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"We can even feel that we are poor, but we have a strong and rich spirit" : learning from the lives and organization of the women of Tira Chapeu, Cape Verde.

Marla Jill Solomon  
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"WE CAN EVEN FEEL THAT WE ARE POOR,  
BUT WE HAVE A STRONG AND RICH SPIRIT":  
LEARNING FROM THE LIVES AND ORGANIZATION  
OF THE WOMEN OF TIRA CHAPEU, CAPE VERDE

A Dissertation Presented

by

MARLA JILL SOLOMON

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1992

School of Education

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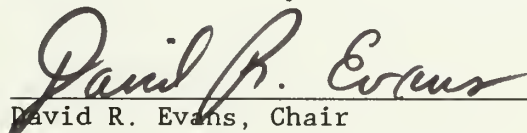
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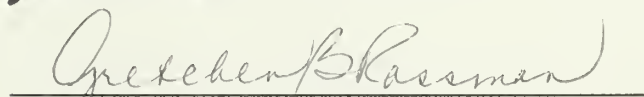
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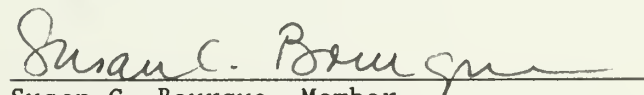
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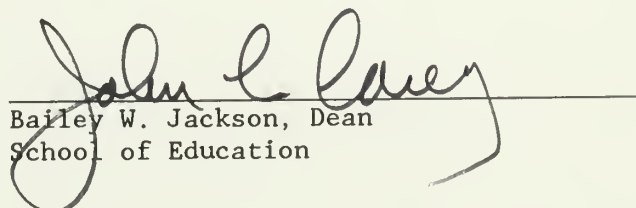
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In memory of Tionga and Djaneti,  
who taught me the important questions.

May they live forever.



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ABSTRACT

"WE CAN EVEN FEEL THAT WE ARE POOR,  
BUT WE HAVE A STRONG AND RICH SPIRIT":  
LEARNING FROM THE LIVES AND ORGANIZATION  
OF THE WOMEN OF TIRA CHAPEU, CAPE VERDE

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This study explores, through participant observation and interviewing, the meaning of the experience of Cape Verdean women who participate in a base group of the national women's organization of Cape Verde, *Organização das Mulheres de Cabo Verde* (OMCV). The study addresses the significance of this type of organizational activity for Third World women, seeking to illuminate the perspective of women who participate in it. It also has three underlying purposes: (1) to fulfill a goal of feminist research to see the world from women's viewpoint; (2) to aid outside 'helpers' of such organizations to understand them more fully; (3) to contribute to theory-building about women organizing by examining multiple theoretical perspectives in light of a Cape Verdean group's reality.

Based on 20 months of field research carried out during 1989-1991 with the OMCV base group in a low-income peri-urban neighborhood of the capital city, the study asks: What are the relationships between important themes in the women's lives and the activities and issues of

their group? To answer this question, I studied the women's words about their lives and their group, revealed in individual interviews, group discussions, and informal conversation, and blended these with my participant observation experiences with the women, their group, and their community, situated within the national context. The study chronicles and reflects on this process of doing research across cultures using an interactive, interpretive approach within an openly feminist research program.

From the study of the women's life stories, four major themes emerged: (1) the economic imperative and women's responsibility for survival, (2) the dynamics of help ties, (3) self-respect, pride, and status, and (4) issues of change and resistance. In the analysis of how these themes relate to women's organization activity, the help relationship symbolized by the *madrinha*, or godmother, appears key in defining group purposes, functioning, and relations. I suggest that the women's organization expresses tensions evident in Cape Verdean society at large involving gender, economics, and social relations and status, while it also serves as a subtle challenge to the status quo in the consciousnesses of women.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .	v
ABSTRACT . . . . .	vii
LIST OF TABLES . . . . .	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES . . . . .	xiv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS . . . . .	xv
GLOSSARY . . . . .	xvi
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Significance and Purpose of the Study . . . . .	1
Rationale for Studying Cape Verde . . . . .	3
In the Field: Refining the Question . . . . .	5
Design and Methodology . . . . .	7
Definitions and Limitations . . . . .	8
Writing the Text . . . . .	10
Organization of the Study . . . . .	11
PART I: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	
II. WAYS OF SEEING: CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY . . . . .	15
Conceptual Approach to Studying Organizations . . . . .	15
Theoretical Perspectives on Women Organizing . . . . .	17
Woman's Sphere and Woman's Power: Debates on the Public/Private Dichotomy . . . . .	18
Gender-Class Relationships: Conflict and Compromise . . . . .	22
Ideology and Consciousness: The Possibility of Resistance . . . . .	27
Women's Voices: Their Own Visions . . . . .	33
Synthesis: Ways of Seeing Cape Verdean Women Organizing . . . . .	36
III. WAYS OF DOING RESEARCH: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY AND DILEMMAS IN PRACTICE . . . . .	39
Where I Started: Development of the Research Approach . . . . .	40
Principles of My Approach to Feminist Research . . . . .	42
Making the Principles Real . . . . .	51
Choosing Methods . . . . .	59

	<u>Page</u>
Where I Went: A Preview of Research Process Issues . . . . .	61
Getting In . . . . .	62
My Role: Issues of Giving and Taking . . . . .	64
In the Tira Chapéu Group . . . . .	66
Details of the Research Process . . . . .	70
Research Time Frame and Stages . . . . .	70
The Study Group and Types of Data Collected . . . . .	72
Transcription, Translation, and Language Issues . . . . .	74
Data Analysis and Construction of the Text . . . . .	76
IV. THE RESEARCH SETTING . . . . .	80
Relevant Elements of Cape Verdean Society and Culture . . . . .	80
<i>A Luta Continua: A Organização das Mulheres de Cabo Verde</i> . . . . .	91
Generative Themes in Tira Chapéu Life . . . . .	99
PART II: THE WOMEN'S LIVES	
V. THE ECONOMIC IMPERATIVE AND WOMEN'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR SURVIVAL: WOMAN AS PROVIDER . . . . .	120
Work: Selling, Serving, Getting By . . . . .	122
Relationships with Men . . . . .	125
Having Children . . . . .	129
Migration . . . . .	135
Schooling . . . . .	138
<i>Democracia</i> : Survival on a Grand Scale . . . . .	142
Making Sense: A Summary . . . . .	143
VI. HELP TIES: WOMAN AS MADRINHA AND FIDJADU . . . . .	144
The Importance of Help Ties . . . . .	145
Family Ties: Helping Each Other Get By . . . . .	145
Created Families Illustrated: <i>Mai-di-Kriason</i> . . . . .	148
Traditions of <i>Djunta-Mon</i> . . . . .	150
Getting Ahead: Having a <i>Madrinha</i> . . . . .	152
<i>Apoio</i> and <i>Assistência</i> : The State as <i>Madrinha</i> . . . . .	161
The Limits of Help Ties . . . . .	163
Problematic Aspects of the Help Tie System . . . . .	169
Tying Up . . . . .	173



	<u>Page</u>
VII. SELF-RESPECT, PRIDE, AND STATUS: WOMAN AS FIGHTER . . . . .	175
Though I Greet You with Bended Knee, I Walk Away With Straight Legs . . . . .	175
Social Status: Social Relations and the Image of 'Good Woman' . . . . .	178
Self-Respect and Economic Need: Women's Choices and the Survival Impulse . . . . .	183
Ramifications in Daily Life . . . . .	190
Overblown Pride Enters into Collective Efforts . . . . .	190
Women's Right to Child Support . . . . .	191
"We all belong to God": Self-esteem and Differences in Status . . . . .	193
R-E-S-P-E-C-T . . . . .	195
VIII. "A GOVERNMENT JOB IS A HUSBAND": ISSUES OF CHANGE AND RESISTANCE . . . . .	197
"Raised to Stay in the House": Control and Breaking Out . . . . .	198
Sexuality and Fertility . . . . .	198
Working Outside the Home . . . . .	203
Activities Outside 'Survival Duties' . . . . .	205
"In That Case, I'd Rather Be Alone": Resistance as Separation . . . . .	210
Summing Up . . . . .	216
PART III: THE WOMEN'S GROUP	
IX. SURVIVAL STRATEGIES: GROUP PURPOSES AND THE IMAGE OF MADRINHA . . . . .	220
Doing <i>Batuku</i> : Women's Time and Perceptions of Group Purposes . . . . .	221
Inadequate Responses to Women's Survival Problems . . . . .	227
The Importance of Help Ties and the Image of <i>Madrinha</i> . . . . .	233
Joana's Role: Leader as <i>Madrinha</i> . . . . .	234
Joana's Role: Centrality as Dependency . . . . .	240
<i>Pidi Jardim</i> : Power, Dependency, and the Lack of Alternatives . . . . .	243
Mobilizing Serra Malagueta: Barriers to Changing the <i>Madrinha</i> Mode . . . . .	262
A Closing Word . . . . .	265

	<u>Page</u>
X. BREAKING OUT: THE PROBLEMATIC STATUS OF OMCV MEMBERSHIP . . . . .	267
Pride in Membership: Symbols and Status . . . . .	268
"We Were Called Whores": Control and Breaking Out . . . . .	273
"We Are All the Same": Respect and Status Differences within OMCV . . . . .	280
The Abortion Law Meetings: Conformity to Connections and Resistance as Separation . . . . .	286
Dealing with Change: The Pivotal Position of OMCV . . . . .	292
 PART IV: FURTHER ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION  	
XI. IMPLICATIONS AND QUESTIONS REMAINING . . . . .	295
The Big Picture: Women's Realities and Women's Consciousness . . . . .	295
Acting it Out: Realities and Consciousness in Organizational Action . . . . .	302
"These Days, Things Are Only with a <i>Padrinhu</i> ": OMCV's Ties to the State . . . . .	302
Resisting the <i>Madrinha</i> : Class Structure, Relations Within OMCV, and the Autonomy/Dependency Dilemma . . . . .	309
Organizing for Change in the Context of "Resistance as Separation" . . . . .	314
Girls Just Wanna Have Fun: The Opportunity Cost of Women's Development . . . . .	317
What's It All About?: The Process of Change . . . . .	320
XII. LOOKING BACK . . . . .	323
Revisiting the 'Ways of Seeing' Idea . . . . .	323
The Nature of 'Ways of Seeing': Continuing Interaction with Others' Work . . . . .	325
Issues of Validity . . . . .	331
Who's Zoomin' Who?: "Empowerment," "Co-optation," and Assumptions of Interactive Research . . . . .	333
And So? . . . . .	338
APPENDIX: SELECTIONS FROM TRANSCRIPTS OF KEY INTERVIEWS . . . . .	339
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	381

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	<u>Page</u>
1. Population growth - Tira Chapeu, Praia - 1970-1990 . . . . .	104



LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	<u>Page</u>
1. Map of the Republic of Cape Verde . . . . .	81
2. Map of Greater Praia, showing location of Tira Chapeu . . . . .	102

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- CNCV: *Comité Nacional de Cabo Verde* (National Committee of Cape Verde)
- CNOMCV: *Comissão Nacional Organizadora das Mulheres de Cabo Verde* (National Organizing Commission of Cape Verdean Women)
- DGEX: *Direcção Geral da Educação Extra-Escolar* (General Directorate of Nonformal Education)
- EMPA: *Empresa Pública de Abastecimento* (Public Supply Company)
- ICS: *Instituto Caboverdeano de Soledariedade* (Institute of Cape Verdean Solidarity)
- ILO: International Labor Organization
- INC: *Instituto Nacional das Cooperativas* (National Institute of Cooperatives)
- JAAC or  
JAAC-CV: *Juventude Africana Amilcar Cabral-Cabo Verde* (Amilcar Cabral African Youth of Cape Verde)
- MPD: *Movimento para Democracia* (Movement for Democracy)
- OMCV or  
OM: *Organização das Mulheres de Cabo Verde* (Organization of Cape Verdean Women)
- OPAD-CV: *Organização dos Pinheiros Abel Djassi-Cabo Verde* (Abel Djassi Organization of Pioneers-Cape Verde)
- PAICV: *Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo Verde* (African Party of the Independence of Cape Verde)
- PAIGC: *Partido Africano da Independência de Guiné e Cabo Verde* (African Party of the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde)
- SECP: *Secretaria de Estado da Cooperação e Planeamento* (Secretary of State for Cooperation and Planning)
- UNFPA: United Nations Fund for Population Activities
- UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

## GLOSSARY

Note: The separation of words into Kriolu and Portuguese lists is somewhat artificial since most of the Portuguese words are also used within the Kriolu context. A word's appearance in the Portuguese list sometimes indicates its origins in officialdom or Portuguese Cape Verdean culture (see Chapter IV). In addition, the Kriolu list uses the Kriolu orthography developed by the Bilingual Literacy Project of the *Direcção Geral da Educação Extra-Escolar*; the Portuguese list uses Portuguese orthography.

### KRIOLU

*ajuda:* help; also refers to assistance from a *madrinha* or a gift (see *madrinha*)

*algen grandi:* important people, big (in terms of status) people

*Ami e li sin sin:* I'm right here, used by a young boy to point out his place in the line for the *chafaris* (see *chafaris*)

*azagua:* the farming season or rainy season when planting and harvesting are done; from *agu:* water

*batuku:* dance/song/drumming/clapping activity usually performed by women, indigenous to the island of Santiago (see *funana*)

*batukadera:* *batuku* performer

*bolsa ku sintu:* pockets and belt, a style of girl's clothing

*bota:* to toss out; kick; kick out; create, as in "God created people."

*chafaris:* public source of piped water

*chokadu:* shocking, hurtful; disturbing in a jolting way

*Dipos di sabi, more e ka nada:* Once you've really enjoyed yourself, death is nothing. Commonly used proverb. (see *sabi*)

*distinu:* destiny

*dizinvolidu:* developed; educated; advanced

*djunta-mon:* join hands; a particular form of mutual assistance relationship; also mutual assistance relationships in general

*djunta sangi:* to mix blood; refers to having sexual relations with more than one man so that a woman is not sure who the father of her child is

*dretu:* right; correct; good; all right, okay

*Es atun!:* Tuna here! Cry of door-to-door vendors of tuna.

*Es ta kume es:* They will just eat for themselves. Use of the eating metaphor was widespread during the legislative election campaign of 1990-91. Supporters and politicians of PAICV were accused of "eating" just for themselves, keeping for themselves through favoritism the resources that should have been everyone's. (see also *mama*)

*fidjadu:* godchild

*finka juelhu:* literally, to straighten [one's] knees. Translations into colloquial English include: grit [one's] teeth, stand tall, stand on [one's] own two feet, bear down.

*forsa:* strength; refers to both physical and financial strength

*funana:* a couples dance indigenous to Santiago, now widespread in Cape Verde. This dance and *batuku* were banned under the Portuguese colonial government and disapproved by the Church for two reasons. First, they were considered sinful: *funana* pairs couples in close and sensual body contact; *batuku's* main activity is strong and suggestive hip movement. In addition, both dances, especially *batuku*, have strong African roots. The Church and colonial government were partners in the colonial ideology which suppressed the African aspects of Cape Verdean culture by prohibiting their practice. However, the prohibition did not wipe their practice out completely and the post-independence government supported the revalorization of such cultural elements. (see *batuku*)

*grog:* Cape Verdean distilled liquor made from sugar cane (see *grogue* in Portuguese)

*jardin:* pre-school (see *jardim infantil* in Portuguese)

*jora:* a kind of volcanic rock used in construction

*Kada kenha ku di sel:* Everyone for himself.

*kasabi:* the negative opposite of *sabi* (see *sabi*)

*kasa di branku:* white person's/people's house(s), where one works as a maid. In this context, *branku* is used in its common Cape Verdean association with rich people, not necessarily white.

*kaskadju pretu:* a kind of black rock used in construction

*Ka sta ben konbersadu?:* Isn't it well said?

*katchupa:* staple dish of Cape Verde, made of maize and beans. "Poor man's *katchupa*" contains these and a little onion, garlic, bay leaf, pork fat, and possibly a little tuna. "Rich man's *katchupa*" usually contains pork and other meats, tuna, and vegetables such as yams, cassava, carrots, cabbage, collard greens, and tomatoes.



*Keli e di meu*: This is mine, used by a woman to point out her cans in the line for the *chafaris* (see *chafaris*)

*kintal*: inner or back courtyard common in Cape Verdean homes; used for cooking, washing clothes and other household chores; the domain of women and servants

*koitadu*: poor; pitiful

*konbersu sabi*: good conversation; talk that has a meaningful message and is put elegantly and eloquently, usually using the proverbs or metaphors Kriolu is so rich in

*konfortadu*: satisfied, as in *nu staba konfortadu* or *nu konforta*: we were satisfied, we got by, we made do

*konjuntu*: group, as in musical group or band

*kreba-mi*: loved me

*kriston*: a kind of christening, customarily held on the seventh day of a baby's life (see *seti*)

*kumadri*: co-mother; the birth mother and the godmother of a particular child are referred to and refer to each other as *kumadri*. (see *madrinha*)

*kunbosa*: used by a woman to refer to the other woman or women attached to her man; also refers to these women as a whole, as in "Maria and Lina are *kunbosa*."

*kunvivi*: a get-together; socializing

*madrinha*: godmother

*mai-di-kriason*: mother-of-raising; refers to the woman who raised a person, often someone other than his/her own birth mother

*malandru*: a blackguard, scoundrel, no-good; also used as an adjective; *malandrisa* is the behavior of a *malandru*.

*malkriadu*: badly raised, badly educated, badly behaved

*mama*: to nurse, suck on one's mother's breast; image used during 1990-91 election campaigns against PAICV. *Mamadera* is one who sucks a lot, too much. PAICV officials and supporters were accused of sucking on the system, keeping for themselves through favoritism the resources that should have been everyone's. (see also *Es ta kume es*)

*mandadu*: money order or check, usually sent by an emigrated relative

*maradu*: tied; tied down

*menbra*: a man's girlfriend, usually no children involved in the relationship; also refers generally to a young woman or young women (see *mudjer*, *rapariga*, *transu*)

*Merka*: The United States, portraying an image of wealth and plenty (see *Merkanu*)

*Merkana/Merkanu*: A person from the United States (feminine/masculine versions) or a Cape Verdean who has emigrated to the United States or his/her descendants. Because of the relative financial success of many *Merkanu*, the label is used with both admiration and resentment. Emigrant *Merkanu* are sometimes considered arrogant and out of touch with Cape Verdean life. At the same time, they are revered for their relative wealth and their contact with the prestigious *Merka*. (see *Merka*)

"MPD e nhaco [sic]!": "MPD is great!"; 1990-91 legislative election campaign slogan (see *Movimento para Democracia*)

*mudjer*: woman; also wife, either common-law or official (see *rapariga*, *menbra*, *transu*)

*mufinu*: coward, no-good, unmanly

*na si pe*: at her/his feet; by her/his side

*Nha*: title of respect for a woman, as in "*Nha Joana*"; also, feminine polite form of "you"; *Nhu* is the corresponding title of respect for a man.

*Nha tene-n moda karasku*: You've got me like hangman; you've got my neck in a noose.

*Omi ka ta pinta manta ku mi; mi ki ta pinta manta ku el!*: A man won't show me up; I'll show him!

*padrinhu*: godfather (see *madrinha*)

*pai-di-fidju*: child's/children's father, used to describe women's mates the same way one would say "my husband," when they are not married to them but have children with them.

*palmatoriada*: hit on the hands with a stick made for this purpose

*paradu*: stopped; confined; out of work or laid off of work, sitting at home

*pidi*: to ask

*pidi jardin*: ask for a pre-school, in the sense of asking for financial and logistical help from a *madrinha* or other source

*pidimentu*: asking

*puta*: whore; slut; prostitute

*rabenta vida*: literally, explode or break [one's] life. In the text, used as an adjective to describe work that is physically tough, killing, destructive.

*rapariga*: the woman a man has on the side over a long term, usually with children as a result of the relationship; also refers generally to a young woman or young women (see *mudjer*, *menbra*, *transu*)

*runhu*: mean, annoying

*sabi*: used both as an adjective and a noun, comes from *sabura*, having to do with pleasure. Related words in Portuguese are: *sabor* (taste, flavor), *saboroso* (savory), and *saborear* (to relish, to taste, to enjoy). The word is used in many ways. It can describe good-tasting food (*kumida sabi*), or a really wonderful party (*feira sabi*), or to say 'we had a good time' (*nu pasa sabi*). 'Having a good time' has to do with many elements, principally: plenty (of food and drink); good company (lots of laughter, close friends and family, lively and fun conversation which usually includes informal story-telling); feeling welcome where you are, getting a good reception from your hosts in terms of their behavior toward you; and music and dancing. Most important is the element of plenty.

*sen konta*: proudly, without shame

*seti*: seven; the ceremony meant to be held on the seventh day of a baby's life as a kind of christening; in current times, not always held on the seventh day (see *kriston*)

*Si Deus kre*: God willing; if God so wishes. Used as a *caveat* to statements about the future or the expression of wishes or desires.

*strutura*: organized community or national structures, usually linked to the State or Party, such as *OMCV*, *JAAC-CV*, the *Tribunal Popular*, the Residents' Commissions, the administrative section of the city government, etc.

*taberna*: a shop that also serves as a bar, selling mostly *grog* (see *grog*)

*tchabeta*: the clapping and drumming done for *batuku*. For drumming, women use large drums or, in more recent times, wads of cloth tightly rolled and wrapped in plastic or paper to make a thumping sound when struck with an open palm. (see *batuku*)

*tene-n ku kunhesimentu*: know me

*tiston*: one-tenth of one *escudo* (see *escudo*)

*tortu*: twisted; bent; wrong or bad

*transu*: a casual, occasional or passing love affair or one-night stand; also refers to the man or woman who is the object of such an affair (see *menbra, mudjer, rapariga*)

*trokadu nomi*: name is changed; refers to being called an insulting name such as *puta* in the context of gaining a bad reputation for having sexual relations with more than one man (see *puta*)

*Un pon ku un metadi e ka mau*: A loaf and a half is not bad; a little extra never hurts.

*viva*: a cheer or shout, usually at a rally or event of some kind; literally, "long live"

*vivênsia*: living; making a living; surviving

### PORTUGUESE

"*A luta continua!*": "The struggle continues!"

*apoio*: support; also refers to a state food-for-work welfare system instituted under the Portuguese in the last decades before independence

*assistência*: assistance or help; also refers to emergency food given out during times of famine, especially the 1947 famine, and the State living subsidies provided for the disabled

*auxílio*: support; used by Joana to designate government subsidy of OMCV, as opposed to *apoio*, support OMCV might receive from international groups and outside individuals

*bairro*: neighborhood, urban community

*camarada(s)*: comrade(s), term of address used among members, sympathizers, and supporters of the Party and Party-affiliated organizations, and in general use in State institutions as well, popularized and generalized during and after the struggle for independence. Seen to equalize social/class status by using the same title for all people.

*capitão/capitães*: (singular/plural forms) "Military governor[s] representing the Portuguese crown, especially in Cape Verde" (Lobban & Halter, 1988:34).

*Centros de Promoção Feminina*: Centers for Women's Promotion, centers of OMCV activities such as training, literacy education, sewing and embroidery groups, etc. Most of these centers also house and operate pre-schools.



*Comité Nacional de Cabo Verde (CNCV)*: National Committee of Cape Verde, the directing organ of PAIGC in Cape Verde (see *Partido Africano da Independência de Guiné e Cabo Verde*)

*Comissão Nacional Organizadora das Mulheres de Cabo Verde (CNOMCV)*: National Organizing Commission of Cape Verdean Women, the preparatory and organizing committee which mobilized for and institutionalized the national women's organization (see *Organização das Mulheres de Cabo Verde*)

*concelho*: administrative district of Cape Verde. There are 14 *concelhos* in Cape Verde.

*conto(s)*: Cape Verdean monetary unit; 1 *conto* = 1,000 *escudos*

*crítica/auto-crítica*: critique and self-critique, institutionalized procedures of self-examination used by the Party and organizations associated with it

*degradados*: "Exiled Portuguese criminals, often charged with political crimes, who settled in the Cape Verde Islands or were confined there for a period of punishment or exile. Some *degradados* became a permanent settler population . . ." (Lobban & Halter, 1988:42).

*democracia*: democracy

*Direcção Geral da Educação Extra Escolar (DGEX)*: General Directorate of Nonformal Education, division of the Ministry of Education that provides literacy education

*donatários*: royal land grants to Portuguese noblemen which started the Cape Verdean land tenure system

*ELECTRA*: the national electric utility company

*EMPA (Empresa Pública de Abastecimento)*: Public Supply Company, state-run enterprise responsible for importation and distribution of food and other basic supplies

*Ensino Básico*: Basic Education, subdivided into two "cycles": *Ensino Básico Elementar* (Elementary Basic Education: four years, obligatory) and *Ensino Básico Complementar* (Complementary Basic Education, two years, not obligatory)

*Ensino Secundário*: Secondary Education, comprised of two tracks: *Ensino Secundário Liceal* (Secondary Education-academic track: two cycles, the general and the complementary, three and two years respectively) and *Ensino Secundário Técnico* (Secondary Education-technical track: one cycle of two years)

*escudo*: Cape Verdean monetary unit. In 1991, about 75 *escudos* had the value of one U.S. dollar.

"*Fora P. Pires!*": "Out with P. Pires!"; campaign slogan. Pedro Pires was the Prime Minister before PAICV was voted out of power in the general elections of January 1991.

*grogue*: Cape Verdean distilled liquor made from sugar cane; also known as *aguardente*. (see *grog* in Kriolu)

*Instituto Caboverdeano de Soledariedade*: Institute of Cape Verdean Solidarity, non-governmental agency for the coordination of international non-governmental aid and development projects

*Instituto de Trabalho*: Institute of Labor, responsible for contracting, sending, and managing the return of migrant laborers from Cape Verde to São Tomé e Príncipe, especially during the 1947 famine

*Instituto Nacional das Cooperativas (INC)*: National Institute of Cooperatives; runs a few small women's income-generating and handicraft group projects

"*Investir na promoção da mulher, opção para o desenvolvimento*": "Invest in the promotion of women, a strategy for development." Motto of the 1st OMCV Congress, held in 1990.

*jardim infantil*: pre-school. Children between four and six years of age may attend pre-school, its program geared toward preparing them to enter primary school. Along the lines of a kindergarten, it is not a required part of the formal school system. Many women also see a *jardim infantil* as a kind of daycare center, in that they may leave their children there half a day or all day and go to work, provided they are of the right age and enrolled. Pre-schools in Cape Verde are of several types: public project-supported where the cost to parents is subsidized; community-based where parents pay the cost of employing a teacher, provide snacks, and obtain the in-kind contribution of the building and equipment; and private where the parents' fee includes the costs of the teacher, building and equipment, snacks, etc. (see *jardin* in Kriolu)

*jovem*: young; young person; describes a celibate single person in the Church context

*monitora infantil*: teacher at a *jardim infantil*

*morgado*: feudal-like landowners given royal land grants; also refers generally to more modern-day large landowners, inheritors of the land grant system

*Movimento para Democracia (MPD)*: Movement for Democracy, the challenging political party in the campaign and elections of 1990-91 after the opening to a multi-party system was declared in February 1990. MPD won the legislative elections in January 1991 and became the new party in power.

*nova república*: new republic; the popular designation for Cape Verde in its new multi-party phase

*OPAD-CV*: the national children's organization, a kind of scouts

*Organização das Mulheres de Cabo Verde*: Organization of Cape Verdean Women, national women's organization of Cape Verde affiliated with PAICV

*PALOP (Países Africanos de língua oficial portuguesa)*: Association of African countries whose official language is Portuguese, composed of Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Angola and São Tomé and Príncipe

*Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo Verde (PAICV)*: African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde. (see *Partido Africano da Independência de Guiné e Cabo Verde*)

*Partido Africano da Independência de Guiné e Cabo Verde (PAIGC)*: African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde, the party which led the struggle for independence and became the single party in power in 1975. After the 1980 coup in Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau separated and PAIGC became PAICV, *Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo Verde* (African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde).

*quarta classe*: fourth class; fourth year of Elementary Basic Education, equivalent to fourth grade in the U.S. system (see *Ensino Básico*)

*quarto ano*: fourth year; second year of Secondary Education-academic track, equivalent to eighth grade in the U.S. system (see *Ensino Secundário*)

*quintal*: see *kintal* in Kriolu

*quinto ano*: fifth year; third year of Secondary Education-academic track, equivalent to ninth grade in the U.S. system (see *Ensino Secundário*)

*Secretariado Administrativo*: administrative section of the city government, responsible for, among other things, control of housing construction and clandestine housing

*segundo ano*: second year; second year of Complementary Basic Education, equivalent to sixth grade in the U.S. system (see *Ensino Básico*)

*sétimo ano*: seventh year; fifth year of Secondary Education-academic track, equivalent to 11th grade in the U.S. system; the last year of high school in the Cape Verdean system (see *Ensino Secundário*)

*São Tomé e Príncipe*: a nation composed of two small islands (São Tomé and Príncipe) off the coast of Gabon, part of the constellation of former Portuguese African colonies. The lush plantations of this colony absorbed many Cape Verdean migrant laborers during the 1947 famine in Cape Verde.

*sociedade escravocrata*: slavocracy, socio-economic system based on slavery

*sociedade Kriolu*: creole (or creolized) society, made by the blending and mixing of races and cultures

*terceiro ano*: third year; first year of Secondary Education-academic track, equivalent to seventh grade in the U.S. system (see *Ensino Secundário*)

*tese*: thesis, a document prepared for debate at a conference or congress

*Tribunal Popular*: Popular or People's Court, a local judicial structure instituted in villages, towns, and *bairros* following independence, made up of local residents and intended to act as a local conflict resolution resource

*vale a pena*: it's worthwhile; it has value

"Viva PAICV!": "Long live PAICV!" (see *Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo Verde*)



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Significance and Purpose of the Study

In this study, I explored, through participant observation, the meaning of the experience of a group of Cape Verdean women who participate in women's collective activity. In a feminist view of women and development which emerged from and in reaction to the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985), women play a key role in creating and implementing alternative visions and strategies for development in the Third World. "Because women's organizations are central to these strategies, a more thorough examination of methods for their empowerment is necessary" (Sen and Grown, 1987, p. 89). Even education and development authors and practitioners that do not use a feminist frame of reference consider women's organizations essential catalysts to women's involvement in the processes of social change. As Nzomo (1989) notes, "The mobilization of women into groups has been one of the major preoccupations . . . since the declaration of the Women's Decade.<sup>1</sup> Women's groups and women's group programs have therefore come to be viewed as the key toward 'integrating women in development'" (1989:11).

But this high expectation of women's groups' potential is founded on superficial understanding. Common development agency knowledge about

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<sup>1</sup>"Women's Decade" refers to the United Nations Decade for Women, which ended with an official meeting for government representatives and a simultaneous NGO Forum in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1985. In many countries, the campaigns of this Decade stimulated the formation of governmental women's bureaus and the mobilization of women into groups. More radical and political women's groups also emerged in reaction to Decade activities.

these groups is limited or distorted by cultural assumptions. Even academic literature on women's organizations in Africa has studied them from a narrow range of perspectives. Do we really understand these organizations well enough to pin so much hope for development on them, at both national and grass roots levels? What does it mean to work with these organizations from the outside? What is going on with them on the inside? And most important, "what have the women themselves derived from participating in group activities?" (Nzomo, 1989:11). Researchers, development practitioners, and women's organization members themselves have begun to pose such questions only in the last few years. This study is an effort to contribute to answering them, seeking to illuminate the perspective of the women who participate in groups.

Literature which studies women and their organizations from various perspectives provides a variety of theoretical frameworks for this study, but at the same time reveals the absence of an important way of seeing: that of the women who are members of these organizations. Thus, the primary goal of this dissertation is to explore in depth the meaning a group of Cape Verdean women make of their organizational activity. According to the perceptions of members, what role does organizational activity fill in their lives? How does it contribute to their lives?

This exploration also has three underlying purposes. First, it seeks to bring to light a neglected perspective, to fulfill the goal of feminist research "to see the world from women's place in it" (Callaway, 1981, quoted in Lather, 1986:68). Second, since I believe that lack of 'inside' understanding is often the barrier to the effectiveness of those who try to 'help' women's organizations from the outside, perhaps this work will aid such helpers to learn to see women's organizations

more fully. Third, by examining multiple theoretical perspectives on African women's organizations in light of a Cape Verdean group's reality, the work contributes to theory-building about women organizing in the Third World.

### Rationale for Studying Cape Verde

The Republic of Cape Verde gained its independence in 1975, and one could feel its youth and vitality in the streets. Even in 1985, on my first visit there, "A *LUTA CONTINUA!*"<sup>2</sup> blazed in paint from a mud-plastered rock wall; the 29-year-old leader of an important party organization greeted his *camaradas*<sup>3</sup> in Kriolu, the indigenous national language, at the central plaza in the capital, Praia; a revolutionary artist, jailed in Tarrafal prison under the Portuguese, had become the country's most prominent architect. The words of the late revolutionary leader, Amilcar Cabral, and the then president, Aristides Pereira, reverberated with hope for justice, progress, and change.

Women were an important part of the agenda for change. From the start of its struggle, the Partido Africano da Independência de Guiné e Cabo Verde (PAIGC) reserved for women two out of five spots on each village revolutionary council (Urdang, 1975). But in Cape Verde, women are especially important in another way as well. Because of the large numbers of men who emigrate from the islands to the United States, Europe, and the African continent, women form the backbone of agriculture, social structures, and the economy. On many islands, women far outnumber men; a 1983 agricultural survey of Santiago island

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<sup>2</sup>"The struggle continues!"

<sup>3</sup>comrades

estimated a ratio of 100 females for every 65 males. Female-headed households are a socio-economic response to conditions of chronic scarcity (Finan and Henderson, 1988). "Because of emigration, women comprise nearly 60 percent of the country's potential labor force of approximately 173,000 people. . . . Female unemployment and underemployment rates are estimated to be twice as high as those for men. The problem is particularly acute among female heads of households" (Clement, et al, 1989:1). Thus attention to women's needs, opportunities, and problems in Cape Verde is more than the political rhetoric of equity; it is central to any consideration of the country's development and the establishment of a just social system.

In the 17 years since independence, some of the promises liberty made have come forth as problems. Realism has set in and drought conditions have maintained the country's precarious economic position. For women, some contradictions have arisen. Although the national women's organization managed to mobilize thousands of women, in 1986 only 11 women served as members of a corps of 83 National Assembly representatives (*Boletim Oficial*, 1/13/1986:2-4). Until 1991, there were no women Ministers or heads of state. In 1989-90, the Party had only one woman First Secretary at the Sector level.<sup>4</sup> And although by the late 1980's, equal numbers of girls and boys attended school, far

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<sup>4</sup>When I use the word, Party, with a capital P, I am referring to the *Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo Verde* (PAICV) or its antecedent (originally *Partido Africano da Independência de Guiné e Cabo Verde*, PAIGC, before Cape Verde's split from Guinea-Bissau), the party which led the struggle for independence and became the single party in power in 1975. A Sector corresponds to an administrative district of the country, and so a First Secretary at this level is an important Party official. See Chapter IV for more information in this regard.



greater numbers of women than men were still illiterate and unemployed. Women's problems remained a top government priority under PAICV, but its goals seemed problematic to fulfill. An exploration of the problems Cape Verde faces in this realm unearths fascinating and important dilemmas relevant to movements of change for women worldwide.

Though Cape Verde's rich history is unique, more and more places in Africa and other parts of the developing world share some or all of the social and demographic trends expressed in this island country: heavy male emigration, migration to cities by both women and men, drought and/or famine, *de facto* female-headed households, and government statements favoring the advancement of women. Likewise, the lessons learned here are both unique and vitally important to the many countries facing similar problems. The creole character of Cape Verdean culture adds to the interest of this study, as it may hold lessons for other such cultures and for multicultural societies striving to deal with their varied elements. Few researchers have sought to bring the fascinating Cape Verdean experience into a broader discussion of development, particularly as it speaks to women.

#### In the Field: Refining the Question

Once in Cape Verde, my initial questions took more definite shape. I sought to understand the women's lives, side by side with understanding their group's life. In order to see what their group did for their lives, I sought to hear both individual life stories and the group's story and understand the common themes and parallels--and the conflicts and disjunctures. Thus my implementing question, suggested by the initial field exploration, became: What is the relationship between

the themes of women's lives and the activities and issues of their group? To answer this question, I studied the women's words about their lives and their group, revealed in individual interviews, group discussions, and informal conversation. Blended with these words are data from my participant observation experience with the women, their group, and their community.

The historical moment I studied in Cape Verde influenced the shape of the research. I chose to study a women's group that was part of the PAICV-related national women's organization, *Organização das Mulheres de Cabo Verde* (OMCV), because of this organization's symbolic and practical importance in the Cape Verdean women's movement and women's political role in the nation. In 1989-1991, this organization was openly struggling with the issue of local autonomy vs. central control and dependency. As PAICV lost the country's first multi-party elections in January 1991, OMCV struggled with its identity in relation to its brother-Party. These two issues became preoccupations of my exploration of the women's perceptions of their group's meaning. In the presentation of the data (Chapters V through X) and analysis of its implications (Chapter XI), these preoccupations become clear.

From the study of the women's life stories, four major themes emerged: (1) the economic imperative and women's responsibility for survival, (2) the importance of help ties, (3) self-respect, pride, and status, and (4) issues of change and resistance. I then sought to understand how these themes were reflected in or connected to group issues and activities.

## Design and Methodology

Five areas of literature formed the basis for a set of theoretical perspectives which I took into this study: (1) anthropology and sociology of women, (2) critical theory and education, (3) feminist theory and practice, (4) organizational theory and development, (5) Third World "women-in-development." The set of perspectives is based on the belief that multiple perspectives are not only useful but also essential to understanding organizations, and that one's ability to see alternative views influences one's ability to act in alternative ways (see Solomon, 1989a; Morgan, 1986).

In a qualitative approach to the study, I used primarily participant observation, supplemented by informal and formal interviewing. Much research on women has shown that it is difficult to understand the complexity of women's situation on the basis of quantitative indicators, particularly when examining women's relationships to each other and to society. I chose this approach because the nature of the information I wished to uncover concerned such relationships. In feminist research, the "methodological task becomes that of generating and refining interactive, contextualized methods which search for pattern and meaning rather than for prediction and control" (Lather, 1986:68). This kind of research is interactive, based on the idea that both researcher and researched have voices; research then becomes a mechanism for mutual learning among participants. The emergent themes--which are in fact ways of seeing--are thus partly mine, partly the participants', a result of our experience together. The stories told both created the way of seeing and were shaped by it, in an ongoing process of making and living meaning.

### Definitions and Limitations

Several key terms undergird this study, and so I explain here how I use them.

**Women's organization:** A women's organization is a group of women who come together and act together with a common purpose. My concern here is with collectivities, whether formal or informal, which are made up exclusively of women. Just as a national women's organization sanctioned by the state fulfills this definition, so does an informal network of related women who share child-care help. Rotating credit groups, sewing circles, literacy groups, cooperatives and pre-cooperatives, kinship-based associations, charity associations, self-help groups, and social groups are all examples of women's organizations that exist in the Third World.

**Feminism:** The feminism to which I subscribe is, first, an affirmation of the experience of being a woman. In this sense, it celebrates the female experience in its variety and seeks to reveal what that experience offers to humankind. In revealing that experience, feminism also recognizes that women "universally face some form of oppression or exploitation" (Maguire, 1987:96). Feminism is committed to understanding "what causes and sustains oppression, in all its forms" (Maguire, 1987:96) and, for this reason too, seeks to reveal the variety of women's experience in the world. But this commitment does not stop at understanding; its reason for being is to create a world order of "freedom from oppression based on the political, economic, social, and cultural manifestations of racial, cultural, sexual, and class biases." It is a "moral and political statement for human survival and well-being"

(Steady, 1987:4-5). Feminism seeks to change the beliefs, world order, and human interactions that oppress women.

**Feminist research:** Feminist research is a debatable and sometimes problematic concept. Coming to terms with my version of feminist research is the focus of the bulk of Chapter III. Nonetheless, I present here a key to the way I understand it, in terms of both purposes and methods. For me, Lather (1986) captures the essence of both:

The overt ideological goal of feminist research is to correct both the *invisibility* and the *distortion* of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position. This entails the substantive task of making gender a fundamental category for our understanding of the social order, "to see the world from women's place in it" (Callaway, 1981, p. 460). The methodological task becomes that of generating and refining interactive, contextualized methods which search for pattern and meaning rather than prediction and control (Reinharz, 1983). While the first wave of feminist research operated largely within the conventional paradigm (Westkott, 1979), the second wave is more self-consciously methodologically innovative (Eichler, 1980; Reinharz, 1983; Stanley & Wise, 1983; Bowles & Duelli-Klein, 1983) (Lather, 1986:68).

Key elements of this explanation require further scrutiny, and I provide this in Chapter III.

**Reflexivity:** Reflexivity can apply to theory and social research. A reflexive theory is one that explains its own existence, is conscious of its own development (Solomon, 1989b; Stanley & Wise, 1983). Social research is reflexive in that the researcher is part of the world of social actors studied; research methods are like other social actions; human interaction in the context of research is like other human interaction for other purposes. I have sought to make this research reflexive both in theory and in process.

**Way of seeing:** A 'way of seeing' might be described as a set of assumptions, a framework of belief, or a lens that causes us to see



phenomena in a certain way. In this study, I try to make explicit how ways of seeing "guide and prefigure, and hence shape, what is seen" (Morgan, 1983:13). In Chapter II, I delve into this issue in more depth in the specific context of studying women organizing.

This study is not a history of the national women's organization of Cape Verde. Neither is it a history of the women's movement in Cape Verde, a study of women's role in political life in Cape Verde, nor a broad study of women's socio-economic situation in Cape Verde. It will not answer the question of whether independence and post-independence development have benefitted women. It will not generalize about Third World organizational approaches to development which consider women's needs and perspectives. Yet it draws and touches upon all of these topics, from the perspective of one small group of women living in an urban periphery community of the capital city of Cape Verde.

#### Writing the Text

I have chosen to write this dissertation as a story. Only telling it as a story adequately reveals the on-going learning process that research is. I reveal how I saw at the outset, how I learned from the women of Tira Chapeu, what else influenced me along the way, and how I see now as a result. Putting words into print tends to fix knowledge forever, but in fact, I write here how I see today; the process of learning goes on.

In the text, I use the following language and presentation conventions. I use s/he and him/her, etc., to signify gender-general subjects in my own writing. In the translation of the women's Kriolu text, I use s/he, she, or he as appropriate in context. Kriolu is a

non-gendered language, that is, he and she are the same word and, for the most part, nouns are not gender specific as they are, for example, in Portuguese. In Kriolu, gender is determined only in context. In addition, in translated quotations, a series of periods (. . .) indicates text I have edited out of the interview passage. A dash (--) indicates that the speaker paused or broke off her sentence in mid-thought. All of the names of participants in the study have been changed. However, I have retained the names of national or historical figures to maintain accuracy.

#### Organization of the Study

The dissertation is organized into four parts. Part I (Chapters II, III, and IV) provides the background to the study, including theory, method, and research setting. Part II (Chapters V through VIII) presents the lives of the women of the Tira Chapéu group, organized by the themes mentioned above. Part III (Chapters IX and X) interprets the issues and activities of the women's group in relation to these themes. Part IV (Chapters XI and XII) provides concluding thoughts.

Part I, "Background to the Study," provides a discussion of the bases of the study and of Cape Verdean culture and society in relation to the study. In Chapter II, I explain the theoretical stance that was the basis of the study and how I developed that stance. I describe the concept of multiple 'ways of seeing' and the four 'ways of seeing' I unearthed in literature relating to African women and their organizations. I outline how these shaped my own way of seeing at the outset of the study.

In Chapter III, I discuss the methodological approach that I started out with, which went hand in hand with my chosen theoretical approach and the idea of 'ways of seeing'. Here I also present some methodological issues that surfaced once I entered into the field study, and detail how I carried out data collection, data analysis, and other aspects of research process. (I continue to discuss these in footnotes throughout Chapters V through X and in Chapter XII.)

In Chapter IV, I describe the research setting, including three sections: (1) a discussion of elements of Cape Verdean society and culture that frame the study; (2) background on the Cape Verdean women's organization, *Organização das Mulheres de Cabo Verde* (OMCV), of which the Tira Chapeu women's group I studied is a part; (3) a description of Tira Chapeu, a peri-urban community of Praia, Cape Verde's capital city, and the geographical center of the study, and the women who participated in the study.

Part II consists of chapters on "The Women's Lives." Chapter V deals with the economic imperative and women's responsibility for survival. Chapter VI discusses the importance of help ties and the relationship of *madrinha* to *fidjadu*.<sup>5</sup> Chapter VII is about issues of self-respect, pride, and status which influence the women's lives. Chapter VIII deals with dilemmas of change, conformity, and resistance.

Part III addresses "The Women's Group." In Chapter IX, I discuss how the economic imperative and the importance of help ties are played out in the women's group. The image of *madrinha* is especially important to how women view the group's purposes and activities. Chapter X deals

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<sup>5</sup>Godmother and godchild, respectively. See Chapter V for further discussion of these terms.

with issues of self-respect, status, control and change in the women's group.

Part IV discusses conclusions. In Chapter XI, I talk about the overall implications of the content of the study, analyzing in broader terms the meaning of the Tira Chapeu women's group and posing remaining and emerging questions. Chapter XII lays out some of my post-field and post-writing reflections on the research process. Here I reconsider my original 'ways of seeing' and ways of doing research in light of my experience in Cape Verde, returning to some of the goals and dilemmas presented in Chapter III.

## PART I

### BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This section of the dissertation provides the necessary background to the study of the Tira Chapeu women's lives and group. In Chapter II, "Ways of Seeing: Conceptual Approach to the Study," I describe four 'ways of seeing' which emerged from a review of literature related to studying African women organizing. I explain the significance of being aware of the lens used to see an organization and outline the lens I was using as I entered the field study situation.

