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Culture, Health & Sexuality

An International Journal for Research, Intervention and Care

ISSN: 1369-1058 (Print) 1464-5351 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tchs20

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To cite this article: Richard Eves (2019) ‘Full price, full body’: norms, brideprice and intimate partner violence in highlands Papua New Guinea, Culture, Health & Sexuality, 21:12, 1367-1380, DOI: 10.1080/13691058.2018.1564937

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2018.1564937

CULTURE, HEALTH & SEXUALITY
2019, VOL. 21, NO. 12, 1367–1380
https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2018.1564937

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'Full price, full body': norms, brideprice and intimate partner violence in highlands Papua New Guinea

Richard Eves

Department of Pacific Affairs, Coral Bell School of Asia and Pacific Affairs, ANU College of the Asia-Pacific, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia

ABSTRACT

This paper draws on qualitative research in Jiwaka Province, in the highlands of Papua New Guinea (PNG), to examine the changing nature of marriage in that context. In particular, it examines how changes in the practice of brideprice have been associated with an increase in intimate partner violence. Violence, a relational process, is to be understood in the context of the customary unequal power relations between men and women. It is argued that men in the highlands of PNG see any gain in power for women as a loss for themselves, and so actively resist it. Men who see their power over women challenged resort to the discourse of brideprice, arguing that the payment of brideprice gives them absolute authority over wives. A good understanding of the norms that sanction violence is a vital step in developing interventions to prevent violence.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 27 March 2018
Accepted 11 December 2018

KEYWORDS
Norms; intimate partner violence; marriage; brideprice; Papua New Guinea

Introduction

Jackson argues that women's negative experience of marriage has been given prominence in the literature while its positive aspects have been largely ignored (Jackson 2007, 118). Despite marriage generally being the most acute site of inequality for women, Jackson points out that it can also be a site of co-operation between the genders and so may be beneficial to women (2007, 116–118). Moreover, marriage is sometimes the setting for the significant exercise of women's power (2007, 124). In this paper, I document the ways in which social and gender norms are central to some of the inequality in marriage in the Papua New Guinea (PNG) highlands, while recognising that marriage does give women advantages.

The role of social norms in regulating and defining behaviour is increasingly noted in research on intimate partner violence. Social norms are beliefs shared by a community about what is appropriate behaviour and what is inappropriate (Heise and Manji 2016, 1). Such norms act as social regulators, and since considerable pressure is exerted to ensure conformity to them, they are powerful factors in shaping behaviour. Gender norms are a category of social norms that comprise accepted beliefs about typical and appropriate behaviour for men and women, and boys and girls.

CONTACT Richard Eves Richard.Eves@anu.edu.au

> [Gender norms] spell out dominant models of masculinity and femininity in different societies, allocating men and women and boys and girls to different roles and responsibilities on the basis of socially-constructed aptitudes and dispositions. (Kabeer 2016, 297)

Thus, gender norms shape how men and women see themselves as men and women, their social and intimate relationships, their sexuality and the allocation of power and resources (Stern, Heise and McLean 2017, 976).

A growing literature examines the role of social and gender norms in supporting, licensing and legitimising intimate partner violence (IPV) (Hatcher et al. 2013; Miedema et al. 2017; Stern, Heise and McLean 2017).[1] For example, Go and colleagues argue that violence is a form of discipline used to enforce gender norms (Go et al. 2003, 393, 402). Hatcher and colleagues describe how the male perpetration of IPV is related to women's deviations from traditional gender norms (Hatcher et al. 2014, 1034). The successful prevention of violence, therefore, depends on understanding the social and gender norms that support violent behaviour.

The exchange of valuables (brideprice), an important part of the cluster of social and gender norms that comprise marriage, is common in many countries throughout the world, including in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific.[2] Debate exists over the risks these practices pose to women, but the relationship between brideprice and IPV is complicated and a direct association is rare. For example, reporting on findings from the WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence, Abramsky and colleagues found that the payment of dowry and brideprice (compared to no such exchange) was associated with IPV in some sites, but that the patterns of risk were difficult to interpret (Abramsky et al. 2011). They found that in six sites where dowry was paid this was associated with higher levels of IPV in four sites (three significant) and lower IPV in one site (not significant). In cases of brideprice exchange, this was associated with decreased IPV at four (two significant) and increased violence at two sites (neither significant) (Abramsky et al. 2011).

