vanuatu nearly all her life and her husband, a young ni-Vanuatu man, a guitar instructor who played with several bands in Port Vila from Punk to the Blues. Our household was quite unique and gave me a wonderful opportunity to live with both ni-Vanuatu and foreign guests. While I was in Vila my roommates ranged from a very devote SDA ni-Vanuatu woman, a brother of another female ni-Vanuatu tenant (whom I never did actually meet, as she was living with her finance in Australia) studying at the French Lycee and hoping to become Port Vila’s first French-trained ni-Vanuatu doctor, another young ni-Vanuatu man training to be a pilot and consequentially, whose name seemed to change for every friend or relation I was introduced to, a young Australian man whose father owned a plantation on Santo (often in trouble with the law in Australia, and thus the explanation of his prolonged visits to Port Vila), another Australian man working with Australia’s Youth Ambassador program, doing an internship as an accountant at Port Vila Hospital and two other anthropologists doing their Phd’s, one in Vila while the other, an occasional visitor collecting historical information to coincide with his work on Pentecost. This mix afforded me insights into relationships between foreigners and ni-Vanuatu citizens, on several levels. The

first of these observations lay on similarity. While we occasionally had the usual squabbles related to disappearing food supplies, most of our daily routines and attitudes reflected similar attitudes and activities. Moreover, if I had difficulty in understanding something I'd observed or been told by one of my informants, there was someone in the household, with whom I could speak to and receive in detail other explanations. The room for discourse in our house was a wonderful opportunity that not only afforded me the luxury of asking questions but hearing tales of my roommates' own relationships to their ni-Vanuatu counterparts.

Another really important connection was made almost from the time that I arrived and began to work with the Young People's Project. Viviane, one of the fieldworkers' took me under her wing and made me a part of her family. When her mother stopped in to meet me a week after my arrival, I was hugged and welcomed into their family as a young woman far from home and in need of a family. My momma Alice, never saw me as anything but another daughter and took it upon herself to make sure that while I was away from home she would look after me out of respect and obligation to my *stret* (real, genuine) mother (with the firm belief that this would be reciprocated if any of her children were ever in Canada). Further, due to the fact that my parents are divorced, I was often thought of as in need of family. People would always tell me '*Oh mi sori tumas long yu*' (I am so sorry for you) when the topic of my parents being divorced came up, and even though I would explain that it didn't impact on me negatively, it was always taken as a sad reality. I spent most week-ends in their household and was taught so much about ni-Vanuatu life from them. For the rest of my life I will always be indebted to the kindness that they provided while in Vila and identity of being a daughter.

A wonderful story related to this familial identity took place at an SDA¹⁴ women's fundraising event, where myself and my momma went to make lap-lap as both a product for the fund-raiser and as a cooking lesson for young girls. At the event, I chatted with one of my momma's brothers, who was also the minister of her congregation. He asked me all about my views on religion and more specifically on Judaism; as I was the first Jewish person he had encountered. We spoke about sharing similar Sabbath's and food taboos, as well as the differences between Judaism and Christianity. During his sermon, after the cooking and baking lessons, he introduced me and shared with the congregation the similarities between Jews and SDAs. He welcomed me to his family and told the congregants that it was Jesus Christ who'd brought me to Vila to find my new family and be taken under the SDA wing. So even after I'd told him how Jews viewed Jesus, the similarities were reinforced and the differences marginalized.

Research methodologies:

Video data collection: With over twenty hours of video shot from my time spent in Port Vila, these videos are crucial archival material and a means to keep myself closer to the participants of study and more generally, life in Port Vila. Maintaining the integrity of my informants' first person accounts was very important to my appreciation of what was seen and heard while in Vila. Out of this recorded data are daily events at the YPP, meetings between the fieldworkers, formal interviews with the fieldworkers, shots of Vila and its town life, special occasions (ie. weddings, *kastom* and town celebrations), the daily lives of girls in Seaside

¹⁴ SDA are Seven Day Adventists, whose population in Vanuatu account for 20,000 of its 186,000 inhabitants (National Census main report, 1999).

(cooking, cleaning, preparing kava, sewing etc.) interviews with older Seaside residents and the girls both formally and informally. In general, I tried to shoot material to document the experience of ni-Vanuatu people living in town. Having an ever-present video camera did make me stand out, and while I was not always recording, I made an attempt to keep it as visible as possible. This was a lesson I'd learned from a colleague who'd spent many years in the field with a camera. It was as important to have people meet the camera, as it was to meet you. Eventually visual anthropologists have to formalize their relationship through a far more technical and time-consuming process with informants, hindering the ability to just sit down with a note-pad (if that) and ask questions. So in getting to know and trust the researcher, informants would also need to feel comfortable around audio-visual equipment. Another outcome of this video-collection method was that as people grew more comfortable with me and the camera, I was often asked to special events to record the festivities. This gave me not only an invitation to attend and observe different occasions, but the ability to give to my hosts copies of what had been recorded.

I went into the field with a project designed to not only observe what was going on, but also to capture on digital video these moments. It was through a series of mistakes that I decided to rethink my original method. I have read that one of the major aspects of participatory communication is about making sure that the media does not become the defining factor in a project. Often I lost out on moments because of my reliance on a technology rather than my reliance on my own abilities as an anthropologist. In saying this I must also point to the feature that guides all methods in anthropology: the researcher. Whether using a video-camera or note-taking, a researcher relies first and foremost on him/herself to

gather data, thus whatever the methods; they are entirely based on a reflection of the researcher's skills.

Here is an instance of my own failure as a researcher, when I let the camera take charge of my ability to focus on listening:

While on the island of Tanna, I was given an opportunity to hear a woman explain why she and her mother-in-law had decided to punish another woman in their village for having an affair with her husband. This punishment had been a violent crime unlike any I had previously heard of. Yet, throughout her detailed explanation of the crime; her personal reasons for doing it and her fears for what punishment might lay ahead, I was focused on getting just the right shot of her. Should she be centered or should I instead have her to the left of the courthouse, where she'd be momentarily tried? Was my camera set to the right aperture? Should I use an automatic or manual focus for the shot? These questions involved me more than her speaking, because of course, I would have this interview on tape. Something I would have the opportunity to revisit time and again. But I hadn't turned on the microphone, so I lost not only the audio but also the opportunity to pay attention.

What I found after returning to Port Vila, was that when I simply set up the camera and did not pay attention to all of the details that would make this a spectacular documentary (save for turning on my microphone of course), I did indeed have footage that showed my alertness to what informant was saying (this revealed through the questions I followed with) and wonderful field-notes from which I could study not only their statements but their body

language as they spoke. This video footage includes 12 hours of formal interviews (6 hours with the YPP fieldworkers, 4 hours with young women, 1 hour with young men, 1 hour with older residents of an in-town settlement), 6 hours of random life activities in town (scenery around Vila, Vila's shops and market, a nakamal, making lap-laps, a girl's sewing group, workshops held at the YPP, video nights in the settlements, holidays and annual events in Port Vila—Children's day & Independence day), 2 hours of life in one of the settlements (area shots, children playing, women cleaning and cooking, women preparing kava, a banquet for young men after winning a karate tournament, chorale singing, a wedding), 2 hours on Tanna (includes video shot for the Department of Geology, Mines and Water Resources after Lake Sewi broke its banks at the foot of Lopevi Volcano and damaged a Jon Frum Village, doesn't include video shot for the YPP), one hour of life in my home. From the video-footage shot with the researchers, each fieldworker's interview was conducted in Bislama and then transcribed and translated into English. The quotes that emerge throughout this thesis from the fieldworkers' are the result of the recorded interviews, using my own translations. Moreover, due to the nature of this thesis, it was suggested that I use the fieldworker's true identities when quoting them. What these young researchers have accomplished deserves recognition and while emphasizing each of their critical contributions is only a small measure of recognizing their far greater accomplishments in understanding and communicating life in Vanuatu, they stand as outstanding researchers and deserve a great deal of praise for the work they've contributed to.

Fieldnotes: My fieldnotes are a crucial aspect to my own views of what was happening during my time spent in Vila. How these people were affecting me, things that I didn't quite

understand, kinship structures and how people were related to one another, are all prevalent in these entries. Often I tried using these notes to construct a skeletal draft of the video I wanted to produce and used them to focus on questions and relationships people had to town and *kastom*. They are a store of information that guided the way I was able to search for issues. I used them to not only guide this research but in hindsight, to be able to gauge where I was at during this whirlwind period. I have notes on Bislama and Namakura¹⁵, days spent in Seaside trying to understand village divisions and what the girls were doing on a daily basis, looking for routines and their relationships with one another and boys. I documented the stories and rumours I was hearing concerning youth and how these were affecting them in the eyes of the community. Although I would have in hindsight been far more thorough in my note taking, I believe that I recorded quite a bit to draw together the information that caught my interest and will allow my thesis to interpret many issues and folds of the YPP and the lives of girls in Seaside.

Participant Observation: The most important area of data collection was time spent with the YPP researchers and girls, learning, hanging out with and studying the activities they were undertaking. While at the YPP I ran a couple of workshops on tie dying and cooking, assisted in fundraising and creating a youth market in town. Often if there were a workshop being conducted I would go and sit in with the kids, either documenting it on video or working with them as another participant. Working alongside the young people identified me as more of a peer than anything else. I would also speculate that my youthful appearance influenced my

¹⁵ Namakura is the island language used by several of Vanuatu's Shepherd Islands and North Efate. They include: Tongoa, Tongariki, Émaé, Makura, and Mataso.

being accepted in many areas a great deal. People never believed me when I told them my age and always put me about ten years younger than I am. One of my oldest informants (a young woman living in Seaside, one of the town's ni-Vanuatu settlements) was perhaps a year or two older than me and had a couple of children of ages 8 and 10. She never revealed her proper age because of her fear that she might not be accepted as a YPP participant. At times she would tell me that she was 21 and others 28, so I cannot be sure. I believe that this was perhaps the case for many young people participating in the project's activities. I was adopted by a family during the time I spent in Vila, because of my appearance: A young girl so far away from home needing someone to watch over them. My momma took it upon herself to become a guardian for my own mother and held it as a responsibility to my own family. In Seaside this was also the case. Coming in to the settlement as a young woman, I was accepted by the girls as a peer and guarded and taught by the women as a young naïve foreigner who needed to learn a few lessons. I really feel that in terms of my appearance I was very fortunate to look as young as I did because it let people's guards down. Going to meetings with the police and Malvatumauri, I was never seen as nosy or threatening, while hanging out with the girls I was one of the crowd (save for obvious physical traits) without standing out too much. I could use my own life-history to find similar experiences to share, while also remaining unique and able to go out and drink kava with the older women and men. Throughout my stay I was always being a participant observer and can find experiences in every activity I participated in whether just drinking kava with my roommates or going to Tanna with two of the fieldworkers to compile data on young people living on the islands. Many of my days were spent following fieldworkers from the Young People's Project around and assisting in any way I could. This not only introduced me to what the project was doing but also brought me closer to young

people in town by giving me an identity and an attachment to a credible organization in town. From this standpoint, I was introduced to young people across town and although spending a great deal of time in one area, was given an avenue to investigation that cross-cut settlements and afforded me time with young people from differing backgrounds and places.

Informal interviews: Whether sitting in the park just making *smol storian* with passer-byers' or going into Seaside and helping with chores, I was always in some way or another conducting informal interviews. Working at the YPP and having daily interaction with the fieldworkers and youth visiting the drop-in locale provided a constant source of informal interviews. It was through their small statements or descriptions of life as a young Ni-Vanuatu that many questions were formed and a structure for the data created. Similarly, the experience in Seaside provided a wealth of information to gather. It was during these informal interviews where many of the issues emerged, as being representative of what youth were facing living in town. The girls would often recount an evening's activities with their boyfriend or explain their own family's migration to Vila, while hanging their laundry or on our way to their gardens. I found that when creating more formal interviews, a level of comfort was lost, not only between myself and my informants, but in terms of the how answers were given. When faced with a formal interview the girls became shy and wished to go speak away from others. The answers that they provided were often short and without much detail.

Formal Interviews: Formal interviews were conducted on either tape or video with questions being formed after conducting more informal discussions beforehand. I initially built

a questionnaire that I could ask the fieldworkers of the YPP in order to examine the role of the YPP in the lives of young people. It consisted of questions specifically focused to project activities and what might be the possible ways I could best reflect what the YPP were doing in town. I interviewed each of the 6 fieldworkers on tape at the beginning of my stay in Vila. I then worked alongside them for 4 months (visiting young people around Vila, conducting workshops, going to Tanna to video a portion of their Island research, helping with video nights at the settlements etc). During the end of my stay I sat down again with each of them and conducted hour-long video-recorded interviews. Each of these interviews focused on what their particular role was within the project, how their personal lives affected the work, how *kastom* was perceived in town and what their concerns for the future were. I was also able to sit down with 5 young girls and interview them (each of their interviews running approximately 15 minutes to an hour). All the questions were open-ended and focused on what daily life was like for them. Other formal interviews were conducted with several young men living in one of the settlements and one of the chiefs of the settlement. With the young men, questions focused on their daily live (their occupations, evening activities, kava drinking, participation in sports etc.) while the chief offered me a history of the settlement and his views on what issues were facing young people being raised in town.

Library—bibliographic research: I spent a good deal of time pouring over the on-site data stored at the national library of Vanuatu and collecting information from reports put out by different development projects and agencies around Vila. The YPP's original mandate was to create a research report on the state of Young people in town; so much data came from this, as well as UNICEF's report on the status of women and children in Vanuatu. The statistics office

was just finishing their 1999 census report during my time in Vila so many of the statistics I include are new and reflect the last couple of years in Vila. Moreover, before leaving for Vanuatu and upon return to Canada I've spent countless hours pouring over anthropological literature related to Vanuatu, Melanesia, youth studies, identity, place, liminality, applied anthropology, participatory development and urbanization.

Onsite Video research: I spent some time watching videos put out by both the YPP and Wan Smolbag¹⁶. Video-making figured quite prominently as a tool used to educate and get information and resources to people. Low literacy rates¹⁷ impair people's means to find and use available support and often too embarrassed by this inability, they would not attempt to seek it otherwise. They were an important source of data as they very much reflected current issues affecting Vanuatu.

Videos viewed:

Kilim Taem (Yang Pipol's Projek): Simultaneously shot while the YPP were conducting field research on the state of young people in town. This video reflects issues affecting young people through interviews and footage of life in town.

HIV Awareness (Yang Pipol's Projek): This video is the outcome of two workshops the YPP hosted on health issues and video-making. Young people scripted, acted, edited and

¹⁶ Wan Smol Bag is a theatre group founded by a British couple in 1989, but very much a ni-Vanuatu driven project. It provides a ground for young ni-Vanuatu interested in acting to present plays, produce films and radio spots that inform people on many levels about conditions facing the people of Vanuatu. Some of the issues they have brought to light are domestic abuse, the loss of kastom, kava and other substance abuses, environmental and ecological dangers of modernization and reproductive health concerns, just to name a few. They travel throughout the country presenting their plays and always at the end of their presentations have the audience participate in conversations that attempt to get communities talking and affecting action.

¹⁷ The literacy rate in Vanuatu as taken from CIA-The World Fact Book 2002 is 53% of the total population over the age of 15 (<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/nh.html>).

directed the film themselves, using claymation techniques and fictional shorts to emphasize the importance of reproductive health and the dangers of STD's.

Vote long Pati (Wan Smolbag): This fictional film highlights the significance of the voting process to a democratic nation. It tells the story of government corruption and the importance of people's participation in the voting process. Underscoring this is the story of a husband and wife; and the measures she takes to stop his role in ballot fixing and accepting government kick-backs.

Kasis Road (Wan Smolbag): This is a fictional film about family planning and population issues in outer-town settlements. It tells the story of a young man's battle to find meaning in his life. Living in a settlement with no electricity and running water, his life seems to be going nowhere. He has gotten a girl pregnant and won't take responsibility for his actions, instead getting drunk every night. These are issues affecting many young people in town.

On the Reef (Wan Smolbag): This fictional under-the-sea musical revolves around sea-creatures inhabiting the reefs in Vanuatu and highlights the precarious situation of exploiting the natural marine by villagers around Vanuatu.

Vanuatu: A Touch of Paradise (prod: Jan Postuma): This film is a travelogue introducing Vanuatu as a tourist destination. It briefly touches on the culture of Vanuatu; from the Pentecost land-dive to exploring its multiple volcanoes and fauna, but mainly focuses on hotels and tourist attractions (beaches, snorkeling, scuba diving, deep sea fishing) in Port Vila.

While in Vila I became very good friends with another young anthropologist. We made a deal, no discussions weighed down with anthropological jargon, just talk of life as we were experiencing it. An amazing realization that we shared in keeping to this level of discussion

was how much our informants had to teach us about the role of anthropology in Vanuatu. One Apu (grandmother) who took me under her wing, chastised me for my methodology:

‘Becca, if you want to learn about our *fasin* you must come live with me, listen to my stories and work with me in the garden. Young people cannot tell you about life as I can’.

I did not take her up on this offer as beneficial as it might have been for several reasons. The first reason had to do with using multiple fieldsites. In coming to be affiliated with the YPP I was given a rare opportunity to work with many different island groups without being identified with one in particular (save by being adopted by Viviane’s family, who lived outside the research space of the Young People’s Project)¹⁸. Moreover, inside the specific settlement this Apu lived in, the divisions between village groups remained a predominant feature. Had I attached myself to one of these families I would have had a far more difficult time making inroads with young girls from the other ‘village’ units. I was already feeling a pull from each ‘village’ to visit independently each day and did not wish to alienate one anymore than the others. The second reason had to do with the nature of my study. Having decided to focus on youth, for all of the invaluable data I might have gathered from this Apu, she was unable to provide me with the sort of information concerning youth in town that I needed in order to write this paper. Thirdly, the house I was already living in afforded me important access to other segments of town in Port Vila that would be important to constructing a holistic representation of present-day state of life in town.

¹⁸ The Young People’s Project limited its activities to three settlements for several reasons. First, the three are amongst the most largely populated. Next, as a participatory research project its impact must be carefully monitored and connections maintained with young people. With further constraints being monetary and settlements being too remotely located for daily visits.

Moreover, the importance of the Apu's statement also touches on the fundamental changes that the discipline of anthropology is currently undergoing. Lindstrom and White (1995:203-4) state:

"Ethnography today is inevitably located at the juncture of local and anthropological discourses of culture. As is commonly recognized, the persona of the ethnographer doing fieldwork is inevitably shaped by local ideas about tradition, not only because this is what anthropologists are presumed to be interested in, but because concepts of (native) tradition and (European) modernity surround most anthropological transactions."

Taken a step further, the ethnographer must now be aware of the 'tradition' surrounding his/her role in 'doing' ethnography and the knowledge that informants have surrounding the practice of anthropology. In recent times anthropology has found itself dealing with a "crisis of representation", whereby this illusion of not "being there" or rather being invisible yet remaining the authorial voice in ethnography, has come under attack. No longer do audiences take for granted the invisible nature of the anthropologist, but the position of anthropologist to the subject needs to be clarified. Further the audience itself has shifted and an anthropologist must now write for not only "Western" academe, but for the population being studied. This has caused self-reflexivity to reveal itself in a manner where the ethically positioned role of the anthropologist becomes a visible character in the formation of the material and the balance between anthropologist and informant itself immersed in an imagined 'tradition'.

The final note in this methodology has to do with my own particular feelings of liminality upon arriving and conducting my first field study. Because of the support and

guidance of the YPP I overcame many of the initial anxieties I faced as a foreign researcher trying to break into a community and conduct work using a camera. Moreover, the course that this fieldwork took unveiled questions surrounding the utility of anthropology from the perspective of those 'being studied'. There were lessons that changed the course of my fieldwork and gave me the incentive examine not only a group of young people feeling the impact of change and modernization, but look at it through the eyes of a group of young people trying to ethnographically document some of the complexities of town life in order to get one step closer to resolving them. Throughout my fieldwork I learned that by turning subjects into agents, the shared knowledge of anthropological methods can yield more than a thesis or a grade, it can empower people to find answers to their own dilemmas and develop worlds of good.

Being a part of this team was an extraordinary challenge and dream come true. What they taught me in terms of effective field research and negotiating identities in town and across the country, were invaluable lessons that not only changed the direction of this thesis but also raised important questions about my own career goals and what I hope to do in the future.

Chapter 2

A SENSE OF VANUATU

This chapter will introduce readers to an understanding of where, when, why, what and how Vanuatu is. While Vanuatu is a country with its defined physical boundaries, it is also a vast set of islands each with its distinct set of ideologies and often multiple languages. Within Port Vila there are ‘cultures’ of people living in town together, trying to get along, learn from one another, and survive in a market economy all the while attempting to maintain their root island identities.

From a very general standpoint these facts are recounted through a brief introduction to Vanuatu’s history, the migration patterns and change affecting in Vanuatu, its *kastom* heritage with the modernizing effect of urban living, a market economy and concluding the section with an ethnographic sketch of several of its islands. Although it might be argued that introducing an ethnographic sketch of Vanuatu’s island cultures rears the debate surrounding the critique of ‘traditionalism’ where anthropology has in the past been accused of promoting “Melanesia as the locus of exotic or primitive cultures” (Knauft 1999:203), Bruce Knauft (1999) in From Primitive to Postcolonial in Melanesia and Anthropology acknowledges the value of using this “tribal” ethnography in order to document such an enormous amount of cultural variety. He writes (1999: 211):

“It is important to find productive ways to juxtapose anthropology’s traditionalist and current sensibilities; it would be unfortunate to view these as mutually exclusive. Indeed, we

can use the strengths of one to inform the other. The goal is not to polarize the so-called indigenous against the so-called postcolonial, nor to cultivate antagonism between objectivist and reflexive or deconstructive moments of analysis. Rather, our purpose is to see how ethnographic history can be critically employed to deepen our current understanding of both Melanesia as a culture region and the tensions and challenges of anthropology as a developing field.”

The social and cultural changes that have taken place primarily since Independence have seen Port Vila develop into Vanuatu’s major urban locale¹⁹. A mixture of modernity and *kastom* has created a space for identity quite unique to Vanuatu.

2.1. History—Origins of the Islands, Colonization, Urbanization

Vanuatu is a Y-shaped archipelago nation consisting of about 80 islands, stretching over 1176 kilometers in a Northwest-Southeast direction and approximately 14 degrees south of the equator (see map 1 page *iv*). Not only do the amount of islands suggest the vast array of cultures Vanuatu encapsulates (even with the knowledge that before the 1960’s little had been published in terms of ethnographic research on the 16 most inhabited isles of the chain²⁰) but the language distribution of Vanuatu being that of over 100, explicitly informs on what a daunting task it is to outline the scope of its peoples and differing social organizations. These islands are (from north to south): Espiritu Santo (where Vanuatu’s 2nd largest town Luganville is located), Maewo, Ambae, Malo, Pentecost, Malekula, Ambrym, Paama, Epi, Shepherd Islands, Efate (where the capital of Vila is located), Erromango, Tanna, Aniwa, Futuna and

¹⁹ It has been since after Independence that so many of today’s scenarios have come to be shaped through ni-Vanuatu actions, values and norms. Pre-Independence, town was representative of foreign interests with only little attention paid to ni-Vanuatu people, who falling under the banner of protectorate, had no formal citizenship to either France or Britain (Brown 1970).

Aneityum. The exact total of its population is 193,219²¹. Of this population, 94% are indigenes, or ni-Vanuatu (of either Melanesian or Polynesian descent), 4% Caucasian, 2% Chinese, Vietnamese and Pacific Islanders (CIA Factbook, 1999).

The first sign of migration to Vanuatu is said to have begun in 3000 BC with the Austronesian peoples movement from the Solomons, but the first archaeological evidence said to have verified human inhabitancy was in 1400 BC on the Island of Malo, where remnants of Lapita culture were found by traces of their distinctive pottery style. The Lapita people brought with them yams, taro and domesticated animals (i.e. pigs, poultry and dogs). Between the 11th and 15th century, the next wave settlers came from the East. Indigenous forms of economy were based on root crop horticulture and animal husbandry, particularly pig breeding and exchange (Allen 1982, Jolly 1997).

The first explorers to arrive were De Quiros (1606) who named Santo, Australia del Espirito Santo, thinking he'd found the great Southern continent. Bougainville (1768) named the northern islands after the Greek ones, Les Grandes Cyclades. Cook arrived in 1774 and named the archipelago islands the New Hebrides, after a geographically similar area of Scotland. Many of the other islands also retained the names he chartered on that voyage, including; Tanna, Erromango, Ambrym, and the Shepherds Group (O'Bryne & Harcombe 1999). It wasn't until the early 1800's however that the archipelago received much notice, as

²⁰ Allen discusses this so-called lack of research in the Introduction to his edited volume, which he posits as a collection of essays carried out by fourteen anthropologists contributing to a revival of interest in Vanuatu, not seen since the late 19th and early 20th century evolutionist theorists.

²¹ Vanuatu Census figure from July 1999.

the sandalwood trade moved south due to exhausted resources in the Northern Pacific. It was during this time that indigenous tribes began trading with Europeans for commodities such as animals, metal, guns, ammunition and tobacco. As Philibert (1981) describes:

“After their needs in metal tools, clothes, glassware, beads and other imported commodities were momentarily satisfied, some islanders forced traders to deal in traditional valuables such as pigs and shells, thus transforming the traders into middlemen in a new inter-island trade system. (317)”

Moreover, this period revealed the difficult nature of the relationship between indigenes and traders. If there were atrocities committed by one ship of Europeans, the islanders would retaliate by punishing or attacking the next group of sailors, as all white men were considered one tribe (O’Byrne & Harcombe 1999). The sandalwood trade finished shortly before 1870, yet this was just the beginning of European colonization.

The most tragic period of early colonization took place with labour recruiters, in search of plantation labourers to work the sugar cane plantations of Fiji and Queensland, the nickel mines of New Caledonia and the coconut plantations of Western Samoa. Called ‘blackbirding’²², the means by which labour recruiters found their men took terrible shapes if no volunteers were found (and even when found), often capturing men²³ on the shore, taking them aboard and chaining them below deck, or luring villages of people on board on the promise of exchange and simply kidnapping them. “A blackbirder might dress up as a priest,

²² See the Kaljoral Senta website for a more detailed account of blackbirding (<http://arts.anu.edu.au/arcworld/vks/blkbed.htm>) where several pages and photographs from the Cultural Centre’s book entitled “*Storian blong olgeta we oli bin go katem sugaken long Ostrelid*” published by in 1996 can be viewed. Barbara Lawson (1994) Collected Curios: Missionary Tales from the South Seas gives a full description of the early European arrivals, missionary life on the islands, the Sandalwood trade and blackbirding practices.

²³ The reason I say men is that throughout the years of the blackbirding practice it was primarily men that were placed in plantations. Jolly (1991) estimates that only between 6-10% of labourers were women.

hold a service and then kidnap the worshippers (O'Bryne & Harcombe 1999:14). Moreover, they would hold three fingers up as to make the indigenes believe it would be 3 months of work, rather than the actuality of 3 years, which often turned into indentured labour lasting over 12 years, the men only being to of this upon their arrival in the foreign places. The practice of blackbirding (as a form of pseudo kidnapping) was only ended in the 1870's, in part due to the campaigning against the practice by British and Australian Presbyterian missionaries, giving way to indentured labour service, which itself was ended early in the 20th century. What did emerge from this recruitment was *Bislama*, the lingua franca of Vanuatu, *Pijin* the lingua franca of the Solomon Islands and *Tok Pisin* the lingua franca of PNG. Men found themselves with other Melanesians in plantations across the Pacific from Queensland and Fiji to Western Samoa with mutually unintelligible languages and a need to communicate with one another and their English-speaking supervisors²⁴. One story recounted about blackbirding, similar to our own urban legends came from "Chris" a young man I was speaking to:

"The story he told was of an ancestor of his, who was taken from his island and sailed for days, eventually landing on a plantation's grounds. After years of indentured slavery and 10 years of promises from managers to be brought home, he had a dream. He dreamt he escaped. So the next morning he woke up and did just that. After traveling for hours he began to recognize landmarks from his dream (or what he thought was his dream), however as he came closer to a small village he realized that this was not the stuff of dreams, but his natal village. For ten years they had tricked him (through a disorienting boat ride) into believing that that he had been far away, instead of a few hours from home." (Fieldnotes, July 2000)

The entrance of settlers, both plantation owners and missionaries, started around the 1850's, although missionaries had been on the islands since the 1830's with their Polynesian counterparts, spreading Christianity, both Protestant and Catholic. The Presbyterian Church

²⁴ See T. Crowley (1990) Beach-la-Mer to Bislama: The Emergence of a National Language in Vanuatu, for further insight into the creation of Bislama.

had the largest following, and took the strongest stance against *kastom* activities, preaching to their converts of the darkness that their past actions had encouraged. Today, Christianity remains the most popular religion, with most of the population worshipping in the different denominations (Presbyterian 36.7%, Anglican 15%, Catholic 15%, Seven-Day Adventist 6.2%, Church of Christ 3.8%), 7.6% are animists continuing *kastom* ways and 15.7% other (CIA 1999). However the light in which Christianity has come to receive *kastom* practices has changed immensely.