In Chapter III, "Ways of Doing Research: Methodological Approach to the Study and Dilemmas in Practice," I detail my methodological approach to the study, focusing specifically on how I developed a set of guidelines for the kind of feminist research I hoped to do. Further, I introduce here some of the issues which arose in the field situation as I tried to carry out research using these guidelines. Finally, I describe in some detail how I actually carried out the research.

In Chapter IV, "The Research Setting," I discuss three items of background information relevant to the study. First, I set the scene for understanding the *Organização das Mulheres de Cabo Verde* (OMCV) by highlighting elements of Cape Verdean history, culture, and society that are important to the picture I paint of this organization. Next, I outline a brief history of the organization up to the point of the field study period. Last, I describe the community that is home to the women and women's group I studied, Tira Chapeu, and begin to introduce the study participants.



## CHAPTER II

### WAYS OF SEEING: CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY

My exploration of literature contributing theoretical perspectives to the study of women and their organizations was an important step in my journey because it helped develop the way I saw, my frame of reference, at the outset of the field study. It also confirmed my commitment to seeing from more than one point of view and shaped my desire to do an in-depth study with one organization that would illuminate the 'ways of seeing' of the women members of that organization. In this chapter, I discuss what I found out from this exploration of literature, the position I took on it, and how it shaped my further work. This chapter describes how I saw at the outset of the field study. In Chapters XI and XII, I reconsider aspects of this sight and how it changed through the research process.

#### Conceptual Approach to Studying Organizations

Practice is never theory-free, for it is always guided by an image of what one is trying to do. The real issue is whether or not we are aware of the theory guiding our action (Morgan, 1986:336).

A discussion of paradigms, or ways of seeing the world, dominates much current social science literature, and well it should, particularly when applied to the complex realities of the Third World. What we see is shaped by the lens through which we see it. The way we define a problem influences how we attempt to solve it. Our theories of what the world is, that is, our ideas and images, guide--and limit--how we act in the world.

This connection between thought and action is related to the concept of praxis, discussed by Paulo Freire and Marx, which I loosely interpret here. Praxis is a process of reflection and action which is also a process of change. We act in the world that exists, and we also reflect on the effects and meaning of our actions. By reflecting, we see how we should change our actions and our world.

...men's [sic] activity consists of action and reflection: it is praxis; it is transformation of the world. And as praxis, it requires theory to illuminate it. Men's activity is theory and practice; it is reflection and action (Freire, 1970:119).

As we engage more and more consciously in the process of reflection and action, the breadth of our perception increases, and we are able to 'see' what we did not see before.

An understanding of the link between ideas and action is especially important when trying to understand organizations. Organizations are an enactment of how we view the world; they are literally how we 'organize'--or make sense of--the world. Thus,

... the way we "read" organizations influences how we produce them. Images and metaphors are not just interpretive constructs used in the task of analysis. They are central to the process of *imaginization* through which people enact or "write" the character of organizational life (Morgan, 1986:344).

Like the difference in depth of vision between seeing with only one eye and seeing with two eyes, "new insights about a situation emerge as one reads a situation from new angles, and . . . a wide and varied reading can create a wide and varied range of action possibilities" (Morgan, 1986:336). In other words, the theory which will best illuminate our praxis is many theories. Unfortunately, we are often unaware of the assumptions we are making, and this lack of awareness prevents us

from considering alternative theories and perhaps acting in alternative ways.

### Theoretical Perspectives on Women Organizing

In the study of women's organizations in Africa, the idea of multiple perspectives is extremely important. The literature that informs this study is literature about women's position in society, describing it from particular points of view. In seeking deeper understandings of women's organizations, the literature helps us go beyond superficial or unspoken assumptions. But it can also hinder us if we are not aware of the lenses authors use to show us the meaning of women's lives. Many constructs, taken in isolation, prove to be too narrow for the complex realities of women's and men's lives. Moreover, most of the studies considered are cross-cultural (that is, the researcher is from a different culture from the one studied) or concern cross-culturally applied theory, and this too defines the views they reveal. External constructs used by researchers cannot be avoided. In fact, denying that they exist blinds us. We must first be aware of them in order to use them wisely and balance them with other perspectives.

In order to begin to understand women's organizations in Africa more deeply, I first explored the sometimes taken-for-granted theories which underlie action and research, in other words, how these organizations are 'seen' by current researchers. By looking at the various 'ways of seeing', and sifting out how they interact, I began to see what they illuminate and what they hide.

Four 'ways of seeing' emerged from the literature related to the study of women in society and in groups. These ways of seeing are: (1)

woman's sphere and woman's power, (2) gender-class relationships, (3) ideology and consciousness, and (4) women's voices. Each offers explanations of and significant questions about the meaning of women's organizing activity. Elsewhere I have explored these ways of seeing in depth (Solomon, 1989a; 1990); here I summarize them and discuss their significance for shaping this study.

#### Woman's Sphere and Woman's Power: Debates on the Public/Private Dichotomy

The first 'way of seeing' asks the question: what do public and private "spheres" mean for women's position in society? At its core lie the questions of how power is defined and who has "real" power in society. Within this perspective, three schools of thought debate, with the third school evolving to form a cogent view of women in relation to power.

The debate began with the formulation of the "public/private dichotomy" by Rosaldo and Lamphere in their 1974 collection of anthropological studies of women, Woman, Culture and Society. Rosaldo's original theoretical construct relates "universal asymmetries in the actual activities and cultural evaluations of men and women to a universal, structural opposition between domestic and public spheres" (Rosaldo & Lamphere, 1974:41). From this view, women's oppression varies according to the extent to which they are confined to the domestic sphere, cut off from other women, and denied access to the public world of men and power. "Real" power is associated with legitimate authority, in the Weberian sense of this concept, and with "public" institutions dominated by men in most societies. Dichotomized "public" and "private" realms define male and female experiences.

Other authors (e.g. S. Rogers, 1975, 1978; Stamm & Ryff, 1984) explore a second school of thought within this viewpoint which challenges the first. They also examine the definition of power and the public/private split, but draw different conclusions. They accept the idea that women do in fact inhabit a separate domestic sphere, but they argue that this sphere is of central importance in many societies. They contend that the over-valuing of the public sphere which the first school of thought of the public/private 'way of seeing' promotes, continues the biases of male-dominated anthropology and leaves no room for valuing private and personal types of power and activity common to women's lives. Women have special modes of power, different from but not inferior to the power men wield. For example, influence on the decisions of others is a form of power seen as essential by the authors writing from this perspective.

A third school within this perspective questions the validity of the public/private construct from top to bottom, aside from the question of which domain is more highly prized. The question becomes: does this "universal opposition" really exist? Or is it an ideological construct which continues to reinforce limited ways of thinking? Rosaldo (1980) herself is among those to re-evaluate and critique the public/private dichotomy.<sup>1</sup> She and others argue that the opposition between public and private is a socially constructed idea. As such, it is susceptible to change and should not be taken as something inherent, biological, or natural.

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<sup>1</sup>See also Elshtain, 1974; Pateman, 1987; March and Taquq, 1986.



Elshtain (1974) decries the work of researchers studying women who accept the public/private dichotomy without seeing its ideological, normative roots. This practice misleads, according to her and others arguing this school of the debate. The oppositional nature of the duality causes us to think "we know the 'core' of what quite different gender systems share, to think of sexual hierarchies primarily in functional and psychological terms, and thus, to minimize such sociological considerations as inequality and power" (Rosaldo, 1980:400). The duality causes us to oversimplify and prevents us from taking into account variations across cultures and various interrelated forces working in society.

Yet, these writers don't want us to throw out the public/private construct entirely. Public and private do have meaning as socially created constructs, but not as universal and/or "natural" opposites. Instead of opposing public and private, they suggest that we must link women's lives to social inequalities of all sorts, such as those based on race and social class. Further, we must reconceive public and private across cultural variations and focus on their interrelationship rather than their division, in order to truly critique and change the binding ideology which has justified their hierarchical separation.

This third school of thought thus provides the fullest and most critical and self-reflective way of seeing issues of power and public/private domains in their application to women's lives and organizations. By implication, it becomes important to understand women's organizations of all types, formal and informal, "private" and "public," in order to understand how women live in and transform their world. Each culture must be examined not for what it has in common with others,

but for what is unique about the different levels and patterns of interaction among women and men. Researchers must pay attention to how a culture defines power, how an organization defines it, and how women may define power differently than men do. We should study the relationship between people's concepts of power (as ideology) and the actual use of power to act in society, so that we do not take symbols for reality or vice versa, but understand that power is created through the interaction of the two.

This way of seeing the issues in women's lives prompted me to see the importance of power questions in the women's organization I would study. What kinds of power is the organization exercising? How and by whom is its power base recognized or acknowledged? How does the group itself define power? How do they envision their roles in regard to public and private realms? In what domain do they act and what meanings do they attribute to their actions? Are their concepts of public and private separate or interconnected? Do their actions reinforce limits or expand possibilities for women?

But while the lens of public/private helped me to understand these aspects of power in women's organizations, I felt it also hid or ignored other aspects. The viewpoint implies the importance of, but fails to focus adequately on, the relationship between divisions of power among men and women and other divisions of power in society. It does not offer any explanation for *why* power is divided as it is in many societies, or for *why* ideology is often used to maintain hierarchies. To get some possible answers to these questions, I had to put on different glasses.

## Gender-Class Relationships: Conflict and Compromise

The full development of the woman's sphere and woman's power perspective begins to go beyond limiting dichotomies to a broader view of gender and its relationship to other ways social identity, power, status, and material conditions get created and defined. A second 'way of seeing'--the relationship between gender and class--builds on this first viewpoint, in its essence using the complex relationships between gender and class as the primary analytic tool for understanding women in society. This 'way of seeing' dominates much of the literature about women in Africa and has important implications for African women's collective efforts.

Gender alone is not enough to understand women's lives, this perspective argues. Principally a Marxist-feminist analysis, authors writing from this viewpoint posit that "capitalism does not everywhere have the same effects for women" (Bujra, 1986:117). Neither are "women's issues" the same for women across classes.

From this perspective, women cannot be thought of as a single category, even though there are important and occasionally unifying struggles in which they may engage. At the same time women cannot be simply analyzed 'as men': gender is almost invariably a relevant social category. The point is that gender differences find differential expression at different class levels--gender is qualified by the places women occupy in newly emergent classes (Bujra, 1986:118).

Thus, class defines women's lives along with gender.

Two questions run through this framework. One is: do women identify more with their class interests or their gender interests? The second is: to what extent do women participate in the class status of related males or find their class status defined more fundamentally by their gender? The answer to both questions is "Well, both, depending,"

focusing on the relationship between these two important categories of social existence. Central to this 'way of seeing' are concepts of relations of production originating with and adapted from Marxian thought. Heavy emphasis is laid on economic factors as determinants of social and cultural aspects of life, as well as on the historical context of current societal conditions.

One branch of this viewpoint focuses on how colonialism and the development of capitalism have affected women's role in production. Gender-class authors argue that even though pre-colonial African societies were not necessarily egalitarian, women's place in them was generally stronger than the position they hold in capitalist society today. Much of this strength was due to their important role, complementary to men's, in economic production, reinforced by parallel social structures organized by gender which allowed women a certain autonomy and status in their own realm. Women's and men's institutions were considered interrelated rather than hierarchical and cut across both private and public sectors of life. The phenomena of cash cropping, taxes, wage labor, and migration, as well as European ideas about women's place, caused women to lose political power, become more burdened with the work of survival, and more alienated from production.<sup>2</sup>

Another branch of this 'way of seeing' focuses less narrowly on economics and brings into the picture the ideology which accompanied capitalist transformation. In Africa, formal education was one of the principal ways this ideology was transmitted, and so the relationship between formal education and class formation, and the accompanying

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<sup>2</sup>See Etienne & Leacock, 1980; Robertson & Berger, 1986.

changes in the status of women, is central. This branch of the viewpoint claims that women in the upper classes of a more solidified class structure begin to identify more with their class than with their gender, and that in fact the situation of women in the lower classes is shaped in part by women of the upper classes. For example, women of the petty bourgeoisie, working outside the home or not, usually hire other women as servants. Women of this class are more interested in recreating and preserving their own class privilege than in recognizing their links with other women. And in fact, these links are feeble, their economic situation being quite different from that of lower class women. Moreover, the formers' ability to enter into wage labor depends at least in part upon "the organization of other unpaid female labor to shoulder domestic burdens" (Bujra, 1975:128).

Yet even though women's solidarity is cross-cut by class, women within each class are worse off in relation to men of that class, the gender-class argument goes. "While class position mediates the experience of gender, gender is an important determinant of class position" (Robertson & Berger, 1986:14). Women are defined both within classes and as a class, making their relationship to the issues of class, production and reproduction both complex and essential to understand.

This perspective has important implications for studying women's groups. The gender-class perspective focuses on the breakdown of indigenous patterns of women's solidarity based on kinship and age, the privatization of female life in the privileged classes and its effect on gender consciousness and solidarity, and rural/urban transitions and their influence on how women organize. Many of the authors writing from this perspective analyze women's organizations to determine whether



their ideas and activities reinforce gender solidarity or class solidarity. Staudt, for example, asks the question, "How do women act politically to alleviate, acquiesce to, or transform stratification?" (1986:198). Her 1980 study of the Umoja federation highlights their "cooptation" into class structures, limiting their ability to truly represent women's interests.<sup>3</sup> Cutrufelli looks at how women's organizations fit into national and international political and economic systems. She claims that women's organizations born out of nationalist movements "tend to stake claims that reflect the position of compromise and insecurity of African women" (Cutrufelli, 1983:172). Moreover, the dependency of their nations influences how they define their own struggle.

Thus, the gender-class framework helped me see many important issues in women's organizations. It helped me look at the meaning women's groups have in relation to class. The perspective questions the assumption that all women's groups are moving toward positive change for women, showing clearly that many women's groups uphold the status quo or even act together with other world events to worsen women's own situation. This 'way of seeing' helps differentiate between various economic activities and see the relationship between economics and group formation. And so it made me want to ask the following questions about the organization I would study. How are class relations reflected or expressed in this organization? Is the organization made up of women of one class or of many, and do they reflect the class structures of their

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<sup>3</sup>See also Wipper, 1971 and 1975, for similar studies of the Maendaleo Ya Wanawake in Kenya; and Johnson, 1986, on women's organizations in Nigeria.

society or promote some change? How do their activities relate to the economic relations of the society? How are economic changes affecting them? Where is their place in the mode of production? What kinds of ideals do they promote and how do these relate to class formation? What forms of education do they promote and what does this say about their relationship to class? What kinds of consciousness do they have about their own work--is it recognizably related to gender or to class? In what ways do these two kinds of consciousness interact in the ideology of the group?

Yet, in using this 'way of seeing' African women's organizations, I felt I might lose sight of important aspects of organizations. The viewpoint looks primarily at formal women's organizations, organized around some visible interest. This implicit valuing of organizations that work in the formal political domain hides the potential importance of other kinds of organizations which may in fact have more radical possibilities. In addition, generalizations about economic trends across Africa tend to ignore differences among African cultures. Looking at the colonial style experienced and the history of women's collectivities across East and West Africa, it's clear that Africa is not all the same. In a place like Cape Verde, I would have to look beyond these two limitations to find the uniqueness.

Finally, the viewpoint's focus on the past is its weakness as well as its strength. It makes us remember that we must see the historical context in which an organization grew and exists. However, it sometimes leads into the deterministic feeling of much Marxian analysis. What to do about the future? It does not lead forward to suggest hope, for example, that women's national political organizations can free them-

selves from cooptation. Only with a look toward how our ideas and our concrete realities interact to perpetuate patterns can we see how those patterns might change. With the third 'way of seeing', I began to uncover this view.

### Ideology and Consciousness: The Possibility of Resistance

The third 'way of seeing' recognizes the importance of ideas in interplay with material realities in perpetuating social structures and ways of being. This perspective sees world views and social ideologies as determining factors in the maintenance of sexual hierarchy and women's position, roles, and power. As defined by Bourque and Warren (1981), the approach

gives a more central role to belief systems and world views than the other approaches to women's subordination. At the same time, it examines those belief systems in the concrete conditions of social life. . . . The concrete conditions of social life, the institutional structures of society, and the context in which images are evoked are all relevant to this analysis (Bourque and Warren, 1981:77-78).

In the gender-class perspective, material conditions underlie ideologies and institutional structures. In the ideology and consciousness 'way of seeing', the relationship between ideologies, institutions, and material life is more complex. In this view, ideologies grow out of *and reinforce* institutional structures which maintain systems of differential access to material resources and power. Used in this context, social ideology is a "system of ideas that deal with the politics of establishing and defining value in social and material realities" (Bourque & Warren, 1981:79), "a set of cultural beliefs that shape people's perceptions of such key dimensions of their social universe as gender, class, and race" (1981:77). Such values may both motivate and justify hierarchy.

The perspective recognizes that there may be multiple ideologies about women and their activities in a given society, and some of these ideologies may be contradictory, making the analysis of gender extremely complex. Gender, class, race, ethnicity and other categories of social identity all contribute to defining women's position. To add to this complexity, women's own consciousness about their lives intertwines with dominant social ideologies and real material conditions. This 'way of seeing' explores the complicated web of interplay between people's own consciousness, the dominant ideologies of their groups and societies, and the concrete actions they take to perpetuate or change their world.

As I use the term here, consciousness is the meaning given by an actor or actors in society to his, her, or their own actions. As implied in this definition, consciousness exists on both individual and group levels. Consciousness differs from social ideology in that it may or may not reflect the dominant world view of the society in question. In other words, at the level of consciousness, there is the possibility of resistance and the formation of alternative world views.

Weiler (1988) asserts the crux of this viewpoint. Citing Arnot, she says: "social relationships are always in process and are constructed by individual humanbeings within a web of power and material constraints" (1988:38). She takes into account the existence of worldviews: a dominant worldview that recreates the status quo and the possibility of building alternative worldviews diffused through society, what she calls critical counter-hegemony. In her view, we need to look beyond the material determinants emphasized in the gender-class perspective, toward how the meaning made of material reality and experience interacts with the material to perpetuate or change it.

Keohane, Rosaldo, and Gelpi (1982) develop the idea of varying forms of women's consciousness, outlining three kinds: feminine, female and feminist. Feminine consciousness is the consciousness of woman as defined by man's "gaze, construct, and desire" (1982:ix). Female consciousness is women's experience "in giving and preserving life, nurturing and sustaining. Profoundly conservative, it is also resonant with radical possibilities."<sup>4</sup> Feminist consciousness is the "reflection on women's experience drawing attention to pervasive patterns of subordination, limitation, and confinement" (1982:x). Within this consciousness, alternative visions for living can develop. All three are part of thinking about women's experience, and the realization that all three, and even others, exist is the most important element of that thinking. Recognizing alternative worldviews, rather than one hegemonic view, is key to understanding women's experience.

The ideology and consciousness 'way of seeing' is extremely important for understanding women in Africa. One of its principal strengths is that it goes beyond gender and class. Cultural factors, for example, make a difference in terms of how we analyze the separation of private and public spheres, the definition of the private sphere, and the family as the primary locus of gender conflict, all of which vary across cultures (Glenn, 1984:137). Because African women's experience in many parts of the world has been defined by race, this too becomes a key factor in understanding it. The idea that sex, race, and class oppressions are interrelated and multifaceted comes into full flower in this perspective (hooks, 1987:75). The multiple dimensions of class,

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<sup>4</sup>On this point, also see Kaplan, 1982.



gender, race, and culture as definers of identity and ideology allow for the variation in and between African cultures and national histories.

I found in this 'way of seeing' a synthesis of important elements of the other perspectives with a new emphasis on the possibility of multiple ways of understanding. The idea of different kinds of consciousness allows us to open our eyes to 'inside' visions and meanings. The perspective blends and weighs various factors in particular women's lives, rather than determining which are most important across the board. Within this framework, we can more readily see and accept women's different understandings of their lives and different definitions of feminism, both across and within cultures and groups.

Steady's (1987) discussion of "African feminism" is an example of a way of thinking that expresses this tendency toward openness and synthesis. Her African feminism rejects rigid dichotomies and the opposition of men to women, but recognizes gender as a determinant of human experience. It strives for the values of human totality, parallel autonomy, cooperation, self-reliance, adaptation, survival, and liberation (Steady, 1987:20). She declares that these concepts are important to the study of women in Africa, with gender always linked to liberation from other oppressions of race and class. Like the one Steady uses, conceptual frameworks within this perspective become culturally and historically specific.

Methodologically, multiple vision--and an understanding of how factors interrelate--is essential because "feminist theory as a critique of ideology must also criticize itself and counter the tendency to congeal into a new ideology" (Keohane, Rosaldo, and Gelpi, 1982:ix).

This 'way of seeing' legitimates tentativeness and reinforces the multiple perspective approach to understanding organizational phenomena. It reverberates with many of the elements of feminist study as I envision it: hearing inside as well as outside views, being conscious of the lenses with which we see, and linking idea to action. The ideology and consciousness 'way of seeing' leads to visions of change by recognizing the possibility of individual and group action even within seemingly immovable material conditions.

In terms of women's organizations, I found this 'way of seeing' particularly important as a way of linking important elements of all three perspectives to the concrete ways women organize. In particular, it made me think of new questions. What are the spoken and unspoken purposes of women's organizations? What kinds of consciousness do women have about their identity and the identity of their organizations? Do they emphasize strategic or practical interests in organizational activity (Antrobus, 1988)? How are organizations used for change or maintenance of the status quo in regard to structures of inequality? How do the dominant social values of a cultural group influence how and why women associate? How do the meanings women and society give their collective actions relate to the material realities of their lives?

In the context of an organization, the interaction among social ideology, consciousness, and action is complex. For example, in the case of a national women's organization, the social ideology surrounding its activities may be contradictory. On the one hand, the slogans of nationalism may encourage these women to fight for a change in the position they held under a colonial regime. They may be verbally and visibly absorbed into a party in order to carry out this goal. On the

other hand, the rewards they receive from those in power may influence them to act on women's behalf only when women's interests coincide with the party's interests. The ideology of change contradicts the ideology of nationalist unity and maintenance of a power elite.

Women in the organization may absorb one or another of these ideologies unconsciously or consciously, but they may also have their own consciousness about their actions. For instance, they may first and foremost identify with their birthright as women to protect their families or ensure their own physical safety and security, expressing a "female consciousness" through their actions around practical interests. Moreover, different echelons of women within the organization may have varying kinds of consciousness about the activity of the organization which influences that activity and the ability of the group to act for change.

The idea of multiple worldviews also makes us see the possibility of multiple purposes of organizations. Women's organizations form one of the important ways in which women participate in social life and institutional structures, both materially and symbolically. The meaning of women's place in society is often acted out and represented through their organizational activity. The meaning of the organization on the outside may be very different from what it is to women on the inside, or even to individual women within the organization.

With this 'way of seeing', I felt I was getting closer to a 'way of seeing' that was mine. Through this perspective, I felt I could look at women's group activities on several levels, striving to see whether and in what way they fulfill expectations along lines of female, feminine, or feminist consciousness and the areas between. It would help me see

beyond the material to the relationship between idea and action and between individual and group. And most important, I could begin to see women's own views of their organizational activity, and how those views influence the shape that activity takes and its effect on their lives. As I had moved forward in my search through books, I increasingly saw this last element--hearing women's own voices on their lives and groups--as the goal of my work.

### Women's Voices; Their Own Visions

This 'way of seeing' is not a separate viewpoint so much as a direct outgrowth of my process of searching and of the ideology-consciousness 'way of seeing'. In much of the literature I reviewed, the 'way of seeing' left unexplored was that of women themselves. Researchers see meaning in their actions and collectivities, but what meaning do women themselves see? If I believed the premises of my own theoretical approach to studying organization--that the meaning we read into organizations helps determine their shape and purpose--I had to try to discover African women's own meanings.

Women's own view of their experiences of organization is especially important because organization is a link between theory and practice (Davies, 1987). In organization, people act out and reinforce social values. But social values are not static. Through organization, people often work together for change. Women's accounts of their experiences can provide a tool for self-reflection by the women themselves and valuable understandings for other women's groups. By opening another 'way of seeing', women's voices can enhance outsiders' ability to work with women's groups with deeper understanding.

Hearing from women themselves is also one of the ideals of feminist research. When the issues are cross-cultural and cross-class, this ideal is even more important. Women here are not the same as women there. Only by hearing 'their' views can 'our' views become whole.

Davies (1983, 1987) has compiled one of the few collections of women's voices on their organizational activity, among a growing body of women's life stories. The voices in this collection are those of formally educated Third World women giving their own theories about their activity and their reactions to the dominance of western views. In this collection, Jou'beh discusses the necessarily political nature of women's issues for Third World women, claiming that western women's separation of the political and the sexual is a political act in itself. An article on the African National Congress women's group reinforces Jou-beh's linking of national liberation struggles with women's struggles in the Third World. SWAPO women also write about their need to be involved in the struggle of their nation because they "bear direct and immediate witness to the reality of malnutrition, illiteracy, and unemployment of their children," and face the torture and death of their loved ones (Davies, 1987:69). These articles, however, focus on organized action in the public eye, ignoring other kinds of women's activity, since Davies' frame of reference falls largely within the gender-class perspective.

The literature of women's voices is more developed in individual life stories, including autobiographies, novels, oral histories, and some other research studies. The insights these life stories can provide are many. Maguire's (1987) study of battered women in Gallup, New Mexico, gives voice to their struggles with defining their own



experience in light of society's definitions of them and with changing the conditions of their lives. The words of the women appear in print, through an interactive research process used to draw out their own analyses and feelings.

Many women were examining the contradictions they experienced between their society or culture's definition of women's status and their own beliefs. . . . Another Navajo woman responded: '. . . in our Indian custom, . . . men have to be the head of the household. He's supposed to be the provider. The woman is supposed to just take care of the kids and cook and stuff. . . . I don't want to be in the corner where I think the man has to be by me all the time to pick up stuff. I don't want to be that kind of person. I want to be myself. I have to do for my children. Navajo custom is changing. A lot is changing. I hate to say this, but Navajo women are out-smarting the men I think in some certain ways. Well really, women are tougher than men. That's the way I think' (Maguire, 1987:185-86).

From the voices heard through this study, it is clear that the women's images of themselves often reflect society's view of them. But their ability to recognize a deeper level of self-knowledge, conflicting with the dominant social view, helps create in them the ability to change the material conditions of their lives.

Bourque and Warren (1981) also explore women's views based on their thesis that "only through analyses of the social world views of participants in the labor force can we move from behavior to meaning, value and ideology" (1981:77). They compare Western stereotypes of Latin American peasant women's attitudes about childbirth to the reality of their lives and perceptions, finding that peasant women are much more aware of "the wider social and economic implications of their fertility" (1981:88) than Western stereotypes allow. Sifted through Bourque and Warren's analytical framework, these voices provide a way to further develop and test the framework against reality.

Another use of and argument for hearing women's voices appears in recent works on the psychology of women. Two examples of such work are Gilligan's In a Different Voice (1982) and Belenky, et al, Women's Ways of Knowing: the Development of Self, Voice, and Mind (1986). A case is made in both for first recognizing different ways of knowing and acting among women and then valuing those ways for what they can offer both to our understanding of women and to society's dominant way of being. Both studies build on the raw data of interviews with women to construct emergent frameworks for analysis. The interaction between the interviewees, the information they put forward, and the researchers' ideas is a process of knowledge creation. In this vital process, the researchers' own voices also become part of the work.

It was as if the voices of the women, their words on paper, and our own process of reading together and culling the interviews for meaning gradually and profoundly modified the lens we brought to the project. As we worked, we were aware of the gradual shifts in our perspectives. . . . The stories of the women drew us back into a kind of knowing that had too often been silenced by the institutions in which we grew up and of which we were a part. In the end we found that, in our attempt to bring forward the ordinary voice, that voice had educated us (Belenky, et al, 1986:20).

I could see that women's own analysis of their experiences would help me see a fuller range of explanations of women's experiences. In studying organizations, women's voices educate us. Those voices may sometimes be difficult to hear, or we may have neither the time nor the skill to listen. But I knew that without the understanding they offered, my vision would remain clouded.

#### Synthesis: Ways of Seeing Cape Verdean Women Organizing

What did all this mean for the way I approached the field study? The review summarized above influenced the research process in several

aspects. First, the 'ways of seeing' became part of the way I saw, with emphasis on the third 'way of seeing', ideology and consciousness. While the analytical questions posed by all four ways of seeing formed the basis of some observation questions with which I went armed to the field situation,<sup>5</sup> the ideology and consciousness 'way of seeing' drew together in a particularly significant way elements of the first two. Moreover, it added the important interplay among individual consciousness, social ideology and action that fell in line with my beliefs about how best to study and "act" organizations, and demanded an important place for the fourth 'way of seeing', women's voices.

Thus emerged the second influence this review had on the dissertation study. In the literature reviewed, the voices of women organizing are often not heard. Thus, a search for unheard voices became the focus of the field study and the reason for doing a field study. I felt that the lessons learned by listening to women would be important for outsiders who work with women's groups, perhaps in teaching them how to listen and what they might listen for. For other women organizing, listening to women like themselves would provide practical lessons as well as possibly change their own visions of themselves. And for the women in the group studied, the experience of telling could be an act of co-creation (Tripp, 1983), learning and empowerment.

In hearing women's voices, I wanted to build theory from the experience of the women I worked with. This kind of contextual theory-building is a main goal of feminist research, creating theory which is real to the people it is supposed to explain. But I also wanted to make

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<sup>5</sup>See Solomon, 1989c.

the research somehow a learning experience for the women who would participate in it. This goal became increasingly important in shaping this study, a third result of this review on my work. The process of working through the literature was part of a personal process of identifying myself as a feminist in my life and in my work, and a growing desire to do a kind of research which was woman-empowering and woman-centered.

As a result, in my research methodology, I wished to acknowledge openly my own framework and agenda. I had already begun this process by sorting through literature and identifying the elements I felt important. The ideology-consciousness 'way of seeing's' focus on interaction between individual consciousness and action, social structures and ideologies, and material realities would clearly color my view of the women's group I studied. Within this, I would focus on understanding women's own consciousness about their lives and organizations in an effort to bring to light other theories.

But how would I do this? I next had to outline some basic principles to research by and choose methods consistent with these principles and the goals of the research. In the next chapter, I explain the methodological principles and guidelines of the study and some dilemmas of their application.

### CHAPTER III

#### WAYS OF DOING RESEARCH: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY AND DILEMMAS IN PRACTICE

'When a subject is highly controversial--and any question about sex is that--one cannot hope to tell the truth. One can only show how one came to hold whatever opinion one does hold.' (Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own, 1929, quoted in Gilligan, 1979:432).

In this chapter, I explain the methodological approach to the study. In the first section, I describe the approach I developed--and how I developed it--before I began the field study, including my definition of research principles and choice of congruent research methods. In the second section, I address issues that arose in the field situation, dilemmas of trying to put my chosen principles into practice through specific methods in a specific context. In the third section, I detail how I ended up carrying out the study. I include here information on the research participants, types of data collected and time frame, method of data analysis, and notes on language, translation, and transcription.

The discussion of research issues does not conclude with this chapter, however, nor with this dissertation. It merely begins. At some points in the text, I footnote data interpretation with notes on relevant methodological issues. Then, in Chapter XII, "Looking Back," I reconsider questions of methodology and make meaning of the research from my current perspective at this writing.



### Where I Started: Development of the Research Approach

My search for a methodological approach had two parts: definition of principles and choice of methods. In this first part of this chapter, I describe the search for principles and the methods choices I made. In fact, my way of seeing rested on a desire to do what I thought of as 'feminist research'. Many have described principles of feminism and feminist research and by no means do they all agree. So the first part of my methodological search entailed defining my own principles of feminist research and the reasons I thought they were necessary to my doing research with women, outlining some problems with trying to make them real in research practice, and explaining how I hoped to make them real in my research in Cape Verde.

Admittedly, my research approach drew on a specific social science paradigm. People often said that it was not specifically feminist: why not consider it humanist or critical? Others contended that it wasn't the only way to do research that might be considered feminist. Both criticisms were and still are true. However, I considered them beside the point, for several reasons.

In the first place, feminism in my view was not just for women. I borrowed the core of my definition of feminism from Maguire (1987):

a worldwide movement for the redefinition and redistribution of power. Feminism is: (a) a belief that women universally face some form of oppression or exploitation; (b) a commitment to uncover and understand what causes and sustains oppression, in all its forms and (c) a commitment to work individually and collectively in everyday life to end all forms of oppression (Maguire, 1987:96).

Oppression based on gender limits all of us, just as racism poisons in a specific way the daily lives of white people, in addition to its effects on people of color and on the shape of society as a whole.

In this way, female experience is intimately related to the rest of human life and to the experience of oppression. Yet, although different kinds of oppression have common bases, the concrete experience of oppression is infinite in its variety. Women's experiences are unique (though not monolithic) and are worthy of attention as such and for what they can teach the rest of the world. As an outgrowth of those experiences, feminism, feminist theory and feminist research are worthy in these same ways. Their being 'also feminist', in addition to some other things, does not discredit them or make them less feminist.

In the same way, feminist research is not divorced from social science research as a whole. Various kinds of feminist research exist, intertwined with various research paradigms. The kind of feminist theory and research I talk about are tied up with critical theory and research. That is, they are integral to the critical movement within the social sciences. Moreover, women have a special relationship to the contradiction between dominant social theory and daily experience that has served as part of the motivation of this movement. "Women are native speakers of this situation and in explicating it or its implications and realizing them conceptually, they have that relation to it of knowing it before it has been said" (Smith, 1974:13).

But for me, feminism was more than just naming and fighting against oppression. It was also uncovering, learning from, and celebrating the experiences of being a woman in all their variety. In this too, feminism links women's experience to human experience, rather than isolating it. What can the experience of being a woman teach the rest of humanity? What can, for example, the experiences of Cape Verdean low-income women in groups show to women's clubs in Chicago or to the

Cape Verdean women's own elite sisters or to their government or to the United Nations? This effort at hearing and learning is similar to other attempts to learn from those the world doesn't usually listen to, a current that runs through much critical research and teaching.

Thus, my research principles were at the same time feminist and critical. I expressed the kind of research I hoped to do as specifically feminist because, in addition to the reasons cited above, I was exploring my own identity as a feminist by exploring the idea of doing feminist research. What was it all about? What would it mean to me and the other women participants? Could we 'do' an act of "co-creation?" The growth of these questions in my own consciousness was related to my experiences as a woman and a researcher. Moreover, in the work I hoped to do, the consciousness of women, including myself, was of particular importance. As I then named (and still do name) my own consciousness feminist (in addition to some other things), an examination of my specifically feminist principles was essential.

#### Principles of My Approach to Feminist Research

I came up with three principles, or ideals perhaps, culled from delving into my own assumptions and comparing them to literature about various research paradigms and programs, among them ethnographic research, phenomenological research, critical research, participatory research, feminist research, and others. I took from these what I saw as common threads to weave the tapestry I wanted. I present these principles here as I saw them then. In Chapter XII, I critique elements of them according to my thoughts following this research experience.

Critique of dominant 'scientific' ideology: A critique of the practices of positivism which create alienation of knowers from the

known is essential to the kind of feminism I profess. This critique rejects some key elements that lie at the basis of positivist explanations and research methods: others' definition of our experiences, the expert/people dichotomy, and the concern for control and order (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Stanley & Wise, 1983:113). It is a critique of *the* current dominant scientific ideology, positivism, as well as dominance by *any* ideology.

Such a critique suggests several tenets for feminist research. First, feminist researchers acknowledge and use multiple ways of seeing. Women know, through the experience of their own lives, of the existence of both central and alternative values (Ifeka, 1975:564), of consciousness which defies conforming activity (Westkott, 1979:428-29), of resistance enacted alongside accommodation (Weiler, 1988). Specifically feminist experience creates a kind of "double vision" which makes one aware of the way *how* one sees influences *what* one sees (Stanley & Wise, 1983:54). In my own experience as a growing critical feminist, I saw my daily experience in quite a different way than I had before and therefore became aware of the process of 'seeing' itself.<sup>1</sup>

Feminism, then, should resist recreating "ideological hegemony" or theoretical hierarchies--of the positivist kind or of any other kind. It should adopt approaches which allow and encourage tentativeness,

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<sup>1</sup>In fact, my belief in the usefulness of multiple ways of seeing stems from a number of personal experiences. Perhaps the most important one was an 'academic' experience. In an organizational theory class, I analyzed a women's organization I had worked for, using the multiple metaphors for organizational analysis proposed by Morgan (1986). The insights this method provided were so profound, and so attuned to my experiences, my ways of understanding, and the idea of change, that I became a multiple metaphor junkie. I started to think about what kinds of metaphors might similarly illuminate my understanding of women's organizations in Africa, and thus began my present journey.

connection, and blending, rather than exclusiveness and rigid categorization. It should seek to find out what various theories might offer to understanding, how they can build on and connect with one another, rather than being seen as mutually exclusive. Otherwise, feminist researchers end up doing to others what has been historically done to women, ignoring--or worse, putting down--alternative ways of being.

In practice, however, among feminists, hierarchies have in fact emerged. The idea of "feminist consciousness-raising" implies a hierarchy of kinds of consciousness with "feminist" as the best. Yet consciousness grows out of experience, and as all experience is not the same neither is all consciousness (Stanley & Wise, 1983:79,119). "Woman" is not a monolithic category (Reuben, 1978:217), but rather a variety of experiences with some common bonds. Neither does feminism have only one definition, but varies with women's experiences. Feminists need to listen to various definitions, pay attention to the interaction between their work and other work in the social sciences (Stanley & Wise, 1983:40; Maguire, 1987), and examine the various possibilities for feminist research.

In this critical tradition, research is not separate from how it will be used and disseminated. An awareness of how knowledge is mediated through journals, conferences, etc. (D. Smith, 1974:12), and of the danger of information being used against oppressed groups (Westkott, 1979:427) sets the scene for making conscious decisions about how to use the knowledge created in the research process. How, for example, will women themselves use it, both those involved in the research and others? How will it forward the movement for change in a feminist framework?



Who has control over its use and how can and should that control be shared? Choices should be made that ensure the use of research--in both process and product--for feminist change.

Finally, feminist researchers make explicit the paradigm in which their research is set (Roberts, 1981b:17; D. Smith, 1974:11). By leaving its own paradigmatic assumptions unspoken, dominant social science has imposed them as givens on the world. In this way, they have become reified as truths external to ourselves. Yet the questions this science poses, its methods and procedures, its theorizing, all stem from a concern with generalization and replication for the end goal of control. They are tied to the "apparatus of ruling" (D. Smith, 1979). Any social science must explain its assumptions in order to avoid becoming mystified, becoming separated from real life experience.

Moreover, we must understand our own assumptions in order to encompass alternatives and encompass alternatives to understand our own assumptions.

In order to understand alternative points of view it is important that a theorist be fully aware of the assumptions upon which his [sic] own perspective is based. Such an appreciation involves an intellectual journey which takes him outside the realm of his own familiar domain. It requires that he become aware of the boundaries which define his perspective. It requires that he journey into the unexplored. It requires that he become familiar with paradigms which are not his own. Only then can he look back and appreciate in full measure the precise nature of his starting point.  
(Burrell & Morgan, 1979:ix)

It is precisely this kind of journey that has been lacking in dominant 'scientific' ideology and it is this kind of journey that feminist research must take.

Praxis: Praxis is "the unification of theory and practice"  
(Burrell & Morgan, 1979:290). It is the understanding that life

activity is a process of change and that we can consciously aim this change toward becoming more fully human. It is emancipatory, with consciousness fused to material life, subject fused to object. It is a dialectical relationship between reflection and action.

The implications for feminist research of the philosophy of praxis are numerous. What kinds of reflection, first of all, are necessary to make this dialectical relationship real in regard to women's experience? First, the researcher must be aware of and examine her own role in the research process.<sup>2</sup> The history of researchers in the women's movement has made this self-reflective stance necessary: the moment a woman is researcher doing research 'on' women, she is aware of herself as both subject and object (Acker, et al, 1983; Roberts, 1981; D. Smith, 1974; Stanley & Wise, 1983; Westkott, 1979).

The specificity of the knower is revealed when women become subjects of knowledge, because women are not identified with the abstract human being but with particular deviations or negations of this abstracted universal. Women studying women reveals the complex way in which women as objects of knowledge reflect back on women as subjects of knowledge. Knowledge of the other and knowledge of the self are mutually informing, because self and other share a common condition of being women (Westkott, 1979:426).

The female researcher holds the power that is traditionally accorded the researcher in *his* role. At the same time, she is a member of the objectified group of women. She is both inside and outside the "culture" she's learning and inside and outside the "culture" of research. She sees with this double vision, and suddenly finds herself as ordinary woman looking back at herself as powerful researcher. Her

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<sup>2</sup>The fields of anthropological and sociological research have seriously explored this issue. Certain schools of thought within them have drawn similar conclusions to the stance I outline here.

identity as a woman makes her recognize that the researcher is not some impersonal, unbiased 'he'. She is herself. Research then cannot be value-free. Self-knowledge and social knowledge are intertwined (Westkott, 1979:430).

This self-examination must appear in the research itself, not as an addendum, footnote or separate article. How does the researcher know what she knows? What are the theories (attempts to understand and explain) she inevitably brings to her work (Stanley & Wise, 1983:160-161)? By what means does she make sense of the world? What are her beliefs about the nature of society and the nature of knowing? All these must be explicit in her work.

"This emphasis on the conscious subjectivity of the researcher also implies a recognition of the subjectivity of the objects of the research." They are subjects who know and act in the world (Weiler, 1988:62). Thus praxis must be not only what the researcher does but what the 'researched' do as well as and along with the researcher. A major goal of feminist research is for "both women as researchers and women as the objects of research to come to understand and explore their own consciousness and material conditions through dialogue" (Weiler, 1988:62).

This interaction necessarily brings about some kind of change. In fact, the mere presence of an outside researcher causes change of some kind, in the same way that any new person in a community would. The research process is a social one and the researcher and researched social actors. But in feminist research, the interaction is specifically and purposefully related to change. Thus, the practice aspect of praxis should be welcomed rather than feared. It certainly

cannot be denied if we believe in the dialectical relationship between consciousness and concrete circumstances (Bartky, 1975:430). The moment a dialogue begins to create and explore consciousness, people's actions change in some way. In fact, theory is useful as a means to change practice (Stanley & Wise, 1983:48). The test of knowledge is not measurement against abstract criteria of 'truth', but whether it leads to progressive change serving all knowers: researcher and researched (Weiler, 1988:63).

Theory built from experience: Theories too need to go through a kind of self-reflection process. Feminist theory must be "reflexive" theory, that is, explaining itself and reflecting on its own development, conscious of itself in somewhat the same way a feminist researcher is conscious of herself (Acker, et al, 1983:423; Sharrock & Anderson, 1986:56-58; D. Smith, 1974:10). Such reflexivity keeps theory within the realm of real experience, not isolated in the imagined space of thinkers' minds. It helps ensure a continual self-critique, steering away from developing an alternative dominant science or way of thinking, steering toward the unification of theory and practice which is praxis.

Feminist research must seek out women's voices and women's theories, creating new language and images from within their experience. Such a search starts with the recognition that we are all theorists. As we approach social experience, we are already involved in trying to figure it out, to understand what is happening. We formulate ideas based on our interpretation of what we see, feel, hear, etc. Social scientists use the same methods of reasoning as do everyday people. Thus, theory inevitably comes along with or even before research

(Stanley & Wise, 1983:160-61). We have ideas about what we live, study and see.

The recognition of this process makes us see the centrality of our own voices as researchers. I can only know through my own theories and their constant revision through experience. There are no "'real' conditions of oppression outside of experience and understanding" (Stanley & Wise, 1983:81). In my research, I must speak through my own voice. But the women we study theorize just as we do and our research can be in some way a vehicle for the expression of their theories, in order to enrich our understanding and the world's. If I wish to open the way for the voices of other women, I must find a way for them to speak directly and acknowledge how their speech is changed by my own voice and views.

Besides seeking to hear other voices, many other rationales support building theory from experience. Research on women's ways of knowing and thinking shows that women live, know and judge contextually (Gilligan, 1982; Belenky, et al, 1986). Their lives are made of the details of living in relationship to others. A theory should be "a set of understandings or conceptual frameworks which are directly related to, and derive from, particular facets of everyday relationships, experiences and behaviors" (Stanley & Wise, 1983:47). As I stated earlier, a theory exists in order to create understanding (Sharrock & Anderson, 1986:39) and change practice, not for its own sake.

Why is this element so important for feminist research? If feminist researchers seek change and the emancipation of women, we must first understand how we as people "make sense" and how we justify the way things are (Sharrock & Anderson, 1986:58). We must understand the



process by which we create meaning as well as the meanings we create. We must understand how we understand, as ethnomethodologists suggest, in order to know how we can change understanding. For change happens at the personal level, at the level of consciousness, interrelated with action and the structures we create. Oppression is not an experience imposed on us by external structures. Rather, we create oppression and the structures and relationships that maintain oppression. In turn, these structures influence our consciousness. Activities and the rules that govern them are interrelated, each elaborating the other (Sharrock and Anderson, 1986:53). Our consciousness is generated internally, but the forms it creates act back upon us via the concrete external identity we give them (Burrell & Morgan, 1979:298). Thus, we can also alleviate oppression by creating new relationships, new structures, and new meanings.

Situating feminist theory in real experience in this way,

we are probably faced with another unresolvable dilemma: working from a perspective in which we are trained to want to give a reasoned and connected account, we face live material that is constantly in the process of transformation, that is not organized in the way of academic theories (Acker, et al, 1983:433).

Feminist research does not fit neatly into academic disciplines. Real life is problem-focused and problems are not organized into disciplines. Change is inter-disciplinary and so must be feminist research (Reuben, 1978:218).

Theory built from experience is part of a process of discovery. Feminism needs "adequate analytic understanding of women's oppression. The way to gain such an understanding is to listen much more carefully, take much more seriously, what women and men have to tell us about their

lives" (Stanley & Wise, 1983:84). Our experience is the basis of the theory that will benefit women most.

### Making the Principles Real

Maguire (1987) claims that "the research process remains the weak link in feminist research. Feminist researchers are not clear on how to create knowledge in a way that is emancipating and empowering to the participants involved" (1987:126). I studied Maguire's work extensively while preparing for my own field study. While I agreed with her that feminist researchers writing about research process were often vague, I somehow liked that lack of specificity.