A qualitative study in Uganda found that the payment of brideprice was one of the factors associated with IPV. Brideprice payment was also perceived to worsen existing gender inequalities and inequities, especially in regard to decisions concerning reproductive health (Kaye et al. 2005a, 302). In Uganda, Hague and colleagues found that the vast majority of their interviewees believed a strong connection existed between brideprice and IPV, though the connection was complex (Hague, Thiara and Turner 2011, 557). They concluded that,

> … bride-price itself appears exponentially to multiply the types of abuse that wives experience and the reasons why the violence occurs. It cements women's inferior position in the family and the likelihood of their husbands feeling that they have an undisputed right to dominate and control their wives by using violence. (Hague, Thiara and Turner 2011, 557)

Researchers also recognise that brideprice having been paid can constrain women's choices and trap them in an abusive relationship (Rudwick and Posel 2015, 297; Kaye et al. 2005a, 302; Hague, Thiara and Turner 2011, 556; Winchester 2016, 1337). Because the brideprice must sometimes be returned if a marriage dissolves, the payment of brideprice can limit a woman's options in leaving a violent relationship (see Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1993, 95).

In the case of PNG, several scholars have noted that brideprice serves as a justification for husbands' control of, and violence towards, their wives (Bradley 1985, 34; Rosi and Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1993, 195). Such justifications, I argue, are increasingly occurring in the context of greatly increased costs of brideprice and largely in contexts where men's power and authority in the marriage relationship is weakened or challenged. Men in the highlands of PNG conceptualise any gain in power for women as a loss for themselves and actively resist it, claiming that payment of brideprice bestows authority over their wives to them. In other words, men who feel they are losing power may resort to the discourse of brideprice to maintain their authority.

Papua New Guinea context

PNG is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and its constitution is committed to equal human rights. Nevertheless, in many significant aspects of their lives, women in PNG are disadvantaged in relation to men – and in relation to women in other countries – with less mean years of schooling (5.3 years for women and 8.8 years for men), less secondary schooling (8.8% of population for women and 14.7% of population for men) and a lower estimated per capita annual income (women US$2362.50; men US$3047) (UNDP 2017). Because women have a lower earning capacity due to their poorer education, and have limited rights to land and property ownership, they are usually dependent on men for economic survival. Women have very low representation in the national parliament (three seats or 2.7% in 2016, reduced to zero seats in the 2017 national election). Violence against women is considered to be epidemic (MSF 2016, 7).

The pre-colonial situation for women in the highlands is generally considered to have been more inequitable than in other parts of PNG, an earlier generation of anthropologists characterising gender relations there as 'sexual antagonism' – that is, a fundamental opposition between male and female. This included a rigid role dichotomy, residential segregation, a strict division of labour and distinct spheres of interpersonal life and ritual activity (Herdt and Poole 1982, 15). Men avoided women at certain times, such as prior to important ceremonies, the use of magic, warfare and hunting, because women, particularly their bodies and menstrual blood, were considered antithetical and, in some contexts, dangerous to men (Reay 1959, 162, 170–174).

The notion of 'sexual antagonism' as a rigid dichotomy was challenged to some extent by pioneering women anthropologists who argued that some complementarity existed between men and women, particularly in the types of labour each performed (see Brown and Buchbinder 1976, 4; Strathern 1972). The value of women lay in their capacity to produce and raise children and wealth objects such as the pigs and garden food used in exchanges of wealth and in ceremonies where men could acquire prestige (Brown and Buchbinder 1976, 8). More recently, Wardlow argues that women's actions are mostly encompassed: 'as part of larger social projects over which they have little authority or influence, and for which they receive little prestige' (Wardlow 2006, 67).