Land ownership is a question, which has been at the heart of most political and nationalist debates, since the first arrival of colonists and the creation of the Compagnie Caledonienne des Nouvelles-Hebrides in 1882 by a settler named John Higginson, an Irish born French land speculator. Within a year, the European had purchased roughly 20% of agricultural land from disillusioned British settlers and local chiefs, while 10 years later the company held over 55% of the country's land (O'Bryne & Harcombe 1999). The French annexed New Caledonia in 1853 and although British settlers had asked their government to do the same with the New Hebrides, they resisted. By the 1880's there was an influx of French settlers and both governments decided to join in a joint Naval Commission due to unrest between British and French settlers and fear of German expansionism into the Pacific. By 1906 the French/English Condominium government was established and a bipartite rule began with both countries setting up separate courts, police, jails, schools, government services, currencies etc. to provide for their individual citizens. Unfortunately, this led to a weak government that basically held no consideration for the ni-Vanuatu population, which felt little governing outside of Efate (O'Bryne & Harcombe 1999). To this day, from young

people interviewed, this sense of “little governance” on the Outer Islands persists (although the shape of the government has greatly changed since Condominium days) and can be argued to be one of several factors as to why *kastom* remains so paramount on the islands.

Nationalist and secessionist movements have been present in Vanuatu since the 1930's with the emergence of cargo cults, specifically the Jon Frum movement in Tanna²⁵, in response to the epidemics killing thousands of indigenes and harsh treatment the Islanders were receiving at the hands of the Europeans (planters and Presbyterian Church officials). It originated with the first followers saying that he (Jon Frum) emerged from the sea and told the men while drinking kava, that there would be an abundance of wealth (like that of the European settlers) and no more epidemics, on the condition that they have all the Europeans leave the island (O'Bryne & Harcombe 1999). In the 1960's on Espiritu Santo, the Nagriamel secessionist movement led by Jimmy Stevens, was born and called for the return of alienated lands back to indigenes. Although the movement was short lived, out of it emerged the realization that ni-Vanuatu people should have a hand in governing their own country. In 1971, the New Hebrides Cultural Association was formed, consequentially changing names to the Vanuaaku Pati in 1977, becoming the first indigenous party within Condominium politics to emerge, led by Father Walter Lini. When the V.P. came into existence it was under the platform of alienation from their lands. While the European population was approximately 3% in 1968, they held 36% of the land, while ni-Vanuatu held by formal title only 64%. Lini, an Anglican Priest called for “responsible self-government” by implementing Christian values and

²⁵ See J. Bonnemaïson (1998) Les Gens des Lieux: Histoires et Geosymboles d'une Société Enracinée: Tanna and L. Lindstrom (1993) Cargo Cult: Strange Stories of Desire from Melanesia and Beyond for a more in-depth overview of the history of the Jon Frum Movement.

beliefs, while also stressing the preservation of traditional values and lifestyles—*kastom* (Facey 1995) and was backed by the British. As Facey (1995) explains, on a national level they had many obstacles to overcome:

“Faced with the problems generated by such division and diversity, the Vanuaaku Pati leadership made several critical decisions in order to put forward the Pati as a national political party. They established Bislama, the pidgin lingua franca, as the language of New Hebridean politics, and used it via the medium of the radio, taking their message to the general populace with great effect. (209)”

The origins of Port Vila becoming Vanuatu’s capital city began with the colonization by European settlers and missionaries. However it has only been since the 1950’s that Melanesian urban migration has become significant. It has gone from 7% of its total population to over 20% in 1985 (Haberkorn 1992). Permanent migratory practices of the indigenous people are entrenched in pre-colonial times because of social, economic and political features of village life (an important example of this being marriage patterns dependent on matri- or patrilineal descent groups). However seasonal, short-term circulation migration was reserved primarily for men. In post-colonial times, circulatory migration was seen with indentured labour throughout the Pacific, and plantation work throughout the archipelago. This continues with Vanuatu’s largest exports, copra and cocoa, being produced on commercial plantations situated on the islands of Efate, Santo and Malekula, providing a source of wage-labour for many ni-Vanuatu²⁶. Moreover, with the notion of place as predominant in *kastom* and identity, migrants often consider their rural villages the site of their permanent home. A saying from the Tannese expresses this: A man should be regarded as a “tree that must take root and stay fixed in place (Haberkorn 1992).” This was a very predominant fact within Port Vila, as every ni-

²⁶ Although since 1989, the commercial plantations have been overtaken by small-holder production (Haberkorn 1992).

Vanuatu I encountered labelled him or her-self²⁷ a man-Ambrym, man-Pentecost, man-Malekula, man-Tongoa etc. Although Port Vila residents trace back as much as three or four generations nowadays, never would people consider themselves man-Vila. Their island heritage and *kastom* beliefs very much still influence their identities and life-choices, even if some of the younger generations of town residents have never set foot on their 'native' islands.

2.2. Migration Patterns—Island and Town Settlement

World War II was another important period of urban growth for Vanuatu. Although Port Vila had already established itself as a town, Luganville, located on Santo, saw its population triple overnight with 100,000 American soldiers stationed there (O'Byrne and Harcombe 1999). It also saw the expansion of Vila with much-needed infrastructure and wage-work for the ni-Vanuatu men. During an interview with a man who had been living in Vila since the 1960's the changes in town and ensuing growth of settlements were detailed. Below is a translated and summarized version, highlighting the establishment of one of the town's earliest settlements quite unique due to its patterned homogenous island stratification:

In the early sixties a colonist owned the land around the settlement by the name of Masta Collato ('Plantation Colardeau' see Brookfield and Glick 1969). He had a couple of men working for him and told them to find a small plot to set up houses for themselves. Both men were from the Sheppard's group although from differing islands. So Harry Aro set up the *Tongoan* settlement while the other man named Gordon moved across the way and set up a *Paama* settlement. At first only the men came to work but slowly families began moving in. Early on two of the *Tongoan* villages were combined into what was called *Sele* (*Itakoma* and *Mantangi*—neighbouring villages on *Tongoa* and therefore already quite mixed with marriages between the two), and the other, *Mangarisu* was already big enough to be on its own. However as people continued to migrate to town they could again divide themselves back into their

²⁷ There is no gender distinction found in this label. Women consider themselves man-Paama in the same sense that men regard themselves man-Paama.

traditional village structures (he described it as people moving on top of one another, after the entire land area had been claimed to its boundaries). Seaside *Tongoa* is now divided into 5 villages although a sixth has also been mentioned. Each is represented with in-town chiefs taking care of their residents and any problems that might arise. The chiefs from *Sele* (a term which is still often used to denote 2 of the original villages settled in Vila) and *Mangarisa*, are considered paramount chiefs in the settlement affairs. The system of chiefs remains an important structural part of life in the settlement, as police are rarely called in to resolve problems affecting its inhabitants (for reasons of trust, *kastom* and respect).

Robert Tonkinson (1977) introduced another form of migration related to the relocation of Ambrymese after a volcanic eruption in 1951. While most returned to Ambrym after the threat had subsided, one entire Southeast village “Maat” chose instead to relocate itself to Efate. Tonkinson refers to Epstein (1969:294) and his studies of the Tolai of New Britain (a peri-urban village) in order to explain why continuity rather than rupture occurred with this transition:

“what gives the Tolai situation so much of its complexity, and, for the observer, its particular fascination, is the no less striking evidence of persistence and continuity... Change and continuity represent two faces of a single coin, so that in any given context the one cannot be understood without at the same time specifying the nature of the other. (Tonkinson citing Epstein, 1977:279)”

Moreover, he provides several reasons for this similar continuity that to a lesser degree in modern Port Vila, are still identifiable as sources of continuity for migrant populations living in town:

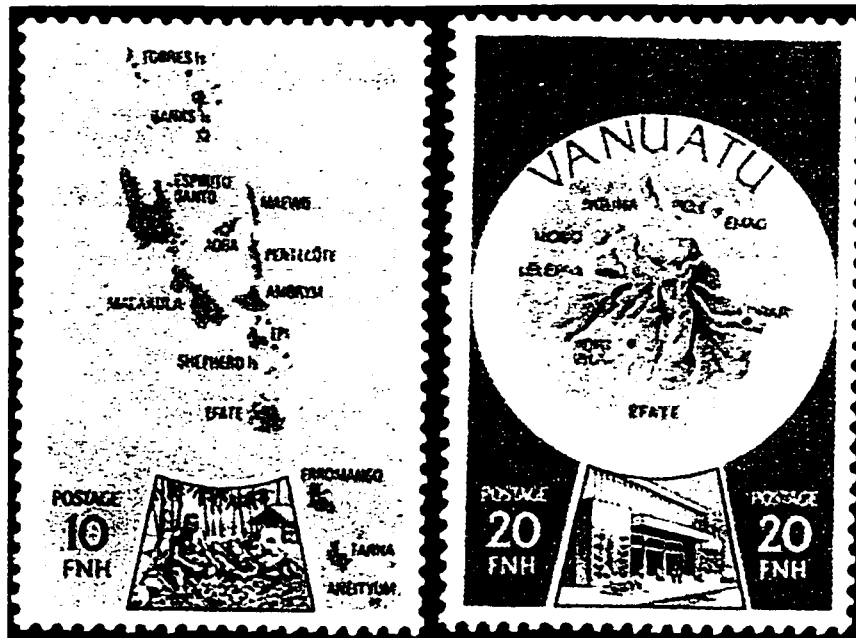
“No such schism has occurred, however, in large part because of the ambiguities inherent in the position of Maat Efate. First, some of the money that was used to purchase land near the relocated village was contributed by congeners in many Southeast Ambrymese villages; thus the new location is partially “theirs”. This ideal is supported by the fact that Southeast Ambrymese visitors to Efate are welcome in Maat, are generally given hospitable treatment, and can stay as long as they desire. Second, men from Maat go to Ambrym in search of brides and in return they give women to Southeast Ambrymese men, most of whom

then stay on at Maat and live uxorilocally²⁸. Third, there has been continued communication between Maat and the homeland, with exchanges of letters, messages, and visits such that to a certain extent the Maat people remain in the reciprocity of network of the homeland and thus fulfill many of their responsibilities to their relatives there. Finally, the people of Maat still consider themselves to be ethnically Southeast Ambrymese and are unequivocal about this continuing identification with the homeland. (Tonkinson 1977:290)”

Although the two aforementioned cases both highlight a continuity of ‘homogenous’ attachment to their *man ples* through the structure of settlements which reflect one island groupings, this is not the case for most of Port Vila’s settlements. Most town settlements reflect a heterogeneous mixing of island people living in very close proximity. Nonetheless with emphasis placed on the third and fourth rationalizations, (those of continued communication between town and island relations and identifying one’s self with island ‘homeland’) continuity rather than rupture remains a principle force in reckoning town identity. Below is a photograph of two of Vanuatu’s stamps. They signify an interesting association between the traditional Vanuatu (as shown with an image of a ni-Vanuatu preparing food in a village setting) versus a map of Efate (which displays a drawing of the post office—the unofficial place of communication for ni-Vanuatu keeping in contact with their relations by mail and telephone). What this suggests is that ties to island have been altered through modernization. With technologies now available to ni-Vanuatu, new methods keeping kinship and familial ties have been introduced and rapidly accepted. While it might take a rural villager some time to find a phone, the immediate possibility of connection is evident. Location is permanently altered in this respect, as rural-urban distances are overcome through technological advances.

²⁸ Uxorilocality is the definition for post-marital residence when a couple lives with the wife’s kin. (Harris 1991:161)

Table 4. 1980 Issued Stamps of Vanuatu and Efate



source: <http://www.iomoon.com/efate.html>

The fourth representation of continuity takes value in a continued identity to *man ples* and island ethnicity for all residents of Port Vila. This is similar to the notion of *wantok*. With the growth of urbanization, rapid migration has since the 1970's given way to new forms of social organization, in order for ni-Vanuatu to find dwellings and job opportunities. This system is known as *wantok* associations (Connell & Lea 1994). Here they discuss the growth of urbanization in Melanesian cities and the ties that bind them:

"In cities, social and economic relationships are largely based around a local place (a "settlement") or kinship relations that link urban and rural places (rather than on personal relationships of friendship or workplace ties)... Urban Melanesians define themselves through their cultural identity, in the self-esteem and pride that follows the appropriate and successful attention to tradition (however this may have been reconstructed in town)..."

Urban squatter settlements have increasingly come to resemble rural villages, as kinship ties in towns become more elaborate, residential patterns replicate village life, tress and gardens reach fruition, rituals are enacted in the urban setting, incomes are turned in social objectives, urban leaders emerge, and "village" courts provide social control (274-5)."

Although the wantok system clearly defines the way that kinship links are formed in Port Vila with the patterns of obligation and reciprocity intact, the actual word *wantok* was never used in any of the interviews or conversations found in this research. Two concepts seemed to relate to *wantok*, denoting this type of relationship. The first is *man ples*, while the other is *tawei* and although formally used to denote in-law status, is frequently applied as ‘slang’ by young men (and nowadays women) to describe close relationships to either kinsmen or friends.

It remains that ethnicity, is what guides the identities and actions of most of the population; whether in contrast to the white ex-pat and Asian populations or in contrast to the underlying differences in *kastom* found on the outer islands:

“Cultural diversity—without multiculturalism—ensures that ethnic identity triumphs over class, meaning over employment; tension, conflict and the search for order foster exclusion and tradition in a variety of forms. [What remains is] ...all Melanesian cultures are products of appropriation, resistance, and accommodation (Connell & Lea 1994:282-86).”

While the national anthem reflects the diversity of *kastom fasin*, at the same time it implies that after independence not only did people become citizens of Vanuatu, but all of their traditions subsumed into a united ni-Vanuatu identity:

“Yumi, Yumi, Yumi i glat blong talem se,
Yumi, Yumi, Yumi i man blong Vanuatu!

Plante *fasin* blong bifo i stap,
Plante *fasin* blong tudei,
Be yumi i olsem wan nomo,
Hemia *fasin* blong yumi!”

(You and I, You and I, You and I (We) are happy to proclaim,
You and I, You and I, You and I (We) are the people of Vanuatu!

We have many traditions

And we are always finding new ways.

Now we shall be one People,

We shall be united forever!)

(<http://www.tbc.gov.bc.ca/cwgames/country/Vanuatu/Vanuatu2.html>)

The questions that inform the overall importance of ethnicity and island structure are only going to become more important to Vanuatu's development, as urban migration grows. Although Vanuatu's rural population still accounts for the majority of its people; urban migration is increasing at 6% per annum (ESCAP 1999:5), making Port Vila one of the world's fastest growing urban populations in the world. With this population movement, infrastructure; not just physical but cultural as well, becomes a paramount concern in town and without better services and understandings in place; conditions will only worsen.

2.3. Kastom—Its Place(s) in Vanuatu

"Kastom is a term in Vanuatu, in our language Bislama, to mean the way of life that we grew and still practice. This is the way of life, which comes from our own place. So the *kastom* of Ambae is the things that we do that come from Ambae. This is a hard thing to explain in any language, but especially in English. People today are trying to find ways to fit *kastom* together with the new things that have come into our lives. So the *kastom* that we now practice on Ambae is not the same as it was before. Now people are changing it and adding new things. One of the most important influences on *kastom* has been the churches.

When people on Ambae today talk about *kastom* they use the word to mean ceremonies, stories, songs, dances, traditional knowledge, sacred places, certain ways of cooking, family organisation (or kinship), traditional leaders or chiefs, Ambae mats, pigs and other such things." (Tarisesei 1999:1)

In discussing *kastom*, the concept first must be clearly defined as it is used frequently and regularly with inconsistency. *Kastom* has become a central key to locating the ni-Vanuatu identity for those not only trying to revive tradition outside the city, but in terms of reckoning change within the urban core. However, the definition of *kastom* within town for its residents

becomes representative of the diversity of *kastoms* of *man ples*. Moreover in town, both notions of *kastom* are present: Ni-Vanuatu citizens using their *man ples* identities to define themselves, while the government uses *kastom* as a tool in developing a National identity for their country, alongside other Melanesian Countries. Margaret Jolly (1994:253-4) clearly emphasizes the duality of *kastom*:

“*Kastom* can mean the particular practices of a small local group, or it can mean generically indigenous culture as opposed to ways identified as exogamous or irrevocably European. The presence of Europeans has contributed both to the awareness of differences between the parts of the archipelago but also to a sense of shared identity.”

First is an outline of *kastom* used to signify traditional culture and how it has come to represent the politics of cultural identity as presented by Roger Keesing. *Kastom* enables the cultural reproduction of this ‘traditional’ or authentic identity (Wagner 1991). Both the terms ‘traditional’ and ‘authentic’ carry overly simplistic meanings that make their usage in ethnographies highly problematic, especially when brought into an urban context as it tends to delineate boundaries between village and town, *kastom* and *fasin blong waelman*, the dividual and the individual. Each of these boundaries is constructed and far more flexible than what the terms ‘traditional or authentic’ presuppose. Stephanie Lawson, in her chapter “The Tyranny of Tradition” (Lawson 1997:19) cites Krygier’s three traits of tradition as:

“The first is the “pastness” of a tradition’s contents (or at least a belief by its participants that its origins lie deep in the past). The second is a belief in the authoritative presence of the past in contemporary life, without which it can have little significance for the participants. The third characteristic consists of a belief that the contents of a tradition have been continuously transmitted from the past to the present, and not simply unearthed from a past discontinuous with the present (Krygier 1986:240). Taken together, these characteristics are said to form a *living* tradition, much of which is assimilated by present participants with little or no conscious awareness.”

In Keesing and Tonkinson's special edition of *Mankind* (1982) questions of *kastom* and tradition were first raised. To Keesing *kastom*, although distinctly Melanesian, in that its roots imply the supernatural and the Melanesian belief in the spirits of their ancestors, it has been renegotiated and become a tool in the national rhetoric of nation-building and as well as serving as a symbol for culture itself (1982:98). The uses of *kastom* are multiple and hold throughout Melanesia as a political symbol whose origins pre-date today's more scholarly and political figures, becoming a symbol of the anti-colonial struggle and the continued traditional narratives of pre-colonial times. This having been said, it has adapted itself to social changes and taken on an exogenous nature of asserting indigenous rights. It also has come to envelope the abstract concept of old ways, even if they themselves were distinctive and contradictory in their specific natures, so as to become a banner that allows all old ways to find sanctity and uphold national unity in as much as regionalism and diversity "[b]ecause it can mean (almost) all things to all people (297)." Keesing believes that *kastom* was able to do this, even with the phenomenal linguistic and contradictory social organizations because of the plantation systems that brought many men of distinct groups, to live and work together. It is then precisely this vagueness and abstract quality that has allowed *kastom* to enter into the rhetoric of all Melanesian people; as a displaced mode of resistance. Its contemporary uses have been centered through by its opposition to colonization and more poignantly to counter the historic indoctrination of Christianity "as invasive ideology (300)".

Tonkinson reiterates many of Keesing's points but also highlights through his own ethnographic studies in Vanuatu the difficulties inherent in attaching such as abstract concept

to the national ideologies of the State, especially in its re-invented forms, as original customary forms have been lost to time, Christianity and European cultural contact.

Philibert locates another forum in which *kastom* has found place to anchor itself within an urban perspective, this as Vanuatu Cultural Policy and in 1979, celebrated these through a festival highlighting the national Arts of Vanuatu. Philibert (1986:3) explains:

“To a large extent, the festival shaped a view of culture as a set of traits, ‘old’ behaviours and beliefs, with the accent placed on culture as a spectacle such as dances and their associated paraphernalia, the performance of magical tricks, music, in short activities with a strong theatrical and ludic component. Far from being a closely integrated, functionalist view of culture, the view of *kastom* to emerge from the political circles of the capital is one of a set of survivals. This is so because those who have to decide what *kastom* was/is are precisely those who have lost theirs.

The Arts Festival accomplished two things: it showed ni-Vanuatu the diversity and thus the richness of their *kastom* and it presented this traditional knowledge in a positive light such that the évolués, the acculturated urbanites, felt for once their situation to be one of loss rather than advantage.”

The extent to which *kastom* has been revived and expanded leads one to look at the politicized nature of the concept as it is now used from a Nationalistic standpoint. Moreover as Philibert (1986) argues this has led to a ‘generic culture’:

“Given the cultural fragmentation of Vanuatu, clearly primordial sentiments cannot lead to the emergence of national groups of any significance size. Instead, a generic ‘no-name brand’ culture is being codified to serve as a basis of nationalistic sentiments as well as a rallying point for a civil polity. The party in power has applied itself to inventing ‘traditions’, *kastom*. It has also defined bad *kastom* and good *kastom*, the latter being those which challenge neither the nation-state, nor Christian dogmas (7).”

After independence *kastom* forms of leadership were revived and moreover, incorporated through governance into the constitution and established to form a Council of Chiefs to advise the Representative Assembly for anything related to *kastom*, no longer through

general elective processes. This council has 39 big-men and traditional leaders, all subsumed under the label of chief and named to suit its new mandate which “prevented [them] from commenting on the new, except from the perspective of the old, the *kastom* concerns of their communities (Bolton, 1999:8).” The name *Malvatumauri* was chosen to describe the task of maintaining *kastom* for the state. Which according to Chief Willie in an interview with Bolton (1999) expressed these meanings:

“*Mal* means chief. *Vatu* means stone or island or place. *Vatu* means stone because in the past when they ordained chiefs, they sat down or stood upon [took authority from] stones. That is why we chose *malvatu*. *Mauri* means something which is alive, which grows, which grows in the light. The Maori people [of New Zealand] have their own meaning for the word that we don’t know, but this is what it means. You can say that a whale is *mauri* because it is the king of all fishes. So it is something which is big, and has life, and grows. So that’s why we called the Council *mal vatu mauri*. There are three words in the name (taped interview 28 July 1996). (9)”

Implicit to the creation of the Malvatumauri, *kastom* has also formalized itself in the work of nation building, where Foster (1995) explains:

“All the current discussions treat “the nation” as fabricated—an actively made and remade cultural product. Consider the two dominant tropes of contemporary talk about nations: imagination (Anderson 1983) and invention (Hobsbawn & Ranger 1983). Both tropes direct attention to the processes and means by which interested agents create and circulate images and ideals of nationhood, and hence definitions of collective and personal identity. Both tropes, moreover, communicate a notion of fabrication without an implication of falsehood or spuriousness. That is, “the nation” is no less real because its images or ideals often assert for it a primordial or natural existence. It is precisely the reality of “the nation” that is struggled over and variously achieved in the confrontation of various images and inventions. (4-5)”

Since 1991, the Cultural Centre’s Women’s Culture project has been working to revitalize lost practices such as the textile production of plaited pandanus mats. The Cultural Centre began collecting men’s knowledge in 1976. Moreover, what Lissant Bolton’s paper

(1998) and Jean Tarisesei's (1999) emphasized was the relationship that the church has to both the Cultural Centre and *kastom*. These papers were written following joint fieldwork conducted by Bolton, an anthropologist at ANU and Tarisesei, Co-ordinator for the Women's Culture project. Bolton (1998:4) examined how the Cultural Centre, whose main tenet is to revive and preserve *kastom*, implemented a fieldworker program in 1976, where men and women were "trained to work in their own villages and areas documenting and reviving local knowledge and practice."

Workshops since 1980 for the men and 1994 for the women have been held annually to look at the information gathered and discuss issues stemming from them. An interesting point made is the fact that these meetings open with a prayer, this being the extent of the church's involvement in the fieldworkers project. Here Bolton (1998:9-10) describes the situation that interconnects the Church with the project:

"The prayers in the fieldworker workshops act to contain the impact of the churches on the work of the Cultural Centre. The prayers show respect, but the influence of the churches is limited to prayer. At the same time the acknowledgment of God through prayers in the fieldworker workshops draws Christian belief into the work of the Cultural Centre in the revival of *kastom*, affirming the idea that Christianity and *kastom* are compatible, declaring in fact that the Christian God supports the revival of *kastom*. This acknowledgment makes it easy for the fieldworkers, men and women alike, to see *kastom* and Christianity as balanced (as they are in the Vanuatu Constitution), each contributing to contemporary ni-Vanuatu life."

Kastom therefore contains even room for Christianity to flex its weight within the language of 'old ways'. But what of the engendered form of *kastom* which still reserves is discrimination against women. Ironically, while the "invention of tradition" approach has omitted many of the features frowned upon by the Church, such as cannibalism and sorcery, it

has not rescinded the lower value of women, as tellingly portrayed in a poem by Grace Mera Molisa quoted by Jolly (1997:140):

“VANUATU IS:

FREE	Men are free, Women are in Chattels
------	--

SELF DETERMINED	Men determine, Women go along
--------------------	----------------------------------

SELF GOVERNING	Men Govern Women
-------------------	------------------

INDEPENDENT	Women depend on Men
-------------	---------------------

ENJOYING THE FRUITS OF THE STRUGGLE	For Men Only
---	--------------

The Nature of the Nation's Democracy
The Nature of the Nation's Christianity
The Nature of the Nation's Melanesian Values
is Exemplified in Practice.”

To identify the difference between the National rhetoric of *kastom* with the *man ples* notion is not an easy task, as they often borrow from one another. An excellent example of this is in looking at the Malvatumauri. Its very establishment was a product of the state; itself an invented tradition, while its provenance only affects *kastom* as defined by local practices. In the Custom Policy of the Malvatumauri presented in Lindstrom and White's (1994) Culture-Kastom-Tradition: Developing Cultural Policy in Melanesia, there is absolutely no mention of Port Vila and cultural policies that might include people residing in town (implying that there is no *kastom* in town). The Cultural Centre similarly by collecting a database of *kastoms* related to *man ples*, uses both constructions of *kastom* in its work.

When speaking with youth, *kastom* was generally considered to be non-existent in town life. As one young man told me:

“I can sit and describe *kastom* but that’s just like talking about the skin of it. If you want to know *kastom* then you must experience it. Go live it. You can stay in Vila and talk about it but you’ll never really understand it until you go home to it. You can stay in Vila and talk about it, but *kastom* is the other way. It is on the islands and the only way to learn it, is to feel it and experience it. *Kastom* is a philosophy that is practiced. True *kastom* is practiced on the islands and is the only way you’ll ever understand it. (Roger, YPP Fieldworker)

Then what was central to identity in town? What underlined the importance of equating one’s identity with one’s island origins? How might the kinship connections between people and the incredible geographical and cultural distance these relational ties carried themselves be explained? What of the obvious engendered social dynamics of men and women?

Presenting an ethnographic summary of several of Vanuatu’s islands at this point will clarify what *kastom* represents to most ni-Vanuatu. Living on the islands and practicing ‘traditional’ rituals and life-cycles is what typifies *kastom* for most Ni-Vanuatu. Therefore, as a tool of symbolic nationalism *kastom* differs greatly from *kastom* as it is tied to *ples* and used to identify the diversity of ni-Vanuatu *fasins*.

2.4 Vanuatu—An Ethnographic Overview

This section presents a descriptive summary of social organization across Vanuatu in order to better grasp the present state of life in town. Within Port Vila there are actually cultures of people living in town together; trying to get along, learn from one another, and survive in a market economy; all the while attempting to maintain their *man ples* identities.

What these identities convey must be used as a starting point in order to recognize what life is like for youth in town. In acknowledging and considering the variedness of the past and present on particular islands, a sense of the variedness of life in a single town will better emerge and guide the arguments.

Several islands will be examined including: Pentecost, Ambae, Malekula, Nguna and Tanna²⁹. What each of these islands has in common is that traditional life is bounded by an ongoing cycle of rituals, with each stage of an individual's life celebrated, from birth, initiation, marriage and death. This brief outline will sketch the differing languages, socio-political organizations, economies, kinship structures and family organizations, land tenure and religions and rituals of the 5 selected islands. It is not the intent to revisit all of the ethnographies conducted on Vanuatu, as most are based on the study of these 'traditional' elements, fundamental to *man ples identity*. Rather it is to sketch the diversity of ni-Vanuatu organizations as they reveal a multiplicity of *fasins* across the various islands. Using Levinson & Hays (1991) Encyclopedia of World Cultures, six anthropologists³⁰ specializing in the particular regions of Vanuatu contributed summaries informing the basis of this overview.

2.4.1 Socio-political Organization

On Ambae, Malekula and Pentecost the socio-political organization is traditionally one of graded society (each with its variances). Based on prestige, men are graded on the ability to

²⁹ This roughly covers the spread of Vanuatu's islands (from North to South) and provides a good summary of the diversity found in ni-Vanuatu socio-political and economic organizations.

³⁰ Ellen Facey (Nguna), Margaret Jolly (Pentecost), Joan Larcom (Malekula), Lamont Lindstrom (Tanna) and William and Margaret Rodman (Ambae).

accumulate and exchange boar's tusks and other ritual objects which ranked accordingly, earn men the rights to differing levels of knowledge based on a ritual ladder.