I liked the fact that many feminist researchers are honest in their acknowledgement of the limitations of research. Even if one calls something participatory and empowering, does that make it so? What do we do when our ideas conflict with participants' ideas? If we want to avoid invalidating others' experience, can we do research only with women like ourselves (Acker, *et al*, 1983:434)? To what extent do we really empower the participants in research and to what extent ourselves? Whose voice is really being heard? When I wrote my dissertation using knowledge created by doing research with Cape Verdean women, how would these women benefit? "'There remains an inherent contradiction between treating the natives as equals and using the knowledge they give us for goals they would never imagine themselves...'" (Paul Reisman, 1982, quoted in Abu-Lughod, 1988:11).

In spite of my best intentions, I was leary of calling my research 'empowering' or 'participatory research'.<sup>3</sup> Somehow, in the context of

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<sup>3</sup>For an excellent review of participatory research and its relevance for feminist research, see Maguire, 1987.

doctoral research this label felt to me like a contradiction, only in disguised form.<sup>4</sup> Underlying this feeling were my experiences in the Third World. I always went on the pretext of 'helping', training, or teaching. But I always learned more than the supposed beneficiaries; most of the intellectual benefits, not to mention the material benefits, accrued to me. Was 'participatory research' another way of hiding this fact, of continuing to try to 'help' in a situation of imbalanced power and imbalanced benefits? While the power of research participants was most important, I was wary of promising change that might never occur while not adequately acknowledging how the research participants helped me.<sup>5</sup>

Laying bare my own learning might be a way of 'equalizing', a different way than 'participatory research', I hypothesized. Vulnerability is part of the daily experience of the 'researched', no matter how the research experience itself is approached.<sup>6</sup> The feminist researcher should tell her own story of how the research experience changes her consciousness and life as well. This can increase her own vulnerability, in fact making her a person who is also 'researched'.

I liked the non-specificity of feminist research for another reason as well: it maintains the contextual nature of research practice and

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<sup>4</sup>Maguire (1987) also recognized the contradiction inherent in writing a dissertation based on 'participatory research'.

<sup>5</sup>I've heard rumored that in a conversation at the University of Massachusetts, Paulo Freire was heard to say that anyone thinking about doing participatory research ought to be prepared to be in a given community for about ten years. In response, Myles Horton corrected: "Better make that about fifty."

<sup>6</sup>Stanley and Wise (1983) suggest that this may be why the powerful are not usually the objects of research. I would add that this is true of 'participants' even in participatory research.

theory. It lets activity, as well as idea, grow out of the particular environment of research and the experience of the researcher and research participants. It also steers us away from creating new research formulas like those which have standardized research practice within positivist science. In some subtle (although perhaps unhelpful) way, the lack of specificity keeps feminist research from crystallizing into *the* new way of doing things right.

My concerns about practice centered on doing feminist research across barriers of class, culture, race and history. How does a white middle class single woman from the United States do feminist research with Cape Verdean women? What would my role be? How would I both acknowledge my ways of seeing and validate theirs? Would I be able to understand their ways of seeing? What would be the products of research? In working toward change, how would we deal with conflict? What role would be appropriate for me in the change process, if any? What did all my philosophizing mean for the work I actually hoped to do?

As Maguire (1987) declares, the *how* of feminist research is stickier than the *why*. I sorted through some initial *how*'s which made sense to me at the time as ways to put my principles into practice. Since my principles were 'theories'--my way of making sense of feminist research (that accorded with my experience up to that time), putting them into practice would 'test' their 'truth' in one particular situation and further shape them. Here is the vision I had of how I would deal with this practice, moving from theoretical principles to implementing principles.

1. Use multiple ways of seeing.

This process had already begun by the time I wrote my methodological stance. In my theoretical literature review, I tried to shape into 'ways of seeing' things I had read that had affected my thinking about women's organizations. I was aware that there were certain basic ideas that provided the frameworks for how scholars looked at women's organizations, and I tried to make explicit in that paper what I thought those basic ideas were and how they might influence analysis of women's organizations. Having gone through that exercise, I had internalized certain elements of those frameworks where they accorded with my experience. I expressed in the paper what I thought were their strengths and how they helped me look at things. I showed which beliefs would underlie my own work.<sup>7</sup>

In the Cape Verde field study, I wanted to take the 'ways of seeing' idea to its implied conclusion. I wanted to see how women in the group I would work with saw their own activity. What were their ways of seeing and how did they affect their actions (just as I would analyze my ways of seeing and how they affected my actions)? Bringing the idea of multiple 'ways of seeing' to bear, I would listen carefully to their ideas about themselves, their identities, their roles, their culture, their reality, their meaning. At the same time, seeking to hear women's voices, I would not represent them as directly spoken when they were sifted through my thoughts first. I would analyze their words and actions through multiple 'ways of seeing'. This brought me to the second way I hoped to proceed.

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<sup>7</sup>See Chapter II.



2. Tell the story.

Making ways of seeing explicit means telling *how* knowledge is created as well as what the knowledge is. In practice, this meant I would record and write about this research as a process, continually examining my role and changing ideas, the way the research participants and I acted and reacted, and how we came to know what we knew. *A la* Maguire, my voice would be the central narrator both in field notes and in my final dissertation. Data would be examined as a topic (that is, how it was produced), not just as a resource. And I hoped the work would somehow live on both sides of a Moebius strip: it would be rigorous and successful according to the criteria of the university and at the same time critical of those criteria (McIntosh, 1984). I wanted to be courageous in finding a personal mode of expression and scholarship.

3. Practice praxis.

Praxis brings the dialectical tendencies of multiple ways of seeing and thinking into the realm of research action. I hoped to avoid dichotomizing thought and action or creating new hierarchies of knowledge ('mine' being superior to 'theirs', for example, or vice versa). In practice, this meant that the women I worked with would have a chance to examine the ideas we created and ideas I might create too. They would read what they or I wrote, talk about what we thought about together, and reflect on actions they and we took. In this way, we would keep ideas relevant to reality, connected to action and related to goals of change that might develop in the research process. Constant re-examination (reflection-action) would deepen the meaning of the theories for me and the other women. We also need to keep checking our

theories for their reflexivity (do they explain themselves?). Actions within the research process would be subject to scrutiny and discussion, so that the other participants might become aware of *how* they know as well as what they know.

4. Examine everyday life.

Smith (1979) suggests that rendering daily life "problematic" is an effective feminist research strategy. Reminiscent of Ira Shor's (1980) methods of critical teaching, such a strategy asks "how is it so that...?", examining with research participants any condition of everyday life. This kind of feminist-research-as-problem-posing can be done in many ways. For example, an action research process, in which information is gathered by the outside researcher through interviews and observations and fed back to the group through the eyes of the researcher, often lets groups see their own ideas and hear each other in new ways leading toward change.<sup>8</sup> The steps of participatory research outlined by Maguire (1987) provide an alternative approach. Group "decoding" of daily situations is another related procedure (Freire, 1973). Before I established a relationship with a particular group, I wouldn't know the best ways to approach the examination of everyday life as a "problematic," but I believed this would be the core of the research activity.

5. Be aware of various modes of expression.

Along with multiple ways of seeing, different individuals, groups, and cultures have different ways of expressing meaning. As I noted

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<sup>8</sup>I used this process in 1985 with a Northampton community group, armed only with my inexperience and the desire to let go of control, with exciting results.

earlier, in much of the feminist research done in the United States, the mode of expression is verbal and interviews (group or individual) are the chosen way of learning. Talking to women would be important in the work I would do too, as women might give meaning to their behavior that I could not know by observing the behavior. However, they might have other ways of expressing that meaning in addition to or instead of talking directly about it. They might express resistance, for example, through the juxtaposition of contradictory behaviors, even if they did not acknowledge the contradiction verbally.<sup>9</sup> Thus, I hoped to use a variety of methods of learning, including participant observation, talking, and action, as appropriate. As I learned more, I would be able to follow the lead of the women, as being with them would hopefully show me how they were teaching me. Their spoken meanings might end up being the most important after all. But I would go in open to various possibilities and work toward balancing them and connecting them as I found them.

6. Develop a variety of research 'products'.

Clearly, one of the research products had to be my dissertation and I would make this clear to the research participants from the outset. Acknowledging the self-serving nature of the research, I wanted them to know that I saw myself as the biggest learner and I wanted to learn about them and to help other people learn about what they were doing. But I was also concerned about ways of letting their voices be heard directly and helping their wishes see the light of day. So, one of our topics of discussion would be what they wanted 'products' of the

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<sup>9</sup>Women in some African cultures express resistance through song or dance.

research to be. They might take the form of books they wrote, performances they developed and put on, project proposals for work they wanted to do, workshops to address certain problems they identified, or other such possibilities. Maybe they would simply benefit from having been listened to, even if by only me and the readers I addressed. But research products that were useful in terms of their goals for change would be a constant preoccupation.

7. Use language that is direct, specific, and personal.

The work I wrote, including my dissertation, must be accessible and readable. I had to be present in the work (and the research participants must be present in what they produced) in order to reinforce in language my responsibility for and involvement in the work. This presence might be expressed differently in different research products, but it must always exist. I wanted to participate in the now widespread movement to diminish the alienating effect of language that invades certain academic research products.

I would also try not to take gender, class, culture, or race for granted when I wrote, clarifying when I was extrapolating from one set of experiences to another.

8. An on-going commitment?

I came to the point of saying I could not try to do 'participatory research' in large part because I believed that participatory research is not something done in a year, nor initiated from the outside. Participative, interactive, even change-producing or consciousness-raising, my research might be, but not the long-term commitment to fundamental transformation I believed participatory research was supposed to be.

And though I still abided by that refusal at the outset of my study (perhaps out of fear or perhaps out of responsibility), I also picked Cape Verde because it was a place I felt a personal commitment to, a place where I saw the possibility of developing an on-going relationship with groups I worked with. Part of my job while there would be to see what kind of on-going relationship, if any, might be a good one for me and for them. In a year and a half, something good might just barely get started, so at least I wanted to see a possibility for something more. And though I wouldn't do participatory research in a year and a half, maybe they would do it over time with or without my presence.

I recognized that this stance contained contradictions. I hoped to explore those contradictions in the course of my research.

#### Choosing Methods

Next I had to find methods that fit in with my theoretical and ideological assumptions and the research principles that had grown out of these. I chose a general qualitative approach to the study, using primarily participant observation, supplemented by informal and formal interviewing as needed. Much research on women has shown that it is difficult to understand the complexity of women's situation on the basis of quantitative indicators, particularly when examining women's relationships to each other and to society (Mernissi, 1989; Stanley & Wise, 1983; Westkott, 1979). "The methodology of participant observation focuses on the meanings of human existence as seen from the standpoint of insiders" (Jorgensen, 1989:14). I chose this approach because the nature of the information I wished to uncover concerned such relationships and meanings. In addition, this approach fell in line with one of the primary goals of feminist research, "to see the world



from women's place in it" (Callaway, 1981:460, quoted in Lather, 1986:68), and provided a tool to get to the fourth 'way of seeing', women's voices.

Underpinning my use of participant observation was an "openly ideological" feminist research program (Lather, 1986). Because participant observation as a method can be used within various research programs (naturalistic empiricism, interpretive anthropology, etc.), it was important to delineate the assumptions underlying the way I was going to use it. The kind of research I wanted to do is situated in the radical humanist paradigm, as defined by Burrell and Morgan (1979). Their work exposes the common roots of the interpretive and radical humanist paradigms, but shows the differences in how they have grown. While those who work within the phenomenological tradition "aim at understanding meaning without influencing it," radical humanists, particularly those influenced by critical theory according to the Frankfurt School, seek "both to understand the world and to change it" (1979:294). It was this fundamental difference which lay underneath my research approach.

A qualitative "participant observer" approach fit both the research circumstances and the research goals. Clearly, I came to the research as an individual and as an outsider. As such, I would learn about Cape Verdean society and Cape Verdean women organizing from my own perspective. I had value commitments which would influence my interpretation of events. Likewise, my individual presence and actions would have an impact on the group I worked with. In defining my role over time, I would discover what that impact was and what it meant. As part of the research process, I would explicitly address my own

subjectivity, the process of change brought about by the research event, and the idea of ideologically committed research. The qualitative approach, in much of its current critical practice, not only allows for but encourages examination of all of these aspects of research.

To prepare for the field study as well as possible, I examined issues I would face in the field and steps in the research process. In my research proposal, I addressed entry strategies, selection of the participating group, the role of the researcher, data gathering techniques, language, data management and analysis, and establishing validity. This preparation helped me a great deal. Still, as in any such process, the issues and challenges in the field were many. In the next section, I outline some of these.

#### Where I Went: A Preview of Research Process Issues

"These resonances between the personal and the professional are the source of both insight and error. You avoid mistakes not so much by trying to build a wall between the observer and the observed as by observing the observer--observing yourself--as well, and bringing the personal issues into consciousness" (Mary Catherine Bateson, 1984, With a Daughter's Eye, quoted in Belenky, et al, 1986:226).

In this second part of this chapter, I preview some of the issues and challenges which arose in the field situation. Later, in footnotes to the text about the Tira Chapeu women's lives and group (Chapters V through X), I elaborate on how these issues cropped up in critical ways during the research process. In Chapter XII, I look back at these issues and others mentioned in the first section of this chapter, and decipher what I've learned about the research process by doing it.

## Getting In

Upon arriving in Cape Verde in September 1989, I contacted the three organizations where I had links: the *Organização das Mulheres de Cabo Verde* (OMCV; the national women's organization), the *Direcção Geral da Educação Extra Escolar* (DGEX; the nonformal education division of the Ministry of Education), and the *Instituto Nacional das Cooperativas* (INC; the national institute of cooperatives). I spent an initial period explaining my research and negotiating with these organizations, and it appeared that OMCV would serve as my primary home. It made sense: I was doing research about women. In the eyes of the officials I talked to, OMCV was the place I should be since this was the organization that dealt with women.

I decided to spend my first three months visiting various types of women's groups, getting to know the lay of the land, in order to start the group selection process. I also engaged heavily in the study of Kriolu, as it quickly became clear that I wasn't going to get any research done with the women I wanted to work with in Portuguese. They didn't speak it. And even those who did didn't express their personal thoughts and feelings in it.

From the beginning, I was overwhelmed by two feelings, which continued as dilemmas throughout the research period. The first was the unavoidable confusion of multiple ways of seeing. Even in my daily life, my experiences seemed to contradict each other. In addition, so many people had so many different ways of seeing the same group, the same event, the same person. Of course, I believed that multiple ways of seeing provided richness to understanding, but how to sort it all

out? And how would I ever be able to say anything about this complicated mess of points of view?

The second feeling was that I was not in real control of the research process. By entering in as participant observer, I became only one part of a larger life. My presence affected the people I worked with, but moreso, their reality affected me and the research process. I was one in their place; they were many at home. I fell into their lives and they took me over. This became immediately evident in the process of selecting a group for the research. Looking back at my research journal, I see that the group I chose fulfilled the criteria I outlined: a group interested in having me around, open to the research, that I could do something for; an ongoing group that had its own momentum; located in a peri-urban low-income neighborhood; a group of a type typically targetted by development projects and programs. But I also see that they, and circumstances, chose me. I had both formal and informal introductions to the group, which made them accept me more readily.<sup>10</sup> The leader was a dynamic individual who attracted me and pulled me into her life. I already lived near this *bairro*. And quirks of fate, including breaking my wrist on a trip to a group in the interior during the group selection phase, made me want to stick closer to home.

Later on, other larger circumstances affected the research process, particularly incidents in the community's life and the political changes going on in the nation. I realized that once I entered in, I was in. I

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<sup>10</sup>I found that in Praia, informal connections had more weight than formal organizational ones. An introduction through a mutual friend put one on much more solid ground with a person, more likely to get a commitment and develop a good relationship.

had to go with the flow. It was this flow, the problems and events of local life, that determined in large part not only the process but even the content of the research. In this sense, I found the research *inevitably* based on daily life experience.

#### My Role: Issues of Giving and Taking

What one observes is determined not only by physical location but also by social location (Jorgensen, 1989:53). For this reason, a participant observer must be aware of how her "location" and role influence what she sees. In the belief that valid findings "are *more* rather than less likely as the researcher becomes involved directly, personally, and existentially with people in daily life" (Jorgensen, 1989:56), I hoped to create an active, involved role for myself over time. But active how? And with whom?

My relationship with OMCV was complex. I was never sure whether they wanted me 'in', and to what extent. I see, in retrospect, that it was always difficult for me to 'read' their reaction to me. I felt I was receiving many double messages that I had to struggle to interpret. OMCV's reaction to me had to do with several factors, I believe. First, in my struggle to define a collaborative venture, I expressed my openness to their suggestions about what shape the research should take, but perhaps this openness communicated vagueness about the purpose of the research, leading to uncertainty and even suspicion. Second, they reacted to me in part as a member of the international donor community, influencing their official behavior toward me. They were used to different kinds of researchers and different kinds of research and didn't adjust easily to the type of collaboration I was trying to engage them in. I often had the feeling that people were 'performing'



according to the expectations they thought I had, based on their experience with foreign donor agency representatives or other researchers. Third, the idea of my offering my services--aside from research itself--to their organization was difficult to get across and even more difficult to implement. They were interested in the idea, but never got to the point of defining what they might want. Fourth, the political moment influenced how the organization treated me during several key events. OMCV was in an extremely vulnerable position during the time of the research, first because they were preparing their first Congress (a time of reflection, evaluation and presentation of results to the public, the government, and the political system), and then because they were part of the one-party system that had begun to be dismantled and often attacked. I only really understood their vulnerability when the election campaign began, after I had already been in Cape Verde for a year.

In part because of the hugeness and difficulty of the task of trying to collaborate and get 'in' on the national level of OMCV in this highly charged context, I focused more on developing a collaborative relationship with and giving something back to the local group I studied. Although clearer, this task was not easy even here. What to give back? And how? And when? When would I know enough to know what to do and how? I felt that it would be misleading and irresponsible to come up with a program of activity or 'help' that I alone devised, or one that would take longer than the time I had to follow it through. Yet it was really only in the last six months of the research that we had developed the necessary trust and mutual knowledge to be able to say what I might do.

In addition, I faced the challenge of, once having defined myself to them as learner, changing the definition to helper. In fact, I wanted them to see me as learner because I thought it was essential for them to see themselves as having something to teach. And they did teach, and they did see themselves as teaching me. But to evolve from that relationship to a working one, where some benefit might also return to them, was not easy. Maybe it was not even desirable. It took a long time, and it was just ripe when I was almost on my way home. I made efforts to start such a process, even though I was leaving.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps it will carry on. All of this reinforced my conviction that a relationship of this type takes more time and commitment than an 18-month dissertation research grant will allow.

As for the research process itself having some positive effect, I think this happened in small ways, and some of those I haven't even seen yet perhaps. All this I deal with more globally in Chapter XII.

#### In the Tira Chapeu Group

My role in the Tira Chapeu group was not the helper-researcher I'd imagined, and this again reflected that I was being taken into their way of life, rather than incorporating these women into mine. In Tira

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<sup>11</sup>At the end of 1990, I started to investigate sources of funding for building the community's desired *jardim infantil*, or pre-school, which the women's group had struggled so long for, without success. I decided that this would be the most useful thing I could do for them in the short term, and I finally had an idea of how to do it. However, just at that time, OMCV informed the women's group and me that a Dutch non-governmental organization had decided to fund the Tira Chapeu *jardim*, so I dropped my activities around this. This funding fell through about three months later. I tried to revive my own efforts at linking the women's group to funding sources, but by that time, the time was short. I was about to leave, and the process was incomplete by the time I did leave, although I had opened some doors. More details about the story of getting a *jardim infantil* appear in Chapter IX.

Chapeu, people relate to each other primarily as relatives, friends, and neighbors, even when they are also co-workers or have other kinds of more formal relationships. And so they took me in as a daughter-cousin-friend. As such, my personal life was open to inspection and influenced how they saw me: my being a white-skinned *Merkana*,<sup>12</sup> first, and being a single woman with no children as well. My nationality was a central point of conversation in the getting-to-know-you stages, and my fertility was always a hot topic for debate, being so unusual in the Cape Verdean context. In this way, fertility crept into my consciousness as a central issue in women's lives there, and as it is a central issue in my own life, it shaped some important aspects of what I saw there. My personal life was strange to the women, but very much central to our relationship.

The roles I took on (either real, perceived, or by implication) were: student researcher; daughter to Balila, the women's group leader; best friend to Cecilia, a young woman living in Tira Chapeu, and adopted member of her family; go-between for OMCV business; some kind of adjunct to the literacy program; link to the donor world, the world of funds;

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<sup>12</sup>*Merkana*, meaning American (female version), carries with it many subtle implications. The word refers not only to those hailing from the United States, but also to Cape Verdeans who have emigrated to the United States and their descendants. Because of the relative financial success of many *Merkanu*, the name is called with both admiration and resentment. Emigrant *Merkanu* are sometimes considered arrogant and out of touch with Cape Verdean life. At the same time, they are revered for their relative wealth and their contact with the prestigious *Merka*. As a born American, I escaped some of this complexity, while still carrying the image of wealth and plenty.

*madrinha*<sup>13</sup> to two babies born while I was there and *kumadri*<sup>14</sup> to their mothers; friend to many women in the study and not in the study; friend to others in the community; supporter of the Party and friend to supporters of the Party. Over time, the researcher-helper one I had envisioned began to emerge, but this could only happen slowly, once I was solidly in the family.

Sometimes my roles led to confusing questions about the use of participant observation material. I grew to be a kind of assistant/daughter to Balila, going around Praia with her on some of her business, helping her make links to this and that organization when she knew I was going to be in town. A few times, I had experiences with her as a result of our being together in this way that were relevant to the research, to her role in the Tira Chapeu women's group. She understood that I was using this material in my research, but the other people involved were not people I had negotiated a research relationship with. They knew I was doing research and were often friends of mine. In dealing with that kind of material, I have had to make adjustments in order to protect such people and not violate their trust in me.

Through the research process in Tira Chapeu, several other issues surfaced. I began to see the tension between what was my view and what was the women's view of situations we were living together. And when they were the women's views, *which* women's? Often group members deferred to their leader's way of telling a story. This tension between voices of researcher and participants exists in all research of this

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<sup>13</sup>Godmother.

<sup>14</sup>Co-mother. See further notes on *madrinha* and *kumadri*, Chapter VI.

type, and it was an important learning for me as a person seeking to get at other people's ways of seeing, to live the intricacies of that tension.

One of the facets of this problem in practice was literacy. Most of the women I worked with did not read or write. Immediately this challenged certain assumptions and standards of the research process. The idea of signing an informed consent letter required many hours of figuring and some debates on ethics with Cape Verdean friends. I translated the letter into written Kriolu and read it out loud to the group, but they had to trust me that it said what I said it said in order to put their fingerprints on it.<sup>15</sup> How, too, would I 'feed back' transcripts of their interviews and group meetings? How to involve them in analysis? How to get them to 'write' their own stories? How to invite them to control and comment on what I was writing? Language issues also played into this, since I wrote in English when writing just

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<sup>15</sup>In fact, it seemed that the women would be perhaps more suspicious of having to sign this document than they were of me and the research I would do. I explained the consent letter to them in terms of the requirements of my university and the effort to protect them from harm. But the idea didn't translate well. (They wondered, for example, why I wanted to change their names.) Writing itself, and the idea of written documentation, was external to their way of doing things, even though they might like to be able to do it and appreciated its power in society. This early experience threw into relief just how external to their own desires and wishes and ways the whole research process probably was. This made for a paradox: there was great potential for learning from the process, but it would require a great shift in their way of seeing. To what extent would I be forcing them if I strove for this shift, for their internalization of the research process? And this question circled back to my role: was I there to learn how they did things or to show them other ways of doing things? The balance was delicate and complex. I feel that I was only at the beginning of understanding it and being able to move to another level with them when my field study period ended. It took me that long to learn enough about how they do things to see what other ways they might want to learn.



for myself. I ended up using oral methods of feedback and analysis which had their own drawbacks and advantages.

In the next section, I detail some of the actual methods and mechanisms of the research as they evolved in light of these research issues in this research setting.

### Details of the Research Process

In this section, I describe how I ended up carrying out the study. I include here information on the research time frame and stages; the study group's organizational context and types of data collected; transcription, translation and language issues; and methods of data analysis.

#### Research Time Frame and Stages

I carried out field research on Santiago island, Cape Verde, for a period of 20 months, from September 1989 to May 1991. This field research was funded by grants from the Social Science Research Council, the Fulbright Program (Institute for International Education), and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation of Portugal.

During this period, the research unfolded in eight major stages. The first was an initial three-month period of exploration, from September to December 1989, including survey contact with a wide variety of women's groups on Santiago island and preliminary definition of broad research issues. The second phase, carried out from January to April 1990,<sup>17</sup> involved narrowing the possible groups and selecting one group

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<sup>17</sup>In early February 1990, I broke my wrist, was medically evacuated, and returned to Cape Verde a week later in a cast. Although this did not stop the research process, it did slow it down and made this second phase take longer than I had planned. It also influenced my decision to study the Tira Chapeu group, as I continued close contact with them throughout this time when I could not easily travel to other

and setting for in-depth research. In this phase, I also determined some initial research questions based on key issues I was discovering in the Cape Verdean context. The third stage, May and June 1990, was the getting-to-know-you phase, when I visited the homes of all the women who'd signed up for the study and spent more and more time in the community.

During the fourth phase, July and August 1990, I conducted a set of semi-formal tape-recorded individual conversations with the women in the study. This was an effort to collect their life stories and their individual views on their group. In September 1990, I returned to the United States briefly to consult with my dissertation committee. The fifth stage, October to December 1990, included the transcription and summary of these interviews and oral re-listening/revision sessions with each of the women to fill in, change, or go into more depth in certain areas. During phases three, four, and five, I worked on seeing what issues, themes, and events merited study, were important to women's lives and the life of their group. I listened to tapes, read transcripts, made tape summaries, and read my research journal. I identified several life themes and four major events in the life history of the group which needed further exploration.

The sixth phase, January and February 1991, involved continued participant observation with the women, the group, and the community. Although I'd planned to do more formal group interviews at this time, that plan proved impossible to carry out because the women's attention was focused on the national elections and the political change. In

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groups in the interior.

addition, the group leader had suffered a personal attack related to her involvement with PAICV and was afraid to hold a group meeting until the elections were over. So, a series of four group meetings to discuss selected events in the group's history became the seventh phase of research, carried out in March 1991. Three of these meetings were also videotaped. During the same phase, I also videotaped some community and group events and scenes. The final phase, in April and May 1991, included showing the videotapes to the group and gaining closure on the research with the women in the Tira Chapeu group, the community, the OMCV organization, and my other contacts and supporters in Cape Verde.

#### The Study Group and Types of Data Collected

The Tira Chapeu women's group with which I did the in-depth study is a member group of the national women's organization of Cape Verde, *Organização das Mulheres de Cabo Verde* (OMCV). I chose an OMCV-related group because of my position as OMCV-affiliated researcher and because of OMCV's symbolic and practical importance in the women's movement in Cape Verde. Studying such a group allowed me to address some of the questions I started out with and question the assumptions made about "women-in-development" organizations of this type. I discuss the history, structure, and politics of OMCV and describe aspects of Tira Chapeu life in Chapter IV, "The Research Setting."

Participant observation being the key method used, observation formed the bulk of the data produced. Throughout the research process, I participated in a variety of group and community activities: local group meetings, national meetings in which some of the Tira Chapeu women participated, cultural events, political meetings, organizing attempts, daily social and religious life, and events surrounding the women's

involvement in the country's political transition. I did not live in this community, but in the neighboring *bairro*, a ten-minute walk away. However, I spent the large part of my waking hours in Tira Chapeu or with the Tira Chapeu women elsewhere when I wasn't working at home on transcripts or writing, or working on another project. Thus, participant observation data, recorded each day in my research journal constituted the largest part of the data of this study.

Informal and formal interviews with 24 women constitute the core interview data. The official membership of the Tira Chapeu OMCV group numbered about 80 Tira Chapeu women, but the active members numbered around 50. A core group of about 30 participated more regularly. 29 women signed up to participate in the study at a meeting held in May 1990. Of these 29, I conducted tape-recorded interviews with 25. One moved away from Tira Chapeu in June 1990; I was unable to schedule interviews with three others. Of the 25 interviewed, one turned out not to be a group member and so I did not use her interview as data.

Following the transcription and summary of each formal tape-recorded interview, I returned to the women so they could check, revise, and expand on what they had previously said. I also had further questions for some of them. They listened again to their interviews. I recorded in notes any comments they made during this process. I stopped the tape when they had extensive further comments to make. I also posed additional questions as appropriate, either while listening to the tape or after the re-listening session. I recorded further comments in notes.

For informal interviews and conversations, I recorded notes in my research journal when I returned home at the end of a day or session

with the Tira Chapeu women. Occasionally, before I left the scene or on my way home, I was able to make brief notes in a small notebook I carried to aid my memory.

In addition, as mentioned above, I held four group discussions in March 1991 to treat events in the group's life story. All of the women officially signed up for the study were invited to these meetings. On the average, about 10 women participated in each of these meetings, including some women members of the group who were not officially signed up for the study. All of these meetings were tape recorded. Three of these meetings were also videotaped.

Other data collected included interviews with OMCV women not members of the Tira Chapeu group, such as the Sector First Secretaries, the General Secretary, a former General Secretary, and a woman union leader, recorded in field notes or tape recorded and transcribed.

#### Transcription, Translation, and Language Issues

All of the tape-recorded material was transcribed. The individual interviews were transcribed in Kriolu by Cape Verdean transcribers. I also made summaries directly from the tapes by topic, in English. These served as guides when I used the original transcribed material to construct the text. I transcribed the group meetings myself, from both audiotape and videotape recordings. I transcribed the first meeting in Kriolu and translated the other three into English as I transcribed. I also transcribed and translated recordings made of other interviews, such as with the General Secretary of OMCV. Some of these other interviews were in Portuguese. Many such outside interviews were recorded with notes rather than tape-recordings. Each time I used in



the text a quotation from any transcribed source, I translated it and re-checked it with the original Kriolu recording.

Part of my qualifying for research grants was proving that I was capable linguistically of carrying out the proposed project. I was already fluent in Portuguese, which eased my transition into learning Kriolu. I set about learning Kriolu with a vengeance before I left for Cape Verde. I had a tutor who explained to me the rudiments of Kriolu structure and vocabulary. I also perused available texts on Kriolu. Once I reached Cape Verde, I took two months of Kriolu lessons with a tutor, all conducted in Kriolu, and spoke Kriolu almost exclusively from that time forward. The responsibility for all translations is my own. However, I continued to work with my Kriolu tutor throughout my stay, checking and re-checking passages I was unsure of. Any data that I couldn't adequately understand, even with this assistance, I did not include in the text.

A few words about the nature of the Kriolu language are appropriate here, which affect how it's translated and how it appears in the text. Kriolu draws on Portuguese vocabulary, but the words often don't mean the same thing, nor are they used in the same way. Kriolu is a very figurative language. People often speak in metaphors and proverbs. It is a lively language, spoken fast with vehemence and force. Repetition is used for emphasis. In the quotations used in the text, I have tried to portray Kriolu's liveliness and color, using exclamation points and translating figurative language so that it retains its figurative quality in English. I have, however, omitted much of the repetition of phrases. Although I have misgivings about taking this tack, I have

opted for making the text easier for an English-speaking audience to read while still remaining true to what the women said.

In the text, I use some original Kriolu words without translation, preferring to provide in footnotes the more detailed explanations I feel necessary. These notes often include discussions of a word's literal and figurative meanings and usage in various contexts. Another type of language footnote also appears. I provide notes to words or phrases which I have translated into English, but which merit further explanation. In some cases, the word or phrase could be translated in another way which reveals additional dimensions of its meaning. In other cases, several meanings might be attributed to the word; I provide the original Kriolu word so that readers might check the meaning I've made of it. A glossary of Kriolu and Portuguese words used in the text is found among the preliminary sections of the dissertation.

#### Data Analysis and Construction of the Text

The shape of the themes that appear here is the result of a long process. I was struggling to find a way to understand the significance and importance for these women of their group membership and activities. Methodologically, I approached this by seeking to find out how the central issues of their lives related to the group's life, meaning, and activities. I gathered data on women's personal life stories and on the group's life story and its meaning for the women. In data analysis, I compared the themes which emerged from women's life stories with the data on the group's life and meaning. How did they relate? What bearing did the important issues in women's lives have on the group's activities and their significance for the women? Did women's life issues reappear in the women's group's meaning? Did the central

problems of women's lives get addressed by the women's group's activities?

This separation between women's lives and the women's group, or personal lives and group life, is a construct which I impose on the data for the sake of organizing it in a readable and cohesive fashion. For the women, this separation exists and doesn't exist. They see the group as both the same and different from the rest of their lives. They relate to their fellow members the same way whether in the street, at a baptism, or at a group meeting. Also, women use their group ties as they would any other personal tie. At the same time, the group does in some ways represent and come from outside their immediate world. Its structure, rules, and decisions come from a set of guidelines made somewhere other than among the women of Tira Chapeu. As evidence of this view, the women often referred to OMCV as "they." Still, the link between women's lives and group life is more fluid than may appear here. The group *is part* of women's lives. I try to portray this connection even while separating the two realms for the sake of organization.

The quotations used are from the formal individual interviews and the formal group research discussion meetings.<sup>18</sup> This is my effort to capture women's words as a means of understanding their ways of thinking, their consciousness. But the total picture is a result of all the data sources, particularly my own experience/participant observation in combination with the framework for seeing that I brought into the research setting. The process of data analysis was a kind of moving in

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<sup>18</sup>I also recorded quotes from the women as accurately as possible in my research journal; such material is shown in single quotation marks as it is obviously not a direct transcription.

from two sides. I had my ways of seeing. They had theirs. As we lived and talked together, I tried to get at how they saw their lives and their group. This data blended with my own experience in participant observation, and data from outside the Tira Chapeu group, to come back around again to meet my original ways of seeing. This is the complicated learning process I try to make sense of in these pages.

In practice, the process of data analysis involved several elements. While in the field, I read and re-read my research journal periodically, coding and grouping to cull emerging themes from my observations. At the same time, I transcribed, translated and absorbed the individual and group interview data, and sorted this by topics the women addressed: origins and coming to Praia, work/living, children, husband/*pai-di-fidju*, schooling, beliefs, experience with emigration, current living situation, family background and 'structure' of family, and the women's group. I also discussed emerging themes with my sponsor at OMCV and other supporters and researchers in Cape Verde.

Once I had left the field, I wrote some preliminary explanations of the main themes I saw in the study. I then went back through my journal, interview transcripts and summaries, and other recorded data to see if these themes made sense. Once I had refined these themes in accordance with the actual data, I coded the journal and interview data by theme. I wrote stories of important group events based on the journal record. I wrote a draft of one of the themes, based on a compilation of some of these stories. I then decided that the picture I was painting was too much me and not enough 'them'. I re-sorted the interview data into theme blocks. I then began to put together the themes, the stories, and the supporting interview quotes, working slowly

toward the goal of presenting an accessible, interesting account that would also be 'true' to the reality that the Tira Chapeu women and I lived.

In this process, a tension exists between whose voice is speaking, whose way of seeing is being represented. Ultimately, in this document, the loudest voice is mine. I construct the themes; I draw the conclusions. But at some level, the women's voices also speak in that they were my teachers. They explained to me how life works; they showed me how they do things and why. In the effort to see from their point of view, I did not do away with my own perspective. Rather, somewhere in the middle of the effort, their perspectives and mine met up, mingled, and produced something new. That something new appears in this document. The text reflects the struggle to be true to the women's ways of seeing while not denying how I filter them through my own understandings.

In the next chapter, I describe the research setting and frame the study. I include elements of Cape Verdean society and culture relevant to understanding the portrait I draw of women in Tira Chapeu. I briefly trace the history and politics of OMCV through the historical moment when my study took place. I describe Tira Chapeu life as I knew it and begin to introduce the group of women who participated in the study.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE RESEARCH SETTING

This research was shaped as much by its setting as by any theoretical or methodological perspectives I brought to it. In fact, the theoretical and methodological perspectives themselves grew and changed in contact with this setting. In this chapter, I provide some essential background about the three most important facets of the context of the study: elements of Cape Verdean society and culture, the Cape Verdean national women's organization, and the community of Tira Chapeu. My discussion of these elements is shaped by the themes that emerged from my experience in Cape Verde.

#### Relevant Elements of Cape Verdean Society and Culture

The cliffs, craggy valleys, and sand-stretched beaches that are Cape Verde come out of the sea at about 450 kilometers from the western tip of Senegal and present to the world an experience of vibrant life in the midst of stark and difficult beauty. A resident population of nearly 337,000<sup>1</sup> shifts and struggles across the islands' 4,033 square kilometers of land surface (see map, Figure 1), surviving principally on subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry, revenues from emigration, and relationships with other countries.

The country's difficulties are many, but its spirit is huge, and this is only one of the many paradoxes, contradictions, strange juxtapositions and joinings that characterize Cape Verdean life. Cast

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<sup>1</sup>336,798, according to a provisional reporting of the 1990 census (*Ministério do Plano e da Cooperação*, 1990:2).



on these rocks where life is so uncertain, Cape Verdeans of all economic levels give their best and maybe only food to a stranger who walks into their midst. Sprawled across the globe to make a living, at the same time they are fiercely attached to their land. Open to the world through global migration, they both accept remarkably rapid change and cling to the mores and standards of the past. Struggling with a system of social stratification centuries in the making, they both deny and accept the differentiation among people of various strata that is part of daily experience. And confronting the possibility of profound despair, they create humor, proverbs of wisdom, wild and melancholy music, and deep-soul poetry to fill their lives with beauty and joy. The common maxim, *dipos di sabi*<sup>2</sup>, *more e ka nada*, underlies the ultimate paradox of their lives. Once you've really enjoyed yourself, death is nothing.

Uninhabited when 'discovered' by explorers for King Afonso V of Portugal in 1460, the islands became a crossroads of flourishing trade between Portugal, the African coast, and the Americas. The principal article traded was human life: slaves. From these early times, slaves

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<sup>2</sup>The Kriolu word, *sabi*, does not translate directly into English, in either word or concept. Yet this word is central to understanding life in Cape Verdean communities and the women's group I discuss in this paper. *Sabi* is both an adjective and a noun. In this maxim it's used as a noun. It comes from the word, *sabura*, having to do with pleasure. Related words in Portuguese are: *sabor* (taste, flavor), *saboroso* (savory), and *saborear* (to relish, to taste, to enjoy). The word is used in many ways. It can describe good-tasting food (*kumida sabi*), or a really wonderful party or other event (*feira staba sabi*), or to say 'we had a good time' (*nu pasa sabi*). 'Having a good time' has to do with many elements, principally: plenty (of food and drink); good company (lots of laughter, close friends and family, lively and fun conversation which usually includes a lot of informal story-telling); feeling welcome where you are, getting a good reception from your hosts in terms of their behavior toward you; and music and dancing. Most important is the element of plenty.

were also brought to Cape Verde to work the plantations of large landowners in a system of *donatários*, land grants to noblemen who ruled the land and conducted trade as they saw fit. Antonio Carreira (1983) has called the society that emerged during the colonization of Cape Verde a *sociedade escravocrata*,<sup>3</sup> guided and formed by its foundation on slavery through the 1800's even after the slave trade gradually ended.

By that time, the *sociedade escravocrata* had already had its impact on the structure of Cape Verdean society. A look at the population of the two inhabited islands of Santiago and Fogo in 1582 gives an idea of how this society would later evolve.

. . . in 1582 the two peopled islands (Santiago and Fogo) already had a population, free and slave, of more than 15700 individuals of both sexes, consisting of 1100 whites (nobles, commoners, and *degradados*<sup>4</sup>) residing in the urban centers; 600 "whites and free blacks," and 400 "married free blacks" scattered throughout the agricultural plantations of the interior; in addition to 11000 baptized slaves and 2700 common slaves" (Carreira, 1985:7; translation mine).

Already in 1582 there were a few "free blacks" and baptized slaves, signalling the beginning of the society's movement toward the freeing of slaves and the mixing of the African and European populations. By the time of the first census in 1731, this movement had advanced quite a bit. In that year, whites made up only 0.8% of the population, *mestiços* or people of mixed race 19.1%, free blacks 51.1%, and slaves 17.2% (Carreira, 1985:8). Carreira advances reasons for this change: European men settling without European women and forming unions with African

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<sup>3</sup>Slavocracy.

<sup>4</sup>Lobban and Halter (1988:42) define *degradado* as follows: "Exiled Portuguese criminals, often charged with political crimes, who settled in the Cape Verde Islands or were confined there for a period of punishment or exile. Some *degradados* became a permanent settler population . . . "

women who were slaves, and the freeing of the children of those unions and their mothers (1985:7-8). Carreira (1982) also speaks of the revolt and escape of slaves to the mountains of Santiago and to the other islands during pirate raids which threw coastal settlements into confusion (1982:23). With these changes, the *sociedade escravocrata* became increasingly a *sociedade Kriolu*,<sup>5</sup> a blending and mixing of African and European cultures, languages, and ways of life.

Two aspects of this history are important for the way I saw the Cape Verdean community of Tira Chapeu and its women's group. First, Cape Verdean society is a blend which has been forged into an alloy, with its own national character. Still, within that character run two what I call 'dual cultures'. There is 'Kriolu Cape Verdean culture': the blood of daily life, relationships and personhood, expressing itself in the Kriolu language. And there is 'Portuguese Cape Verdean culture': official life, government, schooling, speaking in the Portuguese language. These are not separate, by any means. The two aspects of life interact and influence each other. However, for the low-income women of Tira Chapeu, Portuguese Cape Verdean culture seems a kind of surface layer over the bedrock comprised of their daily lives and personal meanings. They are affected by but have little power within Portuguese Cape Verdean culture, the culture of structures, money, power, the "center."

My characterization of these two 'cultures' reflects historical bases of social structure formation. Carreira (1982) shows Cape Verdean social structure forming into three groups, evolved from the original

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<sup>5</sup>Creole society.



two: European (largely Portuguese) settlers and African slaves. By the early 1970's, their positioning was something like this:

We find a numerically insignificant bourgeoisie, a fringe, perhaps 2 per cent of the whole population;...[this] consisted of holders of patrimonial properties, rural (though virtually only those on Santiago had any value) and urban, absentees living in the island towns or in Portugal on their rents; a few business men in Praia and Mindelo in the import-export trade; three or four owners of fish (chiefly tuna) canning factories, usually mortgaged to the local credit institutions; owners of motorboats or sailing ships for local traffic--the remnants of the shipowners of former times; a few dozen graduates in the liberal professions (lawyers, engineers, high school teachers, agricultural officers, etc.); established civil servants; bank and office employees; the clergy. They would be what one could more or less call a bourgeoisie.

The intermediate class [3-4 per cent] consisted of--small farmers, sometimes owning their own homes; small traders ('vendas') in Praia, Mindelo and their suburbs, but mostly dispersed through little trading centres engaged in petty trade, including keeping taverns for selling wine and *grogue* (locally distilled cane spirit), fabrics, cigars, sewing thread, needles, kerosene, hardware, foodstuffs, medicines, etc.; the salt workers of Boa Vista and Maio; petty officials and clerks; other business and office employees; drivers, artisans, masters of local shipping.

The third and largest, perhaps including 90-95 per cent of the population, was composed of tenants and share-croppers living by subsistence farming on their landlords' properties and paying rent in money or in kind; the lowest grade of public officials, sailors on local ships, dock labourers, fishermen, farm labourers, weavers (rare), cooks, domestic servants--in other words, the people in general (Carreira, 1982:39-40).

Today's social structure follows roughly the same pattern, but reshaped by continued emigration and drought, nationalization of some businesses and lands and land reform aimed at redistribution of land following independence. Perhaps now the intermediate group is a little larger and its make-up slightly different; the post-independence civil service and emigrant business successes have expanded its ranks. The "people in general" have been joined by more small traders, mostly women, and other free-lance workers who have left their unproductive lands behind. For

the most part, the women of the Tira Chapeu women's group are among these; they are street and fish vendors, domestic servants, servants in government and business offices, cooks, low-level civil servants. As the text later shows, their position in this structure shapes their experiences in life and in the women's organization that counts them as members.

A second aspect of Cape Verde's history is relevant to the story of the Tira Chapeu women's group. From the beginning of Cape Verde's history, a tension between central authority and local autonomy has expressed itself on many levels. Evident in the Portuguese crown's (unsuccessful) efforts to control the *morgados* by later imposing rule by *capitão*,<sup>6</sup> this tension concerned the struggle for power and resources: the crown was not getting its share of the wealth traded and produced by the islands' inhabitants. The tension surfaced again in the revolts and flights of slaves to the mountainous interior. These slaves broke the bonds that made them mere resources for the accumulation of wealth for landowners: they took control over their own lives and survival. In other forms, in other realms of life, and at other moments of its history into the present, this tension between authority and autonomy--and its related struggle for control of resources--reverberates, with important echoes in modern life and in the women's organization I studied. In another paradox of Cape Verdean life, conformity to

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<sup>6</sup>*Morgados* were the feudal-like landowners, given royal landgrants. Later, the crown recognized the dangers of this system: too much control by these landowning lords and no way to control them. A system of *capitães* was instituted in an effort to reign them in and make them abide by the trade restrictions favorable to the crown, without much success. *Morgados* had great economic, political and social influence. See Carreira (1983, 1985) and Lobban and Halter (1988) for more detailed discussion of these points.

authority co-exists with a spirit of self-determination and rebellion, both within organizations and within individuals. The tension of this paradox is closely intertwined with issues of survival, as will become apparent further along in the text.