Marriage in PNG

The ubiquity of marriage, as is often noted, suggests that it is universal (Jackson 2012, 41), though marriage practices and the nature of conjugality differ across time, place and cultures. The cultural diversity of PNG means a great deal of variability exists in its marriage practices. Customary marriage is recognised in the PNG Marriage Act (Luluaki 1997, 9), but couples can select a statutory and/or a church ceremony, the latter becoming more popular due to the widespread influence of Christianity.

Marriage is a social imperative for women, and there is considerable pressure on them to marry (Dickerson-Putman 1996, 46; Langness 1967, 170). In the past, it was quite inconceivable for a woman not to marry, and though an increasing number of women now eschew marriage (more so in urban communities) the vast majority of women in PNG still pursue it as necessary. In the past, a woman's identity and social standing in a community was realised through marriage. A woman's status was often bound up with her success in raising a family and supporting her husband in his endeavours. Indeed, men were often dependent on women for their endeavours, for marriage, together with its exchanges of wealth and its fostering of alliances with other groups, was an important pathway through which men could gain prestige (Brown 1967, 95; Brown and Buchbinder 1976, 7–8; Langness 1967, 172; Strathern 1972, 288–289; Wardlow 2006, 67). Thus, men were dependent on women and their wealth-producing labour, without which their ambitions to become important men would have been severely curtailed. Despite this, men rarely esteemed or respected women but regarded them as inferior beings to be managed for men's benefit (Langness 1967, 171, 174; Strathern 1972, 159; Reay 1959, 23, 161; Reay 2014, 9–10).

Besides the social status conferred through marriage, a woman also gains access to resources, in particular to land. In the patrilineal societies of the highlands, while daughters may have some rights to use their fathers' land, this is not assured after his death, as his sons inherit the rights to the land and may not be willing to grant access to their sisters (Reay 1959, 9). Rather, a daughter is expected to move to her husband's village and to utilise his land.

Luluaki suggests that brideprice in PNG is integrally connected with formalising customary marriages, many societies regarding it as an indispensable part of the marriage contract; indeed, he argues that it is impossible to describe a union as 'marriage' if the brideprice has not been met. In the absence of brideprice, the marriage is not seen as legitimate and pressure will be exerted on the husband and his relatives to meet this obligation (Luluaki 1997, 22–23; see also Jackson 2007, 2012). However, it is important to note that the form and value of the items composing the brideprice differ significantly according to location.

A significant body of anthropological research provides rich insights into marriage and the exchanges accompanying it in PNG (Glasse and Meggitt 1969; Strathern 1984). However, much of this research describes pre-colonial practices or those of the early colonial period. Less has been done on the contemporary situation, even though many changes in marriage practices have occurred (but see Jorgensen 1993; Rosi and Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1993; Shih et al. 2017; Wardlow 2006; Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1993, 2016).

Arranged marriages are becoming less common as men and women seek to follow their own desires in their choice of marriage partner, and more companionate forms of marriage have been accepted to some extent. Some people are marrying into societies with different marriage practices and different expectations of the conjugal relationship. In some places, there has been a proliferation of polygyny, a steep inflation in brideprice and a transformation of gender relations in the household. Some women are opting out of marriage or choosing relationships with rich men or, entering polygynous relationships, in order to meet their interests and aspirations more fully (Mek et al. 2018; Zimmer-Tamakoshi 2016). These transformations in marriage have been driven by the social, cultural and economic changes introduced since colonialism, including Christianity, Western education, the movement of people within the country, the emergence of the cash economy and modern notions of marriage. Not only have these changes impacted on marriage, they have impacted on gender relations and the ways in which masculinity and femininity are realised in the contemporary context.

Under today's different conditions, men must use different means to forge an identity. In the past, men could distinguish themselves through economic, social and political means, essentially involving assertive public performance through oratory and conspicuous displays of wealth, and by exercising their authority over the community (Reay 1959, 95–97, 114–122). Today, community discipline has weakened while individualist sentiment has grown, so that the younger generation of men with few skills or resources to achieve such renown are able to express their identity through negative or destructive actions, such as heavy drinking, the pursuit of multiple sexual partners and especially by imposing discipline on their wives. Though women remain largely dependent on men for access to land, they are gaining their own autonomy in other ways, including access to other economic resources. Some of these changes have seen the established gender order called into question, with more talk about gender equality and increased questioning of the legitimacy of violence.