“This arrangement conferred on men more than women sacred powers enhancing their capacity to grow crops, nurture tusked boars, control the weather, and perform rituals controlling human sexuality, health, and fecundity. But such powers were also considered to be dangerous potentially destructive. This belief necessitated segregated commensality, whereby men ate separately from women and children, and high-ranking men from those of low rank.” (Jolly, 1991:263)

Thus the higher men achieve in terms of prestige, the higher they are elevated in terms of chieftainship and often stronger demarcated is the division of the sexes.

On Ambae, the big men are those of high rank; who have proven themselves through “their ability to accumulate and dispose of boars with tusks in particular stages of development” (Rodman & Rodman 1991:12). Hamlets are the basic unit of cooperation and are based on locality, politics and to a lesser degree, kinship. These hamlets are then joined together in endogamous, Christian denominated alliances, where men compete with one another, to gain more prestige. While in the East it is these allied hamlets that achieve the highest levels of political control, in the West it is through the Churches that most politically charged positions materialize. Disputes are resolved in village and district courts, where Ambaeans themselves have devised the legal codes. Fines are administered to the guilty parties usually in the form of cash, pigs and pandanus mats (Rodman & Rodman 1991).

On Pentecost, organization is based on traditional hierarchical principles of rank and gender (although these are currently undergoing transformation with the monetary economy). While there is in place a national legal structure, most people tend to resolve their disputes (usually involving land, marriage and pigs) at informal village courts.

“These courts are protracted meetings that try to effect consensus. Men rather than women are vocal in such meetings, and those who speak most and exert most influence tend to be older and high-ranking. Decisions at such meetings are thought to be binding on all in the community and may occasion the payment of fines.” (Jolly 1991:263)

On Malekula, this graded society is known as the Nimangi and still operates in some areas, with women’s Nimangi shadowing the mens’. (Larcom, 1991) While the traditional villages still operate with big men, who emerge as powerful men from the graded system, in the missionized villages, the chieftainship is rotated between it’s men of ‘place’ every year or two. Thus it is the big-men who deal with disputes in the traditional villages, while it is the elected chiefs in the Christian villages. Both use fines and exchanges as a mode of resolving cases.

“The object of all locally tried court cases is the reduction of ill will between the parties, so all court proceedings tend to involve a great deal of negotiation rather than arbitrary legal sanctions.” (Facey 1991:166)

In Nguna, and other islands centrally located, rank is passed through a hereditary system. Although originally passed through a matrilineal line, since the 1900’s it has been through male agnates that the titles have moved. (Facey, 1991) Village membership is also important tying kin and clans’ people under one village high chief. These chiefs in the past had their titles passed through matrilineal affiliation, but now reflect a patriline, yet remain the same men dominating the chieftainship and moreover, the disproportionate control of land. The two other bodies govern island life are the church elders and the pastor, and the village council (although their power is lesser than chiefly control). Although there is a government assessor on the island, his jurisdiction only affects crimes of violence. Most disputes are heard by the

village councils and the council of chiefs. Cases are usually resolved by having the guilty party pay a fine (its price based on the type of misdemeanour) (Facey 1991).

On Tanna, social organization is controlled hierarchically by sex and age, and governed through lineages based at kava drinking grounds, with two chiefs elected within each of these drinking grounds. More than half the men who are affiliated to these kava grounds have been adopted (by being given a personal name attached to the ground), rather than being affiliated with their father's lineage or name-set. Each of these kava drinking grounds is then joined to larger groupings (regionally distributed with roughly 115 divisions), all originating from two moieties (*Numrukwen* and *Kaviameta*). Moreover, status is achieved through age, ritual and other local knowledge rather than economic abilities and nowadays is limited to a symbolic rank, as social organization is more seemingly egalitarian. (Lindstrom, 1991) Although national police and a court system are present, people tend to resolve their disagreements "informally". Most disputes are settled at the local kava drinking grounds, where the big-men (the elected chiefs of the drinking ground) and the parties involved meet and try to reach a consensus so the situation or problem can be resolved. The resolution is denoted by the exchange of goods between the parties.

2.4.2 Economy

Most of the islands share a similar pattern of swidden horticulture. Using basic tools and burning plots of land, men and women cultivate yams and taro; these being the most ritually important crops on most of the islands. Others include: sweet potato, sago, breadfruit, manioc, bananas, leafy greens, sugarcane and a range of other fruits and vegetables. On most islands

the division of labor in gardening is divided with men doing the initial preparation and women planting and harvesting. Other activities are animal husbandry (chickens, pigs and cattle), hunting and fishing (the latter two mainly male activities). Cash crop farming has also become a normal activity with land being farmed for kava, copra, cocoa and coffee. Most of the islands prepare a similar traditional food called 'lap-lap'³¹ although the preparation has slight variations throughout the islands and villages.

Again the division of labour very much affects other forms of economy and trade, with women weaving mats and baskets and selling produce at local markets, while men more often trade in traditional knowledge, such as songs, dances and stories and carve ceremonial masks and tree fern, wood and stone figures associated with initiation. Throughout Ambae, the men fish and hunt while women weave mats and baskets. While child-rearing is a cooperative activity between fathers, mothers and siblings, women are considered to be the primary caregivers (Rodman & Rodman 1991). On Malekula, the traditional division of labour has lessened with the missionization of many of its villages. Where house-building was formally a male occupation, today it is a communal activity. In *kastom* villages such as Laus, yam gardening is still a male activity. In Christian villages, women do partake in yam gardening, but only when they are not menstruating (Larcom 1991). In Nguna, most garden work remains gender stratified, with men doing the field preparation and the women, cleaning the freshly burnt areas. Both sexes plant, however the maintenance and harvesting of crops is the provenance of females. Unlike Malekula, there are no "female pollution" beliefs that stop women from

³¹ Lap-Lap is a dish prepared in varying styles throughout Vanuatu. Women prepare either yam, taro or banana (amongst other types of root vegetables) into a paste, and pour the mixture onto island cabbage, which is placed on top of banana leaves. Then chicken or fish is added (most frequently observed) to the top of the paste, with coconut milk layered throughout the

completing their expected tasks (Facey 1991). In Pentecost, a pronounced division of labour is revealed in most activities. While women take care of pigs and sows, men care for their highly valued tusked boars. Gardening although shared, is divided into men's work and women's work, as is house-building (Jolly 1991). This system of division is also highlighted on Tanna, with men also assuming the role of truck-drivers throughout the island (Lindstrom 1991).

2.4.3 Kinship Structure and Family Organization

Although the patterns of kinship range throughout the islands, most of the islands use crow-type terminology to distinguish relatives, which prescribes the equivalence of agnates of alternate generations and equivalence of same-sex siblings (Jolly 1991). In town this remains the case, with all of a young girl's mother's sisters being called *mama* or *smol mama* (recognizing that this auntie is younger than her mother) and her mother's brothers being her uncles. Malekula is significant in that this pattern of kinship terminology functions in a patrilineal descent system (one of only three groups in the entire Oceanic region who use these two systems together) with matrilineal relations excluded from system (Larcom 1991). Tanna stands out as it uses a Dravidian type in which everyone from one generation falls into a one of four terminologies; brother, sister, spouse or in-law (Lindstrom 1991).

What does fluctuate far more throughout the islands is the means by which kinship groups are patterned. In East Ambae, descent is reckoned as an exogamous matrilineal moiety (used primarily for symbolic and ritual activities), while on West Ambae, this identification has long since been lost with a cognatic system replacing it (Rodman & Rodman 1991). In

process and another layer of island cabbage. This is all wrapped into the banana leaves and cooked in a stone oven, which is

Malekula, it is a localized descent system that is exogamous and patrilineal, and works from a foundation that identifies men and women through their 'ples' (which corresponds very much with the urban model of island ties (ie. being Man-Malekula even if he/she has never been to Malekula) commandeering identity. In Nguna, it is an exogamous matrilineal decent system using totemic clan names which divides its groups. Objects such as fish, trees, plants and foods, are used to name these 22 matri-clans (Facey 1991). Pentecost's descent is patrilineal, but debts to its matrilineal groups are still paid on ceremonial occasions. Moreover, houses or *buluhim*, are the major category that divides kin and are geographically dispersed throughout the island (Jolly 1991). On Tanna, the most important kin group is the nuclear family. Moreover, the Tannese use name-sets to order its groups. Rather than being born into 'lineages', this patrilineal-type of descent, is earned with a personal name being received from the kava-drinking ground the man is tied to.

Marriage is an important facet to understanding how traditional and modern networks are maintained. Before conversion to Christianity, most villages on Ambae and Nguna practiced polygyny. This remains a feature of marriage in some Traditionalist villages on Malekula and Pentecost (Christian villages being monogamous). In South Pentecost a third of Sa men have entered into varying types of polygynous relationships in their lifetimes (Jolly 1991).

On Ambae, traditionally child betrothal was common but due to the church's disapproval of this and polygyny, both practices have ceased. Most individuals have the freedom to decide who they wish to marry as long as moiety exogamy is practiced. Bridewealth

a hole filled with red hot stones, placed on top of the lap-lap for a couple of hours.

is still in effect, although the traditional emphasis on tusked pigs and mats' has been moderated by today's emphasis on cloth, household goods and cash (Rodman & Rodman 1991). Moreover, residence after marriage is virilocal³². Divorce and separation are very rare; as some missions prohibit divorce altogether and all frown on either practice.

On Malekula, not only does polygyny remain a practice for the Laus, but in the past polyandry was said to have been practiced by the Mewun (Larcom 1991). Bridewealth is a combination of pigs and cash. In order to marry, bachelors must rely on older men, as it is they who control the marriage choice of their young women. Post-marital residence is patrilocal. Divorce is illegal, so the few people who do separate from their spouses, usually migrate to either Luganville or Port Vila (Larcom 1991).

On Pentecost, ideal marriages from the male perspective are where the female is from the same house (or *buluhim*) of his father's mother. Although marriages are still to an extent "arranged", it is usually in keeping with the desires of the prospective spouses'. 85% of post-marital couples live patrilocally, while roughly 10% live neolocally³³ (Jolly 1991).

On Nguna, the traditional pattern of marriage was through sister exchange, with preferential spouses being cross-cousins³⁴. While chief's sons are still expected to conform to these prerequisites of marriage, for the most part young people are able to "marry for love" (Facey 1991:243).

³² Virilocality is to live with a husband's kin, whereas patrilocal is to live with a husband's father (Harris 1991:161).

³³ Neolocality implies living apart from either husband's or wife's kin (Harris 1991:161).

³⁴ Cross-cousins being a child of a mother's brother or sister's son.

“Nonetheless, weddings, following which the couple resides patrilocally, are one of the major social activities with which people concern themselves today, with substantial resources being amassed by the groom’s relatives to provide a bride-price. For the Ngunese this does not constitute a payment for a woman; rather, the money and other valuables are gifts expressing gratitude and commitment to the relatives of the new bride on the part of the groom and his relatives. (ibid:243)”

Moreover, bride-price has escalated greatly since missionization with variation attributed to the bride’s natal origins and existing relationships between the two families. In Tanna, similar marriage patterns exist highlighting sister exchange and bilateral cross-cousins. Lindstrom (1991:314) explains its prevalence:

“A concern for balance governs marriage, as it does all other forms of exchange. With sister exchange, every marriage entails another, and divorce is very uncommon. Should a marriage fail, the wife’s family must provide the husband’s family with another woman in order to maintain the exchange balance.”

2.4.4 Land Tenure

In terms of land tenure, traditional patterns of distribution remain the identifying feature on each of the islands analyzed.

While on Ambae every adult has usufruct rights to using and living on the land and concepts of village and patrilineage land exist, it is usually individuals’ rather than kinship groups who are primary land-owners. Co-resident brothers often share land and responsibilities attached to their mutual ownership. Men are usually the land-owners; however women can also claim rightful ownership. Ownership of land usually evolves from contributions to funerary feasts (*bongzi*) and occasionally land can be acquired through cash

purchase. Moreover, conflict was frequently reported in the 1970's with 24% of the population controlling 70% of available land (Rodman & Rodman 1991).

On Malekula, land is inherited patrilineally. Married women retain usufruct rights to their brother's coconut land which they can access without having to seek permission. When men have found themselves with more land and a lack of heirs, over the past several decades (due to a fear of European encroachment) it has become practice to parcel this land to sister's sons. However, this practice has generated a great deal of tension and seen many cases appear in court as a consequence (Larcom 1991).

In regards to land tenure on Nguna, Facey (1991:243) states:

“Communal ownership of land is vested in matriclans. The pattern of actual land use, however, is a matter of individual's pressing claims through diverse lines of connection”

The strongest claims result from one's father having used the land previous; however claims can also be made through one's mother and her lineage connections. In contemporary land disputes, there are several reasons for the growing difficulty in finding solutions, these include; a growing population, absenteeism of young people employed off the island and more land being given over to the production of coconuts.

In Pentecost, land tenure is inherited through agnatic lines, although priority is given to those who can trace themselves directly to one of the founding ancestors. Therefore, while land and its contents are shared patrilineally between brothers and sisters, this ownership is not passed to a sister's children, as her ownership is only good throughout her lifetime and her children will be owners of their father's land.

“Land rights may also pass matrilocally if payments in pigs and mats are not made at death by the agnates to the matrilineal kin of the deceased.” (Jolly 1991:263)

Moreover, temporary usufruct can be offered to those without locally available land with control over land distribution being in the hands of the most senior men of each house (*buluhim*). Finally, Jolly (1991:264) notes that “retaining ownership depends on continual use and thus continual residence.”

On Tanna, Lindstrom (1991:314) notes a link between personal names and land ownership:

“Every Tannese boy receives a personal name that entitles him to several plots of land near a kava-drinking ground. Women’s names have no land entitlements.”

Further, every family receives a limited number of names to use for each generation. So, if a man has no sons he may adopt a boy (or a grown man) by providing him with one of the family’s names. Rarely do men who own these plots of land use them to garden or live on (other land is readily available for these purposes) and permission to use the land is usually quite attainable.

2.4.5 Religion and Ritual

Religion and ritual are the final structures to outline in this overview. They have gone under enormous change since missionization, but as Larcom (1991: 166) points out with regards to Malekula:

“Since independence, when most missionaries left, Mewun and Seniang people have revived a number of old dances and ceremonies, which they researched among local elders with anthropological zeal and precision.”

On Ambae, Christianity is the major source of religious affiliation. The Rodman's noted that during a 1979 census, only two people did not identify themselves as Christian, while the rest of the islands' population did. With this noted, people have adopted kava drinking, traditional dancing and singing into their rituals, whether bound by tradition or Christianity. The major rituals celebrated are; rank takings, betrothals, weddings, funerals, Christmas, Easter and Saints' days honouring the patron saints of their local churches. Similar Christian beliefs are held on Malekula, although people still believe the world to be inhabited by spirits (some of whom take on human form, until their death sets the spirit free again). Some rituals have been reworked since pre-contact times and tie themselves to Presbyterian values. One such ceremony is the yam harvest festival, where singing and dancing are followed by a yam exchange honouring the memory of the dead. Other ceremonial dances are still practiced accompanied by slit gongs or drumming in the village dance areas (Larcom 1991). On Nguna, although Presbyterian Christianity informs the majority of the population's beliefs, the traditional view that the god "Mauiikitiki"³⁵ pulled the islands from the sea by a rope, is still recounted as the creation myth. Other lesser spirits are still believed to dwell in particular caves, trees, or rocks in the sea and can be placed under control by chiefs and spiritual practitioners. Ceremonies practiced today include the first yam ceremony, where annual presentations to the chiefs and pastors (in Christian villages) are made, as well as ceremonies

³⁵ Mauiikitiki is a Polynesian mythological figure. He is also represented in the mythologies of the other Shepherd's Islands and Tanna (Lindstrom 1991).

surrounding the investitures of chiefs (although divested of traditional religious content) (Facey 1991).

On Pentecost, while most ni-Vanuatu have religious beliefs invoked from their Christian affiliations, many beliefs and practices have been reworked to include practices shaped by both Christianity and ancestral religion.

“The ancestors are thought still to exert a continual influence in the world of the living, and the living are often engaged in attempts to please or placate remote or recent ancestors. The graded society is predicated on a desire to approach a state of ancestral power. As well as the supernatural powers credited to the dead and the living, other supernatural entities are thought to exist.” (Jolly 1991:264)

On Tanna “Christianity has merged with—not replaced—the traditional concerns with ancestors and spirits.” (Lindstrom 1991:315) All Tannese ceremonies consist of exchange and most are associated with important events in the life-cycle of individuals. Moreover, there are two other ceremonies of note which function to maintain regional relations, they are; *nieri* whereby two men of different kava-drinking grounds exchange different kinds of foods (ie. yams for taro) and *nakwari*, involving thousands of people and results in an exchange of pigs and kava between people the North and South after a night and day of singing and dancing (this event referred to as the *Toka*). Moreover, Tanna also features the Jon Frum movement which draws from custom and Christianity, as well as the remembered history of Americans living on Tanna, for whom Jon Frum is said to embody³⁶.

³⁶ “While staying on Tanna in a Jon Frum village, much respect was held for anything American. On Friday evening, men brought out their hand made guitars and the people sung and danced by an old confederate flag.” (Fieldnotes June 2000)

Chapter 3

Identity, Liminality and Communitas

3.1 Personhood as a Cultural Construct

This dichotomy emphasizing the difference between the Melanesian dividual and Western individual, was first substantiated through the work of Marilyn Strathern (1988). This emerged as a proponent of a paradigm of social action which took stand against using Western concepts to embody Melanesian realities. In the ethnography The Gender of the Gift, she did not render a Melanesian alternative but simply deconstructed the material and checked them in relation to one another through a set of oppositions (we/they, gift/commodity, anthropological/feminist viewpoints), minimizing the information being processed. Much debate surrounding this dichotomy has emerged, but within this research it is critical to look closely at these constructs as they not only present striking material in terms of a post-modern critique but also inform the way that many young people in town negotiate their identities.

The relational or dividual Melanesian identity that evolves out of this paradigm, sets up a notion of traditional Melanesian personhood, situated against the Western ideology of individualism. By deconstructing the society::individual binary through its 'we/they abstract', a duality reflecting the opposing nature the (Western) 'unitary individual' from the (Melanesian) 'partible person' (Douglas 1998) is created. LiPuma (1998:58-59) identifies these contrasts below:

“Contrast of Western and Melanesian Personhood

Western

Persons are conceptually distinct from the relations that unite them and bring them together.

Grasps and symbolizes collectivity as a unification of pluralities. Singular person is an individual.

Society and individual are in a relation of opposition, contestation and hierarchy.

Social life consists in movement from one internal/ external to another.

The person is the subject of an explicit and visible ideology - individualism.

An individual's behavior and intentions are interpreted as the public expression of inner qualities (honesty, greed, etc.)

Persons mature biogenetically as a consequence of their own inner potential.

Persons depend on themselves for knowledge about their own internal selves, i.e. self-knowledge.

A person's power lies in his/ her control over others; power is a possession.

Persons are axiomatically same-sex; social identity should

Melanesian

Persons are compound and plural site of the relations that define them.

Defines collective sociality/ life as an essential unity. Singular person is composite.

The social and the individual are homologous, parallel and equivalent.

Social life consists in movement from one mode of sociality to another.

There is no explicit ideology of persons, only contextually situated images.

An individual's behavior and intentions are interpreted in terms of his/ her actions in context.

Persons grow transactionally as a beneficiary of other people's actions.

Persons depend on other for knowledge about themselves, and they are not the authors of this knowledge.

A person's power lies in his/ her ability to do and act; power is a relation.

Persons alternate between same-sex and cross-sex identities;

fully replicate one's natural physiological state.

Society stands over and against the individual as an external force that imposes norms, rules, and constraining conventions.

Its commodity logic leads people to search for knowledge about things and to make explicit practice out of knowing the nature of objects.

social identity is detached from physiological state.

Society runs parallel to the individual; it is embodied as dispositions to think, believe and feel in a certain way.

Its gift logic leads people to search for knowledge about persons and to make a practice out of knowing the person-making powers of objects."

Although bordering on a suggestion of stereotyping behaviour and action, I believe that this paradigm does hold credence in roughly sketching out factors evident in town living. However it is not that these dualities remain steadfast in town, on the contrary they are of great value in seeing how the two separate facets have been incorporated, and to a point blended, to make sense of people's identities. As Bruce Knauff (1999:16) states:

"...indigenous and modernizing orientations are mutually defining rather than dichotomous."

Thus these two dualisms become a tool in understanding the complex nature of Melanesian (more specifically, ni-Vanuatu) identity and personhood. In discussing the "Western" and "Melanesian" differences in personhood, Edward LiPuma (1998:57) states:

"It would seem rather that persons emerge precisely from that tension between dividual and individual aspects/relations"

Understanding how young people are identifying themselves while living in Port Vila emphasizes the liminality surrounding dividual and individual aspects of personhood. It is the notion of being 'betwixt and between' that readily identifies young people in Port Vila. In a 1996 report Sustainable Human Development in Vanuatu published by the United Nations and the government of Vanuatu, it is claimed that "youth" are an especially "vulnerable group":

"Youth are the group most caught between the old ways and the new, and for many the future looks bleak... For example, many youth who migrate to Port Vila from their home island in an attempt to find work now find themselves living in overcrowded squatter settlements. With little money and cramped living quarters the young men *wokbaot* (walk about) in groups with nothing to do except drink, if one of the group has money, or steal, if an easy opportunity presents itself (1996:11)"

3.2 Liminality: Of Place and Person

"Liminality is conceived of as a season of silent, secret growth, a mediatory movement between what was and what will be where the social process goes inward and underground for a time that is not profane time. (1978:279)"

Although the use of Turner's liminal construct is prominent in this paper, it has been somewhat altered from its original treatment in outlining Van Gennep's notion of *rites of passage*, released from its original mark of 3 phases; separation, margin and reaggregation (see Turner 1967:94 for further discussion). The sense that liminality extends itself to this paper is found in examining the tensions forming identity where the influences of modernity mixed with those of *kastom* and *ples*.

The notion of liminality as an "interstructural situation" is very much a symptom of town living, and Port Vila, viewed as an "interstructural place". Yet this lack of traditional

structure or perhaps better, haze of structure has not stemmed the flow of migration into town. For many ni-Vanuatu people living in town, simply stated there “is no *kastom* in town”, is both an outcome of Christianity’s impact on the islands and towns and the belief that *kastom* is tied to the ground.

After conducting an informal interview with the secretary of the Malvatumauri (the governmental body of a pan-island chiefs system—democratically elected by the chiefs on each island set up to work alongside the government when any questions of *kastom* were called into governance) he reinforced this idea of *kastom* not being ‘in town’. He stated, very bluntly, that children in town were under enormous pressure from both ends of the spectrum. With having to find their way in a modern state, they deal with the difficulty of needing purchasing power and thus the means (ie. educational and vocational opportunities) to achieve success, while also losing the *kastom* knowledge of their ancestors that tied to the land is unavailable to them living in town.

Yet a great deal of work has gone into preserving *kastom* practices, these values and ways of living have remained steadfast; not only on the islands but in town as well. With this said, as physical boundaries very much influence what *kastom* is and is not, the liminality of people in town to *kastom* is quite entrenched. Central to this is a misconception is that ‘Modernity’ assumes a fundamentally ‘Western’ trajectory of living rather than those of “partial connections” (Strathern 1991). Moreover, *kastom* has been dealt the same fate, with so many believing that it cannot be present in town and more generally, in modernity. However this point is exactly why liminality of interstructural space comes to the forefront of my thesis. As Arce and Long state (2000:3):

“[m]odernity as a particular assemblage of social and discursive practices carries only traces of similitude with other instantiations, and is never entirely consistent and coherent. Instead it is characterised by a heterogeneous dynamism wherein ambivalence and ambiguity make it possible for differences of interests and knowledge to be contained in everyday life (Parkin 1995). Because problems arise from the uncertainties and fragilities of the connections, the constant re-positioning of actors vis-à-vis each other and critical events generates a series of social and epistemic interfaces in which discontinuities are managed through practices as deferral, accommodation, negotiation, selective appropriation, and distantiation or absenteeism (Long 1989, 1998).”

The sort of impact this ‘heterogeneous dynamism’ is having on town life is rapidly revealing itself and will be examined as a major element of this thesis. Simply by examining the question of what life is like in town, the concept of interstructural place emerges. How does one theoretically structure and argue all of the influences present in town? Ron Crocombe outlines this point in a discussion of cultural policies and how indigenous cultures have adapted to and been modified by dominant European cultures:

“For some purposes it is appropriate to look at the introduced and local cultures in terms of *levels*: the immigrant European or Asian power was always dominant throughout colonial history. The immigrant cultures determined at least the overt forms of higher level political structures, of the economy, the legal system, and usually the religion.

The two cultures can also be looked at in terms of *sectors*, with some areas of life being lived according to traditional precedents and others according to foreign models. The family and domestic organization, subsistence economy, and the language of interpersonal communication within the culture usually contain significant “traditional” elements. Technology, commercial relations, national constitutions, church institutions, and so forth are based on more foreign models.

Alternatively, they can be looked at in terms of *proportions*, with some element of the traditional and the foreign in every aspect of life, though with different types of blending, in different proportions, of indigenous as against foreign sources of influence. Each of these ways of analysis (i.e., by levels, by sectors, or by proportions) has some validity, but fundamentally cultural change is a living process of adaptation and appropriation, combining influences from the past with more recent external forces. (1994:22)”

Margaret Rodman (1992:646) uses a similarly defined notion to understand the aspects of 'betweenness' that affect tradition and modernity in Vanuatu, but hers evolves from a concept called "heterotopias":

"The term originated with Foucault (1970:xviii), who contrasted the imagined places of utopias, which directly reflect or invert "real" societies, with heterotopias, which are "a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (1986:24)."

Rodman (1992:643) envisages this paradigm by identifying geographers' (Agnew & Duncan 1989) analysis of 'place':

"...reunifying *location* (i.e. spatial distribution of socioeconomic activities such as trade networks), a *sense of place* (or attachment to place), and *locale* (the setting in which a particular social activity occurs, such as a church) to yield a more rounded understanding of places as culturally and socially constructed in practice"

This expresses that while ni-Vanuatu do live in town (location), it is their *man ples* that identifies them (sense of place), and moreover, the spaces they frequent like school, church, different households, movie cinemas, shops (locales) influence the shaping of their identities.

For young people these influences of place are magnified, as their own identities are undergoing a transformation between childhood and adulthood. This is emphasized in a Government of Vanuatu and Unicef's report entitled A Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Vanuatu 1998:

"The most significant period of a young person's life is generally the decade between the ages of 15 and 24. During this period most youths will test, learn, relearn and develop the applied life skills they will need to provide for their livelihoods and the future well being of their children. While the needs of young people are very special they are rarely treated as such

within the context of ni-Vanuatu society. Social problems and ills within the communities are often seen as youth problems, and in general the contributions of youth are only recognized in sports and entertainment. The pressing issues affecting young people regarding their identity and self expression, uncertainty about the future, unemployment and underemployment, education, and the law and order are rarely seen as a particular relevance to young people (1998:52).”

Throughout the Pacific youth are caught in a tangled web of ‘old’ ways and the ‘new’. How they themselves deal with the consequences of social change alongside the need to retain ‘traditional’ elements of their identities is a question that several researchers have begun to explore.

Realities and propositions for identity are conflated and set against the backdrop of urban space throughout the Pacific (Bursalem et al. 1997; Jourdan 1995; Jourdan 1996). Further, the study of urbanization is emerging as a subject that cannot only offer the anthropologist new insights into communication and identity but provide the subjects of the ethnography with information that will benefit their own future and cultural reproduction (Burt 1998; Keesing 1993; Pinholt 1998).

Despite health and development-oriented reports, more needs to be documented surrounding the decisions youth make and the paths that these choices pave. Reports such as these come from international and government sponsored development initiatives and while they are good sources of quantitative data, the work that anthropologists can do in relating the life-stories and everyday decisions youth face, can only provide better understandings for the future. Further, when anthropologists share methodological tools with indigenous researchers’,

the reports and videos such as those emerging from the YPP can not only improve the lives of young people, but generate important changes for the discipline of anthropology itself.

In PNG, quite a lot of research has been undertaken in the past decade concerning 'Raskols' (Goddard 1995, Kulick 1993, Roscoe 1999, Sykes 1999) and the upsurge of juvenile crime by organized groups of young men, stemming from the major cities such as Port Moresby, but is quickly spreading to villages and admitting women (*raskol-men*) into the groups (Kulick 1993). Alienation and loss of traditional identity are perhaps the most salient features of why these youths have chosen to form *raskol* gangs, in that, it is through consumption rather than labour that the boys are able to expand urban relations. Moreover, the alienation they feel towards their own kin calls for these new identities to emerge (Kulick 1993). But as Goddard (1995) shows, *kastom* ideals have also found their way into these groups:

"In other words, they are big-men in a crime-fed gift economy that involves social relations typical of precapitalist Melanesian societies in general (although the criminal activity itself is not typical of precapitalist societies). Most of the more successful criminals I have spoken with have been proud of their influence and status among their peers and have perceived themselves as big-men of crime. Some of them have appropriated nicknames associated with terms of address customarily used of clan leaders and respected elder kin. (64-65)"

The tag *wantok*³⁷ has subsumed gang membership into what is primarily defined as a kinship and shared regional ethnicity, for many of its urban residents. Dr. Christine Jourdan began exploring these issues in 1992 with a group of young men identified as 'Masta Liu'. What she found within this identification was not only the embodiment of youth and a process of urbanization amounting to linguistic 'pidginization', but also a connotation of deviance and

³⁷ Originally defined as sharing the same language (Goddard 1995).

resulting stigmatization. Solomon youth are therefore carrying an identification translated and marking them as 'aimless wanderers' (Jourdan 1995).

