and included formality, distance, name taboos, and respect.

Intergenerational exchange contrasted with that of marital and *kamain* transactions. It usually marked a variety of ceremonial occasions such as birth feasts, first achievement offerings (which sometimes evolved into more elaborate feasts, which Mead called "crocodile-yam" feasts), initiation rites, rituals to release taboos, enemy skull gifts, and mourning rites. All of these significant events in the life of a person were marked by feasting and/or exchange. Furthermore, all of the transactions on these occasions shared certain characteristics that contrasted markedly with those of affinal and *kamain* exchanges: (1) formally, they were between people of different generations, although if one of the central figures were still a child, parents acted on his or her behalf;[6] (2) the main transactors were usually either mother's brother and sister's son, or father's sister and brother's daughter,[7] relationships not characterized by a great deal of formality, distance, or respect, especially when classificatory (as was commonly true for the major exchanges); (3) the things exchanged were not the same or identical, i.e., one did not relinquish a sibling and get someone's sibling in return as in marital exchange, or give a feast of sago grubs and receive a feast of sago grubs as a *kamain* might; if one gave pigs, for example, he or she was likely to receive yams in return; (4) although the goods exchanged between any particular dyad (e.g., mother's brother-sister's son) were not the same, there was always a delayed balancing out; if, for example, a man received yams from his mother's brother in return for a pig, he would later act as mother's brother and give yams to a descendant of his mother's brother (his own classificatory sister's son), from whom he would receive pigs.

Although these transactions took place on a variety of occasions, they all had the same structure, involved the same people, and continued through generations. From a male perspective, all of them were in a sense matrilateral exchanges, that is, with mother's brother or sister's son. From a woman's point of view, they were with father's sister and brother's daughter. If one looks from the perspective not of the transactors but of the intervening relative, a woman observed and mediated exchanges between her brother and her son, a man between his sister and his daughter. On some occasions (e.g., birth and death), the sex of the younger generation participant was not relevant, and the exchanges were between mother's brother and sister's child and between father's sister and brother's child.

There were thus two contrasting modes of exchange: intragenerational (affines, *kamain*) and intergenerational (mother's brother/sister's son, father's sister/brother's daughter). The first was basically an exchange of identical items between the same structural position or equals, and the second an exchange of disparate items between unequals or those in different structural positions. Respect and formality were required in the first, and informality and perhaps jesting in the second. Thus, the two modes contrasted in several ways:

| | |
|---|---|
| intragenerational | intergenerational |
| formality/respect | informality/jesting |
| same goods | contrasting goods |
| equality | inequality |
| symmetry | asymmetry |

However, because the diachronic transactions continued for more than two generations, there was an eventual balancing out at the end; in this sense, even these were balanced and equal.

What is especially significant is that, ideally, a whole complex of exchanges united both modes: an exchange marriage in one generation was followed by diachronic transactions among the descendants of those unions, and the whole series of transactions ended with another exchange marriage, thus at once bringing the series to closure, balancing and equalizing the unequal diachronic/disparate exchanges, and at the same time beginning another series.[8] Indeed this was the schema by which the Mundugumor conceptually ordered their society and which embodied significant values and precepts. Through the process of intergenerational exchange, what had begun as a marriage in one generation was allowed to evolve, but only to a limited extent: the end result was to recapture the elements and pull them back into

6 The fact that parents were expected to act on behalf of the child is significant because it transformed many of these transactions into ones between classificatory brother-sister pairs. See the discussion below.

7 Sometimes other combinations were relevant, such as mother's brother and sister's daughter or father's sister and brother's son.

8 In Bun, these transactions are the way in which people define themselves as human – both as autonomous individuals and social persons. Autonomy is, I argue (see McDowell 1980, 1984), a seminal issue throughout Melanesia. Exchange allows for both separation and connectedness and is thus almost a natural means for expressing and possibly resolving problems of autonomy and self (see also Weiner 1976).