However, the changes in marriage practices have not always been positive for women and have sometimes produced worse outcomes. For many women, marriage remains a 'double-edged sword' (Winchester 2016, 1337); on the one hand it is desired as the socially acceptable route to womanhood and recognition in the community, but on the other hand it is a site of conflict and violence. For those working to address gender inequality and IPV in conjugal relationships, an understanding of the effects of contemporary marriage practices on women is, therefore, important.

Methods

The data on marriage and brideprice discussed here were collected in April 2016 in the Anglimp-South Wahgi District of Jiwaka Province in the highlands of PNG. The fertile Wahgi Valley is near the Highlands Highway that links the coast to the mountainous interior, allowing easy access to the highland towns of Kundiawa, Goroka and Mt Hagen and the coastal city of Lae. It composes one facet of the data gathered there for a larger project examining the relationship between IPV and women's economic empowerment (Eves et al. 2018). That research focused on women's involvement in the informal sector of the economy, using in-depth qualitative interviews to

explore how marital relationships and household economies are conducted and what triggers conflicts and violence.

To facilitate a better understanding of the range of beliefs, attitudes and norms that underpin gender inequitable behaviour, both men (14) and women (36) were interviewed.[3] Respondents were recruited through the community-based organisation Voice for Change, which has strong links with surrounding communities. Many of the respondents had received gender awareness training from this NGO, although IPV rates remained high, women still suffered many disadvantages and the social and gender norms which constrain women remained largely in force.

This paper draws mainly but not entirely on 22 interviews with key informants – women's leaders, human rights defenders and village court officials – men and women working with their local communities to address the high levels of violence. Their direct experience of dealing with violence gives them first-hand knowledge of the kinds of language and arguments used to justify violence. These local cultural brokers are not to be dismissed as inauthentic purveyors of Western discourse; rather it should be acknowledged that contestation over social and gender norms has been a part of life for these communities for many years as change has accelerated in the post-contact era, under the kinds of influences mentioned above. Whether the views of these cultural brokers are representative of the wider society is hard to say. However, their views indicate that at least some local people are thinking critically about the ways that social and gender norms are detrimental to women.

Findings

In Jiwaka, many respondents spoke of the decline of tradition (*pasin bilong tumbuna*; literally, ways of the ancestors), but said that marriage customs remained strong. Of the 36 women interviewed, 29 marriages (80.6%) entailed the payment of brideprice. The highest brideprice paid was K20,000 (US$6170) and 30 pigs, and the lowest was K400 (US$125). The most pigs were 30, and the least was one. One brideprice payment included a cow and some a cassowary.

As has occurred more generally in PNG in the wake of European contact, in Jiwaka the kinds of asset exchanged and the nature of the exchanges have changed significantly, and this has had important ramifications for women who, in some cases, are even worse off than they were in the past. Much as the functions and meanings of marriage are changing, so it is with brideprice, with apparent continuity masking significant changes. Today the exchange is simply referred to as *braidprais* (brideprice), but the types of item and the amount of wealth exchanged and the form of the exchanges have all changed.

In the past, though the number and type of items exchanged varied according to the wealth of the groom, the value of the exchange was quite small compared with today's standards. For a man of wealth, the objects might have included some ropes of small cowrie shells, a parcel of salt and one to four bird of paradise plumes, together with a pig, but a poor man might simply have killed a pig and presented it to the bride's relatives (Reay 1959, 98). Reay says that soon after the arrival of Europeans, opportunities for greater displays of wealth arose and this increased the

volume and the scope of the exchange (Reay 1959, 98). Marriage exchanges always included pigs, generally a single pig, although a wealthy man arranging his own or his son's marriage may have exchanged two or even three pigs (Reay 1959, 102) .