In Vila a similar tag was generated by the youth themselves to denote the position they found themselves in—SPR (*sperem pablik rod*). Roughly translated into 'hitting the road'. A feeling of liminality or marginality that set youth from the rest of the town's population transformed itself into a mark of deviance or laziness. If a juvenile offender was caught, an automatic response of 'he's SPR' would immediately be accepted and acknowledged as a reason for his/her delinquency.

This caricature of identity in the West is perceived similarly within a less negative connotation of person—hood recognized during the space in time where one is categorized a 'teenager' (Amit-Talai 1995; Liechty 1995). The question begs to be asked, why do we assume this "transient human condition, one that is fraught with tensions and ambivalence, with risk and potential" (Taylor n.d. unpublished paper) from Western youth while in other societies; this developmental phase has been transformed into a negative stigma, attaching the liminality of influences to juvenile crime and anti-social behaviour. By documenting the lives of young people, I believe this will quickly become clear. Traditionally roles and expectations do not make room for several years of expected 'slacking off', such as ours does, yet this is exactly what is being seen in town through the generalization of young people *kilim tuem* (killing time). Moreover, Alice Schlegel (1995:31) points out in "A Cross-Cultural Approach to Adolescence", without proper structure to reintegrate young people back into society there is a

danger of young people assuming adulthood without the productive capacity to do anything other than continue 'killing time':

"Adolescents may be experiencing a "time out" but it is time that can easily be lost unless they have a clear sense of direction and the help of adults to clarify and achieve realistic goals. These are issues of great importance to all nations, as their future depends on the success of today's adolescents in successfully reaching adulthood."

Dr. Jourdan (1995) notes that the stepping-stones to national culture revolve around three major symbols that create identity, defined as "a common future, rather than a common history (133)." They are: Schooling, *pijin* and popular culture. Although her research is focused on Honiara, the same can be held for Vila.

While schools have begun to introduce *kastom* learning into their agendas (Tapahae 1998, Tarisesei 1999), it is the actual process of attending school that creates new ties for young people. Further, as urban populations are increasingly 3rd and 4th generation (Walter 1987) marriage patterns reflect selection of mates from the urban pool, rather than corresponding island heritages. Western ideas of romantic love, education and meeting in town have increased the number of social interactions available to urban youth, each influencing these changing patterns.

Pre-marital sexual relationships are another factor for marriage, although the Rodmans noted this in 1970's while conducting research on courtship in Longana, Ambae. During their fieldwork, the four out of the five couples that wed, had brides that were visibly pregnant (Rodman & Rodman 1978). Philibert (1988) found a pattern of change in Erakor, a peri-urban village 10 kms outside of Vila, where in 1972 there were 7 unions out of wedlock (*bus mari*).

By 1979 this number had grown to 31 and in 1983 maintained itself at 30 cases. Bridewealth remains a condition of marriage, although the commodization of language to reflect marriage and its costs have likened at least Paamese women in Vila to “Toyotas”, invoking the rising cost that men must pay, which in Australian dollars amounts to almost \$1000 Can or the price of a truck in Vanuatu (Haberkorn 1992).

The use of Bislama is another consequence of changing National identity. This is reflected even on the Outer Islands with many of Vanuatu’s languages disappearing and children’s first language being Bislama. Below is a chart taken from “Mi Harem Ol Voes blong Yang Pipol long Vila Taon”, the report produced by the Young People’s Project (1998:23):

Table 5. What Language Do You Use Most of the Time?

LANGUAGE	Frequency	Percent
Bislama	732	70.7%
Kastom Language	268	25.3%
English	29	2.8%
French	13	1.2%
Total	1042	100%

Source: Young People’s Project 1998:23

Popular culture is the last of these stepping-stones, and has made a huge impact on the lives of young people in town. Music, alcohol, kava-drinking and sports have all had identifiable impacts. As Dr. Jourdan notes (1995:142):

“Living in town is new to Solomon Islanders. As people who have no traditional model of an urban-lifestyle, they are continuously creating a culture in which they are immersed. They are both agents and recipients in this process, as marginal participants in a worldwide capitalist consumerism and as cultural creators... But Solomon Islanders are by no means passive consumers of imported multinational capitalist culture in prepackaged forms; they impose their own creative stamp on the Western phenomena with which they are bombarded.”

As Sam, a YPP fieldworker, notes:

“In Port Vila there are visible signs of the impact of *fasin blong waetman*. It is seen in the clothing young people wear, the music they listen to, the movies they watch, but these should be viewed as influences and not dramatically changing the lives of ni-Vanuatu to reflect the lives of white people.”

Therefore the recognition of different influences is not lost on youth, in fact, young people are quite aware of the differing influences. The YPP in conducting research have been able to gather data related to these differing influences and invoke a relationship between them, creating a sense of agency and ‘communitas’ amongst youth.

3.3 Communitas: Agency, Anthropology and Advocacy

A successful measure of the Young People’s Project has been their impact in uncovering the notion of liminality and the way it impacts youth in town. Beyond their ethnographic research, the YPP take steps to put a face to it, and then resolve it through advocacy and applied workshops conducted within the youth community. Directly related to this, is a sense of ‘communitas’ that their work generates to resolve inconsistencies and subsequent, misconceptions concerning identity that youth have in the past been labelled with. As Turner (1969:113) points out:

“Communitas is of the now; structure is rooted in the past and extends into the future through language, law, and custom.”

But what happens when it is exactly these structures that are in the process of transforming themselves?

The major issues that the project found and analysed through their research were: *kastom*, language, education, employment, family and relationships in town, health, *kɔlim taem*, Church and the future aspirations and needs of ni-Vanuatu youth. Each of these aspects affect youth from choices made individually and dividentally. Yet in the same breath, choice is removed from the hands of young people due to constraints placed on them from external realities of growing anti-structure. For example, there is a lack of *kastom* knowledge available to youth in town, tight monetary constraints placed on families residing in town making it difficult to provide for networks of extended family, a limited amount of seats available to students in the school systems¹⁸, a lack of employment opportunities available to young people (save for working in shops, being a *haosgel*, a gardener or pumping gas) and carrying the term 'SPR' because of the marginal role youth play in town. What research showed was that young people were getting into trouble in town, as a direct result of being ignored, rejected or thought of being useless, by their communities.

Liminality of position for youth does not prescribe that youth should simply be placed into a cultural category that is regarded as liminal from its original connotation of being removed from the rest of the general public. In fact, liminality is exactly what young people are trying to overcome. While the term SPR might reflect a notion of 'uselessness' in the eyes of

¹⁸ Often coinciding with the lack of spaces available in education, is the inability to select the language young people would like to be educated in. Taken a step even further, while French and English are the two languages that formally guide education, Bislama although the lingua franca; has no place in either system.

others, young people have refused to allow this identifier to remain a central descriptor for them, taking a stand against it and what it has become. The Young People's Project has played a large role into the researching and voicing the emerging crisis of identity, providing a sense of agency to young people where marginality had kept them in the past.

When the Young People's Project was developed, anthropological methods were instrumental in providing young researchers with the building blocks to discover what was occurring with young people in town. It has since enabled them to go further and examine more fully whether these same issues are affecting young people living in the islands. With the assistance of the YPP, young people have been able to find a voice and take the steps needed to find roles for themselves in the urban landscape. Moreover, it is the urban landscape largely uncovered by the YPP, which has brought a sense of 'communitas' to youth. Understanding that town is in a state of flux, unburdens much of the pressure unwittingly placed on the future of Vanuatu; its youth. The project is an ideal forum to bring to light the issues confusing negotiations of identity in Port Vila, because youth are so involved in the system (in receiving educations, trying to find jobs, finding spouses and partaking in recreational activities). Drawing from young people's experiences has given the YPP an avenue to explore the liminal influences emergent in town, and develop these lessons into practical solutions for future generations of ni-Vanuatu.

Further the emphasis the YPP has placed on communication, has seen its ability to reach not only young people but speak as a common voice to Vanuatu's entire population about the consequences of urbanization, loss of *kastom* and politics of being a young person in Port Vila.

Video and radio stand as two important measures of the YPP's reach. Although western modes of representation, both have been acquired and used by the Young People's Project to present the voices of youth to Vanuatu's entire population. While speaking on behalf of young people in town, the YPP have in effect, created a category of person that is now readily visible to all people of Vanuatu. Thus the 'communitas' which is created not only extends itself to the formation of this identity in town, but as the video is shown throughout the islands and the radio shows are aired nationally, these lend themselves to a supranational identity of youth, that all of Vanuatu, whether in town or on the islands, can identify with.

Finally, the YPP's continuing impact on young people through differing forms of advocacy has produced an empowering effect for young people through activities available in the form of workshops and resources. Had this project remained simply 'research', then the lives of young people would have taken a short-lived cause for alarm, but instead, with the visibility of its fieldworkers in the settlements, generating hope in the form of sewing workshops, literacy classes, small business co-operatives, and passing out newsletters outlining legal, reproductive and employment facts, to name a few, has provided a model that actually goes beyond communitas (of the here and now) to provide structure and opportunity to all youth wanting to participate in finding new ways to live and succeed in Port Vila.

Chapter 4

Life in Town for ni-Vanuatu Youth: Liminality of Influences

4.1. Life in town for ni-Vanuatu Youth

“When the government or the Church uses SPR, they might as well be calling us rubbish.” -Sam, Fieldworker, YPP

The sentiment of liminality is forged in the term SPR. ‘Sperem Pablik Rod’. Originally tagged by young ni-Vanuatu youth themselves, the term has come to encapsulate a negative feeling of worthlessness and inability to do anything but hang out and cause trouble.

This section hopes to show that young people are in fact trying to succeed in the face of monumental change and adversity from other members of society. Their voices and actions best represent the challenges that lay ahead for future generations of young people coming to town and more frequently being born and raised in town. It examines the relationships, migration patterns, settlement structures, employment, education, church and *kastom* influences that relate to living in Port Vila. It reflects how young people’s identities and negotiations of self are challenged by the obstacles and changes that modernity presents alongside a pressure to conform to *kastom* and keep tradition(s) alive. Young people have been positioned into a place of liminality with the loss of *kastom* knowledge, lack of jobs and misrepresentations of them being unmotivated in taking an active role in the formation in of their lives.

These are the factors that emerged from interviews, research conducted by the youth project, and videos capturing conversations between young people and the ni-Vanuatu researchers. Many have been kept in Bislama with rough translations following. Several vignettes have been added from fieldnotes to reveal facets of life that affect youth within an urban locale.

Finally what this chapter attests to is the difficulty of dividing influences into separate planes of investigation. Although it is easy enough to divide them into areas of concentration; their given impacts are proportional to the meaning that individual young people prescribe to them, and moreover, to the ways in which society interprets them. In fact no real attempt³⁹ has been made to clearly limit such parameters. An important aspect to understanding the liminality of person and place in Port Vila rests precisely on the difficulty of defining what life is like in town. Thus, when discussing the impact of kinship on town relationships, issues revolving around employment are sure to emerge. Each element impacts the other and they all end up influencing young people, revealing that young men and women are under enormous pressure to negotiate their identities through a sea of changes.

4.1.1 Life in Town: Migration, Settlements and Island Living

“On the islands living is work; while in town you must work to live.”—Annie, YPP Fieldworker

The first vignette introduces what shopping is like in town, creating a visual that reveals how modernity touches youth, yet remains removed from their economic grasp:

³⁹ Save for the inclusion of subchapters to structure the discussion.

Inside the town are buildings lined with stores selling the virtue of Vanuatu's status as a tax-free haven. Perfume, jewelry, beachwear, booze, and pirated videos/software programs are the highlight of this shopping kilometer. 'Eye shopping' is an occasional activity for youth. The girls wander into the stores to look at the gold bracelets, picking out the ones they'd like to have. Then they move onto the next, mounting the lists in their heads: Jeans, shoes, t-shirts, necklaces... Everything that town exemplifies in its 'ideal' state lies in such close proximity, yet after an hour or so, they'll leave as they've come; empty-handed. It is this tourist strip along the main road that eye shopping is done. The Chinese shops littering the backstreets, up and down, hold less interest. It isn't that they come here to buy stuff; it is more about shopping to buy into the possibilities, a similar dream that drew them and their relatives to town in the first place.

According to a recent report from ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) Managing the Transition from the Village to the City in the South Pacific (1999) Vanuatu has one of the highest growth rates of urban population in the world. Its national growth rate is estimated at approximately 2.8% per year, while its annual urban population growth rate is factored in at 7.3% per annum (1999:5). Some of factors are explained in the report (ESCAP 1999:6):

"The push factors for rural-urban migration include declining commodity prices, continuing high rates of population growth, lack of employment, limited educational opportunities and the need to support the wider extended family financially. The pull factors include monetary economy, prospects for employment in town, education and lifestyles, recreational and social facilities, changing expectations and the existence of family and clan support networks."

Moreover, Port Vila and Luganville are the only two 'cities' in Vanuatu that people can migrate to. This almost 'one city per country' effect is present throughout the Pacific and referred to as 'Primate Cities'. The definition of Primate City is when a nation's capital city grows substantially more than any other cities in the country (1999:6). A result of this is that the infrastructure of these Pacific towns are pushed to their limits and settlements grow

steadily with decreased health and safety standards. Below is a quote from a young man outlining the stresses of rapid urbanization on living conditions:

“Long saed blong laef blong taon, hem i had tumas long saed blong wota mo blong kipim wan envaeronmen we i helti blong stap long hem. Hemia long saed blong olgeta we oli stap long taon, be hem i no wan samting we bae yumi talem se oli gobak long aelan from ol pikinini mo ol yangfala ia oli bin bon long taon...

(As for living in town, it's very hard trying to keep our environments clean with water and sanitation systems. This hardship affects everyone in town. But it is not something we can resolve by going back to the islands because most the children and young people were born in town...)

*Patrick from North Pentecost,
Excerpted from “Kilim Taem”
(Young People's Project 1998:47)*

Most young people migrating to town are arriving with their mothers and fathers. A common belief is that young people leave their families behind on the islands, but in actuality, rarely do young people have a choice in coming to town or staying on the island. After a family arrives in town, if parents continue having children town, the decision to go back to the islands becomes far more difficult for the entire family. Below are the statistics compiled by the YPP examining migration from island to town:

Table 6. Why Are You In Town?

Reasons	Percent
Parents live in Vila or I was born in Vila	39.7%
Came for school	16.1%
Looking for work	15.4%
Came to live with family	14.5%
Other reasons (sickness, to see town, for sport, to rest)	14.3%
Total	100%

Source: Young People's Project 1998:15

For nearly 40% of youth, migrating to town or being born in Port Vila was a choice their families made, not their own. For families who have lived in Port Vila for an extended time, returning to the islands is difficult. Readapting would mean introducing children to *kastom fasin*, losing the availability of goods they've grown accustomed to and trying to get back land that might have been taken by another relative with rights to it.

Table 7. When Was the Last Time You Went Back to Your Island?

LAST TIME I WENT BACK	Frequency	Percent
6 – 12 months ago	371	37.3%
2 – 3 years ago	204	20.5%
More than 3 years ago	144	14.5%
I've never been back to my island	271	27.7%
Total	990	100%

Source: Young People's Project 1998:16

The variation between youth who've never been to their islands and those who frequently go seems to be relatively inconsequential to the formation of their ethnic identities. While almost 30% of young people born and raised in town had never been to their islands and 40% of youth had been back in the last 6-12 months, 100% of youth could identify their *man ples* identity.

What is life like in town for young people? Port Vila is divided into approximately 14 settlement areas. They are; Blacksands, Kaweriki, Malapoa, Tagabe, Tebakor, Ohlen, Fres Wota, Melcofe, Anabrou, Tassiriki, Seaside, Nambatu, Nambatti and Elluk. Most of these Settlements are mixed, however there are a couple which have remained single island areas, by splitting the space into distinct island groupings.

Most of the settlements are quite a ways out of town and some sort of transportation is needed to come to town (although walking to town from any of the areas is far from unheard of). A few settlements have running water and electricity but most lack in proper resources; electricity, roads, clean water and sewage systems. In a couple of the settlements there is still space to rent land and build temporary homes⁴⁰. Buying land is difficult and fraught with disputes and fraud. All of the areas are growing rapidly and the city is barely able to provide proper sanitary and health standards. Further, with the issue of land claims, several areas cannot be given safer infrastructures until the local land owners have sorted their disputes. Moreover, a great deal of trouble stems from the issue of overcrowding in the settlements. One in particular located right in town, suffers a great deal from overcrowding.

In the ethnically mixed settlements co-habitation may be difficult. When problems affect more than one island group, then the leaders of each group must meet and try to come up with a solution that is acceptable to everyone. For instance, if a dispute involves someone from Malekula and someone from Paama, both island *kastoms* need to be taken into consideration and respected before finding an answer that will be agreed upon by all parties. However a major problem stems from the fact that when a chief talks in the settlement only the people sharing his island identity pay attention. So even though the communities are larger than one island group, the voices and politics of the area are fragmented into respect and regulation based on individual island identities. The outcome of this is that the entire community has a very difficult time working together. Often the Elders and Chiefs of the communities blame this disharmony on young people due to their lack of *kastom* knowledge and respect. However

⁴⁰ Temporary houses are usually corrugated tin and lack proper foundations.

another way to view these situations is to listen to each of the chiefs, because then what becomes visible are the differing *kastoms* of the people, affecting their points of view and leading to misunderstandings in the given communities. Young people see all of these *kastom* ways conflicting and do not know which to value and which to turn a blind eye towards.

When people first arrive in town and move into a mixed settlement, the adjustment is very intense; as Evelyn, a YPP fieldworker notes:

“I knew an older man who came to live in my settlement. He told me it was very hard for him—he was afraid to walk around and pass by people he did not know and try to talk with them. I told him that once he’d lived there for awhile it would get easier. Once you get to know the people around you it is not so hard and you get used to it.”

Within the settlements there is a great deal of movement. Young people are the main catalysts for the shifting nature of households, often going to stay with different relatives. Factors for this transient behaviour include familial relationships, squalid living conditions, monetary cost of supporting relatives and the individual inability to live so close to other island groups without tensions flaring. Moreover, while there are good factors in having same island settlements there can also be problems associated with them. In one of the settlements, people have divided themselves into specific island village groups. However due to the lack of space these villages while traditionally kilometres apart, are instead feet apart. Family histories and past disagreements that followed people to town have a way of reviving themselves when history and the present live in such an overcrowded space.

When young people leave the islands on their own, it is usually to come and spend the holidays with relatives, work as *haosgels* (for females), bring and sell produce to the market or

because of serious problems that have forced them to runaway. But usually these are short-term stays and these youth return to the islands. A lot of youth on the islands want to remain there, however feel that opportunities only happen in town. If technical schools were available to them on the islands, they could then find opportunities without needing to migrate. Further, youth are beginning to receive the same type of stigma attached to them living on the islands as they do in town. Accused of being *strongbeds* and causing trouble, they sit around, educated with little to do.

If young people have not found employment in town, or finished school, families will often think that they are taking advantage of their hospitality by doing nothing and hanging around. It has become practice to send these young people back to the islands in order to find something to do and let other family members take responsibility for them. However if a youth has been raised in town, when they get the island, they'll find life difficult and what they've come to expect; no longer available. For example, a lot of young people have bread for breakfast, on top of two other meals a day. On the islands often it will only be two meals a day, and consist entirely of *kastom* food, with rice and bread being served only occasionally. Young people refusing to go to their island will simply runaway before being forced to go.

If a young man living on the islands gets into trouble, by hurting or beating a woman and people hear about it, he'll be called to a meeting with his community. If he is found guilty the chief will punish him with a fine to pay to her family. Often men refuse to pay the fine and runaway to town instead. However, if he's found not guilty of wrongdoing, it will be for the girl to runaway for fear of his retaliation. For young women, running away is often thought to

be the only solution. If they are being beaten by their boyfriends or male relatives and a family member agrees to accept them, they will move to town for fear of escalating abuse. Often during the cycle of abuse, friends and family of the girl will advise her to runaway, before any other measure, to stop the violence.

One of the biggest problems facing youth in town is their lack of hope. With little education most are unable to qualify for the jobs they want. They leave the islands to come to town with hopes of finding jobs and supporting their families, but get to Vila only to find hundreds of other youth with the same dreams, facing the same harsh realities. Once this hope is extinguished it is very difficult to rekindle their aspirations and leads to other ways of vindicating what they'd hoped to achieve. Money throughout Vanuatu is an extremely valuable commodity, but in Port Vila this is especially so, with all of its associated costs. Therefore young people are finding other ways of getting the things they want. Theft is a growing problem in town. Stealing clothes off washing lines, shoes from doorsteps and bicycles from yards are common place, with break-ins growing in number. This is not just a concern with boys, but girls steal and fight as well. Moreover, with increasing illegal activities, another aspect of the modern influence is the relative power that police hold compared to the traditional power of chiefs. On the islands most situations are resolved by the chiefs, however in town, it is the police who conduct investigations of theft and abuse. Young people are targeted for most crimes and taken to the police station where beating, belittling and swearing at them is commonplace, even when they're innocent of any wrongdoing.

4.1.2 Liminality of Influences: Education and Employment

The problems affecting young people in town range from the lack of employment, little education and training availability, loss of *kastom* knowledge, difficult living conditions in town, and family and relationship tensions. When young people find no employment or schooling available to them they end up with days filled with little to do. They'll walk around, go hang out with friends, head to town, garden, sleep, listen to music, watch videos, swim, fish, play soccer, volleyball, basketball, petonque or play cards. 'Kilim Taem' is the way they describe their days of trying to fill the hours by 'killing time'.

As the following vignette demonstrates, there are varying levels of disappointment that emerge as a consequence of a poor educational system. There is frustration with not only the lack of educational places available to youth, but also with the inability to create vocational training so that young people are employable after schooling has concluded. What this contributes to is an overall feeling that youth are lazy and unwilling to become productive members of society:

One night while drinking kava at one of the settlements and speaking to a resident and carpenter by trade, the topic of education came up. He told me he was very frustrated by his son, his laziness, his only ability being able to hang around and do nothing. What worried him the most about the young people growing up in town, was their unwillingness to work. To him there seemed to be absolutely no will to work in the minds of youth. Yet in their minds what they did expect was to be continually supported by family. He felt what was needed were workshops that would focus on hands-on trade jobs. Most of the children here would not get a higher education, because there was only so much money to go around. However, with higher education only providing so many jobs, it seemed silly to him that so many people focused on school education as the most important thing. Trade jobs were always needed and he could not understand why no one took this into consideration.

Because young people have such little education, finding employment is tenuous. Without being able to read or write, young people do not have the basic skills to look for work. Even a job gardening in town usually requires speaking English or French, because when working for a foreigner they cannot rely on his knowing Bislama. Further, given the enormous growth rate of Port Vila, there aren't enough jobs to go around. Its population size is growing far more rapidly than its ability to generate jobs for the given population.

“Employment i wan problem. Wea mi mi luk olsem i wan bigfala issue wea mi tink se gavman hemi sud do plante, from tudei mi save telem. Yangfala hemi mekem tumas trabol. Bea sapos yu tink abaot yang pipol mekem trabol from wanem? Hemi mekem trabol from wanem mi se. Yangfala hemi wan man. Mo sapos i wan man; i nidim wok. Yu mas givim wok. Sapos i no gat wok, mo i lukim samting blong wan nara man. Sapos i laekem. Problem se, i mas go steal. Mo mi no sapraes i gat hao mani wiks i pas, i gat wan yangfala wea hemi prisena wea hemi murda wan bisnis man. Wan weste, be mi no sapraes...”

(Employment is a problem. I see it as a big issue where the government needs to do a great deal more and they need to do it now. Young people are getting into a lot of trouble. But why are young people getting into trouble? What I can tell them is, a young person is a man, and men need to work. If he can't find work but sees what other men are buying and own, he'll want the same. But he'll believe the only way to get these things is by stealing them. It reminds me of a few weeks ago when a young man, a prisoner now, killed a business man. Such a shame, but I was not surprised.)

(Roger, Fieldworker, YPP)

Despite the fact that it is generally assumed by ni-Vanuatu that young people living in town have a far better chance of receiving an education, this is not always the case. Below are statistics from the Vanuatu Statistics Office for 1999 and the Young People's Project town research which gathered data from 1053 young people in town⁴¹:

Table 8. Educational attainment by urban/rural (aged 15+)

	Never been to school	Kinder- garten	Primary	Junior secondary (yr 7-10)	Senior secondary (yr 11-13)	Vocational	Post Secondary	Tertiary	Not stated	Total
Total	18525	574	56950	17129	4084	1937	1981	1346	1344	103870
Urban	1286	136	10149	6827	2546	937	680	1070	393	24024
Port Vila	723	106	7532	4975	2087	804	535	1002	345	18109
Lugan- ville	563	30	2617	1852	459	133	145	68	48	5915
Rural	17239	438	46801	10302	1538	1000	1301	276	951	79846

Source: National Census main report, 1999

Table 9. What Level of Education Have You Achieved?

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	Males	Females	Total
Never went to School	18 (2.9%)	8 (2.0%)	26 (2.5%)
Class 1 – 5	32 (5.1%)	18 (4.4%)	50 (4.8%)
Class 6	223 (35.4%)	193 (47.1%)	416 (40.0%)
Forms 1 – 4	223 (35.4%)	115 (28.0%)	338 (32.5%)
Forms 5 – 6	31 (4.9%)	11 (2.7%)	42 (4.0%)
Form 7/INTV/USP course	77 (12.2%)	15 (3.6%)	92 (8.8%)
University overseas	5 (0.8%)	9 (2.2%)	14 (1.4%)
College	4 (0.6%)	4 (1.0%)	8 (0.8%)
Special training (computer, etc.)	15 (2.4%)	27 (6.6%)	42 (4.0%)
Other training	2 (0.3%)	10 (2.4%)	12 (1.2%)
Total	630	410	1040

Source: Young People Speak 1998:25

Issues stemming from financial strain, family violence, gender relations and lack of places in the schools all contribute to the inability of 40% of Port Vila's children to get past year 6 of school. This means by the time a young person reaches the age of 12, their formal

⁴¹ The statistics gathered by the Young People's Project will be used throughout the following chapter, as they reflect largely what young people say throughout town. The YPP interviewed roughly 17% of Vila's youth or just over 1053 young people between the ages of 15 to 25, in total (1998:10).

education is done. Listed below are several examples of factors for the low educational attainment rate: Parents living on the islands will simply stop sending the school fees, even if they've sent their son or daughter to town to attend school. Families with 4-5 children must decide which children should be further educated past year 6, usually choosing the boys, as girls have more obligations around the house and must help raise the other children. The schools have only so many seats available and during year 6, administer exams to filter out children from the system. This leads young people to feel like failures when in actual fact it is the system letting the children down.

4.1.3 Liminality of Influences: Relationships and Kinship

The issues of family relationships in town often stem from traditional family patterns of obligation, respect and reciprocity conflicting with modern economic and social ills. When young people leave their immediate families on the islands to come and attend school or look for employment they will live with their aunts and uncles, who will provide shelter and food during their stay. In the case of young girls, many come to town to become *haosgels* to the family. However, after arriving a lot of youth will not find work or for one of several reasons, drop out of school. This rarely leads to youth immediately returning to their islands. Eventually families get frustrated with them and a fight, or gossiping about the youth's laziness to other relatives, will occur. A lot of youth runaway at this point, going to stay with other relatives in town they'll move in with their boyfriend or girlfriend's families. If a young woman becomes pregnant, it is the family who first took her in who bears the responsibility for this outcome. However, if they cannot or wish not to support her and it is proven that her boyfriend is the

father; his family will take her in. If they decide to fight this, or he fights his paternity, it will be up to the chiefs of their respective communities to judge responsibility. If her family instead decides to send her back to the island, very often resentment leading to division between the family members will occur as the uncle or aunt will be blamed for the pregnancy and not taking enough care of her.

Another fact of town life is that many children do not live with their *stret*¹² family. Youth often will move from relative to relative, staying at different houses every night. Frequently this is due to family problems inside the house. If a father and mother fight a lot, it is easier to bounce from house to house without too many expectations being placed on them, or judgment about what they are up to being spread. Family dynamics are thought to be changing with the high cost of being responsible for so many people. Youth must provide some support in the home or they'll be asked to leave or go live with other relations. Ni-Vanuatu see this as a reflection of the *fasin blong waetman*.