More recent history also exhibits signs of this tension. The Republic of Cape Verde gained its independence in 1975, as part of the international anti-colonial, anti-fascist struggle in Portugal and its African colonies. The key politician-soldier-philosopher of this revolution was Amilcar Cabral, a Cape Verdean raised partly in Guinea-Bissau. Although he did not live to see his country freed, his thought has continued to shape the rhetoric, and sometimes the reality, of politics and economics in Cape Verde, even after the revolutionary party, PAICV, opened its one party state to a multi-party system and lost the first multi-party national elections in January 1991. In this rhetoric and the economic realities that accompany it, the struggle to balance autonomy and dependency can still be seen, for a key issue for Cape Verde is its relationship with other nations in the effort to survive. One of Cabral's key tenets was freedom from European economic and cultural domination through association and identification with Africa. But in practice, the post-independence government<sup>7</sup> maintained close ties with supportive European powers in order to develop a reliable flow of food and necessary goods. For the other side of the

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<sup>7</sup>The post-independence government of the revolutionary party, PAIGC (*Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde*), maintained federation with Guinea-Bissau until the coup there in 1980. As a result of this coup, the Cape Verdeans separated from Guinea-Bissau, renaming their party the *Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo Verde* (PAICV) and reaffirming its continuity from Cabral's original party (PAIGC). See Davidson (1989) and PAICV (1984).

autonomy question had been isolation and Portugal's abandonment of Cape Verde to famine in times of drought and disaster. The PAICV government worked against the living memory of the famine of 1947--when Portugal's only 'help' strategy had been to send Cape Verdeans as conscripted laborers to plantations in São Tomé e Príncipe<sup>8</sup>--to ensure that Cape Verdeans would no longer starve.

A strategy of aid and importation provided that assurance, but created a trade imbalance and continued the country's dependency on outside resources. At the same time, worsening drought conditions and the results of colonial land policy which left arable land only minimally productive made this external dependency essential for survival. Between 1983 and 1988, exports covered only about 4% of the value of imports (*Ministério do Plano e da Cooperação*, 1989:89). Foreign aid makes up a substantial part of the national budget. And in 1987, emigrants brought or sent in 384,305,000 *escudos*<sup>9</sup> worth of goods and capital. In that same year, emigrant remittances represented 11.7% of the Gross National Product and 60.5% of importation of consumer goods (Simões, n.d.: 3-4).

The fragility of life evident in this recent history reflects the economic and geographic marginality<sup>10</sup> of this nation. It is off the

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<sup>8</sup>An island nation off the coast of Gabon, part of the constellation of Portuguese African colonies at the time of the 1947 famine in Cape Verde.

<sup>9</sup>Cape Verdean monetary unit. In 1991, about 75 *escudos* had the value of one U.S. dollar.

<sup>10</sup>I am aware that I am using the image of margin/center from the gender-class way of seeing and Marxian analysis. I believe this imagery effectively frames the issues linked to Cape Verde's economic position which I am discussing here. Of course, this image does put a certain lens on things, and another image could illuminate other facets.

path and has few natural resources. In 1980, 17,453 members of the economically active resident population of 66,610 were unemployed (*Secretaria de Estado da Cooperação e Planeamento*, 1983c:105, 358). Formal jobs are scarce and extended drought conditions make agricultural strategies less and less tenable.

In order to survive the hardships of Cape Verdean life, people connect. Isolation is the enemy. Human links are the glue of social structure and the way to ensure survival. On a daily and local basis, various forms of mutual assistance and obligation function both practically and ritually across close ties of family, friendship, and neighborhood.

Human linking has played its role on an international scale as well, even beyond official government to government relationships. Cape Verdeans<sup>11</sup> emigrate for work and send earnings to families back home. In 1980, 17,081 resident Cape Verdeans over 10 years old depended for survival on family members living abroad (*Secretaria de Estado da Cooperação e Planeamento*, 1983c:341). Large emigrant communities in Portugal, the United States, the Netherlands, France, and Italy welcome the newcomers and continue the interdependent relationships that make Cape Verdean life work.

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<sup>11</sup>Cape Verdeans have emigrated to many countries around the world and continue to do so today. In general, mostly men have gone, leaving women and families at home. Sometimes, families have been able to join later. The one large exception to this picture of gender-distinct emigration is the movement of young women from the island of São Nicolau to Italy to work as maids. In recent times, the proportion of women emigrating independently has risen, although no exact data is available at present. For further discussion of Cape Verdean emigration and its role in social life and structure, see Carreira (1982).



Back home, women are responsible for the survival of their immediate and extended families: they are the center of family life, the core of cultural life, the backbone of subsistence. In a baseline socio-economic study of the island of Santo Antão, Hemmings-Gapihan (1986) found that families on that island were generally matrifocal. Moreover, most functioned on the basis of women's duty to keep them going.

Women, whether single or married, bear the burden of running the family. Even when both parents work, women spend a greater percentage of their earnings to feed the family. In case of separation, women often become the sole support of their children. Women bear the burden of children born out of wedlock<sup>12</sup> (Hemmings-Gapihan, 1986:36).

While women bear this obligation, their resources for fulfilling it are weak. "Because of emigration, women comprise nearly 60 percent of the country's potential labor force of approximately 173,000 people. . . . Female unemployment and underemployment rates are estimated to be twice as high as those for men. The problem is particularly acute among female heads of households" (Clement, *et al*, 1989:1). But because work is scarce, female heads of households are common.<sup>13</sup> Thus, in order to support their families and ensure them a future, women actively maintain the extended social bonds that constitute social security. Mutual assistance is an essential survival strategy.

Women's central role--and the fact that their numbers are far greater than men's in many places on the islands--makes attention to

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<sup>12</sup>Although data are not generalizable from island to island, each island having its own social and cultural forms, I found this situation to be generally true in the community I studied as well, and so comfortably cite it here.

<sup>13</sup>See Finan and Henderson, 1988, for a discussion of the phenomenon of female-headed households in rural Santiago.

women's needs, opportunities, and problems in Cape Verde more than the political rhetoric of equity; it is central to any consideration of the country's development and the establishment of a just social system. In addition, understanding women's experience is key to understanding important aspects of Cape Verdean life. With independence, attention to women's needs increased in actuality and symbol, and was institutionalized in a national women's organization. A brief look at the story of this organization provides additional necessary background for this study of its member group in Tira Chapeu.

*A Luta Continua*<sup>14</sup>: *A Organização das Mulheres de Cabo Verde*

Although women's "emancipation" by their own hands was a key element in Cabral's political philosophy of social justice, a cohesive women's organization was not a PAIGC priority during the anti-colonial struggle in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. Instead,

Party orientations in regard to the need for Cape Verdean women to fight for their own emancipation were early on understood and put into effect by the most conscious militants, who let loose various forms of struggle, isolatedly, before 1975 and collectively on some islands from that date forward (OMCV, 1981:30; translation mine).

However, after independence, a number of factors came together to create the *Comissão Nacional Organizadora das Mulheres de Cabo Verde*<sup>15</sup> (CNOMCV) in 1978. Through the work of a core of about 16 women, the CNOMCV put together the structure and activities that officially became the

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<sup>14</sup>"A luta continua!" was a rallying cry of the struggle for independence and the post-independence push for development. It continues to be used by PAIGC/PAICV and its affiliated organizations. It means "the struggle continues."

<sup>15</sup>National Organizing Commission of Cape Verdean Women

*Organização das Mulheres de Cabo Verde* (OMCV) on March 27, 1981 (OMCV, 1981:31-37).

From its inception, two threads ran through the stated *raison d'être* of this organization. An "emancipation" thread appeared in the words of the third Congress of the *Comité Nacional de Cabo Verde* (CNCV) of PAIGC which gave an official push to the formation of OMCV:

the Organization of Women has as its objective to mobilize and provide a framework for the female masses to fight for their emancipation, or in other words, for the liquidation of injustice, condition of the inequality in relation to men in which they still find themselves in our society (OMCV, 1981:30; translation mine).

In PAIGC doctrine, women deserved just and equal treatment in society, but they had to fight for this themselves. Thus, a national women's organization would have to have mobilization for "liquidation of injustice" as a principal goal.

The other thread--"integration into development"--was expressed in the CNOMCV's and OMCV's earliest statutes:

OMCV fights for the full integration of Cape Verdean women into the process of economic, social and cultural development of our country, in which our people are engaged under the direction of PAICV, with a view toward the construction of a homeland of progress and social justice, free of exploitation of Man by his fellow Man (OMCV, 1981:85; translation mine).

Embedded in this second thread was the assumption that liquidation of injustice went hand in hand with PAICV's plans for the country's socio-economic development, in both process and final objective. In addition, this statement contained the idea that women were somehow isolated from this process and needed to be integrated into it. Other organization documents support this view of integrating women into a development process already underway, and emphasize that removing blocks to women's

equality will increase their participation, quantitatively and qualitatively, in that process.

A subtle shift in argument occurs with the interweaving of the "emancipation" and "integration" threads of the organization's rationale. Women's emancipation appears both as the method for women to fulfill their duty to contribute to the nation's development, as well as an end in itself in the interests of social justice.

In practice, OMCV carried out both these purposes, however sometimes contradictory, as well as many more implicit objectives. The National Committee's report to the first Congress in July 1990 included accounts of activities in the areas of education and training, information and culture, literacy education, productive activities, construction and programming of *Centros de Promoção Feminina*,<sup>16</sup> construction and staffing of preschools, studies and documentation, and external relations (OMCV, 1990a). The organization in that year numbered 11,634 members, representing about 12% of the female population over 15 years old, membership being open to any Cape Verdean woman of 16 or older (OMCV, 1990a). Its 89 paid staff distributed over the national territory worked with members putting in volunteer time to carry out the diverse tasks of the organization. With a government subsidy to cover salaries of these staff and funds from various international and national organizations to carry out activities and projects, OMCV also asked of its members membership dues of five *escudos*<sup>17</sup> per month.

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<sup>16</sup>Centers for Women's Promotion - centers of OMCV activities such as training, literacy classes, etc. Most of these centers house and operate pre-schools.

<sup>17</sup>A woman working on the government workfronts earned about 120 *escudos* per day in 1990. Even though that makes this five *escudos* seem minimal, it's useful to bear in mind that most women do not have this

The organization's internal workings were based on the principles of "democratic centralism" and "collective management" (OMCV, 1981:87-88; OMCV, n.d.:8-9). According to OMCV's statutes, "democratic centralism" involved election of leaders from the base to the top and responsibility of top leaders back to the base. Discussion should be free and open while a decision was being considered. Once it was made, the minority should submit to the majority opinion; all levels of the organization were obligated to abide by the decisions made by superior levels. At the same time, "collective management" required that all members participate in and take responsibility for decisions made, encouraging individual responsibility and a spirit of initiative. OMCV also adopted the ideas of *critica* and *auto-critica*<sup>18</sup> in order to ensure the constant improvement of the organization and the ongoing education of its members (OMCV, 1981:87-88; OMCV, n.d.:8-9).

To put these principles into effect, OMCV created a structure that reflected the bottom-to-top premise.<sup>19</sup> The root of the organizational tree was the base group. In each residential community or workplace where women were mobilized, a base group formed and elected its own Committee and First Secretary. Three or more base groups in a geographical area joined together to form a Section, and all of the

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sort of formal employment.

<sup>18</sup>critique and self-critique

<sup>19</sup>This structure is almost identical to that of PAICV.



Sections in each of the country's 15 *concelhos*<sup>20</sup> joined to form the Sector of that *concelho*. Each of these levels had its periodic general meetings, considered the organization's *órgãos máximos*, or bodies of highest authority. The base group Assembly met once a year, including all members. The Section Conference also met once a year, and included the Section Committee and delegates elected by the Assemblies. The Sector Conference met every other year, with its respective Committee and delegates elected by the Conferences just below. At the national level, the Congress was considered the *órgão máximo*, to meet regularly every five years or as convoked by the National Committee or by two-thirds of OMCV's members. Between Congresses, OMCV was directed by this National Committee, which was elected by the Congress and met twice a year. The daily operation of OMCV was assured by the Executive Secretariat, made up of the General Secretary, the Assistant General Secretary, and various National Secretaries to cover the various domains of the organization's work.<sup>21</sup>

Although true to this basic structure and these principles of operation, the reality that I knew of OMCV was much more complex than what appeared on paper in its statutes. The women I knew and worked with were a dynamic group of individuals struggling to do hard work against many obstacles. Moreover, they not only worked directly with their own structures, but also linked with the work of PAICV. Many of

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<sup>20</sup>A *concelho* is an administrative district. There are actually 14 *concelhos* in the administrative structure of the nation, but in the Party, the women's organization, and for many other practical purposes (such as the literacy program), the *Praia concelho* is split into two parts, urban and rural.

<sup>21</sup>See OMCV, 1981, pp. 88-95; OMCV, n.d., pp. 9-17; OMCV, 1990a.

the women in staff positions at the Sector and national levels were also PAICV members. Their own identification of OMCV's work with the goals and work of PAICV created many links and overlaps, and gave OMCV's work an implicit political purpose in addition to its explicit "emancipation" and "integration into development" purposes. An important goal of OMCV was to support the government, in both needed labor and ceremony, and the government at the time was founded in PAICV.<sup>22</sup>

When I initially presented myself to OMCV and met with its General Secretary, I was introduced to the First Secretaries of three Sectors on Santiago Island: urban Praia, rural Praia (the rural areas of the Praia *concelho*), and Santa Catarina, a rural *concelho* in the mountains of the island's interior. Because of my interest in peri-urban areas, the First Secretary of urban Praia who also sat on the National Committee was assigned to oversee my work. For several months I visited groups in all three areas, only focusing entirely on Tira Chapeu almost six months later.<sup>23</sup> When that focus developed, the two other staff working in the urban Praia Sector became my collaborators, supporters, and friends.

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<sup>22</sup>An example of the kind of ceremonial activity OMCV carried out in this vein materialized when the presidents of the five African countries where Portuguese is the official language (known as the PALOP: *Países Africanos de língua oficial portuguesa*) visited Cape Verde in December 1989. OMCV organized women from the different *bairros* [see note #31, this chapter, for definition] to greet the PALOP presidents *en masse* at the airport upon their arrival in the capital.

<sup>23</sup>At that time, I still had the idea that I was going to study two groups, the Tira Chapeu group and an informal group of women potters in Fonte Lima. Only when I saw the scope of the work with Tira Chapeu, how time-consuming and absorbing it was, did I realize that two groups were one group too many for the time and resources I had. I continued to visit the Fonte Lima group throughout my stay in Cape Verde, but never did a full-blown study with them.

One was the Secretary for Education and Social Promotion and the other the Secretary for Organization.

From the viewpoint of working closely in the urban Praia Sector<sup>24</sup> and one of its base groups, I saw OMCV pass through a challenging and exciting moment in its history. In 1989, when I arrived, the organization was preparing for its first-ever Congress.<sup>25</sup> This event meant taking stock of OMCV's nine years of activity and presenting the results, for better or for worse, to the Cape Verdean people, to the government, to PAICV, and to the world. It was a time of great pressure for the organization. It had to perform well in carrying out its Congress, and had to show that it had been performing well for the nine years of its life.

During this preparation period, a national event augmented the pressure on the organization. The PAICV government declared a change in political system: the country would allow other parties to legalize and hold its first multi-party legislative and presidential elections early in 1991. Because its Congress was already scheduled, OMCV was forced to consider what this shift would mean for them before any other body had

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<sup>24</sup>The urban Praia Sector was probably the single most influential Sector in terms of national workings of OMCV, due to the large number of highly-schooled women who worked in the capital and made up a large proportion of the national level leaders. Thus, my link to this "center" definitely colored my perceptions of the national organization as a whole. In general, Praia dominates national politics because of its relatively large and economically and politically influential population. This is not to everyone's satisfaction, once again echoing the tension between central control and local autonomy which I discussed in the first section of this chapter.

<sup>25</sup>Although in its statutes, the Congress was to meet every five years and the organization had by then existed for eight years, OMCV had only held national conferences up until that time.

taken an official stand.<sup>26</sup> During their Congress, organization members had to debate their group's very identity: would their principal allegiance be to their brother party or to "all Cape Verdean women"?<sup>27</sup> How would members who saw themselves as PAICV and OMCV--and didn't find a conflict in being both--have to shift their self-perceptions and actions in the "nova república"?<sup>28</sup> If PAICV were no longer the only party, would the government continue to give financial support to the PAICV-created women's organization? The discussion during the Congress showed the fire of the moment. Its general resolutions expressed OMCV's difficult and ambivalent position. In the section "*Sobre o momento politico e o papel da OMCV no novo contexto*,"<sup>29</sup> the Congress reaffirmed both OMCV's character as a non-allied movement of "all Cape Verdean women" and its historical alliance with PAICV. Two points of the resolution read:

4 - Recognize the need for the organization to be increasingly autonomous and open, capable of adapting itself to new demands of society and more and more to the expectations of the female populace.

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<sup>26</sup>PAICV was to hold an extraordinary Congress of its own beginning July 28, 1990, to react to the proposed change and plan for the future. The OMCV Congress was scheduled for July 11 to 15, 1990. Thus, OMCV had to react officially even before PAICV did. The difficulty this put OMCV in was expressed well by Joana, the OMCV group leader in Tira Chapeu, who was convinced that the OMCV leaders would change the dates of its Congress to fall after that of PAICV, and was quite aghast when they didn't.

<sup>27</sup>This phrase can be found in many OMCV documents, identifying itself as an organization principally for women, beyond political boundaries.

<sup>28</sup>"*Nova república*," or "new republic," became the popular designation for Cape Verde in its new multi-party phase.

<sup>29</sup>"On the political moment and the role of OMCV in the new context"

5 - Reaffirm the alliance that unites OMCV and PAICV, taking into account the programmatic affinities and close ties of collaboration that exist, without putting at risk the organic and functional independence of OMCV. (OMCV, 1990b:V-1; translation mine)

Following the Congress, many OMCV women participated actively in the PAICV election campaign, but when PAICV lost, the organization managed to stay afloat, reorganize, and reaffirm its dedication to working for women's needs. Still involved in a soul-searching, readjusting and redefining phase when I left in May 1991, and greatly reduced in paid staff, OMCV was still working, still getting funding to build preschools, still doing a family planning project here and there, still holding international women's day events.

This thesis is neither a history nor a complete analysis of OMCV as a whole, as much as I might have liked it to be and as much as some others might have seen the need for that.<sup>30</sup> What it is is a look at the life of one base group, and some thoughts about what that group's life might mean for its members and for the organization as a whole. The group that shared its life with me was the group of Tira Chapeu.

#### Generative Themes in Tira Chapeu Life

As soon as I turned the corner into Tira Chapeu, I always felt as if I were going into a different world, a world of dust and piles of cement block and crumbling walls, of shouting and raucous laughter and the edge between joy and pain. Entering Tira Chapeu felt a little like

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<sup>30</sup>Maria das Dores Silveira Pires, the founding General Secretary of OMCV (1981-1986), in an interview on March 7, 1991, suggested to me that this would be a useful and important history to write because so many women were not aware of the real history of the beginnings and struggles of OMCV.



walking into uncertainty, into volatility. And now that I look back on it, it seems that all this was because I was walking into poverty.

But then it became also the world I knew, where people knew me, like going home, going to a place where I felt comfort and care, where I couldn't get two steps down a street without someone calling out to me or greeting me or teasing me into banter and laughter, much more my home than the neighborhood where I lived. It was a place of peace and comfort--the safety of close ties--and a place of life and liveliness--where people knew how to deal with what life handed out to them, where another baby was still a God-given blessing even when there was nothing to feed it, where small occasions were reason for dancing even when there was no wine, and where friends, neighbors and relatives were mourned deeply and intensely and then life went on. It had to go on.

Tira Chapeu is one of a network of peripheral urban *bairros*<sup>31</sup> ringing the central plateau of Praia up and down a series of bluffs and dry riverbeds edged by the sea. Once, the central plateau was the city of Praia. Now the plateau is merely the microscopic center of a sprawling metropolis, created mostly through rural-urban migration due to the extended drought and its effect on agricultural conditions in the interior. Even government offices and businesses have spilled over into the areas surrounding the plateau whereas once they were all located on the plateau itself.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>*Bairro* doesn't have a direct translation. A *bairro* might be called a neighborhood, but its boundaries are a little more distinct than those of a neighborhood and it has a name. *Bairros* like Tira Chapeu are as commonly referred to as *zonas*, a more general word meaning zone or area.

<sup>32</sup>Tira Chapeu residents tell the meaning of the name of the *bairro*, "take off your hat," and thus bear witness to Praia's expansion. When people first settled in Tira Chapeu, so many years ago, they say, you

Tira Chapeu is one of the oldest areas of this type.<sup>33</sup> It's nestled at the side of the road leaving the city to the west toward Cidade Velha, the early colonial capital. It spreads out across the dry riverbed from the rambling *bairro* of Achada Santo António, a city in itself, between Palmareijo, the *bairro* of embassies and their upper middle class neighbors, and Terra Branca, the "*bairro* the government built" (as people say), with its schools, three-story houses and apartment complexes for civil servants (see map, Figure 2). Tira Chapeu has also become the industrial zone of Praia, a series of factories lining the side of the Cidade Velha road opposite the residential section. Its people are working class, when they have work: former farmers transplanted to the city, skilled and unskilled laborers (stonemasons, carpenters, drivers, construction workers) working privately or on the government workfronts, lower-range civil servants, small shopkeepers, domestic servants, street vendors, fishermen and women fish vendors.

Since 1970, Tira Chapeu has grown beyond its own proportions. In 1970, the population of Tira Chapeu was recorded as 692 persons, made up of 366 females and 326 males, organized into 120 family units

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could see the church in Praia's main square from there. As is the tradition of travelers in Cape Verde, when they first catch sight of a church, men take off their hats and everyone crosses himself or herself. And so it was that when travelers coming into Praia on the Cidade Velha road crested the hill where they could first see the central city, they took off their hats. *Tira chapeu*.

<sup>33</sup>Some of the women participating in my study had come to Tira Chapeu as long ago as the 1940's, many in the late part of that decade during the 1947 famine. That famine stimulated a good deal of urban migration because emergency food was given out at centers in Praia. Other families had settled in Tira Chapeu even earlier. One woman in her sixties had come with her family when she was still a young girl.



Figure 2. Map of Greater Praia, showing location of Tira Chapeu

(*Secretaria de Estado da Cooperação e Plano* [SECP], 1983e:52). In that same year, the total population of the Praia metropolis was 24,896 (13,097 females and 11,799 males) (SECP, 1983e:52). By 1980, Tira Chapeu's resident population had grown to 1,234 (647 females and 587 males) divided into 244 families (SECP, 1983a:54). Greater Praia residents then numbered 40,310 (21,459 females and 18,851 males) (SECP, 1983a:54). By 1985, the resident population of Tira Chapeu had almost doubled again, to 2,383 souls, consisting of 1,229 females and 1,154 males (SECP, 1985:9), represented in 587 habitation units. Relative to most other *bairros* during this period, Tira Chapeu showed much more rapid growth.<sup>34</sup> Praia at large increased during this period to 49,600 persons (26,293 females and 23,307 males) (SECP, 1985:9). 1990 census figures for Tira Chapeu are not yet available, but guesses can be made based on Praia's enormous growth during this most recent five-year period. Praia in 1990 had blossomed into a resident population of 61,797 (32,260 females and 29,537 males) (SECP, 1990:11). If Tira Chapeu's growth mirrored this, and/or matched its own growth from 1980 to 1985,<sup>35</sup> Tira Chapeu could well have been an area of between 4,000 and 5,000 residents by 1990.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>See SECP, 1983a:54 and SECP, 1985:9 for comparative figures.

<sup>35</sup>This seems likely judging from the amount of new construction in Tira Chapeu. As Tira Chapeu is on an edge of the city where land is still available, both clandestine and legal building springs up new every day. Both urban newcomers and residents from other parts of Praia come build in Tira Chapeu.

<sup>36</sup>The 1990 census results were not yet available for individual *bairros* by the time I left Cape Verde in May 1991. The Praia figures mentioned here are also provisional.

Table 1  
Population Growth -- Tira Chapeu, Praia - 1970-1990

<u>Tira Chapeu</u>				
<u>Year</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Total Pop.</u>	<u>Households</u>
1970	366	326	692	120
1980	647	587	1,234	244
1985	1,229	1,154	2,383	587
1990*	---	---	5,000?	---

<u>Praia</u>			
<u>Year</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Total Pop.</u>
1970	13,097	11,799	24,896
1980	21,459	18,851	40,310
1985	26,293	23,307	49,600
1990	32,260	29,537	61,797

The feel of Tira Chapeu--and its residents' stories and impressions--does indeed speak of growth, busting out of its seams, in terms of both occupation of land area and infrastructures no longer adequate for its many people's needs. In spite of its growing population and expanding land area, it has few formal infrastructures of its own. Where government infrastructures don't exist, residents rely on their own ways to solve their problems. Since most residents' background is rural, they are accustomed to creating their own communities, their own systems, their own problem-solving methods. Yet, with residence in the capital comes an awareness of other kinds of



support systems--and an expectation that their community should have them--along with changing needs in the urban context.

In these terms, Tira Chapeu's infrastructures are inadequate for its needs. To serve this population in water, two *chafaris*<sup>37</sup> exist. There is one public bathhouse/toilet. There is no sewage system, no waste disposal site. The roads are dirt.<sup>38</sup> The nearest open market is a very small one at the crossroads of Terra Branca and Achada Santo Antônio. The only schools within the community are two rented rooms of houses, used as classrooms. The rest of Tira Chapeu's schoolchildren walk to schools in Achada Santo Antônio, Terra Branca or Várzea. The nearest medical center is a 15-minute walk into Achada Santo Antônio, the nearest pharmacy another 10 minutes down the same way. A regularly employed government nurse who lives in Tira Chapeu moonlights to serve people's health needs, providing consultation privately for payment.<sup>39</sup> Practitioners of traditional medicine also prescribe and heal. There are small private shops in Tira Chapeu, some of which also serve as bars. No restaurants exist, although women make snackfood and sweets at home and sell them door to door. A consumer cooperative, which had been years in the planning, started to function in 1991.

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<sup>37</sup>Water fountain - in Tira Chapeu, the main *chafaris* was a small cement building with a locked iron grate door, housing three spigots. The building would be unlocked at the time the water flowed each day, for about an hour just after sunrise, then locked up again. This *chafaris* was fed by a city water main. A second *chafaris* existed in Tira Chapeu, in another part of the neighborhood, this one supplied by a water delivery truck and opened for a brief period in the afternoon.

<sup>38</sup>The one cobblestoned road is the road to Cidade Velha running beside Tira Chapeu, between the residential zone and the factory zone on the other side of this road.

<sup>39</sup>As a resident and neighbor, the nurse has a payment system that is real but flexible.

People live outside their houses in Tira Chapeu, the roads filled with laughter, shouting, talking, children playing. On a typical day, a woman cleans fish in a small round plastic pan, gutting it, scraping off the scales, washing it with water. Children scramble and cavort on the piles of *jora*<sup>40</sup> and sand left in front of houses under construction. Men appear in the unfinished windows on first and second stories wearing the grime and grit of building. Half-built stone and cement block houses announce the election campaign: "*Viva PAICV!*", "*Fora P. Pires!*", "*MPD e nhaco [sic]!*"<sup>41</sup> scrawled over them in white paint. Women pass by at their work, one going home from a neighbor's house, another coming by with her tray of bananas and vegetables on her head to sell. "*Es atun!*"<sup>42</sup> a common cry of women fish vendors selling tuna, they painstakingly cut this big fish into small 25 or 50-escudo pieces, which the woman or girl buying will put into that day's pot of rice or *katchupa*.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>*Jora* is a kind of volcanic rock used in construction.

<sup>41</sup>Various slogans of the 1990-1991 legislative election campaign: "Long live PAICV!" (the formerly unique party), "Out with P. Pires!" (the former Prime Minister), "MPD is great!" (MPD was the opposition party newly created in 1990, which swept the elections in 1991) Slogans like these plastered almost all available public space during the campaign. "*Nhaco*" would be spelled "*nhaku*" using the standardized Kriolu alphabet employed for the rest of the Kriolu text in this document.

<sup>42</sup>"Tuna here!" Tuna is a prevalent and favored fish in the local diet. Its price fluctuates according to availability, which varies by the time of year and the weather.

<sup>43</sup>The "national dish" of Cape Verde, *katchupa* is made of a base of maize and beans. This with a little onion, garlic, bay leaf and pork fat is "poor man's *katchupa*." In Praia, a little tuna is typically added to enrich its value and flavor. "Rich man's *katchupa*" usually contains pork, tuna, or other meats, and vegetables such as yams, cassava, carrots, cabbage, collard greens, and tomato.

When I think of Tira Chapeu, I think of all these things. I think of the dust of the main road curving up into the neighborhood, winding in between the *chafaris* and Toti's house, into the open space which is a kind of main square. In the late afternoon, Toti and the other older women who lived around there sat out on the rocks behind a small thatched house sitting in the middle of that open space, across from the *chafaris*. This was usually my first stop to sit and talk, or at least to exchange greetings. The women rested for a while between work and work, enjoying the shade when it was hot and the sun when it was chilly. For me, this was the center of Tira Chapeu and the center of the women who were in my study, even kind of the geographical center among their houses. And of course, it was the center because of water.

Water was a word always on everyone's tongues in Tira Chapeu, as it is in Cape Verde in general. Periodic droughts have always plagued the islands, but now since the Sahelian drought of the mid-1970's, the rains have never really been as plentiful as they once were. The country's water supply has dwindled. A friend of mind recalled a time in the late 1970's when water ran 24 hours a day on Praia's central plateau; but by the time I first visited the country in 1985, even the plateau received water on a strict schedule. In Tira Chapeu, water was not only scarce but carried with it that sense of uncertainty. One never knew when it just might not flow on a particular day. And when it did flow, invariably there was not enough to go around. Even with everyone filling cans and containers in rapid succession, when the water stopped, many went unserved. Women found creative and flexible ways to alleviate the problem. If water didn't come for days on end, they could organize and complain. Sometimes they did, mostly they didn't. Mostly they just

used their links and relations to find other ways to manage. They went to their relatives and friends in Terra Branca. They went to the *chafaris* way down in Varzea or Achada. They bought water from Joana or Toka for 30 *escudos* a can when they were desperate and could find the money. They didn't wash clothes for a while; they took small baths.

One morning in March I observed the scene at the central *chafaris*. At dawn, the *chafaris* was grey, the sky was grey, people were grey. Cans lined up from the night before clinked against others women or children now placed in the line as the sun rose. It was cool. Women were sleepy, wrapped up in sweaters or wrappers, sleeping babies on their backs or sleepy children tugging at their hands. The wind blew their wrappers and skirts. The gentle murmur and ripple of playing children burst into laughter in short breaths, caught with the crow of roosters. The sky lightened, orange bands of cloud against blue, bringing color to faces and clothes. Children and women waited with cut-off plastic wine jug tops on their heads, homemade funnels for the large but narrow-mouthed plastic barrels they would carry the water away in. One line of containers curved around the house of stone with its thatch roof in the middle of the open space, and another down again the other side from the *chafaris*, in front of the public toilets and bathhouse. "*Ami e li sin sin*,"<sup>44</sup> a young boy cried, pointing to the cleaned-out pork lard can guarding his spot in line. The noise grew with the light and the crowd. Guida was upset: "*Keli e di meu, keli e di meu, keli e di meu!*"<sup>45</sup> she defended the place of her three

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<sup>44</sup>"I'm right here."

<sup>45</sup>"This is mine, this is mine, and this is mine!"

containers, marching off with a wary eye. Some just sat and waited and watched. Joana's face was puffed up with sleep. Fati laughed and joked as her baby slept on her back. A woman with a smooth shiny face like an espresso coffee bean sold homemade sugar-candy at what was a daily event. Children approached, gave her money, picked their sweets, drew back. She calmly flipped the coins under the paper lining her candy tray, hardly moving a muscle.

As at most neighborhood events, the women were in the central active position, the children by their sides or actively helping, and some men hovering around the edges, and, of course, the water man. He unlocked the iron door and water flowed. Three faucets of clear white water, flowing without stop into cans and buckets and plastic barrels. An argument started. Everyone knew there wouldn't be enough. But the fight dissipated as quickly as it had started, the collection of water continuing with jokes and laughter, with the day's news and gossip, with silence. Outside, the water controller's assistant collected money, ten *tiston*<sup>46</sup> per can. The water stopped. She marked down the time it went away, as she had marked down the time it came. Less than an hour of water. Some had gone without; empty cans stood waiting for tomorrow's line. The young men hovering around the edges of this scene complained. But there was nothing to do. The water man locked the *chafaris*. People dispersed to begin their day's work or their day's waiting for work. Toti sauntered off with her can of water on her head, my gaze following her stiff limp into her house.

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<sup>46</sup>A *tiston* is one-tenth of one *escudo*. In Tira Chapeu, a can of water (25 liters) costs 10 *tiston* or one *escudo*.



And while women and children wait for and gather water each day, in a larger sense they seem to have given up waiting for water. I see the view from Toka's house out over the dry riverbed bordering the back of Tira Chapeu. Toka's house is up on the bluff that is Tira Chapeu. Looking out from her front door, you can see into the dry riverbed and past it to the *bairros* of Kasa Lata and Monti Burmedju, the latter's dark hole of *jora* like a black scorch mark from lightning. You can see out to the sea, a little blue space between the bluffs, bringing a sense of beauty to this little corner of Tira Chapeu, the blue calm sea on beaches where people go leisurely to bathe. And in the riverbed itself are houses and more houses: new construction, bricks piled up, mounds of sand and cement running up and down the riverbed, from up on its sides to deep down in its gully. What if rain came again? I asked myself. And then I answered my own question: rain doesn't seem to be coming ever again the way it used to. This, at least, is how the people who are building their houses in the riverbed must feel. Those houses in the riverbed are a sign of permanent drought.

Women gather not only at the *chafaris*, but to wait for mail, a slow gathering of women who have more free time: the old ones, the teenage ones who aren't in school. Again, it's a scene of trading news and gossip, talking over current affairs, sharing life philosophies. And then suddenly, when the mailman arrives on his motorcycle, lots of people are there, hovering around as he reads off the names of those who have received letters. Some guard them, some open them; some are disappointed an awaited *mandadu*<sup>47</sup> hasn't come. Rita and Elena both wait

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<sup>47</sup>A money order or check.

with anxious eyes; neither receives anything. The man has to check twice to satisfy some; he riffles through the pile of remaining letters to make sure he's gotten it all right. Then he's gone and people disperse, the busy ones disappearing quickly and the ones with more leisure leisurely drifting away, amidst talk of who got what and who didn't, and whose relatives are where and how they're doing, and how often they write or send money.

And all around, the presence of women. They make up the market at the Terra Branca crossroads, sit at each other's houses tending children, wander the streets selling this or that food item or article of clothing. Men are there too, and boys, but peripherally. They seem to be not there, out working or emigrated, or no permanent man there in the first place, or just out. And even when they are there, they are on the fringes, in the courtyards combing their hair to go out, resting having just come in from work, listening to sports on the radio, sitting around outside playing cards with friends. The women are the center, with their children around them. They are the visible presence in Tira Chapeu, keeping things going: laughter, loving, and life itself.

Some of these women are members of the Tira Chapeu OMCV group. Joana, the group's First Secretary, claimed that some 80 women were official members signed-up on paper, although that number had diminished, she said, because women had moved away, emigrated, died, married or built houses outside the *bairro*. Maybe about 50 were active at the time of this study, according to her calculations. From my experience, about 30 showed up at meetings fairly regularly, with a more solid core of about 10 to 20 more consistently and broadly active. Most of the women involved were women without wage jobs, though most worked

in the informal sector in some way, a few rather successfully. One woman who participated in the study owned a small shop/tavern and spent a vacation almost every year with her grown children in Lisbon. But most lived on a sharper edge of survival. Some were maids, some did a little selling house to house or at markets. Most had little or no schooling. The majority were not officially married, although all except the two youngest<sup>48</sup> and one older woman were or had been in unions with men and had children. They ranged in age from 20 to about 70, either migrated from rural areas by one means or another or born and raised in Tira Chapeu. Several had spent some years in Sao Tomé e Príncipe as contracted laborers as a result of the 1947 famine. To give a brief introduction to the women who participated in the study and a better idea of the makeup of the women's group, here is an outline of some essentials about the 24 women who were the core of the study.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>This number was three, but one of these had her first child while I was carrying out the study.

<sup>49</sup>These were the women who gave me formal interviews, but my informal talks and daily experience, much more extensive than the formal interviews, were with a broader range of women. Although I initially thought that in order to abide by the ethical standards of my study, I should have participation only from those who had been at the explanatory meeting and had understood and agreed to the terms of the study, this was impossible to control. After this initial meeting, many other women heard about the study and asked to participate. In addition, at group events, women other than those who signed up formally also participated. For instance, some women who had never been involved in the previous phases of the study showed up during its last phase, the small group discussions on themes in the history of the group. I did formal tape-recorded conversations only with women who had signed letters of consent that day, but other women's lives entered into the data I collected. Any necessary information about other women who appear in the following chapters will be provided in footnotes.

**Julia:** age 20;<sup>50</sup> born in Praia itself; eight years of formal schooling; single and living with her mother; no children at the time of the interview, but had her first child later during the study; worked occasional jobs, looking for work.

**Rosinha:** age 20; from interior of Santiago, but raised in Praia since age 4; eight years of formal schooling; single, living at home with her *mai-di-kriason* (the woman who raised her), the mother of her late godfather; no children; with her *mai-di-kriason*, made and sold snacks and sweets at a curbside stand in Terra Branca.

**Tina:** age 20; born in São Tomé, returned to Cape Verde at four years old; six years of formal schooling; single and living at home with her mother, Saunsa; no children; produced and sold crochet occasionally, got a job as a servant at the French Embassy in February 1991, but couldn't start right away because she'd broken her leg; they held the job for her.

**Antonia:** age 25; born in São Tomé, but grew up on the island of São Vicente, parents from Santo Antão; four years of formal schooling; living with long-term *pai-di-fidju*;<sup>51</sup> her fourth child born during the study period; not working or selling at the time of the study, had worked as servant in an office in São Vicente.

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<sup>50</sup>Ages as of when we held the formal tape-recorded conversations in July-August of 1990.

<sup>51</sup>*Pai-di-fidju* means literally: child's (or children's) father. Women use it to describe their mates the same way one would say "my husband," when they are not formally married to the father of their children. It is a common and respected relationship in Tira Chapeu, although it doesn't have the prestige of a formal marriage, especially a church marriage.

**Rita:** age 27; born in Praia, but parents from the interior of Santiago; one year of formal schooling as a child, and a year or so of adult literacy classes; had a non-resident long-term *pai-di-fidju*; two children; sister to Aldira and daughter to Toti; job on workfront, and washed clothes twice a week as domestic servant, later obtained full-time job as a maid and continued the clothes-washing job as well.

**Sara:** mid to late 20's; from interior of Santiago; six years of formal schooling, including one year of night school on her own; living with long-term *pai-di-fidju*; three children; sold food and drink to factory workers, as well as second-hand clothes as street vendor.

**Sandra:** age 29; from interior of Santiago; three years of schooling; living with her second *pai-di-fidju*; four living children (five pregnancies, one died as a baby); worked as construction worker for the Chinese building the national assembly, had also worked as maid, at home with a new baby during time of study, supported by *pai-di-fidju*.

**Aldira:** age 29; two years of formal schooling, and also went to adult literacy classes; living at home with mother, but had long-term *pai-di-fidju* who lived with another woman; two children; sister to Rita and daughter of Toti; job on workfront, sold fish, then worked as a maid.

**Linara:** age 30; from Santo Antão; six years of formal schooling; living with long-term *pai-di-fidju*; three children; domestic servant, sold candy from her home.

**Nela:** age 38; from the interior of Santiago; fourth grade equivalency diploma from adult literacy class which she attended in 1986; had three *pai-di-fidju*, including the present one; five children;



no grandchildren; civil service job controlling clandestine housing for the city government.

**Fati:** about 40; from interior of Santiago; no schooling as a child, but went to adult literacy classes for a year or so; married but husband emigrated 18 years before and ceased to keep in touch; living with *pai-di-fidju* of her youngest child; five children; a few grandchildren; sold fruit, vegetables, and sweets at her home and door to door.

**Nisia:** age 41; born in Praia, but spent several years of childhood in São Tomé; three years of formal schooling; had long-term *pai-di-fidju* who had been in prison for eight years at the time of the interview; bore twelve children, but only three living; a few grandchildren; had worked many years as a maid, but at the time of the study, was taking in laundry at home. Nisia died in November 1990 from complications during pregnancy.

**Belinha:** age 41; born in Príncipe but came back to Cape Verde as a baby, was raised in the interior; married and living with husband; four children; no grandchildren; had an extensive fruit and vegetable stand at her home.

**Toka:** age 46; from interior of Santiago, but grew up in Praia; no formal schooling; single and living by herself with several godchildren she was raising; no children of her own; worked as a maid, sold water.

**Malvina:** age 48; from interior of Santiago; one year of formal schooling; married and still living with husband; two children (three born, but one died shortly after birth); no grandchildren; sold homemade popsicles from her home.

**Saunsa:** age 53; born in Praia, but parents from the interior of Santiago; as a child, two years of formal schooling, but also studied a

bit in church-organized adult schools in Principe, where she spent many years of her life; married but separated from her husband for many years; four children; no grandchildren; a relative of Joana's, mother of Tina; living through informal selling and with support of one son who worked.

**Ondina:** age 53; from the interior of Santiago; no formal schooling; married, but her husband died young, then had a long-term *pai-di-fidju* that she was no longer with; four children; some grandchildren; ran a shop/tavern attached to her home, had support from grown children living overseas.

**Liseti:** age 58; from the island of Brava; had two common-law marriages, but now living on her own; seven children and several grandchildren; sold food to workers at the docks.

**Joana:** age 60; the group's leader; from the interior of Santiago; no formal schooling; married but separated from her husband; two grown daughters and several grandchildren; sold water, received a state disability subsidy, and rented out one of her houses.

**Felicidade:** around 60; from interior of Santiago; no formal schooling; had two or three *pai-di-fidju* and several children, but now living on her own; several grandchildren; sold firewood and had some support from grown sons. Felicidade emigrated to Lisbon to join one of her grown children there shortly after our formal interview.

**Tereza:** age 60; from interior of Santiago; no formal schooling; married and living with husband, but also had children previous to marriage; bore eight babies, with four living children; several grandchildren; had worked as a vendor, not working at time of study, living via support of husband and children.

**Artemisa:** age 64; from the island of Brava; four years of formal schooling but read and wrote only a little; was married to a much older man who died, then had another *pai-di-fidju*; two children from her marriage, but both died, one as an adolescent and one killed when already a man; several grandchildren and a few great grandchildren; inter-island vendor, selling raw goods such as grain and beans, as well as processed products, from Santiago on other islands, traveling by boat.

**Sinta:** age 65; from the interior of Santiago; no formal schooling; had a common-law marriage, but no longer living with her *pai-di-fidju*; six children and several grandchildren; Toti's sister, aunt of Rita and Aldira; lived with support of grown children.

**Francisca:** about 70; born in Praia, although spent some years in São Tomé; no formal schooling; had long-term *pai-di-fidju* in São Tomé with whom she had five children, but when she came back to Cape Verde he didn't want to come; several grandchildren; living through support of grown daughter who worked, some support from a niece overseas.

But this is the superficial information about the women's group members. Who were these women? What were their lives like? Why were they in this group? What were their visions and hopes, both for their lives and for the life of their group? This deeper understanding begins to reveal itself in the next chapters.

## PART II

### THE WOMEN'S LIVES

This part of the dissertation deals with important themes in the lives of the Tira Chapeu women who participated in the study. In the next four chapters, I paint the picture I saw of women's lives in Tira Chapeu, emerging in four themes. Each of the first three themes is tied to a metaphor, an image of woman. Chapter V, "The Economic Imperative and Women's Responsibility for Survival: Woman as Provider," discusses the basic dilemma of Tira Chapeu life, survival, as it expresses itself in the women's lives, and reveals the variety of survival strategies women create and use. Chapter VI, "Help Ties: Woman as *Madrinha* and *Fidjadu*,"<sup>1</sup> describes interpersonal ties of mutual assistance and obligation which seem to be the stuff of social relations, keeping life going in the precarious Cape Verdean situation. In particular, a kind of assistance-obligation tie which I term the *madrinha* system seems to pervade the women's lives. Help ties appear as a grand survival strategy. These ties, as noted in Chapter IV, are especially important for women who have no reliable income either from their own labor or from a male partner. Chapter VII, "Self-respect, Pride and Status: Woman as Fighter," considers an aspect of the women's lives that is both internal and external. Self-respect, pride, and status are strong motivators in this context where one's relations with others are important. These motivators assist women in their struggle for survival, leading them to reject situations of abuse. At the same time,

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<sup>1</sup>*Madrinha* - godmother; *fidjadu* - godchild.

these motivators often overpower their need for survival, leading them to choose options which worsen their economic situation but preserve their sense of self-worth or their status in relation to others, or protect their physical and emotional well-being.

Chapter VIII, "A Government Job is a Husband: Issues of Change and Resistance," departs from the metaphors for woman to look at how the women "resist" and enact change in their lives. On the one hand, they are bound by their economic circumstances and social norms to conform to what is expected of them. At the same time, their economic position appears to make them remarkably free to do what they must do. They have little to lose. But do their choices lead to a better socio-economic situation? Neither their conforming nor their resisting seems to change their position--in relationship to men or to the socio-economic structure--in any fundamental way. Nevertheless, small changes in women's ways of thinking seem to reveal the possibility that realities are also shifting and being questioned.



## CHAPTER V

### THE ECONOMIC IMPERATIVE AND WOMEN'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR SURVIVAL: WOMAN AS PROVIDER

Economic need and women's responsibility for survival underlie the women's options, decisions, and perceptions. The women of Tira Chapeu, as discussed in Chapter IV, find themselves at the bottom of the socio-economic structure of Cape Verdean life; they are poor. In addition, they are likely to have very little support from a male partner, for economic and socio-cultural reasons. In this context, women are seen-- and see themselves--as the principal providers. This is also usually a fact. The women's lives are shaped by the daily struggle for the survival of their children, their extended families, and themselves.

In the women's talk about their lives and the options I observed them pursue, women appear primarily and ultimately responsible for getting by. Sinta, for example, identified her mother as the sole support of their family. She spoke of how her mother had left her father and brought her children to the relative safety of Praia during the 1947 famine.