Almost all the items previously given in marriage exchanges have now been displaced, only pigs continuing to be of import. Today, money is the main item of exchange – as much as K20,000 (US$6170) according to respondents, though much higher amounts have been paid elsewhere in Jiwaka. Marriage is increasingly used as a competitive arena in which men, supported by their close kin, vie with each other to see who can pay the most for a bride. As one key informant, a village court magistrate, explained:

> There is a competitive spirit amongst families and *hauslain* [extended family] which means people compete over how much they spend on brideprice for women. If a man has a lot of money, he will spend more than K10,000 and, if a business man, more than K100,000. Men compete to see how much they can spend on buying a wife, which isn't good.

The inflation of brideprice has negative consequences, including the marginalisation of men who cannot afford to compete. When marriage becomes the preserve of the wealthy, or of men who can draw on the support of others, young men without the necessary resources or support structures feel alienated from and resentful towards society. The brides themselves are also often severely affected by the inflation of brideprice, since the exchange usually entails creating debts that must be repaid later, with the burden of earning the money often falling on the woman herself (Eves 2018, 25–26).

Generally, a series of exchanges accompany a marriage. In the past, a first payment sealed the betrothal, followed later by the main marriage payment that comprised an exchange of valuables between two clans (Reay 1959, 98–99). This wealth was given in payment for the bride, but the bride's relatives were obliged to make a return payment of similar valuables. The husband's relatives were also required at some stage to exchange a bride back to the wife's clan (Reay 1959, 99). Exchanges were meant to continue throughout the marriage, especially upon the birth of children, and the debts accrued were finally settled at death (Reay 1959, 101). Marriage exchanges, thus, were not simply a transfer of a bride from her clan to another clan on payment of valuables, but a series of reciprocal exchanges that took place over a lifetime. There was an emphasis on exact equivalence, and the exchange of women and other valuables back and forth between the groups sought to consolidate social networks and relationships.

Today, however, this complex cycle of exchange is being replaced with a simplified version, entailing only the exchange of money and other items in return for the bride. One consequence is that people increasingly conceptualise the exchange of brideprice as a business transaction, in which the wife is a form of 'property' that is purchased. According to Reay this has always existed in marriage exchanges (Reay 1959, 23). Today in their efforts to maintain conjugal authority, the property aspect of marriage is emphasised by husbands who downplay the relational aspect.

Brideprice and commodification

The 'commodification' of marriage exchanges can be explained as an outcome of the cash economy and the substitution of cash for the valuables traditionally used, but it

is also due to people seeing exchange relations through a market lens.[4] In addition to the use of the term *braidprais*, a modern term, the commodification aspect is evident in the common way of referring to marriage in Tok Pisin, as *baim meri* (buying a woman/wife).[5] Rather than being seen as an exchange which creates a relationship between two social groupings, the brideprice exchange is now widely understood quite literally as a simple property transaction, in which a woman becomes the property of a man. Having 'purchased' a woman, a man believes he owns her, like an item bought in a store. However, unlike a store-bought commodity, a bride cannot be on-sold by the husband to someone else. Rather, the marriage must be dissolved and the brideprice returned before another marriage can take place.

Seeing brideprice through the lens of the market means that husbands understand it as giving them full control over their wife. Key informants listed several expressions men use to justify this control. The simplest expression used in Jiwaka is '*bossim*' (to control or boss), but sometimes a man will tell his wife, 'You're under my control' (*yu stap aninit long kontrol bilong mi*), or 'Your life is in my hands' (*laip bilong yu i stap long han bilong mi*), which means that her very existence depends on his goodwill. Sometimes the expression 'full price, full body' (*full prais, full bodi*) is used, meaning that since the full brideprice requested by the wife's group was paid, so the husband has complete control of his wife's body (*olgeta bodi bilong en, mi ful payment*). Brideprice, men say, entitles them to total control over their wives, 'from their feet to the hair on their head' (*long lek inap long gras pinis*). One man, a key informant, a village court official explained:

> It is the custom of highlanders to buy wives with a large amount of brideprice. Ok, when we buy a wife, we think that we have paid for the body of the woman from the toe-to-head. Because a man has paid brideprice he thinks that the wife is under his control. Men think like this. So, when a husband asks his wife to do some work in the garden or something else and she avoids this and does what she likes and goes off to play cards, he will ask her what she has been doing. 'You have work in the house and wander off doing your own thing.' They will then start to fight.