Many government officials hold the view that 'if a young person cannot find work they should be sent back to the islands'. Rumours frequently circulated through the settlements that the police were making their rounds looking for 'SPRs'. Gossip spreads like wildfire in town. An example of this gossip was that the police were grabbing any youth "doing nothing" and forcing them straight onto boats, without consideration of where the boat was heading or letting youth gather their belongings. And while these claims were not substantiated, due to past police action on Santo, rumours tend to cause a great deal of concern amongst young

people. Below is a statement of what occurred in January 1999 found on a website called “British Friends of Vanuatu”. It details the events that led up to “Operation Klinim North”, where hundreds of youth were arrested:

“For much of last year the law and order situation there [Luganville] had been causing concern - in June there were the tragic deaths of two girls who had leapt from the back of a moving truck to escape being raped, in August drunken youths from Hog Harbour were reported to be close to terrorising the town, and in October following a bad case of assault and robbery the Deputy Commissioner of Police went up to Santo to discuss the situation with the local authorities and the chiefs and promised zero tolerance. But whatever was done was ineffective, clashes between Hog Harbour youths and youths from other islands continued, parts of the town remained no go areas after dark, and at Christmas and New Year there was more trouble in the town with youths firing off weapons, demanding drink and creating mayhem. This proved to be the last straw. In early January a police detachment arrived from Vila under the command of Chief Superintendent Eric Pakoa to sort things out. Barak Sope said that he was not going to tolerate lawlessness and that the Government would crack down on those elements that were creating problems in Luganville; he emphasised that law and order had to be enforced if the negotiations with Italian investors for major tourist projects on Santo were to have a chance of success. But very soon reports reached Vila that the police engaged in Operation Klinim North, armed and in camouflage uniforms, were behaving like 'bloody rambos' and beating up and abusing those they had arrested. (http://www.british-friends-of-vanuatu.com/item_64.htm#Law%20and%20Order)”

Finally, this section looks at two important dimensions to kinship in town: Mixed island marriages and informal adoption. As *kastom* (or arranged) marriages are almost unseen in town nowadays, young people are meeting their potential mates in school, in the mixed settlements, at sporting events, nightclubs and through friends from differing islands. Although ethnically mixed marriages are usually accepted nowadays and create linkages between islanders, there remain large issues to resolve. Children born into these marriages often lose the right to claim land on either of their parents land. “Karen” had two children by two different men. Her son was man-Ambrym and her husband’s kin passed land through their matri-clans, excluding him

⁴² *Stret* family implies the immediate or nuclear family in Port Vila.

of any rights. Further, “Karen” was man-Tanna, and as such, her kin passed land patrilineally. Therefore on both sides her son could not claim land. Her daughter was born several years later to a man she loved, but his family would not accept the marriage. Therefore her daughter was never recognized as his, nor could she receive any land through “Karen” as only men receive personal names that include pieces of land.

While this next story does not relate to ethnically mixed marriage, it relates to children born in town and their access to *man ples* land. “Marie” and her boyfriend ran away from their island. Although they married shortly after in the Catholic Church, they have never returned to their island for fear of the stiff fines they would have to pay. Two payments are due, the first for running away and second, for bride-price. Her children, moreover, can not claim land until all of the fines have been levied.

Informal adoption is a frequent occurrence and most adopted youth know who their birth parents or mothers are, but consider their adoptive mother and father as *momma* and *dadi*. When young women get pregnant in town and on the islands, if the family feels she is not prepared to care for the child, they’ll look for adoptive parents (usually an uncle or aunt) or take the child as their own. It was very difficult to find out about informal adoption as most children assume a *stret* tie to their adopted family and rarely are distinctions made between children born to a family and those adopted.

4.1.4 Liminality of Influences: Gender

The vignette that follows outlines the importance of gender as suggested by the body language that goes along with the familiarity and joking relationships that frequently underline gender specific relationships.

“muuuccssss... or susssssss...” Low whistles constantly heard while walking downtown, nearly imperceptible but grabbing their intended mark every time. Wandering down the road a young woman spots an auntie of hers, rather than yell out, she simply makes her noise and her aunt turns around. Maybe she’ll stop and say hello, maybe not. But they’ve made contact and reached one another. How the intended mark of the whistle was recognized was never fully explained. Were there special whistles for different people? No, it just worked.

Gender and age are the two major factors that pattern relationships in traditionally stratified ways; and remain steadfast in relationships between young people in town. In town young women bear more responsibility for the household chores than young men. They’ll have to do the washing, sweep the floors, prepare meals, bring lunch to those working, make sure the younger children get to school and then pick them up. So when people accuse them of doing nothing all day; this is not true, they are always doing something.

During an interview, an older woman stated that;

“when a choice needs to be made between a boy and a girl attending school, it should be the girl staying home and the boy given the opportunity to continue school. Girls are important to the running a home, they are needed to help their mothers and aunties with the other children and keeping the house clean”. (“Helena” fieldnotes, May 2000)

The expectation is that it is a young man’s responsibility to bring money into the household, while it is the young woman’s to maintain the home. Moreover, young men have more freedom to make decisions. While a girl must ask her family for permission to move, a

boy will just go and visit family in town, or leave to find employment without being reprimanded upon return. And if a young woman is given permission, rarely will she receive any money to help her depart.

There is a large gender division and the two sexes are dealt with using different sets of rules and understandings. Thus knowing what the issues are in town and that they affect the both sexes does not provide answers to questions which attempt to see the differences between men and women. Relationships between males and females, although changing in town due to the mixing of ethnic groups in settlements, schooling and church, remain fundamentally the same as on the islands: The division of gender is firmly guided by *kastom* ways. Rarely will you see boys and girls hanging around together, except at night and usually these are clandestine meetings between a boyfriend and girlfriend, out of sight from others. In town, girls usually stay around the house while boys stay together, playing instruments, talking or engaging in one of several sports. On the islands men and boys spend their days in the *nakamal*⁴³, while the girls stay near their homes and kitchens. Their educations revolve around being either male or female. In town this division is still quite predominant.

In terms of social control, this stratification between the sexes is also apparent, even when crimes involve both men and women. A woman in town was accused of treating her children badly (she'd found employment outside of the home and her children had less access to her). One day while she was at work, her husband came home (from work) to find that their son was very ill with malaria. Before bringing him to the hospital, he went and retrieved his

sister. They then took him to the doctors and went to the workplace of the wife. Once there, her sister-in-law threatened that ‘did she not give up this job and return to her husband and children, it would be up to her to seek retribution for her negligence and punish her by any means she saw fit’⁴⁴. Another case was revealed after a young man went back to an ex-girlfriend complaining of his young girlfriend’s lack of respect for him (this young woman would often come to work with signs of abuse—a black-eye, bruising on her arms and legs, a swollen lip). The next day the ex-girlfriend paid a visit to the young woman’s work and attempted to beat her up publicly in order to seek justice for the lack of respect she was accused of by her boyfriend⁴⁵.

4.1.5 Liminality of Influences: Religion

Religion in town, itself is undergoing a transformation. On the islands it remains a defining feature of identity, while in town, young people are making individual decisions respecting the validity and impact of religion in their formation of self. In this vignette the personal choices they’ve made are clearly demonstrated:

One day while sitting around with a couple of young people the subject of religion came up. Both of them had been raised by very devout parents and attended services every Saturday (they were Seven-Day Adventists). When first arriving in town they’d continued to attend services, however after several years both had stopped. “We are now SDN,” they laughed. “You must have heard of our religion? It is a growing one in Vila... Seven Day Nating!!!” and did the finger-snap.

⁴³ Traditional kava drinking grounds.

⁴⁴ Fieldnotes, August 10, 2000.

⁴⁵ Fieldnotes, July 2000.

Another aspect of the church's influence has been its relationship to *kastom*. Church has unequivocally impacted *kastom*. Not just because of a historical intolerance of activities related to *kastom* (i.e. dancing, dress, witchcraft and magic etc), which led to the removal of these activities in missionized communities for several generations⁴⁶, but also with the subsequent resurgence of *kastom fasin* mixing with Christian ways. Missionization goes back hundreds of years and due to the flexible nature of *kastom*, values have changed or oriented themselves to follow in a path more giving to Christianity's doctrines⁴⁷.

As Sam, a YPP fieldworker put it:

"Church has influenced the way we practice *kastom*. Before the Church came, *kastom* was quite different but people do not remember those ways, only ways since the Church has been with us. Girls say that *kastom* is for boys only but then maybe they should see the bible in the same way. In the bible it says that man is the head of the household, not that husband and wife are equal. But this is the way that I see it, people might disagree, but I see it like that"

While on the islands, if a village is not '*kastom*', they are affiliated to one or several churches. Bronwen Douglas (1998:4) noted how this has fragmented the traditional ties on Aneityum and replaced them with Christian-based affiliations:

"The maligned Seven Day Adventists occupy a clearly marked quarter in the island's main centre of Anelcauhat and work hard to be an evidently close-knit, internally cooperating community. The paradox and price of such internal solidarity is its fracturing of wider, older

⁴⁶ Lawson (1994:143) notes that there were several methods that Presbyterian missionaries used in order to convert the populations. The first was exchange "systematically replacing aspects of traditional culture with those of European culture. The missionaries would exchange traditional objects for clothing, Christian worship objects and books. "Clothing was a major criterion in distinguishing Christians from "heathens". Another aspect (ibid:146) "was the elimination of local warfare". And finally, was the removal of objects that "were the focus of traditional spiritual beliefs. Anglican missionaries actually "extract[ed] islanders from their cultural milieu and train[ed] them as Christians in a European environment (143)."

⁴⁷ Tonkinson (1981:261) in reference to south-east Ambrym: "The two kinds of cultural forces represented by the church and *kastom*... have gone from a relationship of opposition, crystallised in the identification of *kastom* with sorcery, to one of complementarity, with the Church and other western elements increasingly in the ascendancy."

collective unities—notably the extended family and the island populace as a whole, sometimes conceived as a vast extended family.”

With these fracturing traditional ties, one thing remains: The church-going attendance rate is nearly 100% of island population. In town, this has changed with secularization slowly establishing itself. Although some young men; one in particular training at the World Vision Centre to become a pastor, spoke of the importance of Christianity, many young men no longer attended services or felt religion impacted little in their lives. The YPP asked youth how often they attended Church in its town research and found that over 98% of all youth had attended Church at least once in the last month, with over 46% going more than once a week:

Table 10. How Many Times Did You Go To Church in the Last Month?

NUMBER OF TIMES	Frequency	Percent
1 – 3 times	347	43.7%
4 times	69	8.7%
More than 5 times	367	46.3%
Never went to church	10	1.3%
Total	793	100%

Source: Young People’s Project 1998:37

The remarks that the YPP made on the attendance figures, suggested a similar pattern of thought by young people in discussing Church:

“While it may well reflect the importance of religion to young people in Vanuatu, it may also be indicative of over-reporting on the part of some young people” (Young People’s Project 1998:37)

When the young men were asked what their denominations were, most expressed membership to the church of their families, but went no further in discussing their religious faith. Denying religious participation was in a measure admitting to being SPR. Young women discussed their ties far more readily; actively taking part in Church choir, youth and sport programs, prayer meetings, retreats and weekly services. The Church plays a role in town

greater than just calling for weekly attendance to its Sunday (and Saturday) services. Most Churches offer extra-circular activities for young people and perhaps these too were taken into consideration when replying to the questionnaire.

4.1.6 Liminality of Influences: In-town Activities

In this vignette, the authorial presence is readily apparent. It was used because young women often would use me to corroborate their comings and goings to family and other youth in the settlements. To them, my presence seemed to evoke a freedom from the usually secretive ways in which these activities had to be approached, albeit still in a cautious fashion:

“Beyyckka, yu go telem mama blong mi, yumi tufala i go wokabot long maket. Go! *Koparow* (Namakura language for ‘go’)!”—(Becka, you go and tell my mom we’re going to walk around the market. Go! Go!). I’d just gotten to the settlement and within two minutes of arriving felt as though I might be doing something wrong. “Why me? Why don’t you go tell your mother?” “Because she trusts you...” hmmm. Now we must be doing something wrong. It was Thursday evening and we’d arranged to go down to the market, a usual evening activity for the girls in this community. Walking up the street heading towards town, one of girls noticed a group of boys standing around the road about 100 meters away and directly in our path. “Quick let’s cut through the field.” “Why are we doing this?”—avoidance I assumed inasmuch as my question had been avoided. As we came to a patch of short grass the young woman who’d had me go and speak to her mother, dropped her bag and said “this is good”. She proceeded to pull out a very tight pair of jeans, put them under her long modest dress and then remove that to reveal a small, tight white tank top to go with the new ensemble. The other young woman rolled up her long shorts until they fit snugly around her thighs, much higher up. “I thought we were going to the market?”, “Oh beeyyckka, we’re going to drop “Rita” off at the seawall to meet her boyfriend, and let’s go dancing instead”. Ironically, I been warned a day or so earlier not to go out dancing with this friend, as the mommas might start talking about me in the same way they spoke about this young girl. I’d been warned by one of the girl’s older cousins. I’d also been stopped by a couple of mommas, who, although from a different island group, had heard that I was spending time with her. Her reputation seemed to bypass the regular island affiliations that divided the settlement. They’d spoke of rumours that she often would steal from “friends” and having an affair with one of her married uncles. Although this did not stop me from hanging around with her, I did decline to go dancing that evening, she going anyhow.

Young people often speak of coming to town and walking around. They find little excitement in the settlements so when they have the opportunity they'll come to town, with perhaps 100 vatu⁴⁸ on them and walk around. A favourite spot to hang out is the market house, which is located in the heart of town and has a sea walk (adjacent to the harbour) extending approximately a mile. Young people will buy peanuts for 20vt and go *waokabot* down by the harbour. If they have a bit more money then they'll go see a movie at one of several video stores/theatres.

Nightlife in Port Vila is becoming popular and although carrying less socially accepted forms of behaviour and activity, is growing nonetheless. Youth will come into town to go dancing and drink. They'll ask their families for money to buy a pair of shoes or some new clothes and spend it on cigarettes and alcohol. A lot of the kids who end up at the nightclubs are not 18 and will have drunk with friends in the *bush* (bush, hidden from others) before coming to town to save the expense of drinks. Since the clubs charge admissions during the weekends, a lot of young people come to town on Wednesday and Thursday nights when there is no cover charge.

In town, clothing has changed substantially over the last decade. As Viviane, a YPP fieldworker explains:

“A few years ago you would have never seen a young woman in a short skirt or dress. Nowadays, a lot of young girls feel comfortable enough to wear what they like. Older people

⁴⁸ Vanuatu's currency is the vatu.

tell youth, “Wearing that is *tabu*”⁴⁹. And while this might have been enough to frighten them into not wearing such clothing before; as it is against *kastom* to wear skirts or trousers in front of brothers, it is not a stringently followed tradition anymore.”

Although clothing itself reflects its origins in Christianity, it is a potent symbol of modernization. When young women opt to wear pants, they are making a statement about the future. In Paama, chiefs have banned young women from wearing of pants:

“Women's groups in Vanuatu are outraged that women in the Paama Island community in the capital of Port Vila have been banned from wearing trousers. The head of the community, Chief Frank Maki, has said that women should wear skirts and dresses as women in trousers are an affront to the islanders' values. He has ordered the community's honorary police force to uphold the ban, saying that it is their job to make sure that Western influence does not erode Paama culture. The Paama people come from a small island in Malampa Province, and there has been a community in the capital for about 40 years. With about 600 members, the community has its own all-male honorary police force charged with upholding traditional Paama laws. Women's groups in the Pacific nation have called the ban an example of 'blatant gender discrimination', while former ombudsman, Marie-Noelle Patterson, has commented that it breaches both the rights of women and the national constitution.”
(<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/scoop/archive.cfm?DPID=557®ion=aus>)

Kava drinking has transformed greatly since it has become popular in town. Before and still on many islands (although this is also starting to change) women never touched kava. While it is a girl's responsibility on a couple of islands to chew and prepare kava⁵⁰, on most it's *tabu* for women to even come into contact with kava. In town, a lot of young women have drunk kava. Most will profess to having tried it once (*'wan wantaem nomo'* –only one time) but slowly it is becoming commonplace for young women to buy kava ('take-out' kava was easily accessible) and drink with peers. Although I did drink kava with some young women “*wan*

⁴⁹ Tabu is defined as “forbidden, prohibited” (Crowley 1995:239)

⁵⁰ A practice on the Shepherd Islands and some villages in Malekula (personal correspondence with a fieldworker).

wantaem nomo”, it was older women who usually drank at the *nakamals*, after the girls had finished preparing the mixture. Moreover, kava is no longer always representative of its *kastom* origins⁵¹; it is *bisnis* (business). It’s about the future and a highly visible method of making money in town and on the islands. Sam, a YPP fieldworker, stated this:

“Naoia ol yangfala i stap dring kava taem oli wekap. Oli dring kava olsem oli stap dring ti mo long afternoon tu oli dring. *Fasin* blong olgeta i soem se olgeta i rili stap lusum *kastom* blong olgeta. Naoia, oli dring kava eni taem long dei, nomata wanem taem, mo sapos oli wantem. Oli stap mekem hemia from se oli nogat wok, oli nogat mane mo oli nogat samting blong mekem. Hemia hem i wan samting blong kilim taem.”

(Young people are now drinking kava from the time they get up. They are drinking kava as though its tea throughout the afternoon. The way they are using kava really shows how it has lost the kastom long associated with its usage. Now they’ll drink kava any time of the day, if they feel like it. They make kava because they can’t find work, don’t have money and have nothing else to do. It’s a way to pass time.)

The food eaten by ni-Vanuatu people is also changing dramatically. While on the islands; lap-lap, yams, taro, manioc, nuts, fruit and island cabbage remain the main staples in the diet, in town; bread, instant noodles, cheese, ketchup, tinned meat and rice figure prominently. As Viviane, a YPP fieldworker pointed out:

“Our *kastom* food is no longer just being eaten, nobody really likes it anymore. We’ve gotten too used to imported food now.”

Food continues to hold a great deal of traditional value, not only in being consumed, but exchanged and presented at feasts. Viviane’s grandfather is a Paamese chief and known for his magical powers. During an engagement ceremony in town, he used food to describe the

⁵¹ See Bonnemaison 1998, Brunton 1981 and Lindstrom 1981, 1990 for detailed accounts of the traditional role of kava in Vanuatu. Lindstrom (1981:390) described the traditional opposition between speech and kava, stating: “Intoxicated with kava, men contemplate and commune with their ancestors (*ierema*). Kava time is the sharing of food and of kava within a daily reconstructed male solidarity. The physical effect of kava upon the body – which generates feelings of peace and generosity – may, in fact contribute to male solidarity. During this liminal, status free period, both females, with the disputes

changes occurring in Port Vila. While ‘vegetables’ were symbolic of the past and *kastom*, ‘meat’ signified the present and ‘Christianity’. In any ceremony, both must be present, as together they signify the ni-Vanuatu way.

A major aspect of the changing diet of Ni-Vanuatu people in Port Vila is a result of not having easy access to garden space. While 76% of young people reported having gardens in town; due to their distant location and relatively small size, other food sources have been incorporated into the diet.

Table 10: Do You Have Access to a Family Garden?

ACCESS TO A GARDEN	Frequency	Percent
Yes	799	76.5%
No	245	23.5%
Total	1044	100%

Source: Young People’s Project 1998:50

Further with a growing urban population there is a fear that access to garden space will become more difficult, especially for those already relying on borrowed land owned by others. One girl “Linda” explained that going to her garden was a long day’s activity, as she’d have to leave early in the morning and walk two hours to get to her family’s plot of land. Further, she always required some money for travelling back by bus with the produce she’d collected. She felt that sometimes it proved less expensive to walk down to the market and purchase what she needed then paying for the bus and losing the time she could have been working as a *haosgel*.

that follow them like shadows, and speech, the medium of dispute, are tabu.” Brunton (1981:368) further indicates that kava was used by pagan leaders to try and sway Tannese back from Christianity by allowing men to drink at any time.

4.1.7 Kastom in Town?

“Kastom is a way of life, like urbanization or Westernization (one of these) is a way of life. But the two of them together are very different so young people who originate with kastom come to town and try to change to the fasin blong waetman. Young people get stuck in the middle. They don't want just kastom or just the other, so they find themselves in-between the two” (Roger, YPP Fieldworker)

“Taem yu save *kastom*, i mekem se yu wokabaot *stret* nomo, yu no save mekem wan trabol o sipos yu kam long taon, bae yu no save mekem wan trabol. Sapos yu mekem wan wrong, yu save finis se hemia yu mekem wan wrong.”

(When you understand kastom, it makes you handle yourself properly; you won't want to cause trouble or if you come to town you won't even think to make trouble. And if you do do something wrong you will know that it was wrong.)

*Jonstone from Pentecost,
Excerpted from “Kilim Taem”, a video produced by the Young People's Project
(Young People's Project 1998:18)*

When youth brought up the topic of *kastom* it usually came in relation to statements which involved other situations or objects of attention. For instance, rural to town migration or gender and familial relations often fed answers that would impart *kastom* knowledge, stories or examples. The likelihood of someone speaking of *kastom* being in town was very rare and most imparted a sense of being disconnecting from *kastom* in a similar way that they were spatially detached from their *man ples*.

However, interest in knowing *kastom* is still strong throughout town. Most youth express an interest in wanting to know their *kastom*, but felt it would be difficult to learn as long as they remained in town. Young people do not grow up with the *stret fasin* of their islands, but with a mixed group of cultural influences and increasingly *fasin blong waetman*. Sam, a YPP fieldworker explained:

“Some men say ‘well according to *kastom* respect is when you do good to one man, you are doing something just and right to him.’ But now you have so many situations to deal with; there are so many *kastoms* and cultures involved. So in town it’s about finding the right road to follow, making the right choices. Nowadays, lots of people think that we’re losing respect, but we’re not. This isn’t true. People must now try and find this road in life where they fit into the society of all ni-Vanuatu people. It’s about finding ways to deal with new situations we all face together now.”

People living on the islands believe that young people in town do not know their *kastom* or how to practice it. However, living in town provides so many examples and so much to know about *kastoms* in plural.

“Young people can pick and choose the *fāsins* that they wish to follow for whatever situations arise. For example, throughout Vanuatu’s islands there are ways of sharing food so that every man has something. Food is for all people, so if family are over; it must be that everyone gets enough to eat even if that is the last of the food. In town this is changing. People are beginning to take the *fasin blong waetman* of if it is yours, you keep it to yourself. You have to think of yourself first and you must think about tomorrow. (Emily, YPP fieldworker)”

“Respect is one of the most important features of *kastom* in Vanuatu, but young people have a hard time learning that if you want respect you must first give respect to others. (Roger, YPP fieldworker)”

It was an interesting fact that most people who spoke of respect put it into a dichotomy that set respect in contrast to the *fasin blong waetman*. Much of the basis of respect lies in valuing the relationship between people and seeing them based on reciprocity. In contrast, *fasin blong waetman* requires ‘receiving’, with no bonds of respect being formed between two people.

While the argument that *kastom* is rooted on the islands and therefore non-existent in town has been made, several young women talked of the *kastom* weddings they’d attended in town, *kastom* dishes they’d learned to prepare and the settlement meetings led by chiefs which

still resolved most issues affecting the inhabitants of town. Tonkinson (1981:262) noted a duality of *kastom* which might clarify this idea. “Jimmy Anson (a lay preacher) said that *kastom* which is public is good, but secretive things such as sorcery are bad and cannot be revived”. Can *kastom* be divided into public and private spheres while retaining its power?

Kastom is not something that is written down and the lack of teachers or elders with the *kastom* knowledge is very much impacting town life. Dancing, singing and *kastom* stories are still visible signs that *kastom* continues to be experienced in town; however, *kastom* in this sense is part of a larger context of action. For instance, when speaking of marriage in town, although *kastom* exchanges between families often take place, most weddings are centered around the Christian ceremony where couples exchange their vows. Moreover, *kastom* dancing, singing and *kastom* village evenings (offered in Mele—a peri-urban village on Port Vila’s outskirts) have become an important tourist attraction in town (*Kilim Taem*, the video made by the YPP reflects this). Thus, the influence of *kastom* has been commoditized in town. Emily, a YPP fieldworker notes:

“On the islands people use *kastom* to find the right path. In town there are other ways of making the right choices. People still use *kastom* to resolve situations and young people often say they’d like to see that tradition continue, but the respect and observance of relationships between people is changing. The way that people respect one another is no longer defining principle of social relations. People are not frightened of *kastom* like they are on the islands. If a *kastom* rule is disrespected on the islands, you are very afraid of what will happen, but in town, people break *kastom* all the time and are not afraid of the outcome of doing this.”

One of the major reasons for the diminishing use of *kastom* is that of social control. Respect still very much forms a part of *kastom* in town, but its other function of controlling the ways and actions of people becoming less pronounced. With police, the judicial system and the government performing many of the objectives of keeping civil society in order and the

removal of sorcery as a measure of a chiefs power (Tonkinson 1981), the role of chief in town is lessened to a more symbolic status, with respectfulness being at its basis. While *kastom* marriage remains a functioning part of life on the islands and means for family to distribute land, gain status by marrying into families of high lineage, and make links with other villages, in town is considered outmoded and of no practical use to urban dwellers. Moreover, living in town gives young people the opportunity to find mates themselves, that they wish to spend their lives with. Thus *kastom* knowledge is extremely important on the islands, as it is the *kastom* stories that provide land rights to families. The stories describe the land and tell of the place, how the family gained rights and what the landmarks on the properties signify to them. Without the *kastom* knowledge, more challenges over land ownership come into dispute.

Young people have a great many obstacles to overcome in reaching adulthood in town. For the time being, living in town does not provide easy answers to youth trying to find gainful employment receive a good education or learn the traditions of their *man ples*. Will the next decade offer some relief to the liminalities that rapid urbanization has created? *Kastom* has proven itself a flexible system, but without acknowledgement of its role in town, can it continue to maintain itself? Moreover, can the notion of *man ples* continue to create an identity for young people raised in town, without *kastom* knowledge, kinship structure and land tenure to back youths' claim their islands? These are questions that will be answered in a decade from now, but rather than wait for the answers, the Young People's Project is attempting to draw out the liminalities now, and find ways to transform young people from passive receivers into dynamic participants in their futures and the future of Vanuatu.

The major focus throughout the next chapter is to analyze exactly how and why an NGO has committed itself to not only studying the issues but voicing them and providing solutions for making adolescent life an easier transition from several perspectives; from childhood to adulthood, from rural living to urban living and from *kastom* to modernity.

Chapter 5

Case Study: Harem Communitas thanks to an Urban Youth Project

“We’re trying to stand up as one body, as one voice for all young people. This, to help all people understand the problems that young people are facing.”—Viviane, YPP Fieldworker

As the previous chapter reveals, young people living in town face sets of realities and choices unlike any other generation before. What took me by surprise was the gap between what was and what is, and how this gap widens with every year that passes. With so many influences affecting the decisions young people make, it helps to know that the flow of communication of how these changes are affecting youth are present and being distributed in a way that provides understanding and an avenue to empowerment. The Young People’s Project, alongside many other development initiatives, has made strides to reach and work with young people in Port Vila. Through their work they have built a foundation that by revealing the liminality of town, have cleared misunderstanding between young people and other residents of Port Vila, developing a place for youth to make their marks and be seen as participants in developing community life and a future for all ni-Vanuatu people. The fears youth concede in living in such a malleable place and time have only strengthened this identity and provided forums for discussion and action. Moreover, young people’s voices have been heard throughout the country, making their intents known to all citizens of Vanuatu. With a clear position in society, young people are far more equipped to deal with daily life, speak out, make better informed decisions and moreover deal with the consequences of bad choices and the changes that urban life carries, unheard of only a few years ago. With this new-found

recognition, a sense of 'communitas' between young people has crystallized, thanks greatly to the methods and work of the YPP.

The message being sent to youth is one of agency; through the conviction that young people have the ability to create identities that can support the tensions that urbanization and change contribute to. The YPP have generated 'communitas' through three important and related ways. First, they've raised self-consciousness of young people, by supplying them with the results of an ethnographic and participatory research project. The voices of young people emerged as one unitary body, reflecting an overall 'adolescent' view of Port Vila with which youth could readily identify with. Secondly, the YPP have raised cultural and social awareness throughout the entire population of Vanuatu to better assist young people in making choices. And finally, they've promoted autonomy and a sense of continuity for young people, by providing them with tools and training that youth had reported lacking in the research.

This chapter will analyze the YPP in terms of these three aspects of work which all feature into communitas for young people. The first area examines the significance of an 'adolescent' view in Port Vila, stressed through the YPP's town research. It details the origins of the project, the training and use of anthropological methods to gather data and write reports outlining the lives and lifestyles of young urban youth and the importance of having ni-Vanuatu researchers designing and leading the project's objectives.

The next subsection examines the different communication mediums have allowed the YPP to distribute information to not only youth, but all ni-Vanuatu. Using video and radio, has not only touched the lives of young people, but contributed to general social and cultural

understandings of life in town. This has also led to partnering with other NGO's in Port Vila and across Vanuatu, wanting to take an active role in promoting 'youth'-centric programs, as their own perceptions of youth were clarified through the research.