The weather got bad in 1947.... There were six of us. In 1947, when she saw that famine was tightening down on us, she had no resources,...She worked, we grew up, we lived....

We had a father. But when our mother saw that the famine was closing in, she said, before we all die of hunger, she would get out of there, and she came here with us. We came to Praia for good. Our father stayed there, and later he died. He stayed because he had another woman. He didn't live with us, but we are all of that one father. He supported us, but not too well, because the weather was already not great, for him to get and give to us and to that other [family] as well.

Our mother said, no, the time has arrived for us to separate, and she put us together with our broken down things, with our mats,...that's what we slept on. We didn't have beds, we didn't have anything; it was a life of poverty with our mats, and one night we came [here] and never went back.

Only secondarily did Sinta refer to her father. Because he had another family that he lived with, he was peripheral to their family life. In addition, because the drought had decreased his ability to provide for the two families, his economic contribution was also not central.

Nela also told how her mother had brought her family to Praia. Implicit in her story are the absence of a father and her mother's responsibility for the family.

I came to Praia at 12 years old and was raised here until 38. I came here because our mother got sick--stomach problems. We were in Sao Domingos without a mother; she came to Praia to go into the hospital. She sent for us and we came to stay with her....She asked our uncle for help. Our mother brought us here.

In these words, as in so many the women told me, the mother's exclusive presence or responsibility for the family appeared to be almost taken for granted.

Rosinha offered an explanation of why women had this responsibility when she talked about why women do the grueling work of street vending and men do not: women have the will and the energy to walk the streets from dawn until dusk because they are thinking of feeding their children.

Selling is mostly women's work....This is work that women are better at. A woman can go everywhere with things on her head. Women are good at getting out and going. When people see a man doing it, they say he has the way of a woman. Women have to find bread for their kids--they have the energy to work hard, to run around this way. They think of their kids at home who are hungry and they don't feel the tiredness.

In order to fulfill this mandate for survival, this duty to feed their children, women create and use a variety of strategies. Women look on many aspects of life in relation to how they fit into or serve as survival tactics. In the rest of this chapter, I show the principal

means by which these women survive and how they view relationships with men, having children, migration, schooling, and even political events in relation to the survival imperative.

Work: Selling, Serving, Getting By

The women worked at whatever they could do in the effort to keep going. Most had started working at home and on farms at a very early age. From there, they branched into activities which produced some kind of revenue. Buying and selling were particularly important activities. Even women who considered themselves not to be "working" did some kind of home-based petty trading. Those who were more active and successful made a relatively good, though erratic, living. Women characterized these kinds of economic activities as part of the struggle to get by just enough to be able to raise their families. Sinta recounted how she had bought and sold charcoal to raise her children.

I raised my children with hardship. My life was selling charcoal on the road. I'd get up in the morning, if I found some nearby, I'd buy it and go sell it in Praia. The day we didn't find it nearby, it was because there wasn't any. We left here--there were many of us--we would buy it in Santiago. We'd hire a car, we'd put it in the car, and come back with it. We would buy three or four [loads] according to how much money we had. When we had sold it all, we would put our money together and hire a car again and go back and buy more.

Sometimes when we went though, we would sleep on the ground because we couldn't find a car to come back to Praia. If we found a car to Praia, we would come. But if we went with a car from the interior, we would sleep there in Santiago, in the middle of the road, with crickets shouting in our ears.

I have rheumatism in the knee, you see, I have this leg here,...Now, for me to go to Praia, I go with great effort on this leg, if I don't have a way to pay for the bus. I make an effort and I go. But when I come home, it tires me. If I don't stop on the way, I won't reach home. It hurts me, it tires me out. And so we would come. So when we come, this is our life, we are satisfied with it, we don't have any other way, in raising our children. We run around to get our daily bread, we get by; that's how we raise our kids.

Clearly, Sinta associated her physical ailments with the hard life of labor she'd led. But this life was what had to be in order to do her duty by her children.

Besides buying and selling, working as a domestic servant was another common means of earning a living for women in the group, most starting this work at a young age. Nisia told her story:

I have always worked as a servant. When I was twelve, I started to work. Then the world was different--it wasn't as expensive as it is now--so that you can't dress your child, you can't live. At that time, it wasn't like that. I was 12, I worked and earned 50 *escudos* a month. 50 *escudos* was worth more than 1,000 *escudos* is today. Because then we also had good rains--my mother can complain of famine, but me, I can't complain of famine. I can't tell stories about famine. I was born in 1949. I was 11 when we came from Sao Tomé, and at age 12 I started working and have worked ever since.

Nisia saw the income she earned from her early work in conjunction with what was produced from the land.

In the urban setting, women had opportunities for income-producing work aside from selling and domestic servitude, even though these two realms still seemed to occupy most women. For Nela, first her mother's inability to care for her children (due to illness) and then Nela's own children's well-being compelled her to work, even doing things she found distasteful or dangerous.

I worked from the time I was small; I grew up without a mother to provide for me. I was born in 1952. In 1963-64, my mother took sick in the stomach. So from that age, I worked....I did every kind of work: planting, weeding, I worked on the workproject that built the walls around Marconi, I worked on the workproject they call TACV across from the police station, on the workproject of the house of Manito Bentu. I worked on the school in Achadinha, I worked on the road to Cidade Velha, I worked on the road to Pensamento, I worked on the airstrip for the planes that have 48 passengers,...the last place I worked was in the project Taiti...I worked all of these things. From the time I was small until now. And I'm still working...

The work I'm doing now is in clandestine construction. When people build houses, they have to stop and go to the

*Secretariado Administrativo*<sup>1</sup> to legalize the situation. [If I see someone building a clandestine house] I either go talk to the person, or I tell the inspector and he goes and talks to them. Since sometimes they make trouble with me, I talk to inspection and inspection talks to them. *Praia bairros*, as *Camarada* Georgina de Mello<sup>2</sup> said, have been built by clandestine construction...

But the job she currently held was not what she would have chosen, had she had a choice. Because people couldn't afford the cost or the delay that legalizing their construction incurred, they resented her interference and made trouble for her. She understood their point of view because she had the same problems, which made it even harder for her to perform the job. But in her view, she had no choice but to work whatever job she had. This was her obligation as a mother.

Our land is poor; there is no place to live. People live in tin shacks. Rain comes in. It's sad. Me, I stop them from building because that's the work that gives me food, but if I found a different job, another way of making a living, I wouldn't stay in this work. It's not a nice job...But with kids in the balance...There's no remedy, there's no other way of doing it, so I'm in it. But if I found another job, even cleaning the ground, cleaning in any office, I would work there, to give food to my kids, these five kids that are with me because I was the one who wanted them, who made them. I won't let them die of hunger. I work. I don't have other work, so I do this.

This job, however difficult, gave her some security and, because she worked for the government, it was more security than most people had.

The hope of a government job holding the promise of security was ever present in the women's thoughts and actions regarding making a living. Belinha saw the advantage of government work clearly. She

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<sup>1</sup>*Secretariado Administrativo* is the administrative section of the city government.

<sup>2</sup>The First Secretary of the PAICV urban Praia sector.



dreamed that her teenage daughter would find such a job and stop working as a domestic servant.

I have a lot of hope in Dina. The one thing I ask Jesus for for her is for God to see her fit to get a job for her supper, so if I die she'll be well set-up. Because working in someone's house [as a servant] is from day to day. But a government job is a husband. It's even surer than my husband here in the house....I already have my supper. For her, I hope God gives her a job with the government....I pray God He'll give her a job--so she can get out of white people's backyards.<sup>3</sup>

But regardless of the kind of work, women worked. They had to work, in their view because of their obligation to feed and care for their children. Artemisa, who left her home island of Brava as a young woman, eloquently summarized women's responsibility for survival in relation to working. She explained why she worked as an inter-island vendor: "...it's to give my kids supper. They're already grown but it's me who's their mother and father both."

#### Relationships with Men

Women's relationships with men were also closely linked to survival strategies. They estimated the value of husbands and *pai-di-fidju*<sup>4</sup> in part in relation to how they provided for the family, or at least tried to. They often looked to relationships with men as a way to improve their economic circumstances. For Malvina, a woman with chronic health problems that prevented her from working, "the thing that has saved me is that God gave me a good husband." According to Sandra, "if you have

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<sup>3</sup>*Quintal* in Portuguese, *kintal* in Kriolu. Refers to an inner or back courtyard common in most Cape Verdean homes. This courtyard is used for cooking, washing clothes, and other household chores. It is the domain of women and servants.

<sup>4</sup>Father-of-children. See explanatory note, Chapter IV.

a good job, you don't need [a man]." In Linara's case, she considered herself lucky because she'd found a good *pai-di-fidju* with the will and the possibility to provide.

I found a good *pai-di-fidju*. Because nowadays it's not every day that you find one. They drink, they hit you. And when you do find a good one, he has a ton of girlfriends, a ton of problems, difficulties. Me, I don't have any complaints....

If he doesn't provide for me, it's only because he doesn't have anything. He has shown me his good will to provide for me, but he doesn't have much. I make do...if there's good will, and he treats me well, we don't fight in the house, we get along well...

He's a carpenter, but it's not all the time that he finds work so that he can say he earned ten *contos*.<sup>5</sup> Not every day. He's a driver working for the Ministry of Health. He earns eight *contos* or so, not even nine *contos*. It's very little.

Although Linara calls it "little," her *pai-di-fidju*'s eight *contos* were more than most women could count on. Clearly this was one of the reasons she considered him a good mate.

But in many cases, men did not live up to the expectation that Linara's *pai-di-fidju* fulfilled. Many women left relationships which were unsatisfactory in this way, reinforcing women's primary responsibility for their children's survival in both idea and practice.

Sandra, for example, told of splitting from her first *pai-di-fidju* because he couldn't support her and their children. "The *pai-di-fidju* I had before, we already split before I came to Praia because it wasn't working out. He didn't have steady work; he had another woman. He couldn't support both of us, so I left him and decided to come to Praia and look for work." Ondina explained similar reasons for leaving a *pai-di-fidju* she'd been with for 20 years, speaking in economic terms of why

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<sup>5</sup>1 *conto* = 1,000 *escudos*. At the time of the study, between 70 and 80 *escudos* were equivalent to one U.S. dollar.

women often were disturbed when their mates entered into relationships with other women.

It's great if it doesn't matter to you if your husband has other women. Normally, it really doesn't matter to me. But you can say it doesn't matter to you, but it has to matter. Because he gets paid and doesn't come home with the money; he takes part of it here and part of it there. It doesn't work. You, the one who's at home, you're at a disadvantage. It has to matter to you. If he once gave money in one way, and then starts giving it another way, it's because already the thing is not working. If he continues to give the way he gave before, fine, but it doesn't work for him to give that way. He has to split it to give to that other woman.

In fact, Ondina had done small commerce throughout her relationship with her man, with the help of her grown children from the marriage that had left her a young widow, never depending exclusively on her second mate's income. Once they split, he continued to provide child support on an irregular basis.

Other women were not this fortunate, even while in a relationship. Rita broke off her relationship with her long-term *pai-di-fidju* because of his increasing inconsistency in being present and in providing support for their children.

I asked him to pay for a school uniform for [our daughter], and he said he didn't have the money. I told him he should give it to her anyway, because it won't be good for her not to have a uniform when everyone else has one. And he said: "I'll give what her mother gives." So I didn't ask him again. I went and bought her the uniform myself. And everything else she needs....Now I'm earning 4,000 [escudos] a month, so I have more means.

In fact, we've broken up. What he gives just isn't enough, that 1,200 per month isn't enough!....I haven't even seen him for about five months. That's him. When he disappears, it's four, five, maybe three months. Then I ran into him the other day in Praia when I took Bebé<sup>6</sup> to the doctor and he said he was coming over, to see about her. I told him not to. He said he would. I said no. Eleven years we've been together. He won't get any better. I'd rather be by myself so I'm free to take someone else if I have the

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<sup>6</sup>Their first of two children.

chance. If he wants, he can come here, but I won't be with him anymore.

Rita's desire to be free was only in part the urge to be rid of a burden. She also wanted to have the opportunity to get together with another man who might be more reliable and generous.

Liseti also told me of leaving one of her mates for similar reasons. The practical outcome of not having enough support was, in her case, coupled with the injustice of his giving money to another woman.

The child I was pregnant with then is over 20 now. He fished and I worked the salt--so we worked together to buy things, to feed our kids. Then he gave the money he got to the married woman [a woman he'd taken on the side]--is that right? No! What I earned, I put into the pot, for us to be able to eat. And so I figure what he earns should go to buy a plate or something else we don't have. But he gave it to the other woman. So I told him: "*Mufinu!*"<sup>7</sup> Stay with your *rapariga*,<sup>8</sup> I'll go try my own luck....I came [here] with all my kids--sometimes we ate, sometimes we didn't--but we were satisfied.<sup>9</sup> Now I sleep relaxed. . . . The injury that men do hurts so much!

But lack of support was not the only reason women left relationships with men. In other cases, economic support was accompanied by emotional or physical abuse. For Linara, the abuse many women suffered at a man's hands wasn't worth what he might provide to his children. She told of offering advice to her sister:

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<sup>7</sup>*Mufinu* means coward, no-good, unmanly.

<sup>8</sup>*Rapariga* is one of a series of terms to describe women in various relationships to men. *Mudjer* is a wife, either common-law or official. *Rapariga* usually refers to a steady woman on the side with whom a man has children. *Menbra* is a more casual girlfriend, usually no children involved in the relationship. Both *menbra* and *rapariga* are also used to refer generally to a young woman or young women. *Transu* can refer to both men and women, as well as the relationship itself; it means an occasional or passing affair, or a one-night stand.

<sup>9</sup>*Konfortadu* - means both "we were satisfied" and "we made do" or "we got by."

[The man] hits you; and you stay with him-- She says: "It's because of my kid that I put up with it." But me, I have hands, I can work to provide for my kid. If you like, the father won't give me anything, but even if it's a little, I'll work and give it to my kid. But to stay and take beatings every day, just because of these three kids, to put up with that! Not me. It's not mandatory.

In her view, it was better to struggle on her own than to accept these consequences. Saunsa had lived such an experience, and had left it, even though it meant that she would be on her own to provide for her family. She grew up and lived as an adult in Sao Tomé. Her husband beat her, and so she left to return to Cape Verde when she was 37 years old.

I came back, but since he didn't want me to come--and of course didn't really have the means either--he didn't give me any help. I came back to stay here, without money, without work, with my four small kids, the youngest of which had been born only 17 days earlier. The oldest was seven. In Cape Verde, without work, at that time that independence was given, in 1974, there were a lot of difficulties here. To raise all these kids, me without work, without help from family; I had family in the interior but I hardly knew them.

Her desire to escape an abusive relationship led Saunsa to take on the full responsibility of supporting her family. Such circumstances and choices were common. Although relationships with men were seen to help with survival, it was difficult to find a man who could or would provide such help. In fact, most of the women in the study were the primary or sole supporters of their children. Women's responsibility for survival seemed to be their "destiny."<sup>10</sup>

#### Having Children

For the women in the study, economic need was both a reason to have children and a reason not to have them. In either case, economics

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<sup>10</sup> "Distinu" was used to explain many "facts of life."



underpinned the question of having children, intertwining with beliefs and women's images of themselves to create a complex issue. In general, women could hardly imagine themselves without children. Although raising children taxed women's capacities and resources in a difficult environment, the women looked on children as helpmates and sources of support as well. For many, children were a key survival strategy.

Sinta's grown children's help allowed her to separate from their father who didn't treat her well. In telling her own story, she explained to me "how women do" things: when their children are old enough to provide support, they separate from unsatisfactory mates.

As soon as I had kids grown up enough to give me a plate of supper, we resolved that he would go stay in his house and I would stay in mine. When he comes, we give each other "Good morning" or "Good afternoon." He goes and leaves me here. This is how women do. It doesn't work out. If the thing had some results...But if you feel he wants to abuse you, you push him out. He already gave you kids to provide you your supper, you rebel and put him out, far away. He didn't treat me well, in the raising of our kids, with *malandrisa*,<sup>11</sup> he had money to give but he supported us badly. I made do, God gave me these kids, and when the kids were able to give me that supper, I told him to hit the road.

It seems that she sees one of the reasons she had children was "to provide supper," to help in the survival struggle. Saunsa echoed this feeling. She had had a hard time raising her four children on her own, but in the long run they proved a support as well as a burden: "But I say, well, those kids that I have, I already have them, they help me, all of them, now." Rita also saw her children as potential helpers. She looked to her seven-year-old daughter to grow up and have a better life, and to share that better life with Rita. "I'll put her in school,

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<sup>11</sup>The noun form of *malandru*, a blackguard, scoundrel, no-good. *Malandrisa* is the behavior of a *malandru*.

so she'll study, so she'll get work, so she'll give me some supper." Ondina too recognized the help her children gave her, but she also considered that this was her due for the effort she'd put in to raise them.

Me, I've been lucky with my kids. Of course, I worked hard for them too. They've seen [how hard I worked], they've seen. The one who's in America, every time he writes he tells me not to work as hard as I'd been working, because I've already worked a lot. Now I work less, but he saw how hard I worked.

Her children still at home ran her shop. The ones abroad helped support the family and her small business.

The house was small. I enlarged it and then put in the *taberna*.<sup>12</sup> I was able to do this with the help of my kids who went overseas, who started to send me money. My daughters went overseas. Also my son who worked, he went into the military, he was in the military two years and then got out. He joined JAAC and got a job as a driver--in this way, we joined forces.

Although only 53 and still working herself, Ondina was already benefitting from the support of grown children that most women counted on in their old age.

This support from children was seen as just, and as one of the key reasons people bore children. Other women, however, recognized the limits to the help children could give in the modern economy. Speaking of her sisters, Joana talked about how their children didn't or couldn't help them.

The one in Flamengu...has two boys, both grown men already, but they're just no-goods. He's here in Praia; he doesn't work. That one [sister] is really pitiful, in bad shape. The one in Len-Katchor has kids, three girls and one boy. That boy is an artist but is no-good too. He doesn't give his mother anything. I too have two daughters, but what they find to live on is theirs. It's not enough for them to give me anything, unless just a plate of food.

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<sup>12</sup>A shop that also serves as a bar, selling mostly *grog*, Cape Verdean sugar cane liquor.

Taking this thinking a step further, some of the women professed that having many children was not a good idea. Although children were highly valued and were seen to be essential for one's old age, current economic conditions didn't permit large families. Belinha talked about being glad "God gave me only four" children.

God help me with these four! It's not worth having more--you can't help them all with school. Those that we have, we'll ask God to help us with them. Having lots of kids is good,<sup>13</sup> but it's also not good<sup>14</sup> at the same time. If you have lots of kids, you can't educate them--you can't put them into the life of Praia, as expensive as it is. So [with] the justice that God did, we are happy.

Even Saunsa, a strongly religious Catholic,<sup>15</sup> believed that couples with little means should practice family planning in accordance with the laws of the Catholic church, because having too many children wasn't practical.

Mother and father, a couple, ...should do planning to not have kids one after the other, or to not have too many kids. In my case, for example, if I had more than 4 kids, I would have even more problems [than I do]. Many more problems. If I had fewer, I would have fewer problems....I think a couple who doesn't have much means shouldn't have many children.

Aldira promoted even more strongly the idea of planning children. Her speech emphasized women's primary responsibility for children's welfare, and thus their primary responsibility for practicing contraception.

These days, you have to be careful about having children. If you're not careful, it just won't do. Everywhere, someone who has a lot of kids, it's no good. Nowadays you have to be careful because men are bad. Men won't refuse, so women have to refuse. The whole burden rests on the woman; a man is freer to just sit around. You have to avoid [getting pregnant].

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<sup>13</sup>*sabi*

<sup>14</sup>*kasabi*, the negative opposite of *sabi*

<sup>15</sup>Although most Cape Verdeans are nominal and even church-attending Catholics, not nearly as many seem to be seriously religious.

In fact, in the past it was God who helped people have and take care of children. Nowadays it's too difficult. Nowadays you have to avoid having kids because life is hard. At one time, you found people with a lot of kids because people had the means to raise them. Life was different. Nowadays, it's no good....[If you tell your partner not to come over] you'll have nothing. No, you have to use birth control....But it's not all companions who want this. They don't want it. They want you to have kids. We don't want to have them because they'll have a hard time. It's us, it's not them [who have the responsibility].

While the benefit of children's support went to the mothers who worked so hard to raise them, the burden of raising them also rested on their shoulders. Women seemed to be feeling changing times: they felt the benefit less and the burden more. Women's attitudes were changing because they couldn't afford to give their children what they needed in order to someday be able to give it back.

Rosinha, among the youngest of the group, also thought that having many children didn't make good economic sense. She reasoned that rich people had fewer children in order to be able to give their children more. Poor people might benefit from this same logic, she said, but they were less educated and so probably didn't think this way. Sandra had similar thoughts: "Poor women like to have lots of kids. There are some who have seven or eight. I think it's better not to have so many kids, so you don't stay so behind."

Although Sandra's words reflected the feelings of most women I spoke with, practices sometimes differed from feelings, perhaps because of the importance attributed to being a mother and/or because of women's difficulties in controlling their fertility. Having children was not simply an economic question. Julia's story illustrates its complexity. At our first interview, in August of 1990, Julia, 20 years old, without work and living at home with her mother and younger brothers and

sisters, expressed her desire to wait until she had a stable economic situation in order to have children.

Having children when you don't have a job is no good. I can't have any yet. Now, so many girls my age have kids--all of my colleagues have them. But I don't want a lot of kids--just one or maybe two. That's it. My mother doesn't want me to have so many either. She says if she were in my position, she would never have seven kids [the number she does have]. Now they have medicine, which they didn't have when my mom was having kids. Or maybe they had, but poor people would be ashamed by this and wouldn't take it. . . .

Julia realized she could get pregnant, but didn't want to use "medicine" yet.

I'll take medicine to avoid so many kids. I don't like medicine though. All my friends who have boyfriends take it, but I've never. My mother takes them though. I don't need to take them now obviously--I don't have a boyfriend! Once a group of us who were doing dance went to Santo Antao. Many of my colleagues took along pills but I didn't. I don't like them. I had a boyfriend, but we didn't use such things. I don't like any type of medicine....Once I have a couple of kids, I could take it so as not to have any more. But while I don't have kids, I won't take it. I'm a little afraid it might not be good to take. It depends; for some it's fine, for others it's not.

By the time of our second interview, in December 1990, Julia had had her first child, then a month-old baby girl. We played back the tape of her first interview, her baby resting in her arms. When she heard on the tape that she didn't want children until she had a job, she laughed, "And now I have one." I asked her if she'd realized she was pregnant at the time of the first interview. "By then I almost knew," she said. "Because it took me a long time to realize it."

Later during the interview, I asked her if she would take "medicine" now. She said, "I'll start taking it." Why didn't she like to take it before having a child? I asked her. Because she was afraid the harm it might do her? "No, I just didn't have the idea of taking



it, the habit," she replied. "I'd never taken it." "Some say it harms you," I said. "Yes, some say that," Julia acknowledged. "Each has her own thing. But for me, it wasn't that; it was just something I didn't do." She stated that at least now her uncle couldn't tease her about becoming a childless old maid, something she'd put up with on a regular basis.

As evident from this story, although economics were an important facet of childbearing, they were not the only consideration. Economic need was paramount in women's beliefs and practices around having children. Having children was an important part of survival. For a woman, they sometimes ensured support from their father or provided direct support when they were old enough to help make the family living. However, increasingly women were seeing these benefits as too remote or too unreliable to warrant the present cost of bearing and raising children. This practical consideration warred with most women's strongly held desire to be fulfilled through having children, and with their feeling that it was unnatural and sad for a woman to have no children at all. Coupled with this was the challenge of changing beliefs and practices regarding contraception. A complex issue such as childbearing wove together other concerns and circumstances, some of which I address in following chapters.

### Migration

Economics influenced not only women's life routines and their choice of mates and motherhood, but also where they lived. In Cape Verde, movement for the purpose of making a better living was and is as much a part of the landscape as are the rocks and ever-present sea.

Both migration within the country and emigration abroad serve as the engines of alternative survival strategies. Migration is a common event in these women's lives, as already evident in the stories of Sinta, Nela, Sandra, and Liseti above. Many of the women, especially the older ones, were born in the interior of Santiago or on other islands and came to Praia for reasons of work or "a better life."

Talk of migration as a survival strategy was part of women's words about their lives. Rosinha described the difference between life in her natal village of João Varela and life in Praia, explaining why Praia was better.

...even now, right now, the situation is more difficult there than here. Because here anything I might want to eat I can eat, as long as there isn't a lack of money there are things to eat that you want. But there, you might have money and you won't find things to buy. Even though now there's a consumer cooperative there that has everything. But even so, it's different than Praia, because Praia's the capital and has everything.

Belinha's story also illustrates the connection between moving and surviving. When she was a young girl, her family emigrated to Sao Tomé under labor contract during the 1947 famine and later returned to their rural lands in Cape Verde, only to find they could no longer make a living there. "We went back to Chaminé after returning from Sao Tomé, but when the rainy seasons got more difficult, we came near to the port, to Praia. We came as a whole family. I was about eighteen at that time."

Ondina had also come from the interior, a bit later in life. She complained of the uselessness of working the land now and praised the relative benefits of life in Praia.

Life in Praia is better, a more relaxed life. [Things are expensive], but in Cidade Velha things were the same. You had

to buy everything. If you worked *azagua*,<sup>16</sup> okay, but *azagua* hardly means anything any more. Some people work hard and get no results. As for me, after I came to Praia, I never worked *azagua* again. You get tired out for nothing. That land that we had, I left it there; someone else came to work it.

This migration, though, was not the only migration in Ondina's life. At ten years old, she had migrated to São Tomé with her family during the 1947 famine. And now that her own children were grown, several of them lived in Portugal and the United States, in search of a better living. In her view, the better life they'd found was worth the price of having them far away.

Sometimes you think about your kids being far away, it's not good, you worry a lot but--it has to be. I don't want them to come back because there they are doing all right, they have work. For them to come back here and find work, it would be hard. They can't earn here what they can earn there.

In her mind, their economic need overruled any objection to breaking up the family and living in foreign lands. They had found a way to achieve the all-important "better life" and help their mother in the process.

Women from other islands also came to Praia trailing work opportunities, either their own or their mates'. Linara, originally from Santo Antao, had emigrated with her employer to Portugal as a young girl. She then returned to Cape Verde, lived in São Vicente where she could find work, met her *pai-di-fidju*, and later followed him to Praia.

I came to Praia in 1986. Tony is from there [São Vicente]. His brother the policeman got him the job here. That's why we came. I didn't want to come. I told him I wasn't going to Praia, but since we already had two kids it wouldn't do for me to let him come to Praia alone. I had to come. I had to deal with it, find a way. I told him I wasn't going to Praia. Me?! Praia?! I wouldn't go there.

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<sup>16</sup>The farming season, when planting and harvesting are done. The word refers to "waters" or "the rains."

But Linara followed Tony where she didn't want to go, leaving a place and way of life she knew because it would be better for them economically. For the same reasons, she considered it a good idea that Tony emigrate to Portugal, given the chance, even if it meant leaving her and their children behind.

There are some Portuguese doctors who come here all the time. There are two who have said that in time, they'll help him go. He's worked with them and they liked him a lot. He would go and work for them. I've already told him that if they come and want to take him back he should go. He's said that there are two coming at the end of the month, two that have said they'll help him find a way, pay his passage so he can go, he should go. Our salaries don't even make it to buy food, to clothe the kids, how would we be able to buy a ticket?

For Linara, as for most Tira Chapeu women, emigration remained the enviable survival strategy, the dream just out of reach.

### Schooling

Schooling was an extremely important part of life in Praia. Schooling was closely linked to economic well-being, both in image and in fact. It was a key strategy not only for survival but also for moving ahead. However, those who most needed it often didn't have the resources to get it: schooling cost some money and took time away from women's home duties.

Because of their awareness of these dynamics, Tira Chapeu women admonished their children to stay in school to have a better life.

Nisia put it this way:

Now I tell my kids to study, because nowadays someone without schooling is nothing. Me, I made it. I worked in people's houses--I know how to do it because I grew up in it. My life is poor, but I made it, I got by. They say time doesn't go backwards. But if it could, I would go to school.

Many of the women believed that school was directly linked to getting a job. Antonia, for instance, explained why her fourth grade<sup>17</sup> education was inadequate.

Because these days, with *quarta classe*<sup>18</sup> you can't find work easily, not even a servant's job. I'll leave someone with the kids and go to night school. To at least do *segundo ano*,<sup>19</sup> because *quarta classe* is only enough to work in someone's house [as a servant], and my companion doesn't like me to do this.

Linara explained the wave of adult working people attending night school in Praia in relation to the job market.

You know why everyone wants to study? Because you hear on the radio every day a request for an employee to be employed

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<sup>17</sup>The formal school system is comprised of an eleven year ladder, divided into the following:

Ensino Básico (Basic Education) - subdivided into two "cycles":  
*Ensino Básico Elementar* (Elementary Basic Education) - 4 years - obligatory and free of charge  
*Ensino Básico Complementar* (Complementary Basic Education) - 2 years

*Ensino Secundário* (Secondary Education) - comprised of two tracks:  
*Ensino Secundário Liceal* (Secondary Education: academic track) - two cycles, the general and the complementary - 3 and 2 years respectively  
*Ensino Secundário Técnico* (Secondary Education: technical/vocational track) - one cycle of 3 years.

Promotional exams must be taken at the end of each cycle, i.e., at the end of *quarta classe* (fourth year of *Ensino Básico Elementar*), *segundo ano* (second year of *Ensino Básico Complementar*), *quinto ano* (third year of *Ensino Secundário Liceal*), and *sétimo ano* (fifth year of *Ensino Secundário Liceal*).

Outside of this system, pre-school is available but not on a universal basis, as it is operated by a diverse group of para-statal, cooperative, and private organizations. Adult literacy classes provide the equivalent of *Ensino Básico Elementar*, including a certificate attesting to this equivalency. A network of private night classes exists at *Ensino Básico Complementar* and *Ensino Secundário Liceal* levels; public school teachers moonlight to teach these classes for payment. *Ensino Secundário* has a cut-off age of 15 for entrance (Barbosa, Cruz, and Roberto, 1989:12).

<sup>18</sup>*Quarta classe* - fourth year of *Ensino Básico Elementar*.

<sup>19</sup>Second year of *Ensino Básico Complementar*.



in such and such place, they ask for *terceiro ano*,<sup>20</sup> or *quinto ano*,<sup>21</sup> so you know that everyone is struggling to get that *quinto ano*. They ask for *terceiro* or *quinto*, one or the other. *Segundo ano* already doesn't amount to much. *Segundo ano* is just servants, and in a while it will be not even that.

This idea that schooling was linked to getting a job was borne out in reality. The few women in Tira Chapéu who had government jobs had them in part because they had some schooling. Nela's job as a controller of clandestine housing required her to read and write: she obtained it because she had attended adult literacy classes and passed a *quarta classe* equivalency exam.

Economic status and schooling were intertwined in another way as well. While schooling was essential for a government wage-paying job, having no wages meant limited access to schooling. Most of the women participating in the study had not obtained much schooling--either as girls or as grown women--because it was too expensive. Antonia discontinued her studies as a girl because her mother couldn't afford to pay the costs. "My mother didn't have the strength<sup>22</sup> to keep me in school, to send me to high school, so I only finished *quarta classe*. If my mother had had enough money, I could have gone further than *quarta classe*." For Tina, a bright young woman of 20:

I finished *segundo ano* only. But I would like to continue. If I find work, I can continue studying at private [night] school. I didn't stay in school because I didn't have the means, you have to pay for so many things, materials. I didn't have any way to pay.

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<sup>20</sup>First year of *Ensino Secundário Liceal*, general cycle.

<sup>21</sup>Third year of *Ensino Secundário Liceal*, general cycle.

<sup>22</sup>In Kriolu, *forsa*. *Forsa* refers both to physical strength and to financial strength. In this context, it means financial strength: her mother was too poor to keep her in school.

Rosinha, also 20, was unable to go beyond *quarto ano*.<sup>23</sup> Her ability to continue her education through private night school depended on her finding a job so she could pay the tuition.

The cost of night school also stopped Sara from continuing, once she started having too many other survival demands.

I studied *primeiro ano*<sup>24</sup> at school. Then I left school, and studied *segundo ano* on my own. I always had a good head since I was in *primeiro ano*. So even though I had my kid, I managed to pass *segundo ano* anyway. Then I started to continue and study *quinto ano*. Life was becoming a little more difficult then. And *quinto ano* is more complicated than *segundo ano*. I saw that it wasn't going to work, and I stopped school. That money that I was wasting on school, I said to myself: Since I have a kid now, to go to school--and my man said: students are numerous now, and work is scarce, lots of people looking for it. So I saw that it really wasn't going to work, and I started selling food.

As in Sara's life, not only the actual cost of schooling prevented women from pursuing it, but also the conflict between the time and energy used for schooling and for the other more pressing demands on that time: work, childcare, in other words, the survival imperative.<sup>25</sup> Linara also felt this conflict, in terms of money, time, and energy.

Now I'd like to see if I can do *quinto ano*. 900 *escudos*-- It's expensive, yes. One wants to, but it's expensive. There are nine subjects. Nine subjects, but if I go I won't study all nine....I'll study half. I'll study one section. Tony told me to study the whole thing. I told him: I won't study the whole thing. What with working, I can't study the whole thing at once.

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<sup>23</sup>Second year of *Ensino Secundário Liceal*, general cycle.

<sup>24</sup>First year of *Ensino Básico Complementar*.

<sup>25</sup>Most of the older women in the study never went to school at all as girls. It was considered inappropriate to send girls to school because they would then be able to write letters to boyfriends. In addition, it wasn't considered important for girls to go to school: their work for the care of the family--housework, farmwork, care of animals--took precedence.

Likewise, Nisia saw schooling as impossible for her, given her life responsibilities.

For me to go to school now is impossible. With my kids in school, they are constantly asking me for this or that--a notebook, a pen--my head is too full of stuff, worries. I have to buy everything--shoes, books, clothes. How in the world could school enter into my head?! There's no room for it. I won't go because I can't learn anymore.

So although schooling was seen as essential for a solid economic situation, at the same time it was difficult to obtain because of economic need and women's responsibility for survival on a daily basis. Poverty both stimulated the desire and need for schooling and prevented getting it, in a cycle that kept many Tira Chapau women where they'd always been.

#### Democracia:<sup>26</sup> Survival on a Grand Scale

The women's concern with survival and economic security lay underneath many of their views on national political events, particularly the opening to a multi-party system occurring at the time the research was conducted. Tina, for example, associated the new political opening with well-being, defining democracy in these terms:

For me, it's not because they say PAICV has done a lot for the country, has been in power for 15 years, has built a lot of things. For me, everyone wants well-being for himself. MPD<sup>27</sup> wants well-being too. *Democracia*...I'm not saying I'm for MPD or not, but I want the well-being of the people.  
*Democracia.*

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<sup>26</sup>*Democracia*, or democracy, was a much-touted word during the transition to a multi-party system of 1990-91. As in the words of the women, it was generally associated with improved chances for economic well-being.

<sup>27</sup>*Movimento para Democracia*, the newly created opposition party building support at that time. This party won the national legislative elections in January 1991. Tina's first interview took place in August 1990. The "opening" to a multi-party system was declared in February 1990 and the election campaign began officially on December 5, 1990.

For Tina, as for many others I talked to during that period, the need for and benefits of change related principally to well-being. Change was sought to redistribute resources more equitably, as well as to produce more of them. For many people, *democracia* seemed to be a survival strategy on a national scale.

#### Making Sense: A Summary

The economic imperative and women's responsibility for survival can be seen to pervade the rationales, beliefs, actions, and choices of the women of Tira Chapeu, from the choice of whether to have children to the decision about which party to vote for. At the risk of oversimplifying, I say that economics are not just an influence on these decisions; they are an imperative. The economic circumstances of these women are precarious; the burden of survival of children is on them. They *must* view their world in terms of survival strategies.

At the same time, life is not so simple as that. The issue of survival intertwines with other needs, other desires, other dreams. In the preceding section, for example, feelings about injustice and unequal distribution of resources started to surface in Tina's views on political change. These hint at the importance of relationships between people and between strata of society, another theme essential to an understanding of Cape Verdean women's lives. Social relations, in fact, even appear to be a kind of grand survival strategy, a web of mutual help ties that keeps life going. In the next chapter, I deal with these ties, their dynamics, and their meaning for the women of Tira Chapeu.

## CHAPTER VI

### HELP TIES: WOMAN AS *MADRINHA* AND *FIDJADU*<sup>1</sup>

The lives of the women in Tira Chapeu are focused on struggle for well-being. They want to have a good life, a life that is *sabi* in every sense of that overflowing word. One of the most important ways that life can be *sabi* is through help ties: the ties among people through which help is received and given. These ties seem to have two kinds of functions in people's lives. In their environment of scarce resources, ties of mutual assistance and obligation act as a kind of social glue. The relationships themselves are an important part of a *sabi* life. But in addition, in this environment of little material security, these social relations constitute security. They carry real material benefits and make it easier for people to survive. In some cases, they serve as a way to make permanent life improvements, to get ahead. The help-tie system appears to be a grand survival strategy that holds Cape Verdean society together.

There are also limits to such ties, however, some related to changes occurring in the socio-economic system. Moreover, the help tie system has some problematic aspects. Some types of help ties carry with them a hierarchical differentiation between helper and helped; the helped depends on the smooth working of relations in order to access resources held by the helper. This chapter encompasses help ties' role

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<sup>1</sup>As noted previously, *madrinha* means godmother, *fidjadu* means godchild. Fuller interpretations of their meaning in the Cape Verdean social context are a major point of this chapter.



in women's lives, their limits, and the problematic aspects of the help-tie system.

### The Importance of Help Ties

The women's perception of help ties as integral to their lives seeped into almost their every description of daily routine, long-term plans, and hopes and dreams. The daily life I participated in involved a constant flow of help and expectation of help, assistance and obligation. Help ties were a taken-for-granted part of how things worked. Help ties existed between all kinds of people and institutions, and for all kinds of purposes. The women's view of these included ties ranging from the close daily assistance ties of blood relatives to offerings from the State. In order to create an understanding of the important role these ties played both in carrying out the tasks of daily living, in getting ahead in life, and in recreating social relations, I describe here some of the kinds of ties that are key for the women of Tira Chapau.

#### Family Ties: Helping Each Other Get By

Blood relations were the first resource women turned to for help. Blood family members usually lived within close proximity to each other if not in the same household, even when adults. They helped each other in special ways, especially in meeting day to day survival needs of food, shelter, and water. For example, Nela's family had depended on her uncle for a place to live in Praia while she was growing up. Saunsa and her daughter, Tina, had depended on the help of Saunsa's parents and brother when she left her husband in São Tomé. Brothers and sisters

helped each other to survive, and later in life, women's grown children often provided their "supper."

Sinta talked about both these latter phenomena in her life:

I have two kids, and they give me my daily bread. One of my kids lives here with me;...My daughter has her own house, she lives down below there. The boy is here; he gives me my breakfast, my lunch....I get by....The only thing I might regret is my kids, but then if I hadn't had these kids, how would I survive today?

I lived because God helped me get by. But I just barely got by. Because if I had to get up to go ask this one to give me lunch, this other one to give me dinner, this other one to give me kerosene--they would get tired of me. So now I don't regret the kids I have, because if I need clothes, the kids help me get clothes. Our kids, it's God who gives them to us so that when we are at this age, they make us sit down and they give us what they have to give...

Her speech indicates that not just anyone--her friends and neighbors--would or could consistently provide the daily sustenance and support that her own children do. She described the same kind of relationship among herself, her siblings and their mother.

Toti is my sister....We are close to each other. All close together--the one who has more means gives to the other, if I have more means I go and give, if I need something, one of them gives it to me. We are family...our mother raised us with difficulty....But also she was lucky because we all stayed close to her. This one gives her this, that one gives her that. Because...now she's old.

Linara depended on her brother-in-law for the very stuff of survival: water. Because she found she couldn't get enough water for her family at the Tira Chapeu *chafaris*, she turned to this help tie.

...I go to my brother-in-law's in Terra Branca, even if it's tiring because I have to come up that hill, I come up that hill struggling, with good will, I get three cans of water, four cans, every other day....If I have to come buy water here, it's 25 *escudos* for a can. One can of water won't even get me through a day in the house. Not even two cans, much less one. If I take three cans every day, to buy, that's 75 *escudos*--or there are others who sell for 30 *escudos* a can....So I have to find a way. I have my brother-in-law in Terra Branca. He's a police officer, Tony's brother....He gives me that water; it's no small thing.

One of the most important ways of helping among women was in childcare. Toti and her grown daughters, Aldira and Rita, worked a system of mutual help for childcare that also included Joana. Aldira explained why they depended on each other in this way.

...me, if I didn't have someone to stay with my kids, I wouldn't be able to go to work of any kind. Since we have our mother to take the kids, we go out and go. Because our father is dead. But if our father were alive, things wouldn't be like this. We wouldn't be working. That would be different. But now, we have to work...When I have to go somewhere, me or Rita, Toti stays. When Toti wants to go, I stay, because you know, we can't all go, otherwise the kids would just be in the street...

She also told why they felt they *could* depend on each other. Family was a constant.

We never leave the kids with anyone else. It's only Toti who stays with them. When she goes, then we stay with the kids, because it can't be any other way. It's not a question of having confidence in someone else. We might have confidence, we might not, but it doesn't work because today I might ask you to stay with my kids. Another time, you might say no. One day I let her go, and I will stay home because that's how Toti and Joana and Rita and I do for each other.

Perhaps the strongest indication of the important role family played in daily survival had to do with the pronounced difficulties of women living away from family support. Liseti, from the island of Brava, bemoaned the fact that she'd gotten settled in Praia because she would have had help from her family if she were back at home.

I have problems--to raise children alone is not easy for a woman--especially since I'm here in Praia, because if I was at home in Brava my family would help me. One of my sisters came to get me to go to Brava, but I can't go with all these kids and grandkids--to leave my house? I can't. So we'll all stay here.

Being away from blood relations put her at a disadvantage, she felt, but at 58, she considered herself too entrenched in Praia to go back home.

Still, the special kind of support a family provided was clear from her words.

But "family" was not a category limited strictly to blood relations in Tira Chapeu. In the case of the cooperative child care arrangement detailed above, Joana was included in the family trust that made the arrangement possible. Relations of mutual help existed between neighbors, godparents and godchildren, friends, bosses and employees, and even individuals and institutions. People created "families" that helped in a variety of realms.

Created Families Illustrated: *Mai-di-Kriason*<sup>2</sup>

The women's conception of "family" ties went beyond blood family. One vivid illustration of this was the phenomenon of *mai-di-kriason*. The word, *mai-di-kriason*, or "mother who raised me," was in as common usage as was the word, *mai*, or mother. Many people were raised not by their own parents but by members of their extended families or by others with whom their families had help ties. For instance, among the women in the Tira Chapeu group, Liseti was raised by her grandmother when her mother left her father. Rosinha was raised by her godfather's mother. Toka was raised by her uncle when her mother died and her father emigrated. Linara was raised for some years by a woman she went to work for as a domestic servant. Joana also lived with and was raised by a Portuguese woman she worked for as a servant, from the time she was 11 years old. Sara lived with her godmother while going to school in Praia.

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<sup>2</sup>Literally, mother-of-raising. Many people are raised by a woman other than their birth mother, thus this very common term referring to "the mother who raised [me]."

Some women in the group later had this kind of help in raising their own children. Nisia's daughter was registered and raised not by Nisia's *pai-di-fidju*, but by Nisia's father. Belinha sent her youngest daughter to be raised by Belinha's mother. Sandra left her first son with her mother to raise in the country when she came to work in Praia. Other women took on that same duty to others, raising other children. Tereza raised the boy that later became her daughter's husband. Joana raised her sister's daughter and was also raising that niece's son.

These relationships were relations of mutual obligation and benefit. A surrogate mother--called a *mai-di-kriason*--raised the child as she would raise a child of her own, with food, clothing, and other necessities. She provided schooling when possible. In return, the child helped her *mai-di-kriason* as a child of her own would, by working in the house and perhaps in whatever petty commerce the woman engaged in.

Rosinha's case was illustrative. At the age of five, Rosinha had been sent to Praia to live temporarily with her godfather's mother while her godfather was working in Portugal. He had built two houses in Praia with the money he had earned there, and sent for his mother to come and stay in Praia because he didn't want her to stay alone. In Praia, she could live near a woman who was his godmother and have a better life than she could have back home in the rural area of Joao Varela that they came from. Rosinha came to live with her to help her, since she had no other children at home. However, this temporary situation became a permanent one. Rosinha's godfather died in an accident in Portugal. Rosinha stayed with his mother so she wouldn't be alone and to help her. As a result of being in Praia and having her *mai-di-kriason's* help, she



was able to continue schooling beyond fourth grade, which was all she would have had access to if she'd stayed back home. At the time of the research, Rosinha was 20 and still living with her *mai-di-kriason* in the house in Tira Chapeu where she'd grown up.

This system of extended "family" ties, based on mutual obligation and assistance rather than blood, was so integral to people's way of being that it was hardly noticed. When I discussed the issue of abandoned children with Rosinha, she articulated how things worked: most people would give a child to a relative or other trusted person to raise, rather than abandon it or give it up for formal adoption. Women also had the possibility of getting assistance in caring for their children from members of their created families, just as Aldira got assistance from members of her blood family. Linara, for example, had a childcare arrangement for her three-year-old daughter with Saunsa, whose daughter, Tina, was godmother to one of Linara's sons. Linara praised this arrangement, which allowed her to go out and work. In Tina's words, they all related to each other "just like family."

Mutual assistance, obviously a central aspect of social relations, was a tradition with many variations. Understanding this tradition provides additional background to the picture of help ties spreading out to encompass all aspects of social life.