The payment of brideprice entitles the husband to his wife's labour, her sexual services and her total obedience (Bradley 1985, 34). This has the logical consequence of legitimating violence, since having authority means exercising authority and, ultimately, using punitive means to enforce this. Indeed, a common response by a husband to justify the violence he uses against his wife is the refrain, '*mi baim em pinis*' (I have paid for her), as one key informant remarked.

Any attempt by a wife to escape a violent or dysfunctional marriage will be met with a similar refrain, the husband saying that he has expended a lot of money and pigs in purchasing his wife, and so the situation should remain as it is. For example, one key informant, a human rights defender working with a local NGO, told how, when she accompanied a female teacher to the police station to lodge a complaint against the teacher's husband for beating her, the husband who was in custody said, 'I paid brideprice, a large amount of brideprice, so I have the right to beat her' (*Mi baim braidprais, bikpela braidprais. Mi got rait long paitim em, em i tok*). This defence may also be endorsed by members of a husband's clan, especially since it is they who have usually contributed to the brideprice. Thus, IPV is considered an entirely appropriate corrective for even the slightest failure of wives to fulfil their perceived marital

duties and to observe customary proprieties. Another key informant, a village court magistrate, remarked that:

> There are a lot of cases. People come to the village court, the wife will complain, and the husband will complain. The husband will say that she is wilful (*bikhed*) and 'I paid for her with brideprice, but she is wilful.' The woman will say that he does not look after her: 'He doesn't help me with the work, he doesn't help me with looking after the pigs, so I'm responsible for doing all the hard work …'

Men's loss of power and authority

It is significant that men have recourse to the argument that brideprice gives them absolute authority when women seek justice or challenge their husband's authority. As Bradley argues, to understand IPV, 'it is essential to see it in the context of relations between men and women in general' (Bradley 1985, 33). Several scholars writing about developing countries have described the desire of men to maintain the existing unequal relations of power as a zero-sum game in which they see a gain in power for women as causing a loss of power for men, and so it must be resisted (see Dworkin et al. 2012, 103). This is apt for PNG where changes, such as the constitutional recognition of the right to equality and the availability to women of education and access to economic resources, have brought new independence to some women, disturbing traditional gender roles and hierarchies. In this context, the belief that violence is a legitimate tool for disciplining errant or *bikhed* (wilful) wives is increasingly being contested. Indeed, there is generally less social acceptance of violence than previously, and this has been accompanied by changing policy and legislation that specifically targets IPV.

Women are active in challenging their husbands and trying to hold them to account for their failure to fulfil their conjugal obligations. In addition to women being able to access their husband's land through marriage, there are expectations that he will contribute labour and financial resources to the household, but many men in Jiwaka fail to meet these obligations. Several women respondents bemoaned the fact that their husbands refused to give them money or help with the work in the garden. As one woman said, she does the gardening, raises and sells pigs, looks after the children and does the household chores while her husband 'relaxes'. There are, however, risks to women challenging their husbands, and violence from male partners is an egregious example. Women's attempts at realising their agency are, thus, constrained by the real threat of violence (see Campbell and Mannell 2016).

However, according to men's either/or understanding of power, women are indeed achieving power at their expense. As a key informant who works for a local NGO observed, the training women receive from NGOs is making women 'go on top' and men say they are 'down on the ground now' (*daun long graun nau*). There is a feeling that men are being left behind and masculine power eroded. Similar responses to manifestations of women's empowerment has been reported elsewhere in the Pacific and is sometimes referred to as 'backlash'. For example, Taylor writes that in Vanuatu some men saw government endorsement of women's rights and empowerment as constituting 'violence against men' and responded by establishing a Violence Against Men and Family Protection Centre (Taylor 2008, 167). Taylor suggests that the idea of

gender equality undermines existing hierarchical mechanisms of social control and entails men being stripped of their traditional masculine power (Taylor 2008, 173; see also Kaye et al. 2005b, 631).