And finally a sub-section on how the YPP have continued to advance their advocacy by sustaining projects that empower the lives of young people through activities such as workshops and communication resources. The project continues to reinvent itself and finds new ways to touch ni-Vanuatu youth (ie. its small business projects, an urban literacy project, *kastom* workshops, island research etc). Each of these are small measures of the greater goals of this group and when brought together firmly establish them as leaders in participatory research and communication.

By the conclusion of this section the importance of this project in terms of its connections to anthropology, grass-roots participation, and alternative communication should emerge. The successes of this group have been made possible by the project's commitment to qualitative research inasmuch as their dedication to creating an organization whose fundamental auspice is to make the nature of this project is as participatory, reflexive and involved for youth as they possibly can.

5.1 Shaping 'Adolescent' Awareness in Port Vila

"YPP i important tumas, i stap helpem ol yangfala long Vilatoan. ("The YPP is really important, they are there to help all young people in Vila town"). They really provide support for young people who can't find work or have nothing to do around the house. Young people don't get much of a chance to find work in town and often the YPP will help by giving us small jobs. Or they'll offer courses in making small businesses or making crafts. Whatever young people are interested in. I have taken several courses that the YPP have offered. One on sewing, one on bottle painting and paper making, one on kastom and culture, literacy training and a computer

course. They are all courses that try to develop talent. Most young people don't think they have talent so the YPP shows them they do." ("Wanda", video interview August 2000)

This section focuses on the origins of the project, the importance of the YPP being a ni-Vanuatu-led research initiative and why the use of anthropological methodology has figured so prominently in its design. In looking at each of these factors what emerges is how a research project has designed and succeeded in creating a portrait of Adolescence in Port Vila, which underlines the formation of 'communitas' surrounding the needs and issues of these same young people.

5.1.1 The Project: Its Mandate and History

From an initially small research project on youth in town (specifically inside one of the city's settlements), Canadian anthropologist Jean Mitchell realized that much more work needed to be done in order to understand why it seemed so many young people were living in town but doing nothing in terms of work. Dr. Mitchell's own work was conducted in the urban settlement of Blacksands and it was there that the idea for the project emerged. After speaking with several young people it was understood that a great shift was taking place in town with youth being cut off from their island ties and that this would affect all young people living in town over the next few years. Along with the director of the Cultural Centre, she put together a project proposal and went to AUSAID and Save the Children Australia. After these two organizations agreed to fund the project, in March 1997 they began to train young people in research methods and together the group constructed a research project to look at the issues facing young people in town, they called it the 'Vanuatu Yang Pipl's Projek'.

Central to its design was having young ni-Vanuatu youth become the researchers, creating an important bridge in the distance between ‘researcher’ and ‘researched’ and thus forging a level of trust and action that might not have been there, without such localized, grass-roots and youthful participation. With the numbers of youth getting into trouble in town the YPP and the Cultural Centre came to the conclusion that young people needed a group to represent them, an NGO to be the voices of young people and have others hear what was going on with youth:

“The aim of the project is to provide a forum for young people to speak about their lives, their problems and their dreams. It is important that the voices of young people are part of the dialogue about the future of Vanuatu at both national and local levels. This research project is part of a larger project to highlight the issues affecting young people and in so doing call attention to the nature of the changes engulfing the country. The project is multifaceted featuring the ideas and work of young people through research, video production and advocacy.” (Young People Speak 1998:2)

Using the research gathered during the in-town research, the YPP began to create projects that youth had asked for. The outcome of the research needed to be about the young people; and as such, giving back to the youth came in the form of workshops young people had themselves suggested during the study. The crucial aim of the group is to get the information they’ve gathered back into the hands of young people, as well informing the rest of the ni-Vanuatu people about their youth. When older people hear or read the information, not only can they pass it on to young people but also better appreciate the difficult situations facing youth and try to create solutions inside the fabric of their own communities.

Moreover, the project is not only concerned with youth living in town, if that were the case it would have been called The Port Vila Young People’s Project. The issues that they’ve

found in town also affect youth living on the islands. To be representative of all youth, the program has conducted research in town and more recently, across the islands. Not only has this enabled the project to understand what youth are facing on the islands, but also they've been able to revisit questions raised in the town research that could only be understood from further research gathered on the islands. The island research also allowed the fieldworkers to verify the results they'd made with the town research. An important aspect to the YPP's data has shown that the boundaries between island and town are fluid and cannot be seen as bounded entities in and of themselves. It was crucial to conduct research on the islands in order to understand why young people are coming to town. In the same light, the project was able to look for the reasons that young people moved back to the islands.

In the course of island research, the fieldworkers were able to speak to young people to find out why they'd returned to the islands. Was it lost hope, other commitments or simply a preference for island life? Another reason why the project moved to the islands was to introduce young people to the Project itself, run workshops and show videos relating to young people and the information they'd otherwise be unable to receive. While on the various islands, the YPP fieldworkers explained the project and research mandates to the youth, making sure that young people knew that the research would benefit them, as well as young people in town. If the YPP found that the needs of rural young people were different from those of youth in town, they'd be better prepared to help. Finally, the island research would benefit any other organizations wanting to work on the islands by appreciating that there might be differences between young people in town and island, to better orient their programs to respond to the needs of island youth.

5.1.2 The Researchers: ni-Vanuatu youth helping ni-Vanuatu youth

A very important part of the project's success has been the principal involvement of indigenous researchers in conducting the research and going into the settlements to be with young people. The 6 main researchers (18-35 years old) come from various backgrounds, some born and raised in town while others first generation migrants to town from their natal islands. Moreover because of these differing Island identities (genders, religious backgrounds, educational attainment etc.), the project has been able to benefit from several points of view and as such the project's studies have been constructed with differing subjective realities and experiences shared in the process of analysis and interpretation. They are faced with the same conditions in town and although the responsibility of writing up research falls onto their shoulders, it is this similarity in situation that provides their *haremsave* (understanding) of what is going on with young people in Port Vila. They deal with their own issues of domestic abuse, gender/power relations, health problems and the difficulty of meeting financial obligations, to name a few. How they deal with these issues directly affects the work being done at the project. Making their own lessons as substantive as the research they conduct with young people. The young people selected to be fieldworkers have had little if any experience in social science research before being trained. However after over 3 years of the project's existence these same fieldworkers are some of the best researchers I've had the good fortune to work with.

What exactly is it that the ni-Vanuatu fieldworkers do? What types of responsibilities does this entail for them on personal, as well as professional lines?

The fieldworkers conduct their work on two levels: research and advocacy. In terms of research they work directly with the young people, going *wokbaot* (walking around together) and *mekem smol storian* (chatting). The most important aspect of their job is interpreting what young people are going through. They've sought to answer questions such as "Why are young people facing these problems?" and in terms of the issues themselves: "How did these issues become problems for so many youth?"

In order to answer these questions they spend a great deal of time getting to know the youth, participating in their communities (keeping the links strong between them and the given communities) and keeping abreast of how these issues might be changing or evolving into lesser or bigger concerns for youth. Another aspect to their work is writing up reports on any workshops they are holding in order to analyse how these projects are impacting youth. And finally, interviewing and learning about other organizations and people working to empower the lives of youth. It isn't just the sole responsibility of the fieldworkers to find out what young people are going through. They also bear the task of finding out how others see youth in town in order to bring this to the attention of young people. The fieldworkers have interviewed the police, the public solicitor's, prosecutor's offices and Malvatumauri⁵² in order to find out what their concerns regarding youth are, and how they deal with young people.

⁵² For further discussion of the cultural policy and the Malvatumauri see Lindstrom & White 1994 Culture-Kastom-Tradition: Developing Cultural Policy in Melanesia. In this edited volume, papers on Melanesian Cultural Policies are examined with the actual cultural policies included in the appendix.

Secondly, they work in a manner that revolves around advocacy. They participate in the workshops alongside the youth, as it is usually an 'outsider' (ni-Vanuatu or Foreign) with particular skill who heads the workshop. Or they will conduct the workshop themselves, beginning with their own intensive training workshops to better prepare them as "specialists" in given areas (i.e. health and reproductive issues, video-making, small business development, legal literacy). A great deal of their advocacy stems from the research they conduct in the field and in town. Instead of leaving research in a format where youth will unlikely have a chance to read it, they produce newsletters, handouts, videos, radio programs etc. Many methods of communication have been used at the program, to ensure the young people receive the information in ways that will benefit them.

Every week the members of the YPP have a meeting to talk to one another about the work they are doing and ideas they might have for future research or advocacy. Communication amongst the fieldworkers is tantamount to the project's success, and if there are disagreements they are to be resolved at the meetings. During the meetings each fieldworker will present whatever it is that he/she is working on and it is up to the team as a whole to decide how to best approach the situation. Discussions have included:

- New ideas to pass onto youth about types of business enterprises or entrepreneurial activities they might be interested in.

- Presenting reports on the *smol bisnis* projects underway. It is a responsibility of the fieldworkers to help in any way they can; be it in making sure youth have the right information

on business details, to joining the group and attending committee meetings to keep the momentum of the project going.

-Keeping the other fieldworkers aware of any preparations they may have underway for workshops. These workshops have centred on a multitude of activities and the organization of them falls squarely on the shoulders of the fieldworkers. In preparing a workshop, the fieldworkers must find the speakers or facilitators, put together timetables, visit communities to get permission if they are running the activity within the settlement, find young people to participate, handle the petty cash; from purchasing materials to doling out bus and lunch allowances for the participants, filming or note-taking during the activities and more often than not, being a participant in the activity.

-Presenting reports on workshops and training that have concluded. As this was primarily a research project, every workshop involved feedback and a report of findings by the fieldworkers involved. This facilitated conversations about the utility of these programs and how they could be better run in future.

-Developing questionnaires and planning the island research. An enormous amount of time went into planning the island research and all of it was discussed at length during team meetings.

Occasionally representatives from UNICEF, AusAID or Save the Children would sit in on the meetings, or if foreign development projects interested in youth-related topics were in Port Vila, the representatives would be invited to the meetings in order to see what sorts of projects were already being sponsored.

The impact of being an indigenous fieldworker is one that is also felt on a very personal level. This was an especially salient reality when the researchers were working on the islands. For a couple of the researchers, this was their first experience leaving Efate and going to the islands. As Viviane, a YPP fieldworker explains:

“I was born in Vila. My parents were already living in Vila. My mother was 13 years old when she came here and never goes back. I am 22 now and have never been to the place where my mother is from. It would be very hard for me to go there. The *kastom* of the place is very strong, they have a different way of living; a *stret jasin*. This is where you live in a village and you make your life from this place.”

During the island research issues arose for several of the fieldworkers surrounding their identities, their values and the differences between town and village life: One of the female fieldworkers was asked to leave a *kastom* village after she came wearing pants and told to return only in proper attire (a long skirt or ‘mother hubbard dress’⁵³). In another instance, issues of power surfaced within the team when the fieldworkers arrived in one of the male fieldworker’s natal village and found that he’d told all of his family that he was ‘project leader’. While the actual project leader allowed this for appearances sake, she was less than happy about it. And finally one of the fieldworkers had refused to go back to her natal island for fear of the reprisal and fines she might face in light of her running away with her husband years before because they could not pay the proper bride price to have a *kastom* marriage.

The advantages of being a “local” researcher are obvious. Ni-Vanuatu fieldworkers are given easier access into the settlements, especially if youth know about the project and have

personal connections to the fieldworkers. When foreign researchers come into town, it is far harder for them to gain entry and trust of the people. They'll have to go and spend months getting to know them, talking to them, drinking kava with them, so that mutual trust can develop. As Viviane, one of the YPP fieldworkers stated: "*Mifala i no fraet long mifala*" (We're not afraid of each other). The only way foreign researchers can properly do research in Vanuatu is if they go into a community for 3-4 months and slowly get to know people, talk to them, tell them about their lives and drink kava with them. Trust will build when they see the foreign researcher all the time and get to know why he/she is there. Then young people will not be so frightened to speak their minds. While this is an obvious fact when conducting anthropological research and is the fundamental characteristic of participatory observation, Ni-Vanuatu researchers deal with very different circumstances when they assume the role of fieldworker. They've grown up in this culture and through ties of affiliation can trace relationships with many of the youth involved. Therefore being an 'impartial observer' is far more complex and situated in kinship and island identity, if even a possibility. As Sam, a YPP fieldworker noted:

"What I've found out working at the project is that when you first meet a group of kids, they have their own style. So when you meet them and have a different '*fasin*' it's hard. As soon as you try to adapt your way of thinking to theirs, they'll begin to accept you and tell you things about themselves. You see, you can't just go in and ask them 'tell me what you're thinking?' they don't know how to answer a question like that. By hanging around you slowly begin to see their ways of thinking and acting. Sometimes the way they see things (or do things) is not *stret*, so if you've made those inroads, you can talk to them. Try and make them see in a different way."

⁵³ The Mother Hubbard dress has been in Vanuatu since missionization. Ni-Vanuatu parishioners were given suitable clothing to attend Church in and missionary wives taught them patterns for Mother Hubbard dresses, which remain the major article of clothing for women all over Vanuatu (see B. Lawson 1994, for a more detailed account).

5.1.3 Using Anthropological method

The YPP are a team of young researchers trained in qualitative methods of anthropological research: they formulate research questions, generate questionnaires, use data collection techniques including note-taking and participant observation, techniques of data-entry using a database (DOS-based EPI Info program), analysis, and video methods. For the original town research, approximately 1,100 young people throughout the different settlements were interviewed:

“These areas were selected because they represent different types of areas in town and have quite different characteristics. Some areas are relatively new such as Fres Wind, Ohlen while other areas such as Seaside are among the oldest urban areas with a totally different pattern of settlement. Special attention was given to Blacksands, Ohlen, Seaside and Vila town. There was an effort to seek out young people in the places where they lived and in the places where they spent time. In each area selected for research an effort was made to spend time in the particular area to gain permission to do the research and to explain the research process before the research actually began.” (Young People’s Project 1998:10)

The report based on this fieldwork it was entitled; “Mi Harem Ol Voes blong Yang Pipol long Vila Taon” (“Young People Speak” eng. version) and a video called “Killim Taem”. As Emily a YPP fieldworker explained in outlining why the YPP first began its research into town life and youth:

“There are always reasons behind why young people behave the way they do, but no one was bothering to find out.”

Participant observation is the primary task of the researchers. The fieldworkers visit the settlements at least half a dozen times a week to speak with youth. When they return they

report on the issues they've heard about. There are about 8 or 9 major issues which really impact young people's lives (education, employment, health issues, Church, *keatom*, *kilim taem*, sexual relationships, family and kinship) but with the *fasin blong waetman*, this number is growing. Moreover, it not simply about writing reports on these issues, but to sit down with the other fieldworkers and talk about these issues, analysing where these are factoring into young peoples' lives. From these discussions, dialogues and plans to help youth deal with these problems surface. Further, spending time with young people and talking to them regularly, allows the project to catch issues before they become social problems. For example if they've heard about a young girl running around with a married man, they might have the opportunity to speak with her, before the gossip turns to punitive action by others within the community. At this level advocacy is an extremely important part of being a fieldworker. Listening to youth about issues affecting them lends itself to advocacy. It is up to the fieldworkers to provide advice about solutions or referrals to other organizations who might help. i.e. If a young person is having health problems, the project can pass on information about the sickness or give them names of clinics they could go and find out more information or be examined.

The Project focuses its advocacy on 3 settlements around town. These were selected from the town research as they were particularly in need of a program that might assist and empower youth who had little education and opportunity to find gainful employment. Selecting three was also a means to limit their field site. Keeping the site small has allowed the fieldworkers to closely monitor and forge close working relationships with the young people living inside.

During the island research the fieldworkers randomly selected villages on each of the islands being visited and within the villages drew lots to interview youth between the ages of 15 and 25. Their methodological tools consisted of conducting surveys, open-ended questionnaires, in-depth interviews and forming focus groups on specific topics. Various means of data gathering were also employed including filing daily reports, making sure questionnaires were completely filled in and recording their interviews onto cassette and video. Using the video camera allows the YPP to experiment with new field research and communication methodologies. During the island research the group used both video and tape recorders to document interviews and life on the islands. They then returned to Vila and transcribed these tapes to use them in the documentation of their island study, as well as editing a video for public audience. As Sam, a YPP fieldworker noted:

“Video like writing in a book keeps thinking fresh. You can watch the videos and say ‘ah yes’ and people will believe what they see. It is a very strong way.”

Often for the fieldworkers, the notion of respect as that which is found in *kastom* plays into the methodology of gathering data. In view of the multitude of island identities the fieldworkers are working with, respect towards *kastom* and people must be pronounced. Young people will not answer questions truthfully or take part in interviews if they feel that the researchers are not respecting them.

5.2. Contributing to Cultural and Social Awareness of “Youth” in Vanuatu

The Young People’s Project has not only impacted the lives of young people but they have also seen their data reach ni-Vanuatu generally, raising awareness and promoting dialogue

throughout the communities of Port Vila and Vanuatu. The one fundamental aim of the YPP is to promote dialogue emphasizing the role of 'community' in the lives of young people. It is through existing structures that youth wish to maintain their identities, but without the instruction and involvement of communities in promoting *kastom* and finding room for new features affecting town life (and rural life as well) young people will remain isolated from the past and moreover, from the rest of society. The YPP have been able to transmit this information directly to ni-Vanuatu through alternative modes of communication and through partnership with other organizations and the government. This section attempts to analyse these two sources of information distribution and how they affect the future of Vanuatu, by being crucial ways of contributing to social and cultural awareness.

5.2.1 Using Alternative Sources of Communication: Video and Radio

From releasing the report and subsequent research, the YPP learned that most ni-Vanuatu people don't particularly like to read and with a literacy rate of 53% for the entire population aged 15 and over (CIA World Factbook est. 1979), most don't have the basic skills needed to receive them otherwise. In using other mediums they have been able to distribute the data efficiently throughout Vanuatu. If they'd simply produced a report it might have been read from time to time by youth working on reports of their own or looking for specific information or statistics, but more than likely it would have simply sat on a shelf. By using video the group understood that those people who could not read, or just didn't want to read, could watch the video and learn about the same issues that the report had focused on. Another point about using video is the belief that people will absorb more in taking the time to sit and

watch the videos. Often when people have read the report, they've merely glossed over it. With "Kilim Taem" people are taken in by the stories, by the voices of young people, by seeing and recognizing the places they live and having so many of their common themes and feelings publicly acknowledged. Video has been a very important way the YPP has been able to educate people.

When in 1998, the group released the video "*Kilim Taem*" everyone talked about it. Young people found a voice and the elders paid attention, in return trying to come up with solutions to issues faced in town. This impact started in Port Vila, but over the years the YPP have been able to carry these ideas back to the islands. Moreover, it generated an awareness that further work needed to be done with rural youth, whose own issues are in great need of study. In making the video the YPP were able to have firsthand, the voices and images of young people talking and expressing concern about the issues impacting them. With *kustom*, young people do not often have the occasion to speak about their thoughts and actions. The YPP made the decision that no elders or people above the age of 35, should appear in the video. It was an opportunity for young people to speak, and others to listen. The video was a collaborative process between the YPP, Griffith University filmmakers and the young people in the video. During the editing process, the YPP had the young people come in and look at the footage they'd put together. They'd discuss what should be included and what should not. If young people had said or done things that they didn't want to in the video, the YPP would remove the statements or actions.

Using video has also been a means to reveal what young people are actually doing. By showing people footage, the YPP are able to advocate on behalf of young people that they aren't just coming to town to cause trouble. They then can reach people who are making the laws; the politicians and government officials, to let them see what is going on with their youth. Further, showing people videos has been a way to increase cultural awareness and a bridge to get youth and elders communicating with one another. As Emily, a YPP fieldworker explains:

"I have spoken to older people after showing the *kastom* videos and told them: '*Kastom* seems to have been lost in town, but when I show these cassettes to youth, they want to learn more about it. That's where you have to help.' People in town do not sit down enough and talk to youth about *kastom*. Maybe it's that young people don't ask about *kastom* enough. But at least with the videos, it gives the chance to young and old to watch *kastom* footage and want to discuss what they've seen and how this relates to their specific *kastom*."

Furthermore, a result of showing these videos and promoting dialogue has been the increased participation of elders in working with the YPP and the Cultural Centre in designing workshops related to *kastom*. The project felt that although they'd in the past documented some *kastom* activities including dance, song and stories, they had not focused enough on young peoples knowledge of *kastom* '*fasins*' when it came to dealing with others. Throughout the research young people had emphasized they wanted to know more about *kastom* but hadn't had the opportunity to learn. Another point stressing the establishment of this workshop was how many ni-Vanuatu were more interested in resolving problems through *kastom*, rather than having the police and government get involved. However, with the multiplicity of *kastom* *fasins*, chiefs would first need to have a forum where they could discuss how each *man ples* set of traditional beliefs could work together. So the group organized for several chiefs from

different island groups to come together and discuss how *kastom* could be used in town to better understand the rules and responsibilities of different relationships and resolve issues facing youth amongst differing islands. What was interesting in this workshop was that before consequences related to young people could surface, a means whereby *kastom* could find room within its multiple structures, to find a place in Port Vila. It was acknowledged that *kastom* in town, still held a great deal of significance in outlining respect and community cohesion in social control. Moreover, at the “Governing for the Future: Young People and Vanuatu’s Governance Agenda” held in Port Vila April 2001, co-organized by the Young People’s Project and the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project (Australian National University), many of the issues surrounding *kastom* and identity in town surfaced. Three young people made presentations noting differences between *kastom* on the islands and in town:

- “-In rural areas there is less reliance on money. Because of the subsistence economy in regional areas economically motivated crime is less prevalent.
 - In rural areas the community equates to the village, overseen by a single chief.
 - In urban areas, people from the same island community are dispersed throughout the towns.
 - They may lack a community *nakamal* (meeting house).
 - Chiefs are not able to meet regularly with the people from their original island communities.
 - In town there are influences from Videos and nightclubs.
 - Chiefs have to think about what changes can be made to the way they think about custom.
 - Custom must be more flexible to deal with all the problems of urban areas.”
- (YPP and State, Society and Governance Project 2001:12)

In response to these concerns, alongside others reflecting the need to focus more on the differences governing men and women under *kastom* (YPP and State, Society and Governance Project 2001:11), chiefs replied that they believed that they were competent to deal with town issues and that more effort must be made to find middle ground between the two (urban-rural

dichotomy) so that justice may be ensured (YPP and State, Society and Governance Project 2001:13).

Every Saturday, the YPP produce a radio program, looking at different issues the staff is currently studying, or airing interviews with young people. In one program they recorded *kastom* dancing and songs they'd seen performed while on the islands. Young people have been quite interested in participating in these radio interviews as it gives them the opportunity to be heard by so many people. Often with the radio show the group will focus on providing results from the town and island research, as this allows them to impact the broadest possible audience for their advocacy work.

“We are trying to change the lives of young people by making them stronger, more aware and better able to do things. Part of this is letting them know about the research and what is going on.” (Sam, YPP Fieldworker)

These broadcasts allow all ni-Vanuatu people to learn about what young people are facing and doing, on both the islands and in town. Topics have ranged from the lack of educational opportunities in town, what young people do when *kilim taem*, job opportunities for youth, and their workplace rights to outlining the importance of ‘safe sex’ practices. Often with people on the islands, there is no way that the written reports can reach them, and the videos require electricity, a television and a video player. However with radio, these issues are eliminated, as radio is the one medium that most people (island and town) have access to. In preparing the radio shows, the fieldworkers emphasize that the objective is to introduce issues that will be carried into conversations between adults and youth.

5.2.2 Work/data sharing with other Organizations

Working with the YPP gives many of Port Vila's (and Vanuatu's Island organizations) the opportunity to get into the youth community and expand their reach. Most groups have offices and drop-in locales that invite the general public to visit, however ni-Vanuatu people can be very weary of going and speaking to the organizations. The YPP instead goes into the communities and talks to people about these organizations. People can ask questions without being frightened or uncomfortable of the foreign settings.

Since the YPP began in 1997, their work has been distributed to other organizations and branches of the government, to inform them of the state of young people in Vanuatu. Yet it is the general conclusion from the fieldworkers that although this information has been available to the government, especially in the cases of the Ministry of Education and Department of Youth and Sport, issues have not been adequately addressed. Moreover, it is the concern that the departments do not pay enough attention to this NGO and others in town, whose mandates are to take a grassroots approach to finding out what the needs and issues are of ni-Vanuatu people.

"I don't think they go deep enough into looking at the issues affecting youth. If they look at the problems of youth, it's only the ones on the surface, ignoring the ones deeper and growing rapidly." (Annie, YPP fieldworker)

The Director of the Ministry of Youth and Sport admitted during the Youth and Governance workshop held in Port Vila April 2001, that “his own department’s focus had been “99% sport and 1% youth” (YPP and State, Society and Governance Project 2001:1).

While other organizations try to target the general population of Vila, the YPP with their focus on young people have had much success and set an example for other groups to follow. By focusing on one particular portion of the population there is more room to target and work alongside them. There are over 30,000 people living in Port Vila today, and organizations just don’t have the means to reach them all. By dividing people into sections of population and dividing the NGOs into population specific organizations there is more opportunity to work effectively. Every year the YPP organizes NGO forums to find out what other groups are currently working on in Port Vila, so that information can be shared. With the organizations all being aware of each others goals then they begin to reach the populations in town that have been previously missed or ignored and learn from each others successes and failures. Moreover, if similar activities are being devised than co-operative ventures can be arranged, cutting monetary costs and creating stronger network ties between organizations and participants in the process.

5.3 Creating Agency for Youth: The YPP and Advocacy

This section will outline where anthropology and participatory development differ in their methods, but where the youth project and its tenets aim assist young people. It is through workshops and communication initiatives that the YPP has sought to provide assistance and a

sense of continuity in the lives of young people. In providing these services the YPP is developing a structure that young people can rely on when in need. While this still acknowledges a sense of 'communitas' amongst young people, stressing similar situations impacting their lives, it also promotes structure so that traditional and modern ways can both be used to improve the lives of youth. This section examines the workshops that the YPP have hosted, having a drop-in centre located in the middle of town, the video nights presented in the settlements and the value of Bislama factsheets, resource booklets and newsletters outlining important issues affecting young people.

5.3.1 Hosting Workshops throughout Town and the Islands

The YPP have been organizing workshops for the past five years on themes which correlate to the findings of the town research and suggestions made by young people. Most of the workshops have been oriented to business and employment opportunities, informal education and *kastom* training. Below are summaries of the workshops with differing amounts data as they were available from interviews, reports or witnessed first-hand and taken from fieldnotes:

Smol Bisnis Pilot Project.

The Small Business development workshop was one that the Project saw as working in tandem with other practical skill workshops. Teaching youth how to make items for sale was one way of providing them with concrete skills, but not sufficient enough foundation to then have them go off and start businesses. Young people have been trained in the many facets of

business development; dealing with customers, keeping track of inventory, accounting etc. Along with the Co-operative department, the YPP has organized 3 workshops held in the settlements to teach them the fundamentals of starting a business. From these workshops the YPP offered small start-up loans to those who participated, and with the training provided, had them submit business proposals to the YPP. The Project then went through the applications and selected several to fund. At this stage, selected applicants formed executive committees to launch their businesses and manage the various facets of the 'company'. Some of these groups have found success, while others have failed. The project has in turn, been able to document the challenges and responsibilities youth face in starting businesses, to better inform youth, the general public, the government and other development groups interested in starting similar projects. Some of the businesses included 3 sewing groups, a local store in one of the settlements and a print-making business. While all but one of these businesses' have failed, their failures have not been recognized as a general failure of the *Smol Bisnis Pilot Proyek*. Instead it has revealed many issues that relate not only to 'businesses' but the organization of people in town. The only business which has continued to work is a sewing group, made up of young women closely related. This has afforded the project an understanding of how economic enterprise in Port Vila must work with other social structures already in place. By simply organizing a group of young people without kinship and settlement ties, will not create enough vested interest for the participants to want to continue. Moreover, when businesses are created using pre-existing ties, if individual members can no longer contribute, they may be replaced with other relations, creating a continuum of activity.

Sewing.

This has been one of the most active areas of the YPP's involvement in small business ventures. The group began by introducing sewing to groups of girls interested in learning how to sew and then running business development courses to show them how to sell their products. Once the groups had the training they were encouraged to organize fundraisers and hold weekly sewing meetings, to stay on track. Although the YPP began with three sewing groups, only one remains. Two new groups have replaced the others in an attempt to get other girls interested. What the YPP found in their follow-ups with the girls was that several issues were keeping them from participating: The girls had too much work around the house, some girls weren't showing up regularly to the meetings, several members had moved away (back to the island or somewhere else in town), too much competition with a co-operative started by their mothers, some families were against the girls working and would no longer speak with them. The success of one group was in a large part because all the members were related. This allowed girls to better share their housework, hold successful family fundraising activities and make sure that the communities understood what their business was about. With the new groups, similar one-island group structures were being used.

Paper Mache.