### Traditions of *Djunta-mon*<sup>3</sup>

The tradition of *djunta-mon* is an important one to understand to fill out the picture of help ties. Although weakened in the modern cash

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<sup>3</sup>*Djunta-mon* means literally, "join hands." It is often used to refer loosely to various forms of mutual assistance, although it also is specific to the form described here.

economy, *djunta-mon* had been an important way that people got things done. It was a fairly structured mutual help system geared toward accomplishing specific tasks, especially common in farm labor. In an extended family, village or neighborhood, people would go together to each person's field in turn, to plant, weed, and then harvest, until all the fields were done. Those who got help were expected to help on the fields of everyone who had helped them.

In Tira Chapeu, by the time this field research took place, most people no longer farmed rural lands. Those who did often had to hire labor because their *djunta-mon* ties had broken down, and people wanted to work for cash. But they still built houses on a cooperative basis, although not in strict rotation as for *djunta-mon*. Friends and family were invited to help on the major portions of house construction, especially putting on the roof, which was labor intensive and had to be done in one day. In return, the workers would be given plenty of food and drink, and if they should ever need similar help, would invite their host or hostess to their own house-raising. In spite of the cash economy, this system of help without pay persisted, especially for those whose access to cash was limited.

In the modern urban environment, mutual assistance took on new variations. The use of extended ties went beyond daily survival needs, the care of children, and building houses. One of the most important kinds of ties was called having a *padrinhu* or *madrinha*,<sup>4</sup> for such ties could bring new resources and help in getting ahead.

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<sup>4</sup>Literally, godfather and godmother, respectively. However, as becomes apparent in the text, *padrinhu* and *madrinha* mean much more than this.

### Getting Ahead: Having a Madrinha

For the women in the Tira Chapeu group, their own means wouldn't allow them to get ahead, to take steps that would mean real improvement in their lives, such as getting further schooling, getting a job, building a house, or emigrating. Getting ahead depended on a special kind of help relationship. The women looked to *padrinhus* or *madrinhas*, people with more means than they themselves had and who would share those means. In order to understand this relationship, it's important to examine the literal and symbolic aspects of these words and the relationships they represent.

In Tira Chapeu life, the word, *madrinha*,<sup>5</sup> brings to mind meanings both literal and figurative. I learned about these meanings through women's lives and through the experience of becoming a *madrinha* to two Tira Chapeu children. For most Cape Verdean children, their first *madrinha* serves for their *kriston*, or *seti*,<sup>6</sup> a kind of christening or naming ceremony held at home, traditionally on the seventh day after a child's birth. A prominent community member who knows the *kriston* rites comes to the home to perform the ceremony. The *padrinhu* lights a candle, the *madrinha* holding the baby in a white cloth while the lay

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<sup>5</sup>From here on, I use the feminine version of the word, except where study participants specifically refer to *padrinhus* or it makes symbolic sense to use the masculine version. I make this choice for two reasons. First, even though *padrinhus* are just as common as *madrinhas*, the feminine version has more relevance in the discussion of OMCV group relations that follows in Part III. Moreover, use of one term simplifies the text.

<sup>6</sup>*Kriston* in Kriolu translates roughly to "christening." *Seti* in Kriolu means literally "seven," and is the name of the celebration held on the seventh day after the child's birth in conjunction with the christening. Its performance on the seventh day may be related to African naming ceremony traditions, also held on the seventh or eighth day of a baby's life.

person performing the ceremony says specified Catholic prayers over the baby, dabbling water on the baby's forehead. Afterwards, the family celebrates, the *padrinhu* and *madrinha* contributing drink and food.<sup>7</sup>

From the starting point of this first *madrinha*, a vast network of *madrinhas* and *padrinhus* builds out throughout a person's life as s/he passes through Catholic rites, gets married, and eventually has children of his/her own. At that point, a woman goes from being *fidjadu* to being *kumadri*<sup>8</sup> to her own children's *madrinhas* and serving as *madrinha* for other women's children.

The central and most important point of this network is the *madrinha* of the child's Church<sup>9</sup> baptism. This is the *madrinha* the child "remembers best."<sup>10</sup> She is the woman chosen by a child's parents to serve as sponsor for baptism in the Catholic Church. It's the example of this *madrinha* that I'll use to frame my use of this imagery to delve into understanding this type of mutual help relationship.

In the eyes of the Church, the baptism *madrinha* is responsible for the spiritual guidance of the child as s/he grows up, especially in

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<sup>7</sup>In Tira Chapeu, often the *seti* is not held on the seventh day. A number of life problems and circumstances interfere. Sometimes a family can't get it organized that fast, they don't have the means to hold a celebration so soon after the child's birth, questions of paternity complicate the situation, or the baby's health is in question. The *kriston* for which I served as *madrinha*, for example, was held when the baby girl was about four months old.

<sup>8</sup>Co-mothers: the birth mother and the *madrinha* of a particular child are referred to and refer to each other as co-mothers.

<sup>9</sup>Throughout the text, the word, Church, with a capital "C", refers to the Catholic church.

<sup>10</sup>My *kumadri* (the mother of my godchild) used this rationale in explaining why she wanted me to serve as godmother for the Church baptism instead of for the *kriston*.

teaching him/her the ways of the Church.<sup>11</sup> A *madrinha* is expected to guide the child in a good Christian life, and advise and help him/her live according to the precepts of the Church. Perhaps more important, a *madrinha* is an essential peg in the interlinking structure of mutual assistance that forms the basis of social relations and social security. A *madrinha-fidjadu* relationship is a created family tie, with all accordant obligations and loyalties. The baptism *madrinha* is responsible for sharing in the care of the child, giving the child gifts on special occasions and at other times when possible, and for raising the child in the event her/his parents die or cannot raise her/him for some other reason. The *madrinha* is expected to have respectful, yet intimate and friendly relations with the family of her *fidjadu*.

In Tira Chapeu, women or couples often choose a good friend or neighbor, or a relative they respect or are close to. However, some Tira Chapeu women express a preference for *madrinhas* who don't live in Tira Chapeu, because of a tendency toward jealousies and squabbles when *kumadri* live too closely intertwined in daily life. Yet, they want *madrinhas* who will be involved in the child's life, who will fulfill the commitment they make. Most often, the *madrinha* chosen is someone with at least the same or, preferably, greater material means as her mother. These means may include social relations and influence as well as actual money and other material wealth.

In return for the various obligations of a *madrinha*, the *fidjadu* has certain obligations toward her as well. A *fidjadu* usually gives

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<sup>11</sup>For each Church rite of passage--baptism, first communion, confirmation, etc.--another *madrinha* is chosen, either by the parents or by the child when older.



gifts to his/her *madrinha* at Christmas and on other special occasions. S/he can be expected to help out around the *madrinha's* house, if they live close enough to each other to make this possible. And, if ever the *madrinha* should need or choose, the *fidjadu* can be expected to go live with the *madrinha*, to be raised by her, but also to help her as her own child might. This is common in cases where an adult woman lives alone. A female *fidjadu* goes and lives with her to help her with the household as her own daughter would. And with this intensified relationship come the filial obligation to help take care of that (god)mother in old age and the motherly obligation to raise the child as if her own. In my case, if at some time I wanted to take my *fidjadu* to raise, to keep me company, I would have the right to request that of his parents. If I did this, I would be expected to raise him well and provide him advantages as I would to my own children. Otherwise, I might help with his school fees and other expenses or eventually help him go abroad to university.

Commonly, the social role of a *madrinha* seems more important than the spiritual role to people in Tira Chapeu. As evidence of this, I often heard people minimizing the importance of the Church's requirements for what kind of person could serve as a *madrinha*: that she be a regularly practicing Catholic. Some people said that going to Mass was not the thing that made one a good Christian, whereas in godparent preparation meetings, going to Mass was the aspect of being a practicing Christian most emphasized. In addition, a *madrinha* either has to be

married or a "young person",<sup>12</sup> meaning that she is not in any non-marital sexual relationship with a man. Many people said out loud that they didn't think this was very important, that what was most important was that the *madrinha* be a good person. But they conformed, to some extent, to the Church requirements when choosing *madrinhas* for their children.<sup>13</sup>

Why was I chosen? The most important criterion for choosing a *madrinha* seems to be finding someone who has the means to somehow help and be concerned for the child. As a foreigner with a considerably higher standard of living, access to the outside, life in a richer environment, yet with close emotional and social ties in Tira Chapeu, as well as understanding of the language, I was a good candidate for this kind of relationship. I had established a good rapport with my *fidjadu's* mother; we were friends. I had the means to provide good clothes for his baptism and a nice party. Furthermore, if ever anything should happen to his parents, I would be in a good position to raise my *fidjadu* with every advantage.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>*Jovem*, the Portuguese word meaning literally "young" or "young person," is used to describe a celibate single person in the Church context.

<sup>13</sup>Control on this was carefully exercised through the fact that within the community, the Church leader responsible for approving *madrinhas* knew who was in what kind of relationship. When the *madrinha* came from outside the community, she had to have a paper from the Church attesting to her suitability.

<sup>14</sup>The parents of my *fidjadu* chose me knowing I was not a Catholic, and when I expressed concern about this, they insisted that it was not important, even to the point that they thought it was perfectly all right for me to answer untruthfully if asked. They believed I was a good person. In short, they liked me and felt the necessary friendship for me. My *kumadri's* one worry was that I would go away and forget about her son, but after long discussion of that issue, me trying to be realistic about my uncertainty of when and if my future would bring me back to Cape Verde, she still insisted that I serve as *madrinha*. I

For the purpose of understanding help relations, the literal meaning of the *madrinha* image has to be complemented by its figurative significance. The figurative builds on the outlines of mutual assistance and obligation which characterize a literal *madrinha-fidjadu* relationship. Figuratively, a *madrinha* is someone to whom you have ties and who will help you by using her influence or means. It's popular knowledge that having a *madrinha* can make the difference between making it and not making it, getting a job or not getting it, passing in school or not passing, speeding the process of getting land to build a house or having it take forever. In this context, a *madrinha* can be a real *madrinha* or just someone who is willing to help you for reasons of family ties or sometimes even close friendship either with you or a family member.

The women of the Tira Chapeu group understood the value of this kind of relationship and had--or hoped for--such relationships with a variety of people. For the young women of the group, for instance, their only hope of continuing schooling was through private night school, expensive in relation to their meager incomes. Tina looked to an employed half-brother who said he would help her with these costs. "I have a brother who works at the Ministry, a brother only on my father's side, who told me that I should make an effort to study, and he'll help me."

Many of the women got help from a *madrinha* to find work. Tina hoped to find a job through personal ties. She had "put in job requests

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reassured her that I would do my best and certainly took the obligation seriously.

in various places, especially EMPA<sup>15</sup> where I know the head of the warehouse." Nela had gotten her current job through a well-connected boss on a previous job.

...I worked on the construction of the project Taiti<sup>16</sup> here. This project ended, and the engineer Djossa arranged a job for me in the city administration as a controller's assistant for clandestine construction.

Rita had also improved her work situation through a friendly boss. She had worked on a workfront project. Her boss there asked her to wash clothes for his wife on the side, and from this woman she found a better-paying full-time job as a maid. Rita also acted as *madrinha* to her sister, Aldira, by finding a job for her on the same workfront where she'd been employed. Sara had established a small food-selling enterprise through her husband's boss, who let her set up a canteen to sell food and drink to the workers at his factory. Antonia had obtained a job in Sao Vicente through a former teacher of hers who liked her and found her work as a servant at the youth organization office there. Linara's husband got his job as a driver at the Ministry of Health through his brother, a policeman. Julia also expressed her hope of getting a job through a *padrinhu*.

My hope is to get a job. I have put papers in a lot of places. I'm going to talk to the head of EMPA, Orlando Mascarenhas-- [Somebody] was his professor, [this person] knows him--to see if he can help me get a job there. Nowadays, those who get jobs are those who have family....Even many who have schooling can't get work.

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<sup>15</sup>EMPA is the acronym for *Empresa Publica de Abastecimento*, the state-run supply company which deals with importation and distribution of food and other provisions.

<sup>16</sup>A public housing project.

Because of the scarcity of jobs, people needed some connection to get one. In Rosinha's words, "these days, things are only with a *padrinhu*."

Building a house was another realm in which *madrinha* ties helped people move beyond mere survival. Having one's own house was a sign of being a little better off and in fact was a great advantage: one didn't have to pay rent or live in the limited space of someone else's house. Belinha talked about how many women who worked for foreigners as maids were helped by their bosses, especially to build a house.

...many who have worked for foreigners have gotten up on their own feet because of it. Because of good salaries. And they [the bosses] might even help their maids build a house. There are many such [cases] here in Tira Chapéu.

Sandra also got help to build a house from her Chinese employers when she worked on the construction of the National Assembly building.

If I worked until 9:00 at night, at the end of the month I would receive 4000 [*escudos*] or so. And together with the *ajuda*<sup>17</sup> they gave me, it made it possible for me to get this house together. They had a lot of things left over from the construction work, and they gave them to us pitiful people to help us [with our own building]. They didn't give money, but they gave these things.

Emigrating was another way of getting ahead and another way *madrinhas* played a role in people's lives. Linara had had the chance to emigrate with a woman her mother had worked for as a servant and who then took Linara to work for her.

I went to Portugal in 1970, when I was 10. . . . The woman who came to take me, my mother had worked for her [in São Vicente]....Later she asked my mother if she didn't have a little girl there to send to help her, and so I went. I went [to São Vicente] and before long I went to Lisbon. I stayed there seven years, but then I came back, and they stayed there.

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<sup>17</sup>*Ajuda* means help, literally, and generally refers to this kind of assistance or sometimes to an outright gift.



Her being in Portugal was possible only because of this relationship. She would have liked to have stayed, because she was used to the better life she had there, and realized that if she had stayed she would have been better off today. But a rupture in her relationship with her *madrinha* sent her home.

Ondina, although not an emigrant herself, managed to see many of her children working overseas. They were able to go to Portugal and the United States through various *madrinhas*, people they were connected to who were already there.

At the time my daughters went to Portugal, anyone could go. As long as you had an identity card, and money to pay for a ticket, you could go. There wasn't such a big deal about a lot of documents. My first daughter who went was 17 years old. They had a cousin who had gone whom I wrote to. He was married, his wife was there. So I wrote to this cousin, and he said they could come, that my kids could come.

And so they went, they stayed in his house, they got jobs, they worked, the other one eventually went, the same thing, stayed in this same house. They worked. One had a fiancé here; in time he also went and they married there. They have four kids now. The one who went next had her boyfriend here. He went first and sent for her later. The third went as a girl still. She had a *pai-di-fidju*, he went and then sent for her too.

For most of the women in Tira Chapeu, emigration was out of reach, except through the *ajuda* of a relative, friend, or other *madrinha*.

In the modern urban environment, *madrinha* ties extend into relationships formed in youth organizations, political parties, the workplace, the armed forces, unions, and soccer clubs. People even grew to see the government as a kind of *madrinha*.

Apoio and Assistência:<sup>18</sup> The State as Madrinha

The phenomena of *apoio* and *assistência* were integral parts of people's historical memories of kinds of help ties. Hearing these memories recounted helped me understand how people came to see the State as a helper in a similar way to how they saw their brothers and sisters, their children, their friends, their bosses.

*Assistência* was emergency aid given out during the 1947 famine. Although inadequate to fill the existing hunger and confined to the city, many people remembered *assistência* as the means by which they survived through that famine. Many families, Belinha's among them, migrated to Praia during that time in order to benefit from this food aid. Rita and Aldira's mother had also come to Praia for that reason, together with her own mother and siblings.

At that same time, many people were contracted as plantation laborers for the colony of Sao Tomé e Príncipe. The colonial government cooperated with private businessmen to make this "forced emigration" possible. This vast movement of human beings was considered by most as a kind of slavery; living conditions were similar to those of slaves and pay was meager.<sup>19</sup> But many viewed it as another kind of *ajuda*, however feeble. It was one of the ways they survived.

Later, the Portuguese colonial government tried another approach, *apoio*. Sara explained how *apoio* worked.

*Apoio* was a kind of work where people worked for the State, usually building roads. . . . People were paid. They also

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<sup>18</sup>*Apoio* translates literally to mean "support," *assistência* to "assistance" or "help."

<sup>19</sup>This was also the official position taken by PAIGC/PAICV, as well as the widespread popular opinion about that phase of Cape Verde's history.

gave out food, peanuts, beans. . . . They brought in carloads of food.

*Apoio* was an effort by the colonial government to stave off revolt, a kind of food-for-work welfare system which started building the country's infrastructure and at the same time helped people survive.

Francisca, like Sara, remembered the help given through *apoio*. On her return from São Tomé, she worked on workfronts for 15 *escudos* a day and was given food to eat at the worksite and to take home. At independence, the new governing party, PAIGC, dealt out its own versions of *apoio* and *assistência*. Sara remembered that "after independence, trucks came with condensed milk, sugar; everyone got this because everyone was very poor then." In this way, people continued to build their view of the State as *madrinha*.

Joana blended the State's social welfare program and the personal ties she had to important people of the State and Party into her vision of *madrinha*. She received a small monthly allowance from the social welfare program because of her blindness. But her 300 *escudos* allotment was nothing in relation to what she needed to live and get ahead. Far more important were her informal ties to important people in the State and Party. She talked, for example, about how she built her house.

This house here--it was the help of the State, the help of [the Ministry of] Public Works that gave me this house. . . . This one was started in '83. . . . It was built with *pidimentu*<sup>20</sup> that I did with Tito Ramos who was Minister of Public Works. It was he who gave me help and I built it.

Today I live on the help of the Cape Verdean people, of important people, of the President, of Ministers, of the Prime Minister, of businesses, of Social Services, principally that of Social Services. . . . I have already been living for 37 years on the support of Social Services, 37 years living on *apoio*, with the subsidy from Social Services. Even that time when I was with my husband, Social Services gave me money.

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<sup>20</sup>asking

For Joana, these State relationships were also very personal, for important people in the State and Party had befriended her at a time of crisis in her life.

Because of a car accident I had, he [her husband] abandoned me, left me in the house. Then it was the Party that came and took care of me. So, my husband is the State together with the Party. It's the government of Cape Verde and my Party PAICV that are my husband...

Joana's friends in the Party had assisted her when her husband refused to, and so she had placed her confidence and loyalty in them.

After that accident, he left me and took up with another woman...I stayed here sick...people from the Party in Terra Branca and Tira Chapeu came here, they saw me and sent me to the hospital, they sent me to the hospital...

My husband, when he saw that a car had hit me, he abandoned me. Those people who invited me to meetings took care of me. They are the ones who know me today...When the car hit me, he said that it was a ghost/spirit of the Portuguese that had laid me on the ground. [He didn't want independence.] But when I got better, I told him it was the ghost of Amilcar Cabral that raised me up!

Because, as in Joana's case, *madrinhas* help people in times of great trouble or need, they command the kind of strong loyalty and gratitude Joana voiced in this story. People had learned to look at the State in this way too.

Still, these help ties were not a certainty. *Madrinhas* had their own troubles. A changing economy and social patterns also imposed limits on help ties.

#### The Limits of Help Ties

The women seemed to keep their lives afloat through the assistance help ties offered. But they were aware that help ties had their limits, and that the system of help ties was changing and breaking down. Women saw, first of all, the difference between hope and reality in regard to

the help that relatives could give. They felt that people no longer shared as they once had, either because they could not or because they would not. Some of the women related these changes to larger changes in economic and social conditions as well as in people's expectations.

Many kinds of ties that had once been close and reliable were no longer so. For instance, Liseti struggled on her own in spite of the fact that she had several adult children. The grown sons from whom she might expect some help weren't giving it to her. The one who had emigrated didn't have enough to send; the others were just difficult or had their own problems.

That one [son] earns well but he doesn't give me [anything]....Young men these days have an interest, too. Their money is for buying luxury items. They give 200 or 300 escudos to their mother, but what's that? To provide [the family] breakfast, lunch, dinner, ironed clothes? So I even get to the point of telling him to go on with his money, that [amount] isn't enough.

The older one earns more than the younger, but he doesn't give. That's why he and I are always fighting. He doesn't give, yet he wants me to give him food....Now, say you don't give me anything, what I cook with everything expensive now, look at the price a liter of maize is at, white beans 120 [escudos]...just bread in the morning, bread alone I buy fifteen loaves and that's not even enough...

The disappointed expectations of help-tie relationships of various types were explained in two ways: people could not or would not give. Women complained particularly of their failed hopes of relatives overseas who sent nothing home. Sinta was one of those who experienced the limits of help ties to emigrated children. She didn't think that children forgot about their families back home. Rather, she felt that emigrants had a difficult life themselves and in fact had little to send home, a fact that made them ashamed to communicate at all.

My kids in Portugal write. When they have something, they send me something. When they don't have it, they go a long time without writing....When they have it, they send me. When



they don't, they don't. Life there is just like here, everything's expensive....Maybe they'll come back to see me one day, but I don't know.

This feeling--that family members didn't give because they couldn't--by far dominated the women's thinking about why help ties to emigrated relatives were less helpful than they might have hoped.

Belinha also saw her relations with emigrated relatives as limited by their inability to give.

I have a sister overseas, but we get no help from her. She even wants to come home, but can't. She has a lot of kids--she can't afford to come back. She doesn't even write....she can't come home, much less send anything. In fact, she would be happy if I would send her something if I had it!...I have lots of family overseas, but hope I don't have....I assume they must not be able to...

In the same vein, Sandra explained that she probably wouldn't be able to emigrate because her brother overseas had too many siblings to be able to help her alone.

The opportunity for me to go overseas hasn't materialized. I don't have the means to pay for the passage....[My brother probably won't send for me because] we are so many siblings--all of us would want to go.

Some of the women, however, attributed their relatives' failure to help to lack of goodwill rather than to lack of means. Joana had "two siblings in Portugal. But they don't remember those of us who are here," she claimed. Tina described her relationships with emigrant and other successful relatives with some bitterness, also seeking to explain why help ties were no longer as strong as they once had been.

I have an uncle in Portugal. But that doesn't mean anything. He doesn't send any help [to us]. He has his kids here who are doing well, in fact....But they don't help even the slightest bit. It's only for them. For someone else, no! They look out only for themselves, for their welfare. Us, they don't give any support at all...

[At one time] family helped each other more. Now, no. Now it's just everyone for himself/herself.<sup>21</sup>...I think that this is what made a lot of things change. [People] don't help any family...My grandmother tells me that at one time family helped each other. For example, if someone had a life situation worse than someone else, that other who had more would help. Then it changed...

...it must be because there got to be more people...the population grew a lot. People can't make it with their families. For many, that's the reason. They say: no, I won't help because there are so many of them, I won't be able to help at all....Sometimes it's this that caused things to change.

Julia complained in the same way about her father, who lived in Holland but didn't help her family. She counted on her uncle, who was more helpful, to make her dream of emigrating come true.

I don't know if I could emigrate. I have an uncle, the brother of my father; he likes me as if he were my father. He's been in Portugal 22 years; he said that next year when he comes he'll take me back with him, but I don't know [if this will really happen].

I would have gone earlier if I could; I'd already be there if it were up to me. But my father is worthless--He's mean.<sup>22</sup> I have an older sister [on father's side]. One time my father took her picture and took it with him to Holland. A Dutch friend of his asked if he could marry her. She wasn't married yet at that time. But my father waited until she was already married [here] and had kids and then he told her this. He doesn't help anyone!...My father hasn't taken any of his kids. Not even my oldest brother.

Julia's explanation attributes her father's lack of help to his meanness, not to any difficulties of his own that kept him from giving.

However, in most cases, a keen awareness of economic difficulty and change--on the family level and on a larger scale--seemed to underlie the women's explanations of the limits and breakdowns of help ties. An example of this, Saunsa saw limits to help ties with the State. She explained that at the time she had returned from São Tomé, the State

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<sup>21</sup>*Kada kenhá ku di sel.*

<sup>22</sup>*runhu*

hadn't been able to give what it was supposed to give in the way of support because it just didn't have it. An agency known as SAGRA, which later became the *Instituto de Trabalho*,<sup>23</sup> she outlined to me, had contracted laborers for São Tomé and was supposed to take them in and help them resettle when they returned to Cape Verde. But the time around independence when Saunsa returned to Cape Verde with her family was a time of turmoil throughout the Portuguese African colonies. Many people were being temporarily housed in the *Instituto de Trabalho* building, even flowing over into the street. Angolan refugees filled the space and so there was no place for those of them coming from São Tomé. Saunsa knew that the *Instituto* was supposed to give returnees monetary support. But, she explained, there was no money and so people had to resolve their own problems.

Similarly, Rita explained changes and limits to the system of *djunta-mon*. In the past, Rita's family had farmed their lands by this system. But by the time of this research, Rita's family was in the practice of hiring help to work their land, when they worked it at all. They appointed one day to plant and went to their farm with a lot of people, she explained, paying 500 *escudos* per person per day if they required hired help. Sometimes the family itself went, saving the money spent on hired help. But her brothers were not always able to go because they lost more money by missing a day of work without leave of absence than by paying someone else to go and do the work. So they hired help, along with continuing to work by *djunta-mon* to some extent. It was clear from this explanation that farming no longer had a relative

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<sup>23</sup>Institute of Labor

advantage over losing a day's cash pay, especially in current times of drought and unsuccessful harvests.

For many women, a most important kind of help tie, that with the father of their children, did not fulfill its promise. In this case also, the larger economic situation influenced men's ability and willingness to provide. For Sandra, her mate's unsteady work and other women had prevented him from being able to contribute sufficiently to the support of Sandra and their child. In story after story, men didn't come through with support, and women attributed this either to their inability to support because they didn't have work or to their unwillingness to support shown through taking on other women or simply being absent.

Because of the various limits to help ties, Aldira eloquently explained, paid work was more and more important in modern times.

I like working for the *secretariado* [the city administration]. I've worked for them for 6 years. I like it because of this: nowadays life is work, because nowadays a person who doesn't have work lives a difficult life. Because I might go to you and ask you to lend me that skirt, and you won't give it to me. At one time, you would have. Now that things have really changed you might be afraid to lend it to me because I'll wear it too much. You might say: if I lend her that skirt she won't give it back, she'll wear it out. Nowadays things are a little complicated...

I don't know how to explain to you why it's changed. As time goes by, things get more complicated. There are a lot of clothes available to buy now, a lot of things for sale. If you don't buy clothes to wear, you save money. Because things are cheap, but not everyone likes to buy, things that you like might cost more--all of this. Maybe I won't want to lend someone my skirt because there are a lot of things that person could buy....I might think that person should have her own.

Clearly, Aldira and the other women experienced their lives as being in the throes of change. Even when they could not cite the specific

reasons for these changes, their explanations showed their awareness of economic changes and an insight into the related social changes.

In spite of these changes, Aldira maintained, mutual help relationships still worked well among her family members and she still gave to people who were badly off. Help ties continued to be a force for keeping people together and for keeping life going, even with their increasing complexities and limits.

#### Problematic Aspects of the Help Tie System

The help-tie system helps people survive and get ahead in life, in spite of its recognized and changing limits. But while it does help, it also has some problematic aspects. In other words, there is a down-side to basing access to resources on social ties. The women talked about these problems, including two main dilemmas. First, if you gained something through a help tie, you could also lose it if that tie broke down. Second, in a system where resources were accessed through ties, those who didn't have the right ties didn't get resources.

The first dilemma--if you gained something through a tie, you could also lose it if that tie broke down--was illustrated by Sara's story of the canteen she ran at the factory where her *pai-di-fidju* worked. She had negotiated for the use of space for the canteen with her *pai-di-fidju's* boss, who agreed because it would provide a nice benefit for the factory workers.

So then he [her *pai-di-fidju*] went to see Ilidio Monteiro, and talked to the engineer. I had a refrigerator I had bought second hand for 15 *contos*. He talked to the engineer, and introduced me to him, and asked him if he would let me put that refrigerator there. I would sell cold water and other things, because they wouldn't want beer in a work place. I would make juice and sandwiches. The engineer said yes. All the workers liked me a lot. My man was out driving and I would stay in the headquarters there and sell...



But then the work got messed up, and my man left and I left too. My man was the one who arranged it for me, and then after I started there, he stayed another year. His contract ended, and we came back to sit at home....I took my refrigerator out, and the whole thing was ruined. Then we just made do for a while until he found work again.

Once her companion no longer worked there, she could not stay either since he had made the arrangements that had allowed her to open the canteen.

Julia's search for a job, through a friend who knew the director of EMPA, the state importing enterprise, also signalled this problem. At the time of our first interview, a friend of Julia's family had promised Julia that she would arrange for her to meet the director of EMPA to see about a job. At our second interview a few months later, I asked her if anything had ever happened with the EMPA job possibility. She told me, "Not yet." She was supposed to make an appointment for an audience with the EMPA director in January. Because, she explained, "if you don't make an appointment, they say you can't see [the director]. I keep setting days with the person who knows him, but then she keeps changing them. Because I can't go by myself because [the director] doesn't know me." Her friend's connection with the director, and only that connection, would allow Julia access to him. She herself was not linked to him, so depended on the ties to her friend.

Joana's story of how her father had lost access to the land he had regularly planted as a sharecropper provided a most vivid example of this problem in the context of Cape Verdean history. Because Joana threw a stone at the landowner when he removed an extra five baskets from her family's customary share of the harvest, the landowner turned her father off the land.

We worked on the *morgado's* land...When I was about 14,...this *morgado* went to take out five basketsful and I threw a stone at him. So the *morgado* took my father to the Administrator in Santa Catarina. When my father was called to show the child who had thrown the rock, it was me, and so the Administrator ordered me to be given 12 *palmatoriada* [hits on the hands with a stick made for this purpose], six on one hand, six on the other...

The *morgado* hadn't told my father that he would take away his land. So in the month of July, my father took corn and beans--and took people with him to the land to plant it--the *morgado* went and took him off the land, took that plot from him. That year my father had nothing to live on. So he went to work as a day laborer so he could provide food for us kids to eat.

Joana's family's access to resources this landowner controlled proved to be founded on a tenuous tie, broken at the landowner's discretion when a 14-year-old child displeased him.

A second dilemma emerged from women's discussion of the role of help ties in their lives: in a system where resources were accessed through ties, those who didn't have the right ties didn't get resources. This was especially true in regard to a *madrinha*-type tie. In Rosinha's eloquent words: "These days, things are only with a *padrinhu*." Her stories of schooling and job-hunting were imbued with this popular truth. She first explained to me why she had failed her last year of school. Her professors of math and history, the subjects she had failed, "didn't give me any assistance." If they want to see you pass, she claimed, they do all they can to make sure you pass. In her case, they had withheld this help.

When talking about her search for a job, she expressed doubts that she could compete successfully without this kind of help from someone. She had registered to take a competitive exam to work at the post office. But so many people would take the test, she thought, and she had no special connection to give her an edge up. "These days, things

are only with a *padrinhu*....I don't have a *padrinhu*. I have faith in God, but I don't know..."

Joana told a story of her own attempt to go to school as a child.

My father put me in school. The *morgado* had money, had land....I was poor. [The teacher] went and put in the *morgado's* kid....I started school at ten, but I didn't stay long because of the *morgado*...the teacher didn't let me. He went and put in another person and didn't let me. He put in the *morgado's* son. Me, he didn't let me.

She identified the *morgado's* influence due to his wealth and position as the factor that had kept her out of school. He had put his own child in her place. She and her family didn't have the ties to resources--the influence--that would change this situation.

Tina saw the way influence and *madrinha* ties to powerful people worked on a larger scale in Cape Verde. She was in favor of the opening to a multi-party system because too much favoritism went on within the then-existing system. "Many things are starting to change, even from within the Party to in our very politics. Because the Party in Cape Verde is this way: as soon as one has his comforts, his high level, he doesn't think about others. Lots of times, things start there, from the families." As far as Tina was concerned, this system left out those who didn't have ties to the important families controlling the resources.

Rita reinforced the point of view that the right ties meant access to resources. She, however, felt that MPD, the new party, wasn't going to be any different than the old. During her second interview, which took place during the election campaigns, we discussed how MPD claimed it would resolve the problem of workfront laborers being paid late, something Rita had experienced and complained about when she'd worked on the workfront. She denied that MPD was going to fix this. "I can say

that I'm not anything, not MPD, not PAICV. That is, I'm whichever comes along. Lots of people are deceived. That they [MPD] are going to do more than what's here now. They will just eat,<sup>24</sup> for themselves. Me in my poverty, they won't give me [anything]. A lot of people are being deceived." The principle that those with ties received and those without didn't, clearly influenced how women thought about their lives and community.

### Tying Up

Help ties are a key to survival for the women of Tira Chapeu. The economic insecurity they find themselves facing, combined with socio-cultural traditions of mutual assistance and cooperation, makes the role of help ties central, 'natural', and essential. But the role of help ties is not static. The methods and manners of connecting change as people face new circumstances, new environments, and changing economic conditions. Old solidarity patterns are breaking down with urban migration and increasing entrance into a cash economy. New variations are arising in new circumstances. For the low-income women of Tira Chapeu, a particularly important variation of help tie in the modern urban context is the *madrinha* tie. It helps women solve problems and provides them with access to outside resources, although it too has its limits and problems in changing circumstances.

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<sup>24</sup>In Kriolu, "*es ta kume es.*" Use of the eating metaphor was widespread during the legislative election campaign of 1990-91. The image used against PAICV was that of *mamadera*. The verb, *mama*, refers to nursing at one's mother's breast. *Mamadera* means one who sucks a lot, too much. Supporters and politicians of PAICV were accused of sucking on the system, keeping for themselves through favoritism the resources that should have been everyone's. Eating, *kume*, was a metaphor used almost interchangeably with nursing/sucking, *mama*.

But social relations are not just a collection of help ties. Neither are help ties simply economic arrangements. They are relations involving dynamics of status, respect, fairness, and love. Women are not simply providers, struggling only to meet their bare economic need. They are concerned with self-esteem and consideration for others. They are proud and self-protective. These concerns sometimes support their survival needs and the help tie system, and sometimes overrule them. For women's survival is not just about material survival; it is also about surviving inside. The next chapter deals with these issues.



## CHAPTER VII

### SELF-RESPECT, PRIDE, AND STATUS: WOMAN AS FIGHTER

Chapter VII considers an aspect of the women's lives that is both internal and external. Self-respect, pride, and status are strong motivators in this social context where one's relation to others is important. These motivators assist women in their struggle for survival, leading them to reject situations of abuse. At the same time, these choices, made when the need for self-respect overpowers the need for economic benefit, often worsen their economic situation while preserving their sense of self-worth or their status in relation to others, or protecting their physical and emotional well-being. Self-image intertwines with the women's perceptions of determinants of social status. Women's sense of self allows them to survive internally, to deal with their position in a context of differential status without its affecting their sense of self-worth. In this chapter, I outline how women's strong sense of self interacts with the importance of social status and describe some of the ramifications of that interplay in their daily lives.

#### Though I Greet You with Bended Knee, I Walk Away with Straight Legs

This title is adapted from a Wolof (Senegal) proverb. It refers to the slight dipping by bending the knees a woman does when greeting elders or men, a sign of respect for a superior. The proverb implies, in my view, that the bended knee is not a sign that the woman is stooped over inside. She walks away with her legs--and her pride--straight. A look at the desperate economic situation of Tira Chapeu women could be

deceptive if it led one to think these women were also poor in spirit. The women in the Tira Chapeu group are fiercely imbued with a sense of self-respect and pride and express these openly. Moreover, pride and self-respect seem to influence their perceptions, their relations with others, and their actions.<sup>1</sup>

The women expressed pride in many aspects of their lives. One of the most common of these was pride in being a hard worker, being able to work well. Nisia, along with complaining about the abuses of her work as a maid, also took great pride in "knowing how to work" and having worked successfully for many bosses. She recounted to me her success in working for Dona Ana, a difficult woman who'd gone through many maids before Nisia.

...everyone told me she [Dona Ana] would hire a maid and she wouldn't even stay a month. When I went there, lots of people told me I wouldn't last there. But me, every place I work, I last. I know how to work....I lasted there four years. I have always worked as a servant....At [age] 12, I started to work in the home of Dona Virginia, wife of Senhor Zeca, who is now the owner of Hotel Tinasol. Every place I work, I get by because I know how to work.

Nela also demonstrated the pride she felt in working hard and being able to support herself and her children.

I worked at Monti Burmedju, digging out *jora*<sup>2</sup>--me, Nha Dori, a girl called Maria di Nha Vira--we were the first people to take *kaskadju pretu* from Monti. The first people--no one ever knew there was *kaskadju pretu* in Monti. So we swept the

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<sup>1</sup>The title of this section is adapted from a Wolof (Senegal) proverb. It refers to the slight dipping by bending the knees a woman does when greeting elders or men, a sign of respect for a superior. The proverb implies, in my view, that the bended knee is not a sign that the woman is stooped over inside. She walks away with her legs -- and her pride -- straight. Although this is not something I heard Cape Verdean women say, it is something I saw them do. I am indebted to my friend, Deborah Fredo, for introducing me to this proverb and explaining its message.

<sup>2</sup>*Jora* and *kaskadju pretu* are types of rock used in construction.

ground there. Nha Dori said to us, let's go up and dig and see if we don't find some....In fact, this house here I built with the *jora* I took out of Monti Burmedju....it's there that I passed my life with the three kids that I had....

We got *jora*, and when we had finished getting *jora*, we went to the seaside to get octopus, and came and sold it, came home and cooked for the kids, and went back again, and it's like this on and on that I lived my life...

We started to dig in the black earth. We dug until we reached the bottom, until everybody was digging there. But we were the first: me, Nha Dori, Maria di Nha Vira. The first ones to get black *jora* from Monti. If someone else says different, tell them they haven't told the truth. We were the first.

This pride extended into Nela's activities as an early militia member.

...The first militia camp that was done here in Praia, I was there. With arms and everything. With G-3,<sup>3</sup> at that time it was G-3 on our backs. After G-3 went out of existence, then we had AKM in our hands. AKM in our hands, we cut across the bluff with our "Viva!" for PAICV. Upright on my legs, if the time arrived to fight I could die, but I wouldn't run.

Other women showed their pride in having good heads and being able to speak well. Joana served as the most vibrant example of this. She spoke of her parents' seven children, four of whom were blind. "The first blind one is me. And here I am, I don't have sight, but there's no one smarter than me..." She was extremely proud of her abilities and the respect she commanded from those around her. Likewise, Saunsa showed pride in her own and her mother's knowledge, in spite of their not having had much formal education. "...the training I had...is really from the priests, our meetings, they gave us many ideas. My mother too, she doesn't even know how to read or anything, she got education from her parents, so I have some ideas." Belinha, in listening to her tape-recorded interview, expressed great pride in having spoken well, so well that she wanted other women to hear her

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<sup>3</sup>G-3 and AKM were the types of guns they were issued.

tape. She called a neighbor over while listening to the recording, saying, "Come here and hear this woman talking." On hearing one of her more vivid speeches, she asked: "Joana hasn't heard this?" "No," I responded. "Do you want her to hear it?" She nodded yes. Near the end, she asked rhetorically: "Isn't it well said?"<sup>4</sup>

The women's strong words and actions of self-respect and pride reflected the importance of having self-respect in their social context. A person without pride, who was not ready to fight for her sense of self, would not make it. But the inner sense of self was not the only factor in determining how women viewed themselves. They were also sensitive to how other people saw them. In the next section, I discuss two of the main determinants of social status.

Social Status:  
Social Relations and the Image of 'Good Woman'

Social status and women's image in the community were closely intertwined with women's own self-images. Not surprising in this context where social relations were so practically important, having good relations with other people was an important means of achieving respectable status in the eyes of others. Sinta boasted of her ability to relate to all kinds of people well. "I relate to everybody. I

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<sup>4</sup>"*Ka sta ben konbersadu?*" Good conversation, or more accurately, *konbersu sabi*, is an important part of daily life and relations. It has to do with both form and content. *Konbersu sabi* has a meaningful message, but it is also put in an eloquent way, usually using the proverbs or metaphors Kriolu is so rich in. This had interesting implications for the research process. A few of the women were concerned with their tape-recorded interviews as performances in this vein, and this influenced how they verbalized their thoughts during the interview. In most cases, I believe it did not change *what* they said, although I have no way of knowing this for certain. This reaction, however, was one of the reasons I chose not to do further formal tape-recorded interviews after the first set.

relate to crippled, blind, rich, poor, everybody I relate to. . . . "

Interestingly, an element of this boasting was her recognition that you have to treat everyone--whether big or small, rich or poor--with respect, because you might find yourself in the same shoes at any time.

Poor people have needs. Some days you wake up and you don't have a cent, not even to go to the *chafaris* and get a can of water. I've had days when I just sit in this house, without a cent. I go and ask someone for some money to get water, and they give it to me. I'm not *malkriadu*.<sup>5</sup> I don't do wrong to people--in Joana's group, you can ask what they think of me, how I act. Because Joana and I, we go way back.

Clearly, these respectful social relations had both intrinsic and material value. Being *malkriadu* tended to isolate a person, the last thing people wanted or needed.

Antonia cited her respectful relations with people as one of the reasons Joana liked her and invited her to join the OM group.

Joana's the one who called me. She said because she liked me a lot, that I'm quiet and nice. [She said] of all the girls from Sao Vicente, the one who really gets along with her well, that entered into her heart, was only me. I'm quiet. I don't go into bad environments, I don't fight with people--lots of people like fighting--but I just live in my house quietly. She said she liked me a lot, and asked me if I would like to join OM.

Antonia spoke of this occurrence with pleasure and pride in the fact that Joana held her in high esteem because of her relations with other people.

The value of respectful, smooth relations extended even into women's relations with the other women attached to their men, their *kunbosas*. Some of the women in the group valued their ability to co-exist peacefully with their *kunbosas* and considered it a positive point

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<sup>5</sup>Literally, badly raised or badly educated; in usage, badly behaved, a rowdy with no self-respect and no respect from others.



in their status. Rita, for instance, had a *pai-di-fidju* with five women, including herself. She went out of her way to avoid problems and maintain cordial relations with them, even moving away from the one *kunbosa* who sought to make trouble with her.

We don't have any problems. There's only one that I fought with once. We fought once and then we never had trouble again. . . . she came looking to fight with me, we fought that one time, and then I came to live farther away from her. I came to live here and she stayed there. We became friends then. I go to visit her and she comes to visit me; we became friends.

Aldira, Rita's sister, was another group member to mention this situation. Her *pai-di-fidju* lived with another woman, but Aldira proudly affirmed that they had no problems.

We're friends. Ask Joana. Joana will tell you we're friends. We went to Tarrafal together, we came back. Every day she comes to get water here and I see her. I don't like it [when women fight over men]. I don't like fighting with someone. I don't like fighting over a man, or over other things. It's better this way. This way we won't have any problems; she won't seek me out and I won't seek her out. Each of us goes her own way.

The desire to co-exist in harmony with *kunbosas* was part of the larger ideal of getting along peacefully with other people. Those who made trouble with their neighbors were seen as *malkriadu*. The ability to live in harmony with others inspired both self-respect and respect from others.

Joana's case illustrated another aspect of status based on good social relations. Relations with *algen grandi*,<sup>6</sup> or important people, were accorded a special kind of status. Joana took great pride in her relations with important people and recognized their value in terms of her status as a leader. She recounted one of many episodes when she had

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<sup>6</sup>Literally, "big people".

received special recognition from important State and Party officials, in this instance the wife of the President at the closing reception for OMCV Congress delegates held at the President's palace.

When we were leaving, Carlina<sup>7</sup> came to me. I hadn't even seen her. She came to me and said, ". . . O Joana! I was in the front but I sensed you behind me! Joana . . . you sure give a great 'viva'!" She's really my friend! . . . That day we went to have dinner at the [President's] Palace; she was the one to take me by the hand.<sup>8</sup> If you had a TV, you would have seen me a lot. Yesterday everyone was seeing me on TV.

The pride Joana felt in these relations served her self-esteem. In addition, as will be shown further on, these relations reinforced her status as a women's and community leader.

The other main determinant of women's status was how they lived up to the image of 'good woman'. A 'good woman' stayed with one man, regardless of whether he was able to support her, took care of her children, and didn't go out except in the case of need. Women were concerned with this image and abiding by norms of social--and especially sexual-conduct. Rita talked of the importance of abiding by these norms.

...If I am with one man and before breaking off with him I take another man, and I get pregnant with the first one, even if the child resembles him he won't recognize it as his because I already had so many [men], I already mixed blood.<sup>9</sup> He'll say it's not his...that's the problem for lots of men who won't accept their children...

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<sup>7</sup>Carlina Pereira, the wife of the then-President, Aristides Pereira.

<sup>8</sup>Joana usually walked on someone's arm when out in public places, because of her blindness. She walked with people she trusted to guide her. Thus, Carlina Pereira's "taking her by the hand" was a sign of intimacy and mutual regard. In Tira Chapeu, whose pathways she knew well, she often walked alone, using her walking stick, or was led by one of her grandchildren.

<sup>9</sup>*djunta sangi*

With one man, your name won't be dirtied. Because once you have three or four, your name is changed,<sup>10</sup> and then wherever you go you'll hear people say, "Look, there goes so and so..." and they'll say that name...."puta"!<sup>11</sup>...But if you stay with that one only, they'll say: "Look at that girl there, she's satisfied, she made do; she's hungry and naked, but she made do with that one man."

The consequences of breaking the norms were severe: a woman lost respect and status. It was better to stay in a difficult economic situation with one man than move to another, even if the new man could provide better.

Aldira was also concerned with this issue. Her discussion of the topic detailed the difference between men and women in this respect.

Even if you change partners, and you're not married, people call you these names....A man is free in the street, a woman...*paradu*.<sup>12</sup> A man is free to do what he wants, he can do it. A woman who does it, it isn't good, it's not good to do it even. A person who likes herself and who doesn't want to be alone won't even do this so that people will talk. That's what I think.

For Aldira, the consequences of changing partners included not only the loss of status, but also social isolation and loss of self-respect. In this instance, women's self-image was closely intertwined with other people's opinions, bound up with norms of behavior that determined women's status.

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<sup>10</sup>*trokadu nomi*

<sup>11</sup>Whore; *puta* might also be translated as slut or, in a different context, prostitute.

<sup>12</sup>*Paradu* literally means "stopped," but refers to women being bound in, confined and held still, sitting at home. *Paradu* is also commonly used in the context of work, meaning laid off of work or out of work.