Conclusion

Because brideprice can have negative consequences for women, it is sometimes labelled a 'harmful practice' (Jalal 2009, 2), and its abolition is suggested as a solution. However, as Hague, Thiara and Turner say, '"[c]ultural" practices everywhere are not singularly beneficial or harmful' (Hague, Thiara and Turner 2011, 554). What is at issue, rather, are changes in the meaning of brideprice, more particularly how it can be invoked as a justification for IPV. A positive or negative evaluation of the practice depends on personal perspective and societal context. Wardlow for example argues, for another PNG highlands society, that women have a huge stake in the practice, whether they are a bride, mother or clan member (Wardlow 2006, 106). Indeed, she goes so far as to argue that women's identity is enmeshed in the notion of brideprice, and for at least some women the failure to exchange brideprice violated their sense of being a virtuous woman (Wardlow 2006, 105).

Although brideprice may be used to justify violence, it is far from the only factor contributing to its occurrence. Its abolition would not end the violence, for men can claim authority and power in the relationship regardless and can find other ways of justifying this. It is also the case that many cases of physical abuse occur in relationships where brideprice has not been exchanged (Toft 1985), implying that IPV is normalised in other ways. IPV is legitimated not simply by the exchange of brideprice but by men's general domination over women (Strathern 1985, 4). Take brideprice away and that all-purpose power over women remains, and so does the violence.

Some communities in Jiwaka are already questioning some of the social and gender norms which impact negatively on women, including those pertaining to marriage, and a few have developed community laws, supported by the national government (Eves 2017). These laws deal with several social issues impacting negatively on women, such as polygyny, domestic violence and witchcraft accusations. The Kuma Community Peace and Security Law of the Dambex Association of Kudjip, for example, sets out a list of 30 laws that members of the community must follow, including laws against polygyny, violence against women and marital rape. These laws also standardise brideprice, prohibit the beating of wives and extorting money from them and require men to share their money and goods equitably with their families.

Such community-based initiatives provide an opportunity to start conversations about gender transformation in the community. Their existence shows that norms are not impervious to change, but that communities can unite to facilitate better outcomes for women. Given that negative social and gender norms are beyond the level of the individual but gain their authority through the community, it is appropriate that change should start there. As one key informant, an NGO worker, commented, while some men are in agreement with women exercising their rights, it is society that makes this difficult. Focusing on changing social and gender norms within the

community means that issues such as intimate partner violence are seen as the community's responsibility, not as that of an individual woman (Michau 2007, 104).

Notes

1. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), intimate partner violence is one of the most common categories of violence against women and includes physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and controlling behaviours by an intimate partner (WHO 2012, 1).
2. Bridewealth or brideprice refers to the exchange or transfer of valuables (money, animals and other goods) by the husband or his relatives to the bride's relatives on, or prior, to marriage (Hague, Thiara and Turner 2011, 550; Bossen 1988, 128). Dowry refers to the exchange or transfer valuables from the bride's relatives to the husband and his relatives (Bossen 1988, 128).
3. Papua New Guinea researchers conducted interviews with male and female respondents, and the author interviewed key informants. All interviews were conducted in Tok Pisin, and were transcribed by the interviewers. A research assistant thematically coded the transcripts which were analysed by the author. Ethical clearance was obtained through The Australian National University's Human Research Ethics Committee.
4. The 'commodification' of brideprice has been noted both for PNG (Jorgensen 1993, 60; Luluaki 1997, 28; Rosi and Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1993, 195; Wardlow 2006, 101; Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1993, 87) and more widely (Hague, Thiara and Turner 2011, 556; Kaye et al. 2005a, 302). Writing of PNG, Jorgensen says that some informants spoke of marriage as a sort of business (Jorgensen 1993, 60, 72).
5. Considerable debate exists about the suitability of the term 'brideprice', some scholars preferring the more neutral and less value-laden 'bridewealth' (Jorgensen 1993, 57; Luluaki 1997, 22, 28) and others contesting the view that it entails commodification (Bossen 1988; Valeri 1994).

Acknowledgements

The views expressed here are the author's alone and are not necessarily those of the Australian Government. I thank Genevieve Kouro, Steven Simiha and Irene Subalik, members of the research team, and Tessa Walsh for logistical support.

Disclosure statement

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this paper.

Funding

The Do No Harm research project was funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development program.

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