This workshop was lead by a foreign woman, who'd run similar workshops while in West Africa. She came to the YPP and proposed to conduct a workshop that would teach young people to bottle paint and make paper mache bowls, plates and mirrors. For a week young people came to town, being given bus fare there and back, and would paint their bowls and bottles. Coinciding with this was an idea to create a Young People's Market, selling these

items and tie-dye wraps and banners (made during a tie-dying workshop) to tourists and volunteers in town. Two markets were held, one behind the drop-in centre and another in the market. While the first market did very well, the second was less successful given the little opportunity youth had in marketing the event. After the initial week and selling at the markets, young people continued coming to the centre to paint and make bowls without reimbursement. The money that was made, was reinvested into more paint and materials. A local hardware store provided more paint free of charge, but the costs of the rest of the supplies proved to be too great to make a profit and thus a reliable employment opportunity for those participating.

General Health.

In terms of conducting health workshops, the YPP come from the perspective of wanting to make sure that young people appreciate the consequences of their own actions. A lot of young people in Vanuatu do not really understand how their bodies work. By starting with this lesson, issues revolving around smoking, drinking, sexual practices, etc. can all be raised in an environment where youth might appreciate that 'it happens and now I better understand why'. For example the group will ask youth 'Do you know the risk you are taking by smoking that cigarette?' Being able to ground health related issues in their own personal experience is an important way to educate youth.

HIV and AIDS Awareness.

Although there has yet to be a recorded case of HIV or AIDS in Vanuatu, two of the fieldworkers were sent to a Pacific-wide training course on becoming HIV/AIDS educators.

They have conducted over 15 workshops across Vanuatu since. So much of the disease relies on making the public aware of the potential risks that sexual activity creates, therefore it was important that two of the fieldworkers be able to talk to young people about safe sexual practices. With a population as mobile as Vanuatu's, the fear of AIDS is arriving, is only surpassed by how quickly the disease could become pandemic. In holding on these preventative workshops the fieldworkers are attempting to make young people aware of the risks that are involved in being sexually active. Around the world, every second, six people are infected with HIV. Keeping quiet about these facts and figures will only make it more difficult if the disease were to emerge in Vanuatu. It is not the job of the educators to tell ni-Vanuatu to stay put; they see their responsibility in challenging youth to learn as much about HIV/AIDS and other STDs, so that understanding the increased risks due to nature of their mobility and changing partners, might make them more aware of the preventative measures they can take throughout the country. After the island research the fieldworkers found that although many young people are aware of what 'safe sex' meant, most did not practice it. The main reason cited for the lack of 'safe sex' practices by youth on the islands or in town was condoms; they were unavailable and disliked due to the latex smell and loss of the "good feelings" that intercourse produced. Knowing this, the fieldworkers revised the language they were using to explain what AIDS would do once it arrived in Vanuatu. In telling youth that "AIDS will spread like wildfire" young people were given a sense of how quickly the disease would extend, more than any statistic might do. Moreover, by giving young people hands on demonstrations of using condoms (with a plastic banana) and several to take with them, with instructions on where they could find more, it is hoped these messages might make an impact. In putting on these workshops, in some areas the chiefs asked the YPP conduct them in same sex groups.

Much of the information taken from a *kastom* perspective would be taboo for a brother and sister to hear together. Another reason for dividing like this has been the turn-out of people to the workshops. Not only have youth wanted to participate, but elders as well. Although they were told to conduct the workshops for youth only they decided to open them up to anyone who wanted to learn about the sickness. Older people had made the point by stating “once you go back to Vila it will be our responsibility to teach our children about HIV/AIDS”.

Computer Classes.

The project is often asked to find participants for other NGO and Government led initiatives. Because of the YPP’s involvement in the settlements they know the young people living there and can go to them to speak about other organizations and what they are sponsoring for young people. Because these settlements are known to have little educational attainment amongst its members, a lot of other organizations wish to provide assistance as well. Most other groups would not be able to draw the interest of these youth, because of the distance between their organizations and the young people themselves. The project can go into the settlements and tell young people about their programs and see if they are interested. Then the organization (for the computer classes: INTV and the Department of Youth and Sport) will hold a meeting at the drop-centre to give young people more information about the program.

Literacy Project.

The project began with the YPP selecting one of the settlements to run the pilot with (Seaside). The fieldworkers went and found six youth that were interested in training to teach

the children in their settlements. World Vision ran a week-long training course to train young people in various areas of teaching literacy (basic reading and writing skills in Bislama). The next step was for these youth to participate in a 3-month teaching assignment in their respective communities with children who had little or no schooling up to this point in their lives. Because of the nature of the settlement, the original idea of holding mixed classes was dropped when parents and children refused to attend the school fearing the other's islands children. Further the YPP were worried due to other findings during their research, that when you mix island groups it is very difficult to have them all work together successfully. While one island group were known to be shy and timid, the other group have a reputation of being more 'stronghed' (tough). So the schools were spilt and held in their respective areas. One class was held in a church and the other in a community hall. The YPP spent a weekend cleaning up and arranging both venues so that the children would have clean and properly structured classrooms to learn in. After the three month pilot finished, the YPP wrote up a report dealing with the activity so that any other NGO's wanting to continue the project would have a research paper outlining the pilot; from its daily activities and lessons, to the thoughts and suggestions by the young people trained to teach.

Video-making.

By teaching youth how to use cameras, youth were able to walk around their communities and tape whatever interested them. This taught them not only how to use a new technology, but gave the project insights into the community from the perspective of the young people themselves. From this workshop, the participants created a video based on health issues using clay-mation, open-ended interviews and fictional skits. While this provided

video and editing methods, it also taught young people the importance of using condoms, being aware of the different STDs and the places and people in town, there to help.

Legal literacy.

The legal literacy program was started in order to make young people aware of their rights as citizens of Vanuatu. A lot of young people do not know what rights they have or what the legal system does to protect these rights. A workshop, another branch of the Kaljoral Senta called the Juvenile Justice Project and the YPP have worked in tandem to create a report outlining the rights of young people and study what young people think about the legal system in Vanuatu. Moreover, a conference was held entitled “Governing for the Future: Young People and Vanuatu’s Governance Agenda”. This conference highlighted the findings of the research and allowed young people and officials to come together to discuss governance in Vanuatu, while debating the impact of urbanization, *kastom*, politics, law, education, economic opportunities, programmes organized by the Churches, Chiefs, NGOs, government agencies and by young people themselves.

Traditional Stove project.

The YPP held a training course to show young people how to build chimneys for traditional stoves/chimneys with locally made cement and other locally made materials. So when using a wood fire inside the house, the house would not fill itself with smoke

The Youth Fieldworker Program.

The YPP have created a youth fieldworker program that teaches young people how to gather information from their differing communities around town. This project is a continuation of the Cultural Centre's own fieldworker program, instituted to gather *kastom* information from around the many islands. While this program has dealt specifically with questions of *kastom*, the YPP and the Cultural Centre decided to focus the youth branch on what is presently going on in town. The YPP found six young people (a male and female from each of the three settlements they already work with) interested in participating and the Cultural Centre conducted field research training courses with them. The topics the six young people have dealt with are specifically grounded in the everyday experiences of young people. Thus far the boys have looked at the house-building styles around their communities, while the girls have gathered information on making and caring for gardens in town.

5.3.2 Having a Drop-In Centre in Town

The drop-in centre has provided a place for young people, where they can come and access information and advice from fieldworkers. Youth are also given the freedom to use the computers, watch videos, paint and read. Videos are watched in a private viewing room. It is often occupied by young men who come in, in groups of 4 to over 10 and take advantage of watching from the selection of videos the project supplied. They ranged from recorded tapes of the once yearly 'Napuna Music Festival' featuring local and pan-pacific bands, to health and *kastom* tapes, shot by organizations in and around Vanuatu. The fieldworkers are careful to make sure that young men do not sneak in personal videos, as this is expressly a place where

education is as important as entertainment. A box of condoms next to the television set has to be refilled everyday. Roger, a YPP fieldworker explained the importance of that box of condoms:

“The clinics also provide free condoms, but most young men refuse to go and visit the clinic. When you go inside these places, it is always women who are the ones seeing the doctors and nurses. For a man, this puts a lot of pressure on him. If any of the women know the boy, they know what he is doing and what he has come to get. This ends up creating a lot of gossip for the boys. They don’t like that and won’t go to pick them up. This leads to more girls getting pregnant and STDs being spread because the boys also don’t have money to buy condoms at the pharmacies. With the condoms in the video room, they can take them and no one knows, but they get them and will use them.”

Young women will stop by to say hello on their way to the market, or spend time there if they are participating in any of the workshops, but more often than not, their days are spent at home filled with chores. Young men are the more frequent visitors, but usually they go directly to the video room and leave immediately afterwards.

5.3.3 Movie Nights in the Settlements

The YPP puts on video nights once a week alternating between the settlements. The project owns a generator and every week goes into the settlements to play videos for members of the given community. A lot of young people attend, and this gives the project the opportunity to meet new young people and let them know all about the YPP. They’ll show 3 videos in the evening ranging from concert footage, *kastom* stories to reproductive health videos. Many of the organizations working in town have videos to show people; however, rarely will they put on video nights. Producing a tape does not help situations or bring

awareness to issues, if the people they are attempting to reach have no way to view the tapes. Ironically, development organizations tend to forget that VCRs and televisions, although highly desirable, are not commonplace amongst the settlements, nor is electricity in two of the areas. The YPP with their generator are able to go and work within the communities, showing the videos in various community halls, churches and public spaces so that young and old alike have the opportunity to watch. The community turn-out has often amazed the fieldworkers, apologizing at around midnight after 5 or 6 hours that they must stop for the evening. Moreover, the YPP realized that although these settlements are considered “in-town” a lot of young people don’t have the opportunity to commute into town to come and watch the videos at the drop-in centre. Therefore they took it as their responsibility to get these tapes to youth and have had tremendous success with this activity.

5.3.4 Bislama Newsletters, Resource booklets and Factsheets

For most youth in town, formal education is required up to class 6 education (finishing school at approximately 12 years of age). While some youth speak English or French fluently, most are Bislama speakers and are very shy of trying to speak or read in French or English⁵⁴. Thus everything the YPP puts out is in Bislama, in order to reach as many young people as they can. Therefore young people can pick up the report, the newsletters, the fact sheets etc. and read them in the one language they’re competent in.

⁵⁴ Although youth will say they are too shy to speak English or French, often it is the case that they do not know who to communicate properly in either language.

Newsletters:

The newsletter has been an effective way to present a summary of findings from town research, detail workshops given by the YPP and personally introduce the YPP fieldworkers. While most young people will not read research reports in full, by presenting summaries that can be distributed throughout the settlements, young people have the opportunity to read about the salient aspects of the research which include; migration to town, *kastom* and language, education, work, family relationships, Church, health and *kelim taem*.

Smol Bisnis Resource Book:

The group has gathered information about development projects that help ni-Vanuatu people build and maintain their own businesses. They compiled this information and keep it at the drop-in centre. Young people can come and access this resource book and speak to the fieldworkers if they need any help with business proposals or finding workshops that might help them organize and start a business

Fact Sheets:

The YPP have put together several factsheets for young people stressing important rights and information, otherwise difficult to access. Moreover, the fact sheets are in Bislama, the lingua franca of Vanuatu and for many young people in town, their first language. In them, issues surrounding workplace and employment rights, legal rights and Reproductive health information have been detailed. As reflected in town research, the YPP found that most youth did not know that there were laws enacted to guarantee young people rights in the workplace or that there was a national minimum wage all workers were due. Young people often spoke of

the difficulties they encountered in the workplace with abuse by their bosses, salaries that fluctuated weekly and between workers (without visible pattern), and being fired if sick days were asked for. The factsheet outlined the national minimum wage, overtime work, women's rights in the workplace and a minimum age requirement for being employed. The reproductive health factsheet focused on sexually transmitted diseases; explaining the dangers of protracting STD's, outlining specific signs and treatments for lice, gonorrhoea, syphilis, AIDS and hepatitis B and information on where to go for further help. The YPP also created a Legal literacy factsheet outlining all of the government programs and officers there to help young people when they are facing trouble. It outlined the legal responsibilities of youth and the roles that the police, the public solicitor's office, the attorney general's office and the Malvatumauri all played in ensuring justice and the rights of young people in town.

5.4 The Future of the YPP Outlined through its Successes and Failures

In looking at the future of the YPP, it is important to outline the successes and failures the project has had since its origins. These successes can be measured in what the YPP have brought to the town of Port Vila. There is still much work to be done and the YPP remains one of the only groups to publish material that reaches the general public and most significantly, the youth of Vanuatu. The one thing that differs in terms of this organization to that of others in town, is the extent to which they have changed people's perspectives on youth in Port Vila. Their success can be measured by the concerns and understandings that people, other organizations and the government now display when it comes to acknowledging the challenges that lie ahead for youth. Thanks to YPP workshops many youth have received

training they otherwise would not have had the opportunity to receive. One youth is now working at the bank, while others have found work related to the tourism industry.

A further measure of its success, although rather downbeat, would be the difficulty youth would face if the project were to close its doors. The YPP have made many inroads with youth in town, gained their trust, provided them with important insights, given them a voice and place to host activities that have made a difference in their lives. Were another group to try and create a similar dynamic it would take another 5 years of getting to know youth and youth getting to know another organization. Moreover, if the project were to shut its doors young people might not want to put faith into a similar project that would again run the risk of shutting down after a limited time. Young people have often told the fieldworkers how proud they are of the work the group does on their behalf. There is a great amount of excitement when young people are asked to participate in the activities the YPP is hosting because youth have come to understand and appreciate the goals of the project and what their aims are.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, by hiring fieldworkers from differing islands what they've been able to show others in Port Vila, is a lesson in working together. A lot of the youth who participate in the research and activities often note the importance of this interaction for them. They, themselves can feel reticent around other ni-Vanuatu from different islands so when the fieldworkers come in and participate in their lives, a lot of this tension lifts. The fieldworkers realize their responsibility in working in the settlements. More often than not, they are spending time with groups of youth from different islands other than theirs, and a part of their work rests on making those connections and inroads. As a team, they

must also teach one another about the various *kastoms* and realities of their individual islands and from the success of the project in the eyes of so many, they have done just that.

In 1998, when the project released “Young People Speak” it was alongside an executive summary in Bislama, which included several key recommendations. Those recommendations have highlighted the group’s mandate ever since. They have been included in the appendix in their original form, but appear here below translated and commented on, as they very much typify the project’s aims and are a good means to identify overall successes and failures of the project. They have been divided into the following areas of concentration: Research, education, *kastom*, network of organizations, communication and employment opportunities.

Research:

- The needs of young people must be studied as they are the first generation to grow up in Port Vila. Most are growing up in settlements without the opportunity to receive full educations, training and access to information they really need.*
- Work closely with young people to identify the particular ways of their communities so that information about reproductive health, drinking and smoking can be effectively supplied.*
- Conduct more research on gender. The town research showed that there are a lot of differences in life experiences of young women and men. A more in-depth look into these differences needs to be undertaken.*
- Carry out more participatory research with young people in town to find out how the issues are changing and examine the effectiveness of small business projects and other income generating programs for all class 6 and year 10 graduates.*
- Try and stop the way young people are blamed for all of the changes taking place in town.*
- Listen to what young people have to say.*

In terms of ethnographic research the YPP have effectively documented what life is like in town for young people. Although more research remains to be done in studying gender differences, the YPP have always geared their workshops to equally impact women’s lives and realities. Young women carry a great deal of responsibility in the maintenance of the

household and child-rearing. Sewing workshops and the distribution of sewing machines have assisted young women in finding an avenue, where they can continue to focus on their domestic duties and when there is free time available, gather and work together from their settlement locales.

“Young People Speak” clearly demonstrated the limits that young people have in being culpable for choices they make. Kinship and familial obligations are still the primary basis through which decisions are made. Although individuality and peer relationships are striking features in young people’s *kilim taem* activities, obligations that bind them to kinsmen remain principal features of town life. The liminality of influences that urbanization has caused predominantly factors into the lives of youth, only because they are in a state of flux themselves trying to form identities, in a modernizing state, where monetary considerations are at a maxim. Education and employment opportunities are at a minimum because of the rapid population growth while *kastom* values are also declining given the changing environment and belief system whereby *kastom* is tied to the island grounds. It only makes sense that identity formation in this climate is hard-pressed to find a *fasin* that is easily understood. Rather, identities are formed through personal combinations of aspects that reflect the tensions of transition. The YPP have been able to document these town conditions and provide a certain degree of clarity to young people and all ni-Vanuatu people of how each of these factors influence the lives of youth. It is now to the policy makers and chiefs to learn from these influences to provide more stable conditions for future ni-Vanuatu citizens.

Education:

- Informal educational opportunities need to be found for young people who have finished school, especially between the ages of 13 to 18. They live in these settlements without the opportunity to learn new skills.*
- Children and young people must have access to good quality education. Whether or not the people of their communities can afford to send them, children should go to primary and secondary school. There are children who are not even given the opportunity to go to primary school because their families don't have enough money to pay the school fees.*
- Develop a training centre where young people would have the chance to refresh their math, reading and writing skills, while learning new skills as well. This is crucial as most young people leave school with only Class 6 (age of 12) education.*
- Provide more access to young people about information concerning reproductive health and technologies.*
- Establish a drop-in centre where young people could play sports and make music.*

Education is an extremely important aspect to socialization and continuity of livelihoods. Without immediate attention paid to its maintenance and structure, all ni-Vanuatu will suffer as a result. The YPP have highlighted the difficulties facing youth without proper education and gone a step further in providing young children with 3-month informal schooling inside one of the settlements. Class 6 education is insufficient and government should be guaranteeing that all young people have access to at least year 10 classes. Although they cannot fully subsidize such an undertaking given the current economic climate, they should be creating alternative centres or apprenticeships where youth can at least be trained in a specific vocation. The YPP opened a drop-in centre as a place where young people could come and receive training, watch videos and seek advice from fieldworkers. Unfortunately, the scope of the drop-in centre had little effect. Being in the centre of town, it was quite a distance from most young people and fieldworkers spent more time commuting to settlements than vice versa. Although the youth centres have been constructed in the settlements, more projects and workshops need to be offered inside their walls.

Kastom:

-Support the interest of young people in finding out about their kastoms and learning their kastom language. Kastom knowledge should also be involved when creating policies related to education, Church and economic development.

-Encourage all communities to work together to find ways to support young people learning their proper kastom, as they live so far away from their islands. A lot of young people are in great need of knowing this information, so that they can better understand their kastoms.

-Support the idea of teaching all young people their kastom language.

-Promote kastom fasin to address issues surrounding juvenile delinquency. Most young people respect chiefs and district chiefs of their areas in town. Further they feel that chiefs should have a role in dealing with juvenile offenders.

Kastom has been a particularly important area of research for the YPP. Although there are mixed views between the fieldworkers in regards to how much *kastom* is in fact evident in town, they have been trying to create a bridge between elders and young people in order to better negotiate the impact of *kastom* on the identities of urban youth. A successful measure of this was the organization of the governance workshop that called for a better system, whereby chiefs could work within the settlements to offer *kastom* solutions to minor crimes and provide *kastom* training in *kastom* knowledge and language learning. Social control is only one area where *kastom* can contribute to better relationships between Port Vila's residents. *Man ples* identity is still the means by which young people have links to their islands and histories. While urban migration remains at such a high level, confusion surrounding rights and obligations will only augment. *Kastom* has proven itself a flexible force in identity, remaining steadfast throughout Christian indoctrination. Again, *kastom* finds itself in contradiction to a new 'modern' way of life. What the YPP has tried to do is find a means to overcome the contradiction and recognize it as an important means to provide complementarity with *fasin blong waetman*.

Network of Organizations:

-Money and resources need to be found to carry out projects related to youth. Organizations, the government, NGOs and Churches should create programs to provide better opportunities for all young people.
-Make sure that young people have enough information on health issues and know what types of programs are available to them. Research revealed that young people did not know where to access information or programs that otherwise could help them.

The YPP have always attempted to partner themselves with other organizations in order to improve the lives of young people. Along with the Cultural Centre, they have organized NGO youth forums and kept themselves informed on the activities of all local development organizations in Port Vila. Moreover, when conducting island research they contacted all island organizations in order to conduct workshops in an attempt to foster connections between rural young people and these organizations. The project manager of the Young People's Project has been particularly significant in guiding this course of action. It is a success that the YPP are far too altruistic to take credit for, but should be commended for nonetheless.

Communication:

-Use various communication methods to get essential information to youth where it touches their lives. The different types of methods are: theatre and radio interviews featuring young people. The important focus must be on the exchange of information that comes through when young people are allowed to talk and explain what they think. A lot of young people have said that they really appreciate when they hear other young people saying things that they can identify with
-Organize a weekly radio show that young people could develop and produce discussing the issues that are affecting young people and supply information they think would be beneficial to all youth.
-Create a series of videos for young people. Right now action movies are the only ones influencing young people. There is a need to make local videos where young people could receive educational information and be entertained too.

There is little to be said for all of the success the YPP has had in making *Kilim Taem* and producing radio shows. Both have impacted the lives of young people throughout Vanuatu and will continue to stand as a measure of their importance in Vanuatu for years to come.

Employment Opportunities:

- Help young people start their own businesses. Provide them with the opportunity to learn skills related to funding and marketing. The general concern of young people in town is finding employment. Moreover, most families expect them to find work so that they can contribute to the family financially.*
- Develop a micro-credit scheme for young people.*
- The research revealed that although a lot of young people are not employed and receiving a salary, they are still contributing to the economy by working in their gardens and around the house, which in turn helps those family members who are salaried workers outside the home. This type of work is important and helps all families in town.*
- Provide young people with the business development training and create training apprenticeship schemes for youth.*
- Find out what kinds of conditions young people are working in and make sure they learn about legislation concerning minimum wage.*

Employment is the defining aspect of what brings most ni-Vanuatu to town in the first place. As the YPP highlighted, urban migration is more often than not a family's choice and a young person has little say. Further, if a young person has been raised in town, returning to their island is an option but with consequences. Adapting to island life can be difficult. With most urban young people interviewed, life in town is harder ('i had tumas') while island life carries with it a idealized and simplified way of living. Yet many of these youth have never been to their islands. Finding employment and living in a monetary economy is far more fraught with insecurity, than the safety net provided by a subsistence economy. The YPP have noted this too and investigated through practical measures, ways of easing these tensions. While many of their *smol bisnis* projects have failed, in fuelling these workshops and providing groups with limited funding, it has given young people a chance to try something new. However, a fear in realizing this, is that without successful enterprise it only adds to the notion of failure that young people already expressly admit to.

Examining the one successful business venture they've had must take into account the reliance it has had on the already permanent structure of the settlement and its preexisting kinship network of inhabitants. Due to the homogeneity of its members, this group has been able to handle the nomadic lifestyles of its young residents.

In town, three of the most successful entrepreneurial activities are all based on kinship affiliation; opening small stores in the settlements, driving a bus and running a *nakamal*. Each requires the daily input of several of its members. A settlement store requires members to open and close the store, purchase goods and track stock. A bus requires the involvement of several men, so that buses can run day and night, while *nakamals* require a small plot of land (although households are usually attached), people to prepare the kava and those to sell it, upon its usual 4pm opening.

One aspect of employment remains to be fully explored, as it seemed largely overlooked in research. Fundraising (as a form of exchange) is a large part of kinship in Vanuatu; traditionally and in the urban sphere. Families provide an important means to distribute what money is being made in town. As it often men who have salaried work, prestige is still an effect of these gatherings. Many evenings are spent at settlement homes of differing relations scattered around town. Fundraising is often centered on kava, food and sport. It provides the opportunity for households to share the incomes of those working and is often used to subsidize the educations (*skul ji*) of the household's children. Often there will be several activities run all contributing to the family's income. A Petonque tournament will start the afternoon, kava following and supper afterwards. All members are active participants in running a successful evening.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Recognizing Liminality and Communitas: Vanuatu and the Young People's Project

In understanding that the betwixt and between that characterizes town life, it must be emphasized that this is also an important reality of rural/island life. Tensions, or liminalities, that this paper suggests are evident in town, have been an undercurrent throughout Vanuatu even before colonization. In concluding this paper, an analysis of the different liminal periods and events shaping this argument will be presented. While transformation is a constant factor in all societies, the continuities and ruptures that are carried alongside these cultural changes take on varying forms in relation to their histories and the social structures already in existence. What the ethnographic outline attempted to do (keeping in mind its uncomplicated and rough nature) was describe the 'heterogeneous dynamism' (Arce and Long 2000) present far before any contact between ni-Vanuatu and Europeans had occurred. This is not meant to be construed from the general manifestations of internal groupings; which were quite homogenous in their structures, but in the context of distinctiveness to one another; where their idiosyncrasies tended to be reflected through elaborate exchanges and tribal warfare. Further, with Vanuatu's subsequent colonization two empires attempted to "share" the same territory. William Miles (1998:37) branded this colonization "condocolonialism" and noted:

"Whereas "Condominium" refers to the administrative *structure* of joint British and French rule, "condocolonialism" denotes the *process* of divided and divisive domination. Condocolonialism differs from the classical colonialism in five respects: (1) foreign rule is extended and maintained over an overseas possession as much to counter and irritate an imperial rival as to benefit the mother country per se; (2) infrastructural development is limited

and targeted, lest the benefits of such investments accrue to the rival partner; (3) the subjects of such rule (the condocolonialized) are neither repressed by a metropolitan power nor assimilated into a metropolitan model but rather are induced to join one side against the other; (4) the condocolonialized learn to play off the imperial powers against each other, often to further local interests and pursue indigenous politics; and (5) imperial rivalries are reproduced and internalized by the condocolonialized, giving rise to political cleavages that outlast the accession to independence and perpetuate exploitive attitudes towards the institution of government.”

While it is agreed that a great deal of residue from the French/English rivalry remains in many of Vanuatu’s institutions (particularly in the educational systems, which Miles analyzes in far greater detail), these rivalries are not so poignant in the rememberings of ni-Vanuatu, inasmuch as the lack of ‘respect’ that either country paid towards the ‘condocolonialized’. What stands as a lasting symbol of this, is the inability to define Port Vila as anything but a liminal socioeconomic location and political capital of the Country. Added to this, the land which Port Vila is located on is still maintained by the *sense of place* for whom ‘ownership’ is ascribed by traditional (*kastom*) rights to area (*man Efate*). If the government were to usurp these rights the entire system would be in danger of losing its integrity, which is something throughout the generations under colonial and subsequent post-colonial rule have never, for one moment lost or relinquished⁵⁵.

This point is further reflected in the way that Christianity has been integrated into the system. While the origins of this relationship, point to an initially ‘liminal’ period of adjustment; where *kastom* and Christianity were considered to be contradictory, at least in the

⁵⁵ This does not mean to imply that ni-Vanuatu have not lost or relinquished power over the generations under colonial rule; they have indeed. But their sense of integrity for the system was never appropriated throughout any period. Personal and cultural rights to individual plots of land have formed the basis for many local disputes, but again, this has always been tension *within* the system.

minds and actions of missionaries'⁵⁶, this has certainly been overcome and appropriated to reflect that both Christian and *kastom* values are ni-Vanuatu ones. Where neither of these moral codes fit, the definition and actions of those labelled 'SPR' are formed. While the YPP have quite successfully argued that 'SPR' is not a term that should be equated to young people in general, there are visible expressions of change that youth have embraced that do not represent either Christian or *kastom* ways. It is a mixture of *fasin blong waetman* and *kilim taem* that has led to a general consensus surrounding the negative influences affecting young people. Some of these include; alcohol, cigarettes, dance clubs, action films and a lack of Christian faith. While others with less negative connotations are reggae music, string bands, sports (ie. volleyball, soccer, basketball, rugby, Petonque etc), clothing and dreadlocked hairstyles. Turner (1969:vii) notes:

"We have been too prone to think, in static terms, that cultural superstructures are passive mirrors, mere reflections of substructural productive modes and relations or of the political processes that enforce the dominance of the productively privileged. If we were as dialectical as we claim to be, we would see that it is more a matter of an existential bending back upon ourselves: the same plural subject is the active superstructure that assesses the substructural and structural modalities that we *also* are. Our concreteness, our substantiality is with us in our reflexivity..."

Thus the difficulty youth have in finding identity in town is very much a consequence of Port Vila's inability to recognize a concrete structure of its own. This is the first generation where 30% of the town's population have never gone back to their islands. They are in a sense the first permanent urban population of Vanuatu. Although their *man ples* identities remain a basis for personhood; the structures which guide these very identities are breaking down.