Self-respect and Economic Need:  
Women's Choices and the Survival Impulse

In many cases, the need for self-respect and/or status outweighed economic need in determining a woman's personal choices. Many of the women recounted episodes in their lives that showed the importance they accorded self-respect and self-protection. Joana's sense of self-respect and self-protection had combined with a strong anger at injustice when she was a young girl. As a result of having been punished for throwing a stone at the *morgado* who owned the land her family farmed and having him then take away her family's use of the land, she developed a strong drive toward expressing her self-worth and having it recognized by others. "...it was an idea I had that before I died I would see liberty. It was my dream. People showed me a lot of ingratitude....I always lived with the idea that one day I would be somebody, that my value would be recognized." The strong sense of self-respect and self-protection evidenced in Joana's words and life entered into play in the realms of women's relationships with men and their work as domestic servants. Women often chose to end relationships or leave work situations that abused them or denied their worth, even when this meant facing increased survival difficulties. (Chapter VIII deals in more depth with the issue of change in relation to these situations.)

For many of the women, the desire to maintain self-respect caused them to leave abusive relationships with men, in spite of the survival problems this left them with. Liseti, a 58-year-old woman with seven children, had left two consecutive long-term *pai-di-fidju* because they took other women and abused her emotionally or physically. After twelve years with her first *pai-di-fidju*, Roberto, he provoked her to leave

him. Liseti told this story with great vehemence, full of her own sense of fight and self-respect.

We went to Maio,<sup>13</sup> to break salt with a hammer. I helped him by doing this work. But later he took a woman who had just gotten married six days before. Women of Maio are no good! I got mad and bawled him out. Also the woman. [I] told her to fight. I thought the woman would come and complain but she didn't.

Liseti left her mate almost immediately, even though she was pregnant and had several children. She learned there was a boat going to Santiago the following Monday and decided to take it to Praia.

I got everything together; when the boat came I went on the boat. Later they told him I'd gone to Praia. He went out on the boat without even taking off his fishing clothes; he found me with my kids all around me--I was pregnant too. One month later I had the baby. But even that didn't make me stay. That would only serve to let him hit me in front of his girlfriend. I took a knife and told him if he laid a hand on me, I would kill him right there. I went on my way.

When I came to Praia, I gave birth. It was hard, with the kids, all alone--to pay rent and all that. But I gritted my teeth<sup>14</sup> and asked Jesus and the Virgin Mary to give me courage to work and raise my kids....I left Roberto in Maio because a man won't show me up; I'll show him!<sup>15</sup>

She also left her second *pai-di-fidju*, and in her story of this, self-respect and self-protection were closely intertwined with the respect she felt she should get from her children.

I had many years with my *pai-di-fidju*--no one would have said we weren't married. We had five kids together. 23 going on 24 years together; I called him my husband. But three years ago, we split. He started to go to other women; he had five-- [and] women in Praia just fight over men. I would have to not like myself to have kept him....Why does a man need five women?! For what?!

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<sup>13</sup>An island near Santiago where salt flats are worked.

<sup>14</sup>*Finka juelhu* - literally, "straightened my knees"; other translations might be: stood tall, stood on my own two feet, bore down.

<sup>15</sup>"*Omi ka ta pinta manta ku mi; mi ki ta pinta manta ku el!*"



This way, I am more relaxed. I do what I want. I am at an age where I should have respect for myself. So I stay in my place, you in yours [the *pai-di-fidju*]. If you loved me,<sup>16</sup> you wouldn't have any other women. He might have maybe up to two. But five?! My body is too small to tolerate them [the other women] giving it injury....

There's nothing wrong with a woman without a man. My kids are grown--for them to see me with their father, fighting all the time--they could say: "Mom, you're grown, you shouldn't be fighting." Or if I fight with his *rapariga*, they say: "Mom, you're grown, you shouldn't be fighting over a man." That's a shameful thing for me. I have to respect my kids and they respect me.

Here, Liseti echoed the norms of smooth social relations outlined above. If she broke them by fighting with or over her man, she would lose the respect of her children and her respect for herself. Yet she couldn't just accept his abuses; she had to leave him.

Saunsa, also of Liseti's generation, was concerned not only with respect and self-respect, but with fear of being physically hurt. She had gradually learned to fight back when her husband had abused her, and then had left him for fear of receiving or giving serious injury, being killed or killing.

He didn't have good judgment, he drank; all his money went into drink. And then he would hurt me. He hit me, until I got to the point that, when he hit me, I would hit him back.

At the beginning, I cried. I was the only girl in my family, and I was raised with a lot of spoiling and care, and I didn't like those things [that her husband did]. Getting angry, fighting--I didn't like them. But afterwards, when every day he called me names that I didn't like to hear, that I wasn't used to, and hit me, I got to the point of hitting him too.

And so I thought to myself: if we continue like this, someday it's going to lead to something serious. He could give me a serious injury, or even kill me, you never know--drunk people. And me too, I might get so angry that I commit a crime. So I thought: it's better for me to leave.

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<sup>16</sup>*kreba-mi*

Nela, 38 and also abused by a former *pai-di-fidju*, argued that this problem was common in Cape Verde. "Men of Cape Verde like to hit women. They hit them, with a swollen face and those injuries, you can't put up with it, and you leave him." Women's solution to the problem was also common: leave him, maintain your self-respect and safety, and accept whatever economic consequences follow.

The next generation thought and acted similarly. Aldira, Sinta's 29-year-old niece, even chose not to consider marriage because of the abuses it usually entailed, even though marriage usually meant some economic security and increased status.

My *pai-di-fidju* lives here in Tira Chapeu, but he doesn't live with me. We aren't married. Why marry? The way I see married people-- Married people fight too much. A single person is free; a married person is tied.<sup>17</sup>

You can't marry today's men...he can marry you and then start abusing you because you're married to him...I have never been treated that way, because I defend what's mine...I would never allow someone to abuse me.

You can see that married people do things that are more twisted.<sup>18</sup> That's what I think. So the way I am, I'm better off. I can tell him to go stay in his house and I'll stay in mine. It's better. If we were married, how could I tell him to get out of the house and leave me alone?

Linara, at 30 years old, also had not experienced mistreatment or abuse, in her view because she wouldn't tolerate it. Mistreatment by lack of material support fell into her purview of abuse as well.

I said that the day I find one [a *pai-di-fidju*] who gives me a child and nothing else [no other support], he'll only give me that one and not another. Because I'll put him in the street and I'll work to support myself. I was always this way. Because you have to have respect for yourself. I see so many of my colleagues who have one child, two children, the father of the children gives them nothing, and hits them and they

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<sup>17</sup>*maradu*

<sup>18</sup>*Tortu* means, literally, "twisted" or "bent," but in this case also means "wrong."

still stay with him. Marla, that's wrong. You're not obliged to get hit by anyone.

She identified self-respect as a main reason for not abiding an abusive relationship. In addition, the man may not be providing any support anyway, doubling the abuse and making it doubly intolerable.

But even in cases where men did provide support, many of the women eventually found the strength to leave abuse behind and strike out on their own. As evidenced by this behavior, the precarious circumstances they lived in did not mean they denied their self-worth or tolerated just any situation. More discussion of how they did get out of bad situations, and how they viewed this, follows in Chapter VIII.

This pattern was true of working situations as well. Many of the women in the group worked as maids. This line of work was fraught with difficulty. Belinha spoke most forcefully about the abuses and disrespect often meted out to domestic servants.

I know everything about life in white people's houses.<sup>19</sup> One day you see your boss and she<sup>20</sup> shows you a nice face, the next day such a face that you don't know what to make of it. If they don't like you any more, they have to hurt you somehow, so you'll leave and they can hire someone else. It's not good. This is among ourselves I'm talking about...here, it's just someone who's a little better off than me that I might work for....It's not worth it to work for each other. We do it because we have to. Something is better than nothing. But it's an annoying job.

To Belinha, the job was annoying not only because of the lack of respect and value maids were accorded, but also because it was actually physically dangerous.

...I didn't stop working because I really had more means, a better life. My body just refused [to continue]....God give

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<sup>19</sup>*Kasa di branku*. Belinha is using *branku* in its common Cape Verdean association with rich people, not necessarily white.

<sup>20</sup>Gender was not specified, but a maid's boss is usually a woman.

Dina [Belinha's daughter] a job, so she can get out of white people's backyards. Working as a domestic servant is killing work.<sup>21</sup> Especially for us black Cape Verdeans--it's without value. It's something to do, so as not to do nothing. But to leave your own house to go to work in someone else's, to wash, iron, clean, to watch the kids, to cook--it doesn't give you your value...it breaks your body...

In response to this situation, women had some choices: try to find a job with a relatively good boss, refuse to work as a maid, or leave jobs that turned out to be abusive. Most maids certainly hoped and looked for the first option; it allowed them to earn income. Antonia chose the second option, largely because of her *pai-di-fidju's* attitude. Because of potential dangers and abuses, Antonia's *pai-di-fidju* did not want her to work as a maid.

I don't work in somebody's house because my companion doesn't like it. He doesn't want it. He said these days if you work in somebody's house, they accuse you of stealing or of fooling around with their companions, all kinds of annoying things. So he works to support me so I can stay here at home.

Her choice was clearly an economic one as well as a protective one. She protected herself but gave up the chance to improve her family's standard of living.

Nisia, without a reliable *pai-di-fidju*, chose the third option. She had worked in many households, refusing to continue working in situations she considered both abusive and disrespectful. Although leaving a job meant taking the risk of not finding another, she was willing to do this to preserve her self-respect as well as her health. She told me of her most recent boss:

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<sup>21</sup>*Rabenta vida* means literally, to explode or break your life.

I worked in Prainha<sup>22</sup>...I worked there four years. I got tired and quit. So much work! I'd go early to make breakfast--I have to arrive there at 7:00 because the lady goes to work. And I worked until 8:00 in the evening. If they had a dinner, I'd come home at midnight or later. I'd go back early--no Sundays off. So I got mad and quit. They came to get me even, to take me back, but I said no, I'm tired. I'll stay here at home and take in people's laundry.

They had a huge house to clean, to make food, to wash clothes and iron--just me to do everything. It's a house for two people, but nowadays people pay dirt wages and take advantage of that one person. I got tired....They were good people. It's only that the work was too much. I would come home tired. I have a bad liver and high blood pressure. I couldn't do it anymore. I thought it was making me sick. No rest.

That's what drove me out--I asked the woman for Sundays off--she said she couldn't give her maid Sunday off because then she herself would have to work with her hands that day. Since she went to work every day, she wanted Sundays to rest. I told her: "Well, I'm not a slave," and I left. Because even at that time, at her job they didn't work Saturdays....But she wouldn't give me Sundays off because she didn't want to work with her hands on Sunday. I told her I was going because I wasn't a slave--slaves were what they had in São Tomé at one time.

And I didn't go back....Every day, I got up and went, got up and went. They don't have one day they can give me a day off! So I said to her: "Dona Ana, give me one day off. I have kids in school, I have to wash their clothes, I have to fix it so my kids don't go to school like dogs." And she tells me: No, Sunday, I should remember, is the day she goes around and checks every corner of her house.... Dona Ana is really abusive!... No! I said, "You've got my neck in a noose!"<sup>23</sup>

Nisia, like the other women who worked as maids, did so out of need. But even in need, there was a limit beyond which they wouldn't go. That limit was when the work infringed on their self-respect, sometimes linked with their actual physical well-being. Nisia's failing health, fatigue, and home duties made her ask for a day off. But her self-

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<sup>22</sup>A wealthy neighborhood of Praia where many heads of state, the most highly successful businessmen, and quite a few foreign diplomats have their homes.

<sup>23</sup>"*Nha tene-n moda karasku!*" *Karasku* is a hangman. Literally translated, the phrase means "you've got me like a hangman!"



respect made her quit when Dona Ana refused her request in a way that belittled Nisia's value.

Nisia came home to take in laundry on an informal basis, a much less secure and lucrative living. But it was worth it to her. Her self-respect overpowered her need for economic gain, leading her to make a choice that protected her physical well-being and preserved her inner sense of self-worth, even while it made her survival struggle harder.

### Ramifications in Daily Life

Women's strong sense of self-respect and the importance of social status expressed themselves and interacted in particular ways, as described above. The strength of these forces in social life had ramifications for many realms of daily life, in addition to those already mentioned. In this section, I discuss three of these realms, as explained to me by the women: collective efforts, women's legal right to child support, and women's perceptions of differences in status.

### Overblown Pride Enters into Collective Efforts

While pride is one of people's great strengths, helping them survive in the face of many challenges to self-esteem, its negative manifestation is seen to interfere at times with positive collective efforts. Joana told the story of how the PAICV Tira Chapeu-Terra Branca group, which had been one group until 1985, split into two.

Members of the Party from Tira Chapeu were included in Terra Branca. The First Secretary was from Terra Branca. But there was a Tira Chapeu Committee. Then a young man [from Tira Chapeu] came along--he wanted to be First Secretary--he put his pride in the middle of the affair...so he asked to divide the groups. He went to the Party--to the Sector--the Sector accepted and so they formed two groups: one in Terra Branca and one in Tira Chapeu.

Joana attributed the split, then, not to a logical organizational strategy, but to a personal matter based on one young man's pride. When the group split, the young man became First Secretary for the newly formed Tira Chapeu group.

On a similar note, Saunsa told of a failed attempt by a local Church group to organize a handicraft class for Tira Chapeu women.

Some nuns came....They taught embroidery and crochet. I went every day....Lots of young people went. But then, there was a climate where--for example, me, I'm an adult, but if the sisters told me to take out what I had done so I could do it over to learn better, I would take it out and do it over because I want to learn. Even if I know something, I want to learn more. But others, if you told them to take it out, they would get mad. They didn't want to take it out. They wanted you to say it was fine when it wasn't fine.

So the sisters said, "I can see that this won't work with you because...if you just want to show how much you know, you'll never learn anything." I don't know what difficulties the sisters felt, but they stopped coming to do sewing. But there was a group there that today could have been going well.

In this case, Saunsa indicated that people's pride interfered with their ability to admit mistakes and therefore to learn. This undermined the functioning of the class.

#### Women's Right to Child Support

In a more crucial life issue, women's sense of self-respect and fight played an important role in determining women's actions regarding child support. In addition, in some cases their desire to maintain good relations with a mate prevented them from taking legal action which would surely rupture any remaining relationship.

Although both single and married women were entitled to go to court to claim child support from the fathers of their children, few women actually took advantage of this right. Almost invariably, they

explained their reasons why in terms of pride and self-respect. They did not want to "beg" their mates for what they considered their due. Nisia, separated from a *pai-di-fidju* who also had another family, seemed to have this attitude.

If he wants to give his kids food, he can give. If he doesn't want to, fine. The eight years in prison, I made do for those years. I was the one who worked to provide for them. Now, God will continue to help us...

I won't complain....I don't like that. For me, if a man wants to give to his kids, he gives. If he doesn't want to, for me to go complain, to oblige him to give because it's his kid--that's *obligating* him! I won't complain.

Nisia's abhorrence of the idea of "obligating" her *pai-di-fidju* was matched by the vehemence in Nela's explanation of this issue.

For something that you made both of you--I won't even bother to go complain about anybody if he can't give to his child because he already knows he should give. I won't go. I will work whatever I find and provide for them. I won't complain for anyone to give his child food. If he finds that it's his kid and he wants to give, he'll give. If he thinks he doesn't have to give, that's his problem...

For Nela, it appeared that giving of his own free will was more important than any material benefit she might obtain by going to court.

Rita explained her own reasoning on this matter. In her case, she still had an on-going relationship with her *pai-di-fidju*. Although he did not provide in a satisfactory way or in accordance with legal requirements, she was unwilling to complain against him. In her view, that would signal the end of their relationship and the support he did give.

...I'll stay with what he gives me. But if we aren't getting along anymore, or if he's not giving me anything, then I will go. In that case, I'd go and he'd be obligated to give to me. The court would obligate him. He wouldn't even hold it in his hand; they would do up a paper and take it to where he works and at the end of every month, the child's money would be deducted before he could touch his own...

Up until now, he's giving me a little, but if he doesn't give me anything then I'll go....The friendship's still there.

If the friendship isn't there, I'll go, but since the friendship's still there, I'll make do with the little he gives me.

In her case, continuing her relationship with him was more important than getting more money. At the time, her *pai-di-fidju* was giving her 1,200 *escudos* per month for both of their two children.

"We all belong to God": Self-esteem and Differences in Status

Tira Chapeu women defended the principle that "we all belong to God," as Nisia claimed when she railed against the lack of respect given to domestic servants. Across many kinds of status differences, the women's words reinforced this principle. Sinta applied it to the different status conferred on legally official--especially church--marriages and common law unions. She argued that the type of union one was in was a question of destiny and therefore didn't reflect a person's value.

We all belong to God. God tossed out<sup>24</sup> single people; God tossed out married people. The one who deserves to get married, marries. The one who deserves to have children, will have children. We are all God's. What else can we do? She who merits marriage, will marry. She who doesn't deserve marriage, God gives her her destiny too: she'll have children.

Even though it was socially less acceptable to have children out of wedlock, popular wisdom argued that this really didn't reflect a person's value. Along these same lines, Linara also defended the equal worth of people in common law and official marriages, in her case more personally. She spoke of her relationship with her *pai-di-fidju* of 11 years.

We are more than certain married people. When I say "my husband"--Cape Verdeans are ignorant--if you say 'husband' it

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<sup>24</sup>*Bota*, literally "kicked" or "kicked out," used here to mean "created."

means you're married; you only say 'husband' if you're married. I'm not married but I'm better off than some married people.

For her, worth was determined by what they were together, how they acted toward each other, not their official marital status.

Other women also held the principle that everyone had the same value and should be fairly treated. They complained of behaviors that went against the principle. Mistreatment by various types of people was common, according to Linara, especially when one was in a position of trying to get something or having to ask for something.

Look here, I got disgusted with going to the *chafaris*. You go ask for your can of water--ask, no, they're *selling* it to you--[but] it's as if you're asking for a handout, for them to give you a can of water. Some days you'd find me crying, I'd come home dry without a drop of water, . . . If you go to someone's door to ask for one, they send you away as if you were a dog. I won't say I won't go, because I do live here. Sometimes I can't get it at my brother-in-law's, and I need it, so I have to go and see what I can do, because you can't exist without water.

In the same way, she took to heart the status differences flaunted by civil servants serving the public in administrative offices.

. . . they treat people badly in the offices. They treat you like an animal. I don't like to misbehave, but sometimes when you go to those offices, you say something even without wanting to, because they make you crazy. . . . You go to an office--you are nothing. But they are somebody. You are nothing. I see it clearly. I've experienced it a lot. It's bad, it's bad. It shouldn't be. We are all equal. You're in that position because of your sweat and your schooling. I'm not in that position, but treat me well too. Don't treat me like an animal, because I'm not an animal. I'm a person just like you.

Linara was keenly aware that the people behind the office desks were in those positions because of education or some other benefit she didn't have. But she refused to accept the resulting mistreatment the office workers took it upon themselves to dispense as an expression of their higher status.



Nela complained of a related mistreatment, this time on the community level.

I really wanted to see Cape Verde independent. I am still in agreement with Cape Verdean independence, but I would like it if when we ask for something, and we are putting forth an effort, we get help. It's not everyone who does things, it's a few people who do things. Some people are sick, you would rather have them well so they can help do things. But we would also like it so that if we ask for something, to change something that's not good, we get it, that we not just get told: tomorrow you'll get it. We should ask, and we should receive help . . . We are full of poor people, poor until we can even feel that we are poor, but we have a strong and rich spirit.

Simply, she believed that Tira Chapau should be treated as well as other communities because "we all belong to God." Women thus lived a tension between the ideal of everyone being equal in value and the realities of differential social status.

#### R-E-S-P-E-C-T<sup>25</sup>

Nela's words reveal the women's subtle understanding of the dynamics of social status. They are aware that their world is divided up by resources and status. They are sensitive to the disadvantages their children are burdened with, relative to some other children. They do not deny it; they are not blind to it. Neither are they able to remove themselves from all experiences of abuse based on differential status. Sometimes they cannot afford to.

But their sense of self-respect is so highly developed that these experiences seem not to touch their inner selves. That sense *has* to be highly developed. It serves as a weapon to help them fight through the injustices of their lives and stay internally intact. Even though it

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<sup>25</sup>From Aretha Franklin's song: "R-E-S-P-E-C-T, tell you what it means to me."

may sometimes work against their need to survive materially, their self-respect makes it possible for them to survive inside. They walk away with straight legs.

In the next chapter, I look at some of the consequences of women's attitudes regarding these issues of self-respect and status, particularly the image of 'good woman.' How do these issues affect how women "resist" and enact change in their lives? In order to formulate answers to this question, I must first show more about the element of control in women's lives.

## CHAPTER VIII

### "A GOVERNMENT JOB IS A HUSBAND": ISSUES OF CHANGE AND RESISTANCE

This chapter provides a look at issues surrounding change in women's lives. The essential scene-setting for this discussion is a description of how the women have been--and to some extent still are--closed in. Their movement especially has been limited to movement related to their survival duties, via direct control by family and mates and via their own desire to live up to the image of 'good woman'. In the first section, I discuss how this control occurs and the three realms it manifests itself in, as became apparent to me through this study. These three realms are: sexuality and fertility, work outside the home, and activities outside what I call 'survival duties'.

The second section deals with women's patterns of and attitudes about changing their lives and resisting harmful situations. Women's resistance against negative situations often translates to separation from the situation. In order to make a change for the better, they leave. As discussed in the previous chapter, this kind of choice often brings hard consequences in its wake, especially additional economic burdens. However, staying in a situation seems to mean conforming to whoever or whatever controls that situation. Few women expressed hope for change within a bad situation or had been successful in changing one. In this second section, I describe how the women act and think about change: to them, resistance means separation.

## "Raised to Stay in the House": Control and Breaking Out

As my understanding of women's lives in Tira Chapeu began to rise up out of the mist of confusion in the early months of my stay there, I began to see how their spheres of movement were relatively small. As I learned to listen more closely to their words, it became clear that in their lives, they had known a great deal of restriction. This control seemed to occur through a combination of mechanisms. Their own desire to fit the image of 'good woman' blended with direct control by mates and family. The 'good woman' desire, as discussed in the previous chapter, was both internal and external in a complex interaction between women's own consciousness and larger social beliefs. They wished to be 'good women' as much as society 'imposed' it on them. The direct control by men and family members emerged from the norms surrounding this phenomenon. Moreover, this control often carried with it the implication that economic support would be withdrawn if a woman went against expectation. The realms where I saw women experiencing this dynamic of control included the three I deal with here: sexuality and fertility, work outside the home, and activities outside 'survival duties'.

### Sexuality and Fertility

In the realm of sexuality and fertility, control via social image interplayed with direct control to encompass women's use of contraception, their movement, and their social contacts. Perhaps one of the most important ways this control had expressed itself historically was in the practice of not sending girls to school. This was viewed in terms of controlling their sexuality. Almost universally, people declared that the reason for not putting girls in school was that

their parents were afraid they would learn to read and write and then would correspond secretly with boyfriends. Even though women have been breaking out of this control and society's view of schooling has been changing, the idea this practice expresses comes out in other ways.

Using birth control was one of these ways. In this realm, men clearly had 'say' over what their women did, although women did not always listen. Joana talked about her daughter's husband accepting her daughter's use of birth control.

...If her husband likes her, he will accept. If he doesn't like her, he won't accept. Because it's a husband who doesn't like his woman who won't accept. But a husband who likes his woman will accept for her not to have a lot of children.

Joana's words imply that the husband has a right to accept or not accept. How he exercises that right depends on what kind of man he is. Thus, men clearly had influence over this decision, and if a man didn't approve, the situation could be problematic.

In Antonia's case, it was her *pai-di-fidju* who determined that she would go to see about birth control. "In fact, he sent me. I didn't want to. He says we're poor, he is the only one with a job, it's not good to have lots of kids." She did in fact use the pill for some time, but after it started causing her physical problems, her mate agreed that she should stop.

But control of women's sexuality went beyond the direct power of approval from spouses. Women's families also participated. Many of the women were raised "almost locked up," as Rita recounted. "Our father raised us to stay in the house. Seven in the evening and we were in bed, we never went anywhere." Even as an adult, by herself she only went back and forth to Praia for necessities, she claimed, but never



anywhere else. Toka also had this experience and cited it as the reason she had never had children.

It's not that I didn't want any [children], but there was no way. My uncle kept me under lock and key. When the woman who raised me [her grandmother] died, every night he would come tap on the window here. When I asked who it was, he would answer, "Ah, you've gone to bed?" Then he left. If he came by in the evening and found me sitting here, he would tell me to go to bed. If I wanted to go or not, I went. They loved me a lot.

Toka associated this control with love. To her, it was proper behavior intended to protect her.

The behavior of families and mates was part of the pattern of social norms surrounding the behavior of 'good women'. Aldira illustrated how the image of a 'good woman' controlled women's actions in this realm.

If a woman [has more than one man], it's not right. It's not pretty. Even if a man does it, men and women are not the same. If a woman does it, her name is changed, she's called bad things. It's ugly for the families. If I hear that, if I have a child that did that, it wouldn't be good, it would be shameful, there would be a lot of gossip. It's not good. They say women have the same rights as men, but it's not true. The thing is not pretty. If women did the same as men, the world would be different. It wouldn't be good.

In this explanation, what people say about a woman keeps her from acting against the respectable norm. But the issue goes even deeper: Aldira herself seemed to believe that a woman behaving like a man was "not good," even aside from the gossip it would provoke. Aldira knew something of which she spoke. Although she didn't have more than one man at the same time, she had dropped the *pai-di-fidju* of her first child, and took a second with whom she had two children. Undoubtedly, she had suffered some of the consequences she described.

Linara also experienced control over her activities in this realm, in this case from the *mai-di-kriason* who had taken her to Lisbon. In her story, the image of 'good woman' intertwined with direct control by her family.

When I was in Lisbon, I had a boyfriend. I had to go places with him where no one I knew would see me so they wouldn't tell my *mai-di-kriason*. Later when she found out, she went crazy. She sent me home [to Cape Verde]. If she hadn't sent me home, I could have been in a better situation now.

For a young woman, having a boyfriend was against the rules. The consequence of breaking them was that the economic support her *mai-di-kriason* gave her was withdrawn. She had to leave the "better situation" she'd grown used to in Lisbon and return to Cape Verde.

Liseti had lived a similar story as a young girl. In this story too, social image and direct control with economic consequences interacted. Her grandmother and father controlled how she could dress--and thus her image as a 'good woman'--because her father paid for her clothes.

When I was a girl, my grandmother made me wear long skirts. I wanted to earn money so I could wear what I liked. When I got older, I became a woman of business--made pastel, sold fish. One day I worked selling fish and earned 80 or so *escudos*. I went to buy cloth and have a dress made--a pretty cloth--13 *escudos* per meter.... and went to show my father: "I've bought this!" My father's woman sewed the dress for me...

Our grandmother wanted us to wear long dresses, but we would cry and ask for a style called *bolsa ku sintu*.<sup>1</sup> Our father didn't like shorter skirts--he said girls who wore them didn't get consideration--he paid only for long skirts.

Her drive to make her own money to free herself from her father's restrictions was based on a young girl's desire for a different kind of dress. But her action represented much more than this, just as the

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<sup>1</sup>"pockets and belt"

length of dress she wore represented to other people's eyes what kind of girl she was.

Julia's mother also sought to control her daughter's sexuality and social image by restricting whom she could see and by not giving her information about sex.

The boy I like--I haven't gotten together with him--my mother won't let me because he won't marry me. He has lots of girlfriends and can't stay with just one. He told me he can't stay with just one--so me, I don't want anybody, not even a friend. So I guess one just has to wait. My mother is nasty this way. I know another boy who is really cool--[he] has lots of girlfriends, but he is still running after me. But my mother won't let me get together with him.

Julia felt that mothers' rigidity in terms of boys in fact led young girls to rebel and get pregnant at an early age. This was perhaps Julia's explanation of her own situation. While she was telling me "one just has to wait," in fact she was already pregnant. Later, Saunsa, the mother of Julia's good friend, Tina, commented on this situation. She blamed Julia's mother for keeping her ignorant and unprepared.

[Julia's mother] said Julia was sick, but I told her, if she's sick go get her treated. If she's pregnant, that's not a sickness. Then she said she's pregnant. It's a shame. One would want her child to be better set up--maybe not married but at least with a responsible man. A mother who would say [that she's sick when she's actually pregnant] hasn't given her daughter much guidance.

But perhaps Julia's mother, in controlling Julia and in failing to educate her, was seeking only to preserve the image of 'good woman' for her young daughter, an image that forcefully influenced women's ideas and actions in the realm of sexuality and fertility. She knew this image was important for her daughter's material future and social status.

## Working Outside the Home

Again in this realm, direct control interacted with social control. In the way women talked about working outside the home, however, spouses' direct influence linked to economic support played the major role. Many women who had worked outside the home before living with a man stopped working when their men were around. In some cases, this was in part because they no longer had to work to survive. But for the most part, as Nisia told, it was because men wanted their women at home. She spoke of her own *pai-di-fidju's* attitude about her working outside the home: "He didn't like me to work. He didn't want me to leave the house! He didn't like it if he would come home and there would be no one there." The reason, it appeared, that he wanted her at home was so the tasks of daily survival and family caretaking, such as putting food on the table, would be done.

Sandra also told this tale.

After the work with the Chinese ended, I didn't work any more. I managed to work for a month and a half in someone's house, but that was it. I didn't stay there because I was with this *pai-di-fidju* and he would come home for lunch at noon, and there was no one to do that work, make lunch, and all that. He wanted me to quit the job because when he came home for lunch, there was no lunch.

Her mate's expectation that she should be responsible for putting meals on the table and accomplishing other tasks related to survival kept her from working as a servant. Since he provided their income, she went along. She recognized the economic factor in this situation, generalizing about the control a man had if he had an income and the woman didn't. She told me she preferred to live without a companion, since men just created problems, but that with children and no job she needed this man. "But if you have a good job, you don't need [a man].

A man in the house just means more worries." During one of our interviews, her *pai-di-fidju* came home while she was preparing lunch and talking to me at the same time. With a look at the tape recorder, he reminded her not to forget about lunch because of our interview. Fish was frying on the stove.

Belinha was also sensitive to the economic imbalance in relations between men and women. Although she didn't state so directly, some of her comments indicated that she felt this disequilibrium in her own home. She had always sold vegetables from a table placed on one side of the main room of her home, but when I first interviewed her, she had stopped selling because she'd been losing money. Later, she started again, and when I asked her why, she answered: "To have some money to buy things like bay leaf, to not have to ask my husband for everything." Belinha was adamant that her daughter find a secure job before finding a husband, so that she wouldn't experience the same thing.

...I think a government job is a husband.<sup>2</sup> Because today a man wants a woman who will contribute money to the household...now young people want to marry someone who has a job-- they each put in their share. It's not just for the husband to give--sometimes she might find a husband who'd get fed up with it, who would say: she doesn't work, she doesn't have anything.

These days men want some advantage. If she had a job, she could choose her husband--when they both put in their share, there's nothing to fight over. Cape Verdeans are different--now we want a woman to put in her share of money-- to buy this and that....So find yourselves jobs, get your peace of mind, then worry about finding a husband later.

Belinha envisioned that a government job would alleviate the marital tensions caused by unequal economic contribution to the household. Although she explained it as if men wanted this increased equality, it

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<sup>2</sup>See reference to this idea of Cizaltina's in Chapter VI, in the context of the State as *madrinha*.



was also one way women themselves could gain control over how their mates treated them and how they lived their own lives. Her vision was repeated in the words and actions of many of the women who were struggling to find more independent security, out from under the control men, families, and social image exercised over them, often through economic means. It was a vision of change in progress.

#### Activities Outside 'Survival Duties'

Although women working outside the home when they didn't have to was frowned upon, working outside the home for survival reasons was viewed as acceptable and necessary. Most of the women in Tira Chapeu did work outside the home, simply because they absolutely had to. This kind of outside activity fell within the purview of the 'good woman', taking care of her family. But other activities outside the realm of 'survival duties' did not fit that image. In fact, women's survival activities, including work outside the home, often kept them restricted from participating in other kinds of activities. This occurred both because the outside activities didn't fit the 'good woman' and because the survival activities left women with little time to pursue other activities.

In this realm, men's direct control also played its part. Joana told of her husband's disapproval of her participation in PAIGC activities at the time of independence.

...in '74 when the liberty of the 25th of April<sup>3</sup> was given, my husband was in Lisbon. When he came and found that I had been going to these [PAIGC] meetings, he didn't approve. He didn't agree, he told me that if he had known that I was going to those meetings he wouldn't have come back, if I was in PAIGC he wouldn't have come back...because he didn't want this.

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<sup>3</sup>Date of the declaration of independence from Portugal.

Joana's husband disapproved in part because he didn't favor independence and in part because he didn't want his wife involved in such public activities. But Joana was able to break out of his control and do what she wanted, perhaps in part because he subsequently stopped supporting her economically.

Liseti also experienced control of her outside activities from her mate. She talked about his control over where she could go and even whom she could talk to. This was one reason she felt so strongly the injustice of his starting to run around with other women in their late middle age. She felt she needn't stay at home if he didn't; she needn't put up with his controlling her if he was going to mistreat her.

In that case, I'd rather be alone. We are both old--if we both stayed home, fine. But if he's running around and I have to sit at home, no. Let me stay with just my kids. If I want to go to Tarrafal, I go. If Santiago, I go, or Praia, or with my mother, I can go. After 24 years of putting up with everything, now we get old and he goes and shares with whoever he wants!?!...

[Now] I do what I want when I want--because having a man around is *chokadu*.<sup>4</sup> This way I don't have to worry. When he doesn't find you at home, he's always asking you where you went, telling you you can't go. If you talk to a friend, he tells you: "You're on the road to evil."

A woman without a man is great....The injuries you get from men hurt so much! You cook and your cooking isn't right any more [according to your man], you wash and you don't wash right any more, ironing the same--you just have to stay in your house a prisoner--with the door shut. Why?! No, go sail on your ship, let me go with the wind!

Perhaps Liseti was following in her mother's rebellious footsteps. Although strongly influenced by the image of 'good woman', her mother also had left her mate. Liseti called her mother *malkriadu* because she fought with her father when he took other women. But there was also a hint of admiration and envy in her voice when she told how one night her

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<sup>4</sup>Shocking, hurtful; disturbing in a jolting way.

mother, without saying anything to anybody, went to a dance and never came back, going to Praia, and from Praia to São Tomé.

Other women expressed how 'survival duties' kept them from participating in other activities outside that realm. For Ondina, the worries of raising children on her own kept her preoccupied and unable to participate in other kinds of activities during much of her adult life.

After I married and my husband got sick, I just didn't do much, I didn't go to *batuku*.<sup>5</sup> Then my husband died...The worries of raising children, I myself forgot everything else. But after the kids were grown, I got more animated again. It's hard. Thinking about kids, work. But then when your kids are grown, then you can feel a little more animated again.

Sinta spoke of her responsibilities to home and family keeping her in, and how she started to go out once she was free of them. "When I was having kids, I didn't go anywhere. When I raised them and threw them out, whoever tried to stop me from going places, I'd push him and he'd fall way over there! I went to church, I went everywhere."

Saunsa had also experienced being limited by her duties. Her responsibilities to her family, first her parents and then her children, kept her from pursuing her life dream, to become a nun.

My idea was never to get married, in fact. I didn't like the idea of marriage. Since I was little, I wanted to study to be a nun...I liked that...

That's why I say my life has been a bit difficult. They were always telling me to wait, and I waited. But then came a certain time when the priests said that because I was the only daughter and my parents were already old, that I shouldn't go, that I should stay with them, to marry and stay close to them, they would need my support.

And so I thought about this, and at first I didn't accept it, I rebelled from it, but later little by little I lost that idea.

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<sup>5</sup>Traditional dance/song/drumming/clapping activity usually performed by women, indigenous to the island of Santiago.

Saunsa later went from Príncipe, the small island where her family lived, to São Tomé, the larger island of that nation, in order to have more social, intellectual, and spiritual stimulation. But this plan too was cut short by family demands.

I didn't want to go back [to Príncipe], because there [in São Tomé] I had support, more instructed colleagues, I didn't want to go back to Príncipe. But my mother did everything she could for me to come and be near her. She didn't like me to be far away. There was a nurse who wanted me to be a nurse because I had a knack for it. He sent a message to my mother saying this, but she said no because I would have to stay in São Tomé, far away, if I stayed in the big city it might not be good.

She recognized in this her parents' love for her and their desire to protect her. But she felt that that kind of protection wasn't necessary in her case.

Well, I seemed simple, but I wasn't really--that is, I was simple in fact, but I wasn't easily deceived, for example, [by] boys. But she was afraid I would let boys deceive me because I was very simple, I grew up alone, so she didn't let me stay in São Tomé and study to be a nurse. So I came to stay at her side.<sup>6</sup>

Saunsa felt the same impulse to control and protect her daughter, Tina, but because of her own disappointing experience, she tried to behave differently and let her daughter have wider opportunities.

That's why now, my kids, like Tina, ... [if there's] someone to take her to France or Portugal, for her to go study, to work, I want to do the same thing my mother did with me, but then I say to myself, don't do it, because then Tina will go through the same thing I did. Because of my mother I lost a lot of opportunities. She was helping me, according to her view of things. But if she had let me [go], maybe I would have been better off. I don't want my kids to lose opportunities too...

I didn't want to be far from them [her parents] either. But in order to become a nun, I would have gone. For that, I would have gone.

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<sup>6</sup>*Na si pe*, literally, "at her feet."



Saunsa still had her dream, but now her age and her duties to her own children kept her from pursuing it.

Because even now, if there were a chance of going, I would go. My kids aren't really situated, for me to leave them alone here, but even now, if there were a way--. I'm 53. I think it's too late. Not too long ago, the priests were saying that there are people who marry and it doesn't work, and they separate, or the husband marries again, or they reach an agreement, and those people enter [the nunhood]. But I think it's difficult. It wouldn't work. Since I have kids--

No doubt, if the fates allowed, Tina would have the chance to live out some of the kinds of opportunities Saunsa had missed. Mothers like Saunsa were changing the rules of family control for the new generation.

But the image of 'good woman' fought to hold these rules in place. Catholic Church attitudes reinforced this image. Ondina identified Church attitudes as one reason why her mate hadn't let her daughters learn *batuku* while growing up.

One of my girls knows a little *batuku*, but those who are overseas don't know how to *batuku*. They were raised in those things of catechism. Their father was very religious, he didn't want them to learn. He didn't like it, he was religious. He didn't like *batuku* stuff. . . . His thing was just the Church.

At that time, the Church didn't approve of *batuku*. Now it's different, now things have gotten better. But in those times, the Church didn't like *batuku*. They didn't want it at all. Those girls of mine grew up in church things, and the Church didn't like [*batuku*]. I think they [the Church] still don't like it. But now everything has changed. The Church has accepted things more, but at one time no. They said it was a sin. *Batuku*, dancing. *Funana*<sup>7</sup> too. They said it was a sin. Me, I think that our little games are not any kind of sin, because there's nothing in them . . .

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<sup>7</sup>*Funana* is a couples dance, also indigenous to Santiago, now widespread in Cape Verde. The Church disapproved of both *funana* and *batuku* for more complex reasons. They were considered sinful: *funana* pairs couples in close and sensual body contact; *batuku*'s main activity is strong and suggestive hip movement. But Church disapproval had cultural-political reasons as well. Both dances, especially *batuku*, also have strong African roots. The Church, as a partner in the colonial ideology which suppressed the African aspects of Cape Verdean culture, prohibited their practice.



The Church had lost some of its influence as the image of 'good woman' struggled and shifted, posing the women in this study at the turning point of change. Women were beginning to see new alternatives, such as government jobs and what those represented. Some were going to school and slowly gaining information about and access to contraception. They were reflecting on their position. They were opening the door.

But change was not a purely new phenomenon in their lives. The women had ways of enacting change and resisting bad situations that had both 'traditional' and new aspects. In the next section, I explore some of the women's ways of resisting and changing.

"In That Case, I'd Rather Be Alone":  
Resistance as Separation

Breaking out of bad situations was nothing new for many women who told me about their lives. In most cases, such resistance meant separation from the situation rather than change within it. In regard to partnerships with men, work situations, and even school, women left in order to change their lives. Few of the women had successfully transformed a bad situation; staying in the situation seemed to entail conforming to its demands as they stood.

Relationships with men constituted a key domain where women acted out this principle. They left unsatisfactory or abusive relationships, as discussed in Chapter VII, even though they realized that striking out on their own would in some ways be more difficult. Sometimes the emotional and psychological benefits were worth the economic disadvantage separation incurred. Joana, for instance, spoke of the happiness she recovered after she finally separated from her husband. "It was in 1981 that I got away from my husband completely. That

husband hurt me so much! From '81 to now, I have found more happiness in life. . . . The change came after I left my husband and got better health."

Ondina also left her mate as a way of resisting the problems he gave her.

I never thought of marrying him. These men of Praia. At one time, I would have thought of it. But...he started to drink. I don't like a man who drinks. He started to drink, then got involved with a lot of women. That's the real reason things didn't work, more this drinking, this drinking more than anything. Drinking wastes money too. No, for me it just wasn't working. Now I'm older, now if I live by myself, I live better, more enjoyably. With my kids, with my grandchildren, for me to have a husband who is just making life difficult, it's not worth it.

Ondina chose to stay alone after this separation, not taking another partner. Many of the women chose this alternative after leaving a mate, especially, it seemed, those like Ondina who could afford to do so because she had other support, in her case her own business and her grown children.

But those who stayed alone also seemed to doubt whether another man would be any better. Tina claimed that her mother never imagined that she could find a better situation in another partnership after she left her father; the best solution was to stay alone.

She didn't expect that ending, that now she would be separated from him like this. She didn't marry very very young, but she married fairly young, younger [than my father]. My father separated from her, and she didn't take anyone else. She always figured that if she took another man, she might just have the same experience that she had with the first.

Nela agreed that staying alone was the solution to bad relationships with men, but revealed that she couldn't always stay on her own.

[My first *pai-di-fidju*] didn't earn enough for us to live, and he had no [other] women. Then when he started earning a lot of money, he took on a lot of women and I left him. I came to stay in my own place, alone, with my parents.

But a young person can't live alone....I had two more kids with another father and we lived together for four years....and then he hurt me....I was by myself for five years, I worked to support my kids, but I couldn't stay by myself any more, and so I had two more kids. That's how it is.

Her statement that "a young person can't live alone" moves beyond her own experience to explain why women in general enter into other relationships after a bad experience with one. For Nela, the reasons a young person can't live alone appear more emotional and social than economic.

Rita, too, felt it was difficult to stay alone, not only for emotional reasons but for financial ones. She was dissatisfied with her mate's having other women and being only inconsistently present, but felt she couldn't change this situation except by leaving it. When I first got to know her, she spoke rather acceptingly about these issues.

...his one entertainment is women. Wherever he goes, if he finds a woman, he wants her. If you fight with him about this, you'll fight until you die. Here in my house, he might not come for three or four months. He'll come today, then I'll count three or four months that he doesn't come. Then when he comes back, he finds me here. When he goes again, he leaves me here. This is how he does with me.

Later, she told me she had broken off their relationship.

I haven't even seen him for about five months. That's him. When he disappears, it's four, five, maybe three months. Then I ran into him the other day in Praia when I took Beb e to the doctor and he said he was coming over, to see about her. I told him not to. He said he would. I said no. Eleven years we've been together. He won't get any better. I'd rather be by myself so I'm free to take someone else if I have the chance. If he wants, he can come here, but I won't be with him anymore.

Although she made the same choice some of the other women had made, changing a bad situation by leaving it, she expressed hope in finding a better situation with another man.

Sandra also left her first *pai-di-fidju* when he couldn't support her, and joined with another man later.

The *pai-di-fidju* I had before, we'd already split before I came to Praia because it wasn't working. He didn't have steady work; he had another woman. He couldn't support both of us, so I left him and decided to come to Praia and look for work.

Though she stayed on her own for several years, working and building a house, Sandra eventually entered into a new relationship. Fortunately, this new *pai-di-fidju* treated her well.

Women also chose to separate from bad work situations. Domestic service was notorious in this way. Usually women who left bad jobs followed Rita's and Nela's principle and hoped to find a better one. Nisia's story, told in Chapter VII, detailing how she left a work situation she felt was destructive to her health and her family's well-being, as well as to her self-esteem, was one example I saw of this. In general, Nisia would leave work situations when they went bad. Then she would find another better one, until something went wrong with that one too.

Belinha, on the other hand, considered that getting out of domestic service completely was the only way to change that bad situation. As recounted in Chapter VII, she was anxious for her daughter, Dina, to be able to abandon domestic service. Belinha's own experience had taught her it was no place she wanted her daughter.

God give Dina a government job, so she can get out of white people's backyards....Dina's first job was only 2,000 [escudos per month]. It's only her being anxious to work that made her go to work for that amount of money. That's every day; domestic service is every day. When I saw that there was too much work, I wanted her to stop, and so she came home. Just the other day, she found this job for 3,000...

There are also a lot of physical hazards. A little girl here doesn't know her mother. Because of what? The servant's life. She [the mother] had just finished roasting coffee, and

they asked her to go open the refrigerator--when she opened the fridge, that was it! She caught a cold, and died. You have to be really careful working in a white person's house. If she had died in a government job, all of her kids would have gotten some money. Her kids are still small. But in someone's house it has to be this way.

I explain all this to my daughter. Because I also worked in this--I tell her if you're working in a white person's house and you're hot and they send you to open the fridge, you just say, "I'm hot." And if they don't agree, just come home. Because if you do it and you get sick, you die, then you've lost your life....Life [working] in white people's houses is not very good.

In Belinha's view, not only should women separate from a specific domestic service situation, but they should leave all domestic work because it was all bad. There was no real hope of having a better life within it.

With school too, a few of the women had abandoned the situation because of a negative experience. Liseti's one day of school caused her to leave it forever, even though she saw in the long run that she should have gone. That first day of school the teacher asked her to respond to a question. "I didn't know anything," and she couldn't answer. The teacher punished her, making her stand on her knees. The next day she didn't go back. Her father asked her if she didn't want to go. She said no. "But I regretted it," she told me. Liseti was aware that the consequences of her resistance to the school situation were hard in the long run.