⁵⁶ B. Lawson (1994:78) writes: "Missionaries also directly or indirectly discouraged the use of traditional objects that they perceived as opposing the teachings of Christianity. They encouraged individuals to relinquish clubs, spears and other indigenous weapons (Patterson, 1882:373, 403-4), as well as sacred stones and idols (Gordon, J., 1863:113; Patterson, 1864:494; 1882:308; Robertson, 1902:359-60), as proof of their surrender to Christianity... It is likely that the obsolescence

Kinship structures have recognizably altered over the past decade, with youth marrying for love and outside of their island ethnicities. *Kastom* knowledge has decreased with the passing of generations and urban migration, leaving young people with fragments of *kastom fasins* to use; many no longer relevant to urban life. *Kastom* essentially built bridges between people; it defined obligations and provided the paths for human life-cycles. Christianity altered many of these beliefs, but fundamentally saw *kastom* remain the substructure of society. Modernity is a fragmented group of heterogeneous features, some accepted while others are denied. They are as flexible as *kastom* in this sense and can take on many shapes and forms to order and pattern lives. With young people staying in town and having children of mixed island identities, land ownership becomes an increasingly problematic question. If these young people have no rightful *kastom* claims to land, or traditional exchange obligations to kin, how long can *kastom* values used to drive these structures remain a feature of their identities? Through the research at the YPP and advocacy projects, the group are trying to find ways of integrating *kastom* to town life. A significant example of this has been their involvement in the good governance program, trying to promote the continued involvement of chiefs and *kastom* respect inside the settlements.

Furthermore, the YPP have shown through their most successful programs that the importance of *man ples* is still a formidable part of town life. Kinship and island ties are used to distribute the economic gains made by few to networks of their kin. In establishing programs that already have a significant kinship or same-island structure, people already have the ties that facilitate working together. However, the YPP have also recognized the importance of

of sacred stones on Ancityum, as well as on other islands in the area, had a direct relation to the introduction of missionary texts and bibles, which were probably initially perceived as sacred objects or charms."

registering a unitary voice for all young people. Living in an urban location, implies new connections and ties; through peer groups, education and employment opportunities. Creating a general and culturally recognized voice for young people reflects the change that all young people are navigating through regardless of their *man ples* identities. Moreover, workshops and training courses are a part of finding new sources of affiliation for youth. Without the YPP's research and advocacy, lessons could not be learned now in order to pave the way for the future generations being born in town. Although the economic viability and sustainability of the YPP's *smol bisnis* groups have yet to be proved, in undertaking these projects, the YPP are firsthand studying the consequences of urbanization and uncovering the liminal influences in town and how they impact their inhabitants.

6.2. Developing Anthropology: Lessons for the Field

What has emerged from this case study is a sense of how anthropological methodology can affect change when combined with participatory and grass-roots initiatives. The YPP very telling portrays this. Before the YPP released its research, young people had been erroneously labelled SPR and blamed for much of the change occurring in society. As the history of Vanuatu reveals, there was a time that this impacted all of Vanuatu. While colonization has had serious and lasting effects of the population, it was Christianity that altered the course of ni-Vanuatu identity. Colonization itself was a way for ni-Vanuatu people to exercise their identity; it stood in contradiction to *fasin blong waetman*. Town itself is a product of colonization and as such has always held a particular place in ni-Vanuatu identity of being betwixt and between. While a commodity based market has been evolving through the years, factiously this

representation of town, as the 'hub of colonial experience' has remained. Since Independence in 1980, the government has been working to overcome these representations, but little has changed. Port Vila still remains on the cusp of identification for ni-Vanuatu. It is a liminal place with a history rich in occupation and resistance.

The YPP have worked to overcome these negotiations of power by omitting them from their framework. While readily illustrating the difficulties young people facing with rapid urbanization, the history of Port Vila has remained removed from their queries. Questions of affiliations and ties to island identity need to be further reflected on. Further, more research needs to be conducted surrounding the mixing or homogenous structures of Island groups around town, as issues of modernity and continued resonance to *kastom* and language, are factored seriously into the fabric of this area of study. With the kinship and island ties so firmly located in the space of settlements (even mixed settlements), community initiatives and the informal self-development of its people is bound to result when organizations and their capacity to undertake ethnographic research are utilized. The workshops and mediums of advocacy that the youth project brought into the differing communities were circulated in ways that saw the information flow by way of the invisible lines or bonds between people. In the mixed settlements, more work is needed to cross those lines and create a tide of information that might reach people without having them to literally go door to door and canvas youths separately about the different activities and options available to them.

By presenting the YPP as a case study, it has been the intention of this thesis to present a strong argument for the need for anthropology to recognize its worth as a tool by which

NGO's and other community organizations can collect information for the good of their communities. Moreover, by having anthropologists teach these methods, research can then be conducted within local areas by local participants, aiding in the development of opportunities, advocacy and growth within the communities.

At this stage the dual role of anthropologist as 'fieldworker' (outside the classroom) and 'teacher' (inside the classroom) needs to better establish a sense of continuity, so that teaching doesn't stay in a university setting and the methodologies, hence the knowledge gathered while 'in the field' might remain in the locale and be applied to researching the social conditions requisite for implementing development projects. Moreover, the classroom is equally in need of alternatives. This in mind, anthropology has sold itself short by remaining so academically inclined. It has limited its scope and gone under the radar to many students in other disciplines. Development specialists with degrees in Economics, Political Science, Medicine, Environmental Studies etc. are hired to assist developing nations achieve a sense improvement. But this development will not meet its target unless the specialists are aware of the cultural contexts that they are working within and use them to guide the work, inasmuch as the content of their own specialized' knowledge. An ability to underestimate the knowledge of the other or 'the receivers', is what has seen so many development projects fail. A given for development projects' past failures are that they did not think take into account cross-cultural contexts; as Nolan states (2002:28):

"Development projects are, in essence, situations of cross-cultural encounter. Development, which aims to improve people's lives, is not a thing but a process of negotiation between different ways of thinking, seeing, valuing. In the negotiation process, although technology, finance, and management are important, knowledge of context is fundamental."

In examining the relationship between development and anthropology, what is quite interesting is the historical evolution of the two. Although Applied Anthropology stems from the early 1900's⁵⁷, development studies are a modern phenomenon which arose after WWII with the need to rebuild the infrastructure of war torn Europe. This point returns to the notion of liminality and where anthropology has stood against the other social sciences in terms of its relative position in the frame of development work, and ironically remains to this day. Although anthropology has played a small role in development since the 1940's through the early 1990's, Gardner and Lewis (1996:28) note that much debate surrounding the application of anthropology 'onto' people continues to limit anthropology's role:

"Increasingly, change came to be seen as inseparable from society itself, and the realisation and acceptance of this by anthropologists underpin a continuing relationship between anthropology and development. Nevertheless, it remains the case even today that anthropology retains a residual reluctance to involve itself with certain aspects of change. A second obstacle which stood in the way of developing an applied anthropology was the issue of cultural relativism... Relativism raised the problem of the ethics of intervention by anthropologists in the communities in which they worked, a dilemma which has never been satisfactorily resolved and which continues as a topic for discussion today."

It is in the past decade that the concept of cultural relativism has taken hold and informed an important aspect of what development projects are aspiring to. It is through ethnography that development strategies are developed as functional and positive alternatives,

⁵⁷ From the 1920's, British and French Colonial governments were hiring anthropologists to examine their expanded territories (Mathur 1989, Gardner and Lewis 1996, Nolan 2002). The US found similar value in investing in ethnographic studies from the 1930's as well (Mathur 1989), although some claim this to have impacted the US more in the 1940's and 50's with the advent of WWII (Nolan 2002) and Fox project (Gardner and Lewis 1996, Foley 1999, Nolan 2002). But in the 1960's and 1970's with the expansions of universities (Gardner and Lewis 1996, Nolan 2002), the Vietnam War (see Nolan 2002 for an in-depth examination of the Camelot Project in Thailand) and the very vocal critiques (Talal Asad 1973) to emerge within the discipline concerning Anthropology's relationship with the colonial era, leading anthropologists towards academic careers versus applied positions.

yet the dominant theory of 'modernization' as the primary goal remains the situated end and development projects still often fail due to narrowness of cultural perspective. As Arce and Long (2000:10) note:

"It becomes apparent, then, that within universalistic Western patterns of conduct, local contrasts emerge. The behavior of actors and their capacity to re-position the modern within the familiar constitutes one of the facets of the rapid and constant transformation that Western modernity brings. Hand-in-hand with this local capacity to encompass Western society goes a critical attitude against what is seen as Western. This generates a dynamism which is represented through fusion, blending and counter-movements to modernity, entailing the disembedding of Western civilised standards and their rembedding within various local (and sometimes distinctly 'non-Western') representations of modernity."

There is a line between two strains of anthropology currently examining development. The first is Development Anthropology while the second is the Anthropology of Development. The end result of this thesis is actually a combination of the two. As Grillo and Stirrat (1997:2) note:

"one engaged directly in application (for example, evaluating a project or offering policy advice), the other primarily concerned with the socio-scientific analysis of development as a cultural, economic and political process."

Working with the Young People's Project was a lesson in Development Anthropology. Studying alongside ni-Vanuatu researchers and seeing the importance of using ethnography as a tool to develop projects that effectively improve the lives of youth in Port Vila and throughout Vanuatu, was an important outcome of this research. As Grillo and Stirrat (1997:1-2) further point to:

"Several themes come together in post-modernist anthropology in ways which, on the face of it, make it an unlikely bed-fellow for 'applied' work: an assumption that anthropologists 'construct' their data, and that what is to be investigated is the process of the construction itself; a focus on the 'how' of gathering what become 'data' (ie. fieldwork) and the placing of it in the public domain (ie. ethnography); an emphasis on the anthropologist as 'author', on her or his 'authority' and on the relationship between anthropologist and 'subject'. Nonetheless the

two strands converge, if not in 'development anthropology', then in the ideas and practices constituting the 'anthropology of development'.

Therefore this work is in fact a preview of the changing face of anthropology. Not only do the implications of 'modernity' affect those being 'studied' but moreover, those 'studying'.

Most of the arguments concerning applied anthropology could be dispelled if we removed the assumption of there being a foreign researcher 'leading the study'. The methodological merits of qualitative anthropological study are not only important to the future of academic discourse, but moreover to development studies as well. Perhaps anthropologists have relied on themselves being the "field" experts for too long when in fact there are very capable researchers to be found within the cultures being studied. To say that professional anthropologists carry a dual load cannot be disputed; they are both researchers 'in the field' and teachers 'in the institution'. It is this teaching qualification that begs to ask the simple question of 'why teaching is kept so far removed from time spent in the field?' If there were more of a synthesis of these two qualities, research methods might be passed on to the subjects of research more readily. In fact, thanks to Vanuatu's research policy this is an on-going development project itself. Requiring foreign anthropologists to assist in the Centre's research projects is crafted from this very recognition of the ability to provide guidance and lessons in methodology that will influence cultural development within Vanuatu and moreover, the discipline of Anthropology. James Carrier (1992:1) notes:

"Within anthropology itself have come challenges to the very core of the anthropologist's method: fieldwork and ethnography. With the failing faith in the possibility of straightforward description has come a rising awareness that people in villages not only may have their own view of things but also may end up writing critical analyses of what the

anthropologist publishes. Taking this as their justification, critics within the discipline have come to argue that fieldwork needs to be recast as a collaborative effort, in which the anthropologist no longer is the discoverer who imposes order on, and authoritatively presents, an alien society. Instead, the New Model Anthropologist is a facilitator, the recorder of divergent voices and viewpoints.”

6.3. Future of Young People in Vanuatu: Afterthoughts

Finally the last section will look at the future of young people in Vanuatu as based on this research and supported by data supplied by the youth project. This last area of discussion allows voices to emerge but does not stand to be a conclusion that attempts to wrap things up. Instead it is more of a forum or challenge for future studies and furthering of a relationship between anthropology and participatory development studies. What is highlighted is a common refrain that without continued support from the ni-Vanuatu government and local and international NGOs, changes and research already put into action will only dissipate without consensus from higher level officials and strategic planning for the future. It is not the intention to view the fieldworkers’ statements as hopelessly negative about the future of Port Vila, but there most definitely is an underlining shadow throughout their assertions about a call to action before ‘liminality’ divides people from not just their *kastom* but positive features of modernity. For continuity to emerge in young people’s lives, action needs to be taken now. Today very much guides what will happen for the youth of tomorrow. The young people I spoke to recognized this and placed their beliefs on this argument most readily. *Kastom*, education, *kilim taem* and earning a living are the major concerns and as this thesis has readily explored, keeping a research project such as this one operating will endeavor to keep pressure on the State and other organizations, so quick to ‘help’ in the plenary sense, but what of their follow through?... this the area where doubts linger.

Town and Island are constantly intersecting invisible lines of 'social space'. It cannot be held that life in town and on the islands are two discrete cultural universes. Moreover it is incorrect to assume that life in town is fed by ways of the islands and *fasin blong waetman* while island life remains intact in its past *kastom fasin*. Life on the islands is changing through its depleting population, tourism, money economy and cycle of migration carrying back and forth new *fasins*. The social organization of 'traditional' ways as extended in the Cultural Policy of the Malvatumauri, suggests that *kastom* is still the foundation of island life and must be regulated as such, but without any sort of cultural outline upholding *kastom* in town life, the semblance of order seems lost. Although *kastom* is officially tied to the ground, people are not. *Fasins* are transported with people when they come to town. In recognizing this and proceeding accordingly, the Malvatumauri would be dramatically altering the face of *kastom*. Would this jeopardize the future of ni-Vanuatu people, or reconstruct their lives to better navigate the changes that are underway? Although I would not attempt to answer such a question myself, the late Grace Molisa and Elise Huffer in co-writing a discussion paper, did just that:

"Vanuatu has many of the ingredients necessary to govern itself well, beginning with its knowledge of the best practices of traditional governance, drawn from a diversity of cultural backgrounds from which threads of commonality can be linked and woven into a new fabric of Vanuatu society. These existing best practices are found in the different cultures of Vanuatu, particularly in the egalitarian, achievement-oriented, matrilineal societies, but also in the patrilineal societies that claim hereditary chieftainship (even in such societies there are women of rank and status). We should therefore be looking at not only the politics of hierarchy organisation which hold the Vanuatu people together. Vanuatu also upholds Christian values (*in God yumi stanup*), and has an understanding of the basic principles of democracy. It has formally educated decision makers, lawyers, economists and accountants, but so far it has not put serious thought and effort into applying the right skills to the existing skill demands. All these elements which belong to Vanuatu need to be studied further so that the best practices of the diverse societies can be incorporated into a body of a Vanuatu 'brand' of democracy and Vanuatu 'made' good governance." (Huffer and Molisa, 1999:11-12)

By giving youth a voice, the Young People's Project and the Cultural Centre are succeeding in preparing people for the sorts of issues that will be faced in years to come. The steps they are taking are worthwhile and will make a great deal of difference when the time comes to face the consequences of development. If people have had the opportunity to take part in the development of their social, cultural, political and economic institutions, they will be prepared to continue to persevere in ways that will benefit the future of all ni-Vanuatu citizens.

Things that made town life so different than island life 10 years ago are becoming less obvious divisions as time moves forward. A strong example of this is Bislama. On some islands the first language a child will learn is Bislama rather than their *kastom* language. The same pattern is seen in town with some children not being taught their island language at all. Even on the Pentecost, considered one of the strongest *kastom* islands, fundamental changes are occurring. While there used to be tens of languages, they are now divided into 3 main languages stemming from the regions; North, Central and Southern. The speed at which changes are occurring both in town as well as on the islands, only stands to emphasize the willingness which ni-Vanuatu people have shown in coming to accept certain features of modernization.

This thesis ends with parting words on the future of Vanuatu from those whose very futures are at stake: young people. One common conviction about the future was whatever the future brings is directly dependant to what is done now. Concentrating on the now, is the only way that the future can be interpreted and with all of the growing problems facing people in town, without serious action now, things are not going to get better.

“Futa long tomoro, hemi stap long han long evri wan yangfala” (The future of tomorrow rests in the hands of each of our youth). (Viviane, a YPP fieldworker)

What the youth group has succinctly pointed out is: by not looking at the needs of Vanuatu’s youth now, the future will be no good. The anger that youth are displaying, with having little opportunity has revealed that crime emerges out of feelings of frustration and anxiety. With little focus on these growing problems, they are only going to get worse. The government needs to implement programs to ensure that people are properly educated and have better access to employment opportunities. Moreover, a huge fear of some ni-Vanuatu youth is if the government just sits by and lets the problems facing youth balloon, Vanuatu’s crime will become more organized and begin to reflect a similar pattern that Papua New Guinea’s towns and people. With gangs organized in *kastom* style leadership, guns and knives are easily dispersed and crime facilitated. Sam, a YPP fieldworker believes the future rests on the shoulders of better governance and education:

“If the government were to institute employment programs in Vila, that might provide youth with technical training, young people would have better opportunities to find work and receive wages. The amount of wages doesn’t need to be a lot. Youth can feel they are contributing and making their mark simply by receiving a small amount. Whether or not this could buy the things they want, they would be far more satisfied with earning something, and would not think to go steal and cause trouble.”

In conclusion the words and thoughts of the YPP fieldworkers have been gathered, as to reflect their views on the future of Vanuatu. It seems only fitting to have the voices of such a invaluable group of researchers wrap up this paper:

“In Vanuatu there is a lot of poverty, but you’ll never find youth sleeping in the roads, starving or begging people for food in the streets. This is not the type of poverty that Vanuatu has now. But in 20 years from now, it might be exactly this type of poverty that you’ll see.”

--Evelyn, YPP fieldworker

“Yesterday I was watching television and a white man was on saying that agriculture in Vanuatu was suffering greatly. This because too many men in Vanuatu are thinking that agricultural work is terrible work. Farming is the number one job in the world, yet people in Vanuatu do not realize this. So when you are at home eating rice, look at your plate and realize that by eating this rice you are encouraging farmers in other countries to plant more. Young people in Vanuatu don’t think there is work available; but there is tons of land that could be cultivated to make money. People say that the prices at the market are too expensive, but that is because we are not producing enough. This way of thinking is predominant here and we must change this and pass on the message before we lose all of our knowledge of farming.”

--Annie, YPP fieldworker

“Right now Port Vila is one of those places where tourists come and say ‘oh it’s such a nice place. Everything is so beautiful and the pace of life is so calm and relaxing... you can really understand why Vila is such a great holiday destination’. But if the government does not take action now, in 50 years Port Vila is going to be one scary place. This is not difficult either, with organizations and development projects already showing them how it’s done, working and following the wishes of people.”

--Roger, YPP fieldworker

“The biggest issue right now is that government thinks one thing and the people another. If the government were to take into account the needs of its population in a manner that reflects its participation in the process, then we might have a chance of making the future a bright one. If the government continues to do things the way it does now, then no good will come.”

--Emily, YPP fieldworker

“To explain where we’ll be in 20-50 years from now we have to go back and look at our roots. The roots of our culture are in *kastom*. Look at what has happened in the last 20 years and this is very revealing of where we are heading.”

--Viviane, YPP fieldworker

APPENDIX

7.1. Recommendations Released by the YPP in Bislama

OL REKOMENDESEN

- **Luk save** nid blong ol fes jeneresen blong ol yangfala ni-Vanuatu we oli stap long taon, we fulap long olgeta oli stap bigwan insaed long ol setelmen mo oli nogat inaf janis blong save gat wan gudfala edukesen, trening mo ol infomesen we oli rili nidim.
- **Stanemap** ol opotuniti long saed blong non-fomal edukesen we i save lukluk speseli long ol yangfala we oli lego skul we yia blong olgeta i stap bitwin 13 yia mo 18 yia, mo olgeta ia oli stap meinli insaed long ol setelmen mo oli nogat janis blong lanem ol niufala skil.
- **Mekem sua** se ol pikinini mo ol yangfala oli gat akses long wan gud kwaliti edukesen mo semtaem wan edukesen we oli save mitim ol kost blong hem long wanwan komuniti blong olgeta, hemia long praemeri mo sekondari level. I gat sam pikinini we oli no atendem praemari skul from ol problem blong nogat janis mo nogat inaf mane blong pem skul fi.
- **Sapotem** ol interes blong ol yangfala long saed blong kastom mo kastom lanwis blong mekem se kastom bae i no lusum valiu blong hem from ol polisi blong edukesen, jioj mo developmen blong ekonomik.
- **Enkarejem** ol komuniti blong wok tugeta blong traem faenem ol wei blong sapotem ol yangfala blong holem taet ol save blong kastom insaed long taon from oli stap longwei long ol aelan blong olgeta. Fulap yangfala oli gat bigfala nid blong save karem infomesen mo blong gat save long saed blong kastom blong olgeta.
- **Sapotem** tingting blong lanem ol yangfala long kastom lanwis.
- **Mekem redi** mane mo ol risos blong karemaot ol program blong ol yangfala. Ol oganaesesen olsem gavman mo non-gavman mo ol jioj tu oli shud mekem fulap moa opotuniti mo program blong ol yangfala.
- **Mekem sua** se ol yangfala oli gat inaf infomesen mo save long saed blong helt mo ol program we oli avelebol long olgeta, from risej i faenem se fulap yangfala oli nogat evri infomesen we oli nidim.

- Yusum ol difren kaen fasin blong traem givim long ol yangfala ol impoten mesej we i taj wetem laef blong olgeta. Ol difren fasin olsem i gat: drama, radio wetem fes-to-fes kontak, be bigfala fokus hem i ☐s tap☐g long fasin blong gat oltaem wan eksjenj blong toktok mo tingting wetem ol yangfala. Ol yangfala oli bin talemaot se bae oli hapi tumas sapos ol infomesen oli save go long olgeta tru long ol fasin olsem.
- Givhan long ol yangfala blong ☐s tap☐g ☐ bisnis blong olgeta – givim long olgeta ol skil we oli nidim long saed blong kredit mo infomesen long saed blong maketing. Stamba konsen blong ol yangfala long taon hem i wok mo fulap ol famle oli stap ekspektem olgeta blong faenem wok mo blong givhan long ol famle long saed blong mane.
- Developem wan mikro kredit skim blong ol yangfala.
- Luksave se nomata fulap yangfala oli no stap wok blong karem mane, oli stap kontribut bigwan long saed blong ekonomi tru long wok blong olgeta long garen mo long haos mo we ☐s tap givhan long ol narafala famli we oli wok blong mane. Wok blong ol yangfala ia hem i wan samting we ☐s tap helpem ol famle bigwan.
- Provaedem trening ☐s tap☐g ☐nt long saed blong wok mo ol trening aprentship skim blong ol yangfala.
- Developem ol trening senta we oli save givim ☐s ta long ol yangfala blong oli save holem taet save we oli gat long saed blong save wok wetem namba mo long saed blong save raet mo ☐s tap☐g karem ol niu skil afta oli finis long Klas 6.
- Faenemaot ol problem we oli stap wetem ol kondisen blong wok blong ol yangfala mo enfosem lejislesen blong minimum wej.
- Wok kolosap wetem ol yangfala blong developem ol difren fasin blong komuniket mo pasem ol mesej long saed blong riprodaktif helt mo long saed blong smok mo drink.

- Oganaesem wan wikli redio program we ol yangfala nomo oli developem mo ranem we bae □s tap tokbaot ol isiu we i konsenem ol yangfala mo blong givimaot infomesen we oli wantem gat.
- Mekem fulap difren video program blong ol yangfala. Ol aksen video oli stamba influens long ol yangfala. I gat wan bigfala nid blong mekem ol lokol video we i save givim infomesen long ol yangfala long saed blong edukesen mo enteteinmen tu.
- Promotem kastom blong adresem ol isiu blong ol juvenile ofendas (ol yangfala we oli brekem loa). Fulap yangfala oli respektem ol jif mo ol jif representatif insaed long ol wanwan eria blong olgeta long taon mo oli filim se ol jif blong olgeta oli sud gat wan rol long saed ia.
- Karemaot moa risej long saed blong jenda ('gender'). Risej i bin soem se i gat fulap difrens □s tap bitwin eksperiens blong ol yangfala man mo woman mo hemia i soem se i gat wan nid blong lukluk moa insaed long eria ia.
- Karemaot moa patisipetori risej long saed blong ol nid mo ol isiu we oli stap afektem ol yangfala insaed long taon olsem long saed blong maketing opotuniti blong smol bisnis mo ol posibiliti long saed blong inkam jenereting aktiviti blong ol Klas 6 mo ol Yia 10 skul liva.
- Provaedem moa akses blong ol yangfala long riprodaktif helt edukesen mo teknoloji.
- Mekem ol ples blong ol yangfala blong oli save plei spot mo musik.
- Traem stopem fasin blong stap blemem ol yangfala from ol jenis we oli stap tekem ples naoia.
- Lisen long wanem we ol yangfala oli gat blong talem.

(Young People's Project 1998:xi-xiii)

7.2 Summary of Official 1999 National Census Results:

	1967 ₁	1979 ₁	1989	1999
POPULATION				
Resident Population	77,988	111,251	142,419	186,678
Male	41,371	59,074	73,384	95,682
Female	36,617	52,177	69,035	90,996
Ni-Vanuatu ethnicity	72,243	104,371	139,475	184,329
Residents of other ethnic groups	5,745	6,880	2,944	2,349
Port Vila	5,208	10,691	18,905	29,356
Luganville	2,564	5,183	6,965	10,738
Rural	70,216	95,467	116,549	146,584
Malampa	17,407	23,567	28,174	32,705
Penama	13,968	18,937	22,281	26,646
Sanma	12,785	19,423	25,542	36,084
Shefa	17,633	26,860	38,023	54,439
Tafea	12,436	17,506	22,414	29,047
Torba	3,481	4,958	5,985	7,757
Percent of Population --				
Under 15 yrs. old	44.8%	45.8%	44.1%	42.7%
65 yrs. old and over	2.9%	2.9%	3.6%	3.4%
Occupied Households	14,937	22,621	28,252	36,415
<hr/>				
VITAL STATISTICS	1967	1979	1989	1999_p
Ni-Vanuatu Crude Birth Rate per 1,000	45	45	37	33
Ni-Vanuatu Total Fertility Rate ₂	6.8	6.5	5.3	4.5
Ni-Vanuatu Infant Mortality Rate ₃	123	94	45	25

ISLAND		Resident Population, 1989	Resident Population, 1999	Percent Change, 1989 – 1999
VANUATU		142,419	186,678	31.1
SHEFA		38,023	54,439	43.2
	Efate	27,459	42,128	53.4
	Epi	3,236	4,554	40.7
	Tongoa	2,508	2,397	-4.4
	Ifira	744	983	32.1
	Nguna	983	959	-2.4
	Emae	786	850	8.1
	Emau	541	705	30.3
	Lamen	390	410	5.1
	Lelepa	297	350	17.8
	Tongariki	347	256	-26.2
	Moso	178	234	31.5
	Pele	220	220	0
	Buninga	140	160	14.3
	Makira	90	132	46.7
	Mataso	104	101	-2.9
PENAMA		22,281	26,646	19.6
	Pentecost	11,336	14,057	24.0
	Ambae	8,583	9,418	9.7
	Maewo	2,362	3,171	34.3
TORBA		5,985	7,757	29.6
	Gaua	1,285	2,031	58.1
	Vanua Lava	1,343	1,933	43.9
	Mota Lava	1,047	1,146	9.5
	Mere Lava	815	750	-8.0
	Mota	572	686	19.9
	Ureparapara	277	363	31.0
	Toga	168	298	77.4
	Hiu	129	200	55.0
	Rah	142	143	0.7
	Loh	129	139	7.8
	Tegua	33	39	18.2
	Merig	17	19	11.8
	Metoma	5	10	100.0
	Kwakea	23	0	-100.0

PROVINCE	ISLAND	Resident Population, 1989	Resident Population, 1999	Percent Change, 1989 – 1999
MALAMPA		28,174	32,705	16.1
	Malekula	15,085	18,984	25.8
	Ambrym	7,189	7,369	2.5
	Paama	1,677	1,633	-2.6
	Maskelynes	834	944	13.2
	Atchin	816	761	-6.7
	Vao	777	667	-14.2
	Akhamb	462	567	22.7
	Unipiv	325	444	36.6
	Arseo	38	290	763.2
	Rano	262	273	4.2
	Tomman	190	244	28.4
	Wala	185	201	8.6
	Avock	184	169	-8.2
	Norsup	86	92	7.0
	Uri	45	66	46.7
	Lopevi	19	1	-94.7
TAFEA		22,414	29,047	29.6
	Tanna	19,825	25,840	30.3
	Erromango	1,254	1,560	24.4
	Aneityum	543	821	51.2
	Aniwa	361	424	17.5
	Futuna	431	402	-6.7
SANMA		25,542	36,084	41.3
	Santo	21,117	30,900	46.3
	Malo	2,867	3,532	23.2
	Tutuba	315	518	64.4
	Aore	502	442	-12.0
	Tangoa	390	373	-4.4
	Mavea	126	172	36.5
	Araki	112	98	-12.5
	Bokissa	26	30	15.4
	Malokilikili	12	15	25.0
	Urelapa	3	2	-33.3
	Aese	58	2	-96.6
		170		

Tangisi	4	0	-100.0
Venui	10	0	-100.0

	Occupied Households, 1989	Occupied Households, 1999	Increase 1989 - 1999	Percent Change, 1989 - 1999
Port Vila	4,080	6,155	2,075	50.9
Luganville	1,400	2,103	703	50.2
Total Urban Households	5,480	8,258	2,778	50.7
Rural Households	22,772	28,157	5,385	23.6
Total Households	28,252	36,415	8,163	28.9

(Vanuatu National Statistics Office 1999)

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