In some of the separation situations women described, I questioned whether they couldn't have improved the situation without leaving it. For most of them, it appeared clear that positive change was not possible within the situation, for one reason or another. Staying in the situation meant conforming to its rules and whoever controlled them, be that a mate, a boss, or a schoolteacher. The most dramatic example



of this was Saunsa's explanation of why she did not go back to Sao Tomé. She'd separated from her husband, leaving Sao Tomé where she'd grown up and returning to her native Cape Verde in order to escape him. She found life in Cape Verde unlike what she'd imagined and wanted to go back to Sao Tomé. But she didn't.

If I went, I would have the same problems. And then those authorities, what would they say? "She left because of the problems." And so if I went, for example, to complain to them [about my husband], they would say I was wrong. They'd say I had gone back, even though I already knew all the problems I would live through there. So it gives a bad impression; I didn't have support....That was why I didn't go back.

Going back would mean she'd have to return to her husband and conform to the situation. There appeared to be no question of her husband changing his ways.

Even in the realm of relationships between landowners and renters, this principle expressed itself. Aldira explained problems her family had that had made them give up farming.

It's 2,000 *escudos*--2,000 *escudos* to rent and harvest. But sometimes before you get to harvest, they let loose their animals in your field and the animals eat your crop. On Yaya's land, it was like that. Sometimes before finishing the harvest of beans, with some remaining for us to pick, we'd get in a car at Sucupira and go and we would find cows and goats eating our plants....What would we complain for? They're the landowners' animals, so what would we complain for?

In this case, because the landowner controlled the land, she felt her family had to keep silent about this problem even though the animals' forays infringed on their rights as renters. Eventually, they left the land for someone else to rent and harvest.

Nisia, in her work as a maid, had left positions where she was abused. In the one that she tried to change so she could stay, her boss refused to give her the needed day off, and so she was forced to leave that situation too. Staying meant conforming to what her boss demanded.

### Summing Up

This discussion of control and resistance exposes the complex interplay between women's own desire to be a 'good woman' and maintain good relations, and ways women resist and change within that framework. Change is a common, maybe even 'traditional', part of women's lives, in the separation mode described here. But it is by no means easy. The image of 'good woman' is strong. It partly explains why Sinta had had six children with a *pai-di-fidju* she considered a rascal. "Why I had a lot of kids with him, well, so as not to say to my child, 'this is your father', and to this other one, 'this [other] is your father', I made do with him. He was the only one."

Understanding the difficulties of change and the power of social control in these women's lives provides insight into the importance of the changes they are making. Not only are they practicing "resistance as separation," but they are also slowly finding new alternatives and changing the image of 'good woman' according to their internal sense of self and the requirements of keeping their families alive. They are thinking of government jobs as husbands.

### PART III

#### THE WOMEN'S GROUP

This part of the dissertation shows how the activities, issues, and struggles of the Tira Chapeu women's group relate to the themes outlined in the previous section. How does the life of the women's group reflect the issues raised in Chapters V through VIII? What are the key aspects of understanding how this group fits into the women's lives? How do the workings of the group reflect the women's position and problems in their society? In Chapter IX, "Survival Strategies: Group Purposes and the Image of *Madrinha*," I discuss the role of the Tira Chapeu OMCV group in relation to women's primary concern with and responsibility for survival and economic well-being. It appears that a contradiction exists. On the one hand, the women view their group as primarily a social one and, as such, it takes second place to survival activities. At the same time, they expect it to help them with survival-related needs. Help ties are the most important way of fulfilling this expectation, and the *madrinha* system outlined in Chapter VI reappears here in organizational form. These ties work to help women solve their problems. The relationships of mutual help go far beyond the mere economic; they are ties of profound emotional loyalty. But the *madrinha* ties within OMCV carry with them the same tendency toward "dependency" that *madrinha* ties in other contexts do. Linking access to resources to group relations leaves women with a lack of alternatives when group ties fail to access the resources the women need.

Chapter X, "Breaking Out: The Problematic Status of OMCV Membership," reveals important dilemmas of the group's functioning that

relate to the themes of self-respect and status (Chapter VII) and control and change (Chapter VIII). Group members express their sense of pride in group symbols and activities. Moreover, the organization's literacy activities have helped many women improve their self-esteem and status through learning to read and write. However, OMCV membership falls outside the image of 'good woman'. OMCV women leave their homes, participate in activities not directly related to survival, travel, meet in groups, and learn. To the extent that the image of 'good woman'--and the associated direct control by men--determines women's actions and social status, OMCV women have to deal with criticism and diminished social status in order to remain members. At the same time, OMCV membership has contributed to changing women's and men's ideas of what a 'good woman' is: maybe she can leave the house and go to school and still be 'good'. OMCV membership is problematic in another way for Tira Chapau women. The status of their group in relation to OMCV and other government/Party structures goes against the ideal of "we are all God's" discussed in Chapter VII. Often, the women face experiences of differential treatment which bring home to them their position in the overarching social structure. And although OMCV means breaking out of certain controls, it also means conforming to new rules, rules inherent in OMCV's relationship to the Party and State. In this context, women act out with OMCV their belief that resistance means separation, just as they do in other realms of their lives. When they are unhappy, they leave.

In these discussions, I show the perspective of the women on their group's meaning and activities, as expressed in their words. Thus, interviews and group meetings are an important source of data. These

data are complemented by my own participant observation with the women's group, as recorded in field notes. In these chapters, I recount stories<sup>1</sup> from our joint experiences to illustrate the key issues in each chapter, blending into these stories my perspective and the women's.

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<sup>1</sup>Each story has been put together from various entries in my research journal, sometimes including data from outside the Tira Chapeu group.



## CHAPTER IX

### SURVIVAL STRATEGIES: GROUP PURPOSES AND THE IMAGE OF *MADRINHA*

Set in the context of the socio-economic patterns of Tira Chapeu life, the OMCV women's group took on many meanings. Among the most important of these, the group had a role in helping women survive. Interestingly, the women's expectations surrounding this role were not all of a kind. On the one hand, women considered the group's purpose primarily social and so placed group activities second in importance to their survival duties. On the other hand, they expected the group and its mother organization to address both individual and community survival needs and became frustrated when they didn't.

One way the group often did fulfill this expectation was through the *madrinha* system, with Joana, the group's leader, as a key player in accessing and channeling resources. Her central role bore with it the strong emotional loyalty usually given a *madrinha* figure. This kind of loyalty/resource tie repeated itself between the Tira Chapeu group and other levels of OMCV, even to OMCV's brother organization, PAICV, along both individual and institutional lines. But the *madrinha* ties that characterized OMCV and the Tira Chapeu group were like other *madrinha* ties and had similar problems, leading to a tendency toward 'dependency' on the *madrinha* which left the group without alternative sources of help ties and without resources of its own. In this chapter, I delve into these issues.

Doing Batuku:  
Women's Time and Perceptions of Group Purposes

From much of the women's talk about their group, and from the activities they were involved in, I came to see its main purposes in their lives as social and cultural. They looked to their OMCV group for fun, getting out and about, getting to know other women, and learning about people and places. Many associated the group primarily with performing *batuku*. The group's origins reinforced this association, as did the fact that Joana, its leader, was a well-known *batukadera*.<sup>1</sup> Joana told of the founding of the Tira Chapeu *batuku* group, and how this group had been associated with Party activities just following independence.

In 1975, in 1976, and up until 1979, there were activities of the Party only....In 1978, we founded a *batuku* group called *Konjuntu Vale a Pena*<sup>2</sup> that was a *batuku* group. With this [group], on the 7th and 8th of March we did a commemoration of the 8th of March<sup>3</sup> which was already brought to light.<sup>4</sup>...in 1977.

In 1977, when the 8th of March was discovered,...I came and informed women here, I took their names, and they were given uniforms--a white blouse and blue skirt. So, we did a *batuku* on March 8. That *batuku* that we did was integrated into the Party, it wasn't in OM yet...

She further explained how the *batuku* group got its name.

So, in the Party we did that *batuku*,...we did a nice activity. At the end of the activity, I remember a sister-

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<sup>1</sup>*Batuku* performer, involving dancing, singing, drumming and clapping. In Joana's case, she was a lead singer as well as a general performer.

<sup>2</sup>*Konjuntu* - group, as in musical group or band.

<sup>3</sup>March 8 is International Women's Day, celebrated and promoted by the PAICV government after independence.

<sup>4</sup>By saying "it was brought to light," Joana is referring to the fact that before independence, there was no awareness of International Women's Day in Cape Verde, but that with independence the Party raised awareness of its importance and made it an official holiday.

in-law of mine, we were dancing *batuku*, hats were put on our heads and...that boy who put the hats on our head called us aside and said: "Look here--yes, sir!--Joana and [her sister-in-law] *vale a pena!*" So, we took that name for our *batuku* group.

The group of women who formed the *batuku* group, already active in PAIGC events as supporters and performers, became the core of OMCV when it was founded in Tira Chapeu.

In 1981, when we founded OM with Terra Branca and Tira Chapeu, we did *batuku* in OM and in the Party, all over the place. We'd go to Santa Catarina, Engenho, Boa Entrada, São Jorginho, Calheta, São Martinho, São Francisco<sup>5</sup>--where the Party took me, they took me. Then OM was founded. Members of OM were almost all members of the *batuku* group, *Vale a Pena*, also. Because all of the members of OM were *batukaderas*....[When] we were called by OM here, we'd go.... Everywhere, we did *batuku*. So, we became part of the group too in Terra Branca and from 1981 until now, we are in OM.

Thus, an important role of the Tira Chapeu women in OMCV seemed to have been doing *batuku* at PAIGC and OMCV mobilization events. This role shaped how women saw the group. They continued to think of it as an outlet for having fun by going places to do *batuku* and many of their actual activities reflected this group image.

Perhaps in part because of this image, women's participation in the group's activities took back seat to the essential survival activities of day to day life. This had two facets. Given their survival duties, women often did not have enough time or help to participate in group activities, especially those of a social nature. Implicitly and expressly, in image and in fact, social activities were less important. But even when group activities were not social and might benefit the women in the long run, women often could not take time away from immediate survival duties.

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<sup>5</sup>Towns and villages on the island of Santiago.

Time and worry were essential factors. The demands of raising families, often as primary provider, were time-consuming and worrying, if not daunting. Sinta talked about joining the group only after she'd raised her children and had more free time.

When I was having kids, I didn't go anywhere. When I raised them and threw them out, whoever tried to stop me from going places, I'd push him and he'd fall way over there. I went to church, I went everywhere....I went with Joana, we would go to the interior. We went on an excursion to Tarrafal twice. I never didn't go, once I had had and raised my kids....This thing is a way to amuse yourself, to lighten up your life. You won't gain by it, but you'll amuse yourself.

Ondina also explained why she hadn't joined OM earlier than she had: she had too many survival worries. The group's *batuku* identity is reflected in her comments.

After I married and my husband got sick, I just didn't do much, I didn't go to *batuku*. Then my husband died...[With] the worries of raising children, I myself forgot everything else. But after the kids were grown, I got more animated again. It's hard. Thinking about kids, work, but then when your kids are grown, then you can feel a little more animated again.

When she felt more animated, Ondina joined the women's group, attending the *batuku* events she saw as one of their principal activities.

Nisia also cited other duties as keeping her from participating in OMCV events.

I like to participate in everything OM does....It's only that sometimes I just don't have time. Like the day we were supposed to go to the Assembly. She [Joana] came here, but I couldn't go. I had so many clothes to do that day. From early in the morning until 3:00 that afternoon when they came back, I was ironing clothes.

Lots of places, Joana asks me to go--but when the times comes, I can't go. I feel embarrassed about it. Joana passes by and calls me, and since she can't see, I just stay quiet, as if I didn't hear. I don't listen. She says: "I went to Nisia's but I don't know where she is."  
[laughter]

Nela seemed to associate OMCV with social activities, which took second place to her work duties.

I also like the get-togethers<sup>6</sup>--a lot. Even though we are poor and we can't do things up right, I still like them a lot. I went to Tarrafal with OM and it was great. *Batuku. Funana*....I really like it. What's lacking is time to go to a lot of get-togethers.

She recalled that she didn't even join the OM group as early as she would have liked to because she was too busy working and raising her children on her own. Later, when her work eased up a bit, she joined.

There were people who entered before me. Because my economic situation didn't allow it. I worked at Monti Burmedju, digging out *jora*---...it's there that I spent my life with the three kids that I had. Their father and I split up and I remained with three kids....Later...I started working in the city administration and found a little bit of time and I joined OM.

Toka also claimed that "sometimes I can't go because of work." This was a principal dilemma for the women.

Aldira, 29 years old with two small children, was a member of the women's group but faced the same kinds of problems that had kept Ondina from joining earlier. To her, the obstacle to participation was not having someone to stay with her children. She herself often resolved this problem by leaving her children with her mother, but she sympathized with those who were not in this position.

It's easier for people who have someone to stay with their kids. Then they can go with a lighter heart, with peace of mind, because they know their kids are well taken care of. But those who don't have someone to stay with their kids, they have to go and ask a favor of someone, hopefully someone they trust....Those who don't have somewhere to keep their kids, they don't go, even if they want to, they don't go.

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<sup>6</sup>In Kriolu, *kunvivi*.



Joana summarized this dilemma, relating the demands on women's time to fluctuations in group membership as a whole.

Already in '88 we had close to 70-some members. But then it dropped again. It's possibly around 50-some now. Some have emigrated, some have moved away, others have died...others aren't participating because they are going to Dakar, to São Vicente [for commerce]. Making a living, surviving, is like that...life is difficult, few people participate. But they have the good will.

However much the women enjoyed women's group activities, survival needs always took higher priority.

Yet even the activities that were not social and might benefit the women in the long run took second place to daily survival activities, especially jobs outside the home. Tina, a young woman with many duties at home, sometimes faced problems which interfered with participating in OMCV activities, even when these activities were of an educational nature.

I didn't participate in the Congress. I would have liked to, but in those days of the Congress, we had a water shortage here. We had to go get water in another place when it was time to go to the Congress, so we would have arrived late. It didn't work out to go. So I didn't get to go at all, not even the closing ceremony or anything.

One of the most important OMCV educational activities in the Tira Chapeu community was the literacy class. OMCV, in partnership with the national literacy program of the Ministry of Education, had provided literacy classes in order to help women make up for unavailable schooling opportunities in the past. These were also intended to be of material benefit. In principle, the *quarta classe* equivalency that the literacy program provided would allow women to get further schooling and/or obtain better economic opportunities. For many women, though, the literacy classes could not get through the barriers of lack of time

and too many worries. Toka, for example, didn't go to the literacy class sponsored by the women's group in Tira Chapeu, although she truly desired to learn.

I was working, I came home only at night. I didn't have time. I'd come late at night, working as a domestic, especially if there was something special going on at work. When I would arrive home, I found they had already come out of school. It was already over.

Joana spoke of the problems various other group women faced in attending the literacy class, citing Belinha's case.

Belinha, she went for a long time, and then quit. She went with her husband and everything. But she quit because her head couldn't manage it, with the responsibilities of children, with all that; it didn't work for her to study any further, and so she quit. But on her own. It wasn't because she didn't think it was good. She thought it was good. Just that her head and her time didn't allow it.

Later, the literacy class changed location and time, which put it further out of reach for Tira Chapeu women. The Tira Chapeu class that had originally been held at Joana's house moved to a school in Terra Branca, both because Joana needed to rent out her house to get some income and because the class wanted a better space. The distance, though not great, made the class, now held at night, less accessible to women in Tira Chapeu. Rita had this problem. She had attended the literacy class held at Joana's house, but couldn't continue when she got a job that prevented her from going to daytime classes. "When I got a new job at another place, I didn't go on [with literacy classes]; I didn't have time to go to school any more. The only class I could go to now would be at night. Me, I don't go out at night. So I stayed like this." Going to class in Terra Branca at night was out of the question, a problem both of lack of time and of custom.

Rita's situation, of a young woman of 27 with the primary responsibility for supporting two small children, epitomized the dilemma the women found themselves in. She both needed the practical activities and enjoyed the social activities the group offered. She participated often and enthusiastically. But that same need kept her from participating more, even in those activities which might help address that need, such as schooling. The day to day struggle for survival--and the time that consumed--often took precedence.

Perhaps the perception of the group as primarily social contributed to women's putting it on the back burner. But the reality was that they had to do so: survival activities were too important. Because of their importance, the women also had expectations of the group's parent organization, OMCV, related to their economic needs and survival problems. In the next section, I discuss how these expectations interplayed with OMCV's projected image to cause dissatisfaction in Tira Chapeu.

#### Inadequate Responses to Women's Survival Problems

The national OMCV organization promoted an image of itself as concerned with women's practical needs. One of the organization's two primary objectives was women's "full insertion into the process of economic, social and cultural development of the country" (OMCV, n.d.:5). Of the 75 projects listed in the National Committee's report to the 1990 Congress, 22 directly concerned economic activities, 14 supported construction of women's centers where such activities would take place, 4 supported literacy classes, and 16 were for the

construction or operation of *jardim infantil*<sup>7</sup> for children (OMCV, 1990a:8-88). In addition, the "thesis"<sup>8</sup> of the 1990 OMCV Congress, on the current situation of women in Cape Verde, focused heavily on economic aspects: women in relation to employment, agriculture, the fishing industry, workfronts, the informal sector, migration, etc. (OMCV, 1990c).

This image was reflected in the women's ideas of OMCV as an organization. Many women in the Tira Chapeu group interpreted the symbols of the OMCV Congress in terms of work and development. The slogan for the 1990 congress appeared on a poster plastered on walls all over town: "*Investir na promoção da mulher, opção para o desenvolvimento.*"<sup>9</sup> I asked the participants in the study to tell what this meant to them. Antonia related the slogan to women working outside the home so that their companions would not have to bear the full economic burden of the family in current hard times.

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<sup>7</sup>*Jardim infantil*, in Portuguese; *jardin*, in Kriolu. I use the Kriolu spelling throughout the rest of the text. A *jardim infantil* is more like a preschool than a daycare center, because only children between four and six years old attend, and its program is geared toward preparing them to enter primary school. It's along the lines of kindergarten, but not officially part of the formal school system, and is two or three years instead of one. However, many women also saw it as a kind of daycare, in that they could leave their children there half a day or all day and go to work. Still, it applied only to their children over four years old. Actual daycare is usually called *creche* (in Portuguese) and virtually doesn't exist in Cape Verde, this service being provided by relatives, neighbors, friends, maids, nannies, etc. Preschools in Cape Verde take many forms: public project-supported where the cost is subsidized, community-based, and private.

<sup>8</sup>*Tese* - a document prepared by the National Committee and presented to the Congress as its theme and basis for discussion. In 1990, the "thesis" was a report on Cape Verdean women's progress and current status, especially in regard to work and other economic factors.

<sup>9</sup>"Invest in the promotion of women, a strategy for development."

"Promotion of women" is--[laughs] I think it's a good thing. For me it's important....A woman works, doesn't just stay at home--because you help your companion. Because it's said that 'a loaf and a half is never a bad thing'.<sup>10</sup>...I think that if I found work someday it wouldn't be a bad thing. Because now...the rains are bad, everything's expensive.... Just him working won't do. But with the two of you working, your daily bread will be a little better. The rains are bad. You have to work to help each other.

Francisca also talked about work in relation to this slogan. "This means work--'development' is work--what this woman [on the poster] is coming from."

Given this perception of OMCV's message, many of the women in the Tira Chapeu group felt that OMCV should be doing activities in their community related to economic need. When I asked Malvina to say what activities the women's group ought to focus on, she responded with a litany of the survival problems women in Tira Chapeu faced.

The most serious problems women here have are about making a living.<sup>11</sup> Here we have women who haven't had anything to give their kids for two days. A woman working in someone's house for a while; in three months she might go to four different houses. Another might work five days, seven days, and not receive her pay because it's not working out. Others look for fish until nine at night and don't find it. Others have kids and their father doesn't help. Lots of needs at home. Boys who have more than one woman before they even have jobs. A woman in Praia who doesn't have schooling has a hard life...

Others agreed with Malvina. But in relation to OMCV's role in addressing these needs, some of the women felt disappointed. They felt that the group didn't do much of a practical nature for women in Tira Chapeu or for the community at large. Some of the women lay the

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<sup>10</sup>*Un pon ku un metadi e ka mau*, meaning roughly "a little extra never hurts," literally, "a loaf and a half is not bad."

<sup>11</sup>In Kriolu, *vivénsia*. Could also be translated as "surviving" or "survival."



responsibility for this on the Tira Chapeu group itself, others on upper levels of OMCV or the organization as a whole.

Linara was one of those who felt the Tira Chapeu group itself should do more. She favorably compared the group she'd been part of in Sao Vicente with the Tira Chapeu group, suggesting ways the Tira Chapeu group might raise some money to do something practical.

If we wanted to have a party to raise funds for something, or to buy a shirt, we would have a raffle. We'd have that tape recorder, for example, we'd put it on raffle. Anything to raise funds. We'd have a dance and charge people 50 *escudos*....I've already told them, like here we charge 5 *escudos* dues. 5 *escudos* is nothing. Well, there are a lot of poor people who don't have it either, because me too sometimes I don't have it. That's a way to raise funds. But if one time you would hold a dance and charge people 50 *escudos*, you would raise some funds for the neighborhood.

Saunsa had similar ideas for fundraising and wondered why they were never implemented in Tira Chapeu.

I think the fault is not just theirs [OMCV higher-ups] alone. I don't know if it wasn't also we who didn't give all the support necessary, that we lost enthusiasm....I have always said to Joana, why don't we have an exposition. Because we don't have a fund. To have a fund, you need to-- it's we who create a fund. At times, there were parties held at Joana's house, but I don't think we built a fund with those.

For example, we could do a type of--it's because we're not prepared, but if we did an exposition, everyone did a little sewing, embroidery, a piece of crochet, another could make a bread bag, another a piece of patchwork, any little thing--we could hold an exposition. Maybe Tira Chapeu doesn't have the means. But it could create a fund for OM.

Because we usually do an exposition for the catechists. Everyone gives some little thing, according to what they can give....We could do it for OM too, to create a fund. But we don't have it. My idea was that, to do this in order to help women learn a little bit more than they know, create a spirit of sociability and collaboration. But none of these things has ever been done. I gave Joana that idea. Maybe she didn't have the opportunity to do anything about it; she can't see, so we have to get together, those that can see.

Saunsa struggled with the question of who or what was to blame, the group's lack of initiative, its members' poverty, or OMCV on high. Finally, she attributed some of the problem to the group's leader being blind. She hypothesized that this was the reason Joana didn't act on Saunsa's suggestion.

Although other women also went back and forth between blaming OMCV structures and recognizing their own role, most criticized the OMCV organization's lack of attention to the community's material needs more sharply, especially given Tira Chapeu women's extremely difficult situation. Nela articulated her feeling that Tira Chapeu women in particular were neglected and ignored.

In our OM group in Tira Chapeu, we are all just poor, pitiful.<sup>12</sup> We live an all right life as Cape Verdean citizens, but a life that's a bit difficult. We are fish sellers, carriers of sand and *kaskadju*, workers on workprojects. Sometimes we work on the workprojects for two two-week periods, and when the third [week] arrives we aren't paid. So life becomes difficult with our kids. We in Tira Chapeu we are a little miserable. We have few means.

She felt that, under those circumstances, the Tira Chapeu group members were already doing as much as they could. But promises of support from above were being broken.

Sometimes I feel as if we were not Cape Verdeans. In our OM group. Because we do things like a clean up campaign. We ask for some support to be given. So we can clean our *bairro*, as women, ...and we aren't given this support. They deceive us with their trucks, their garbage containers, with their materials so that we'll do our thing--but we don't ever see this material when the time comes...

Linara was also dissatisfied with the attention given to a request for a piggery in Tira Chapeu.

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<sup>12</sup>*koitadu*

It seems to me we already put this problem [of a place to raise pigs] to OM...Now we here, the population of Tira Chapeu, we are asking them to build us a pen where we can put all of them...You put them in your house but it's no good...they say to wait. We discuss those things until we're blue in the face.

But such projects were not easy to accomplish, according to Tina. Her estimation that the OMCV Congress was fine was mixed with words of doubt that problems discussed there would ever get resolved.

They're always putting forward the same problems, at all places, at all times. But [the Congress] was fine...It went well. Many of the problems they deal with there, I didn't really pay much attention to them. They won't get resolved. They just stay the same. The same problem brought up one year gets brought up again the next. They bring up so many. They can't even get all those problems resolved at the same time.

They said, for example, that alcoholism affects women a lot. But I don't see how to combat that problem. Unemployment, too. They can get resolved, but always a bit remains. So many problems affect women more.

This feeling that OMCV didn't resolve problems--along with the expectation that it should--was shared by women and men outside the group as well. Tina's evaluation, although critical, also recognized the difficulty of overcoming the broad problems discussed at large organizational meetings. She implied that maybe the expectation that they be resolved was inappropriate.

Throughout the country, OMCV was trying to chip away at the large block of problems Cape Verdean women faced. In other areas of the island and the country, OMCV had small-scale production, animal husbandry, handicraft and sewing projects, with the goal of improving women's ability to make a living. But only a few of these efforts had reached Tira Chapeu. A vaguely talked-about sewing center that the Tira Chapeu women had asked OMCV for had never materialized. None of the 75 projects listed in the National Committee's 1990 report affected the

women of Tira Chapeu in their responsibility for survival. However, OMCV did conduct maternal-child health education and family planning education in the Tira Chapeu community, and by the time I left in 1991, a family planning outreach program had begun in Tira Chapeu and a few other Praia *bairros*, targetting young people between 15 and 21 years old. More funding was channeled to rural Sectors; international donors that funded OMCV projects favored these Sectors in the belief that they represented the poorest women. By and large, Tira Chapeu women's needs had gone without response.

As a whole, OMCV was concerned and occupied with women's economic needs and their responsibility for survival, in reality as well as in symbol. This concern was also a main preoccupation of many women in the Tira Chapeu group. But from these women's point of view, few efforts in this realm had as yet reached the *bairro* of Tira Chapeu or had had any real impact on their lives. Yet their expectation that someone from above "help" them persisted. Where did this expectation come from and did it ever produce results? In the next sections, an exploration of the dynamics of *madrinha* ties within OMCV responds to this question.

#### The Importance of Help Ties and the Image of *Madrinha*

Understanding help ties became one of the most important facets of my insight into how the Tira Chapeu women's group worked, both within itself and in its relations with other groups, individuals, and the national OMCV organization. When I understood the dynamics of mutual duty and loyalty discussed in Chapter VI, I felt as if I had turned a dark corner into a street full of light. On a landmark day I learned that base groups such as Tira Chapeu's referred to the Sector level

Committee member responsible for overseeing their group as their *madrinha*.

As Cape Verdean society changes, help relations change and adapt to modern circumstances, especially the institution of formal organizational ties, which now also serve as bases for the loyalty and mutual help relationships that were traditionally based primarily on family and friendship. Youth organizations, political parties, the workplace, the armed forces, unions, soccer clubs, now all serve as bases of *madrinha* ties in the figurative sense. This is significant in a society that seems to depend on help ties to hold itself together, to provide social security, to maintain a social order, to survive, and sometimes to improve life.

Here I show how *madrinha* ties work in the Tira Chapeu women's group, and in the relationship between the Tira Chapeu women's group and its 'mother' organization, OMCV. They work to provide access to resources, with Joana the key player in this process. Emotional loyalties intertwine with the economic to make them work. But the women's view of these relationships reveals breakdowns in their proper working. Moreover, even when they are working, a *madrinha* tie depends on concentration of power and resources with the *madrinha* and dependency on the *madrinha* by the *fidjadu*.

#### Joana's Role: Leader as *Madrinha*

Within the women's group in Tira Chapeu, Joana was the keystone of the *madrinha* system. She was a leader rich in ties to resources and influence with important people. She used these ties to try to help women in her group, as well as her own family and friends. Joana's links to important people went far beyond the practical, for both her



and her group. These links seemed to have a deep personal and symbolic significance for her, in addition to their practical import.

As an illustration of this, Joana had become involved in OMCV and PAIGC/PAICV in large part because the contacts and activity they afforded brought her back to life after a period of difficulty and despair in her personal life. With her ties to OMCV and the Party, Joana felt more animated, less alone. Joana's daily talk with me was always full of whom she had seen, who had been pleased with her for something she'd done, some special recognition she'd received from someone important--all emphasizing her connections. One day soon after the closing ceremony of the OMCV Congress, she recounted some of the contacts she'd had there.

There's a big woman from Maio also who's my friend, her name is Rosa, and she was always calling me...Another from the postal service was there too, named Lusieni, always calling me. Cristina was there too....She's on the National Council [of the Party]...she also greeted me...When we were leaving, Carlina [Pereira, the President's wife] came to me. I hadn't even seen her. She came to me and said: "O Joana!"..."O Joana! I was in the front but I sensed you behind me! Joana...you sure give a great 'viva'!" She's really my friend!

But her ties were also of practical importance. For example, she hoped to enlist support to have a telephone line installed in her house, a rare luxury in Tira Chapeu, a luxury that she saw as furnishing closer contact with her OMCV and Party ties.

If I had a telephone, I would call OM, I would call the Party fast. It's contact...If I had a telephone, I would have good contact. The moment I would contact the Party, OM, I would know what was happening or what had happened. Before leaving the house to go to Praia--sometimes I don't have the money to pay for the bus, or I have to go with someone else. I have to have a child to take me and I have to go too.

If I have a telephone, I won't spend as much because I could just ask a question there. If I have a telephone, I have to have the number of the Party, of OM...of São

Vicente--four numbers only--in São Vicente it's Sara Gabriela [of the Radio station]....Radio in São Vicente, Radio in Praia, Sector of the Party, and Sector of OM. Only those!....Because I'm older now, I can't go all the time.

But I won't forget my Party, I won't forget my OM. After I put in my telephone, I'll call João Pereira da Silva for him to put in water for me....I ask for help at the Presidency with Aristides, I ask with Pedro Pires,<sup>13</sup> I ask at EMPA, I ask at the National Assembly--....

As evident in this speech, the loyalty she felt toward OM and the Party was complemented by her expectation that they would help her accomplish what she needed to accomplish.

Her use of OMCV help to unravel red tape was typical. She had applied to have electricity installed in her house but had always been refused. She claimed that the agents made a mockery of her request, saying she didn't need light in her house because she was blind. She had argued with them on the basis that many OMCV meetings and other activities were held at her house, including literacy classes. She needed electricity for these activities, for light and for music. But the bureaucracy put her off indefinitely. For the OMCV Congress in July 1990, she was to host a fellow delegate from São Vicente in her home and wanted to throw a party in celebration of this national event and in honor of her guest. She was desperate to have electricity installed in her home before it took place. She asked OMCV to write an official letter to ELECTRA, the national electric utility company, explaining why she needed electricity, and to use their influence to help her get around ELECTRA's constant putting her off. This OMCV did, through Isabel, the Tira Chapeu group's *madrinha*, and Joana's influence with the

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<sup>13</sup>The then-Prime Minister.

OMCV General Secretary. Electricity was installed just the week before her guest from São Vicente arrived.

But Joana did not use her ties to access resources only for herself. Her loyalty to important people was matched by her loyalty to the members of her own group. This kind of loyalty existed among group members as well. Many group members were linked to each other through various kinds of personal ties that helped cement their group connection in helping/loyalty relationships. The most obvious example of this was Toti and her two daughters, Aldira and Rita. All three belonged to OM and were knit together in a tight mutual help association. In addition, Malvina was tied to Nisia because Nisia's father was Malvina's husband's cousin and had served as the *padrinhu* of their marriage. Nisia was linked to Toti through one of Toti's sons, who was *pai-di-fidju* to Nisia's daughter. Sinta and Toti were sisters. Luisa and Aldira were *kunbosas*. Julia, Tina, and Rosinha had been classmates in school. Joana and Saunsa were distant cousins. Several groups of women came from the same town or region in the interior. These relations of mutual help and obligation, based on family links and common origin, were reinforced by common membership in the women's group. The most actively involved women in the group were those Joana could call on based on personal obligation as well as group loyalty.

In turn, Joana had great loyalty toward her group's members. An incident that occurred at the Congress demonstrated this. Joana was offered a private ride home but refused in order to stay with the women she'd brought with her from Tira Chapéu.

I was talking to my *kumadri*<sup>14</sup> Isabel--you were there too--when they told us to take advantage of the bus [that was going our way] and we dropped everything and ran...Isabel wanted me to go with her husband [in his car], but I said no. I couldn't leave the other women there--we went all together. Together we got on the Transcor [bus] and we came home.

She could have benefitted as an individual from her ties, but chose to share her lot with the women she'd brought with her to the event.

This loyalty, this use of her ties to benefit other women in her group, made her the beloved leader she was to many members of the group. One of her biggest contributions was access to information. In several cases, she had information about openings in schools or jobs that she dealt out to the young people in her group or children of women in the group. For example, when the national election commission needed temporary clerical workers, Joana heard about this need through her connections to OMCV and PAICV, and sent two of her young women members, Julia and Tina, to obtain temporary work there. In another situation, she sent the son of Delila, a group member, to obtain a place in a special night school, with instructions to use her name with the school coordinator once he got there. Joana had also filled some literacy teacher jobs with young women of her choosing from the community.

Because she had these links to important people and resources, Joana was seen as essential to anything the group did. She could represent their case to outsiders; she could ask for the required *apoio* for anything they might like to do. Moreover, the women valued the

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<sup>14</sup>Co-mother. As noted above, it is used by mothers and *madrinhas* of the same child to refer to each other. In this case, Isabel, the Sector *madrinha* of the Tira Chapeu group, had served as *kriston madrinha* to one of Joana's granddaughters.

recognition she commanded from important people for the status it conferred. Sinta described how she felt about her.

Joana, poor thing, she's blind, but I am happy with what she does because everyone relates to her, knows her, pays attention to her. Everyone goes to greet her, ...Joana doesn't have sight, but she is intelligent. Because all poor and pitiful as she is, nonetheless all those big people go to her and say: "*Nha*<sup>15</sup> Joana, *Nha* Joana, *Nha* Joana!" We went that day [to the Congress] and at the door, a girl inside said, "Joana, I knew you were coming, but you took so long!" As if she'd been waiting for us. Joana said: "No, I was just late."

At the same time, Sinta attributed to Joana special power to access ties to resources that important people controlled. We spoke together of creating a *jardin* for children in Tira Chapeu. "That could only be with Joana's agreement. We who are weaker, it wouldn't work. But if Joana, who is out front, looked for this, she would get it fast." Toka also pledged her loyalty to and confidence in Joana, at the same time showing that Joana was central to any activity the group might undertake. I asked her if she was interested in seeing a neighborhood *jardin* become a reality. She replied: "I'm ready to help. I'm always at Joana's side. Whatever she wants to do, I'm in it."

Joana's centrality could also be seen in how most women had joined the Tira Chapeu OMCV group. All of those I knew had joined through an invitation from Joana. Joana seemed to manage the group's membership, inviting members to join according to the group's needs. Tina recalled how Joana had invited her and two other young women to join because they were the kind of young women she liked and because she needed some young people in the group.

Joana invited us because she saw we were active, participated in lots of things....At one time, the group was

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<sup>15</sup>Title of respect for a woman



only older people, there were no young people. But then Joana saw that they should have some young people in the group, just lots of older people, lots of times they needed young people to write invitations, so she decided she should arrange for some young people for the group. So she invited me, Julia, Rosinha. And when she needs help in writing something, for example, she calls one of us who's close by. She doesn't need to ask someone who's far away to help; she calls us who are near. When she wants to do invitations, she calls one of us to write the names. It's worked out well.

In fact, Joana's management of membership and *madrinha* ties did work out well. It provided her group with material resources, information, and a certain status. But some problems also existed with these ties, focusing on issues of power and dependency. In the following sections, I explore these issues.

#### Joana's Role: Centrality as Dependency

From Joana's central role, one can begin to see the first problem. Because Joana had the power to access resources, she became the only one in the group to have this power. As Sinta said of the *jardin*, "if Joana, who is out front, looked for this, she would get it fast." Sinta's statement reflected the group's reality. Joana was indeed the one with the resources. But this pattern also became a problem in that whatever Joana *didn't* take initiative on, *didn't* get done. While she herself complained of having to do everything, her own and the group's behavior and attitudes continued to reinforce her central position and control.

Perhaps the very existence of the group depended on Joana, at least in the members' eyes. Many declared that they would not have joined without Joana's invitation, that everything they did was because of Joana. Throughout my stay there, Joana was threatening to quit as group leader because of too much work. But each time she mentioned this

possibility to group members, suggesting they think about who should replace her, an outcry of protest arose that effectively stifled taking any action toward her goal.

At a research meeting held to discuss the history and future of the group, Joana suggested that the women elect a new leader at an event planned to commemorate the end of my study on March 23rd. The following interchange took place.

Joana: ...it's time for me to leave too. Like Aristides and Pedro Pires left,<sup>16</sup> I also want to leave.

Francisca: You won't leave. [Other general group comments.] If you leave, everything will end.

Marla: Why?

Francisca: Joana, if she leaves, everything will end.

Rita: The experience Joana has, other women here don't have.

Francisca: ...other women follow at her feet. There is no one. I've said it....There isn't anyone. Joana won't go anywhere. If she does, we have all died.

Marla: So if she leaves, there's no way that the group will continue?

Rita: If Joana leaves, there's no way for the group to continue...I've already left...

Joana: No, I'm having a hard time.

Francisca: No, you're not having a hard time. [laughter, other comments]

Joana: I'm having a hard time....Now, I am waiting for the 23rd for all of you to get together to elect someone else, because remember that I am blind, I can't see. I can't do any more than this.

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<sup>16</sup>Aristides Pereira, the former President, and Pedro Pires, the former Prime Minister, both had been defeated in the elections held in January and February of that year, 1991.

In part, Joana's appeal to her blindness was just talk, an indication that her wish to leave was perhaps only partly real as well. At the March 23rd celebration, she made no move to hold elections, although she repeated her intention to step down at another meeting held a week later. At this meeting Aldira declared her inability to stay in the group if Joana wasn't its leader.

...if you [Joana] leave, I'm leaving too....You'll notify us first, right?...You'll call a meeting?...So I can agree to leave along with you....Joana is the one who's shown me everywhere! Me, not even the cinema--I have not even been to the cinema!...No, it can't be like that. As she is now, that's how she'll stay.

So whether Joana's intentions were real or not, the task of shifting the group from its deference and loyalty to her leadership seemed formidable. Neither she nor other group members seemed to be able to do other than reinforce the ties of personal obligation and loyalty that upheld both their group and their society.

Aside from quitting, when Joana herself tried to change patterns of behavior within the group that reinforced her central role, the group members seemed unwilling or unable to go along. At our last meeting held for research purposes, Joana, who was usually the first to speak at any meeting or activity, tried to pass the floor first to another group member. But the other member, Sinta, demurred.

Joana: Today Sinta will talk [first]. She has never talked at a meeting!

Sinta: The first one who should speak is Joana, to explain how we asked for the *jardin*, and all that. She should speak first and then we will follow.

Francisca: That's how we'll be able to do it...

Joana: When I leave the group, I don't know how you'll all make out.

Aldira: We'll go with you...

Marla: When did you start thinking about having a *jardin* here?

Sinta: I don't know. How many years, Joana? [laughter]

Joana: Look, here, I am going to talk, but also it's not just going to be me alone to open your ideas so you'll know. You also have to give your ideas...Because I have to leave one day. If I don't leave alive, I'll leave dead. So I'll leave you who remain alive, and you'll continue.

Sinta: Well, if you'll start, we'll follow you.

After Joana had recounted her version of how the group had asked for a *jardin*, she added: "This is what they [group members] wanted me to say. Now I've said it. When I talk, they say, 'No, it's just like Joana said!'"

But the group members were not alone in reinforcing Joana's unique leadership of the group. Joana also contributed to maintaining her position. At the same meeting cited above, Joana said the group needed to elect a new committee to help her, because the one that existed didn't work. "I work alone," she claimed. "If I have to continue to work alone, I'm going to leave." Yet Saunsa, a member of that committee, had told me that Joana had simply stopped calling on her some years earlier and had never said anything about why. Another committee member had emigrated to Portugal, but Joana had continued to carry the ball virtually alone, never replacing that member. Thus, Joana's own actions also reinforced her central role and the resulting dependency of the group on her leadership.

#### Pidi jardin: Power, Dependency, and the Lack of Alternatives

The group's desire to have Joana continue at their helm was not only an expression of loyalty and esteem, but also an acknowledgement that Joana knew how to access resources and get things done, as

discussed above. She was, in a way, the group's *madrinha*. This *madrinha* relationship between the group and Joana was echoed in the relationship between the group as a whole, including Joana, and those with power and resources outside Tira Chapeu, especially the national OMCV organization. The story of efforts to start a *jardim infantil* provides a good example of the complexities of this dynamic within the group and begins to reflect the group's relationship with upper levels of OMCV as well. It shows how the group's dependency on access to outside resources sometimes left it with a lack of alternatives when the usual resource channels didn't produce results. The story as I present it here contains three illuminating viewpoints: mine based on the efforts to obtain a *jardin* that occurred while I was in Cape Verde,<sup>17</sup> Joana's story of the group's efforts before and during my stay there, and the other women's views on these same efforts.

From the time of the first OMCV group meeting I attended in Tira Chapeu in January 1990, starting a *jardin* was on the agenda, and from the discussion, it was apparent that it had been for a long time before that. According to the women, Tira Chapeu was one of the few communities that didn't have a *jardin*, and sending their children to the neighboring communities of Achada Santo António or Varzea was problematic. At this meeting, Joana brought up the issue of having a *jardin*. She had looked at some land for construction of a building with a local stonemason (considered a building specialist) and wanted Isabel, the Tira Chapeu group's *madrinha*, and Carmen, another Sector level OMCV staff member, to go inspect this plot that day. But, she declared, in

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<sup>17</sup>This and other stories are constructed from research journal entries.



the meantime the *jardin* could start in the room we were sitting in, a large front room of someone's house rented by the Party for organization meetings. She'd seen other such *jardins* in Achada Grande Tras and Achada Grande Frente, two other Praia *bairros*.

Isabel quickly made it clear that the OMCV Sector gave no financial support to the start-up of that type of *jardin*; all the funds had to be generated within the community. The *jardin* functioned on the fee parents paid; parents also provided stools, tables and snacks for their children. The community itself had to find or provide the building to house the *jardin*. The OMCV Sector could give only technical support, she said. This meant that the community would select a young woman to be trained as a *monitora infantil* (*jardin* teacher) and OMCV would provide her training. The only other support the OMCV Sector could give was occasional food they received from UNICEF<sup>18</sup> to give to *jardin* children as snacks; this, however, was not anything regular to count on. The community would have to generate all its own funds, including any eventual outside support for construction of a building.

Isabel's tone sounded to me like she had heard this request too many times before from too many groups, that she couldn't fulfill all the need and was defending herself against the expectation that the OMCV Sector provide what it could not. Her speech made it sound like the base group should not be dependent on the Sector and that the Sector was not obligated to the base; thus, at the same time, the base group was free to pursue its own linkages to outside resources. I did not see, however, at that meeting or any other, any concrete efforts to help the

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<sup>18</sup>The United Nations Children Fund.

group arrive at the point where it could in fact be independent enough to obtain its own funding and resources, or even organize itself to do this. The considerable pressure on the Sector to provide resources it didn't have led her to this defensiveness, but she was also not equipped to help the community move to a point of less dependency on Sector resources.

At the close of this meeting, Joana took up Isabel's suggestions and said that after January 15, she herself would be going around door-to-door to parents to garner support and see who would be interested in this kind of *jardin*, to be held in the large room the group held its meetings in, rented to PAICV by a local Party member. But she still had a brand-new *jardin* in mind. For when the meeting broke up, Joana led us out to the landsite she and the stonemason had picked out for the *jardin*. The site was across the main road, into the industrial section of Tira Chapeu, near the national press. We poked around. Isabel again was somehow discouraging. How fast could the community get permission from the city government to use this site, since the city office governing land use was notoriously bound up in red tape? she wondered. The JAAC representative present had some connection to this office and promised he would try to find out something during the following week.

At the next meeting, in March, Joana spoke again about the need for a *jardin*. This meeting's agenda was to discuss the OMCV Congress "thesis" about women's situation in Cape Verde and to get group members' reactions to a document that had been produced on this theme. At the end of Isabel's presentation of the document, the women were asked to comment in light of their specific problems in Tira Chapeu. They came back to the need for a *jardin*. Isabel responded as she had before: the

group needed to organize it themselves, as other groups had, getting the participation of the parents to cover costs and local contribution of a building until when and if they could get outside funding for a new one. Joana acknowledged this and said they should get started getting parents to a meeting to discuss the issue. It wasn't clear to me what had happened to the door-to-door idea she had launched at the previous meeting, which had seemed so promising. She just hadn't gotten around to it? Somehow, a meeting of the minds had not been reached.

At a third meeting in May, this one the Tira Chapeu group's Assembly, the base group meeting leading up to the Sector Conference and national Congress, Joana again jumped into talking about the *jardin*. It seemed clear that she'd had further conversations with Isabel about it because they were now on the same rather than opposite sides. Joana, instead of pushing for finding a plot of land for construction before opening a *jardin*, re-emphasized that they could start in the very house where the group held meetings, *Nhu*<sup>19</sup> Betu's house, with the same payment parents now sent to the *jardin* in Achada to pay for *monitoras* here, with snacks provided by each mother and a stool sent from home with each child. Once OMCV and organizations like UNICEF and ICS<sup>20</sup> saw they had organized themselves and were participating, they would come and help them get a real *jardin*. "Then they will give us everything," said Joana.

But no specific plans were made for follow-up action, and when October rolled around, no *jardin* opened in Tira Chapeu. By December

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<sup>19</sup>Title of respect for a man

<sup>20</sup>*Instituto Caboverdeano de Soledariedade*, involved in promoting *jardins*. This institution provided the training for the *monitoras*.

1990, during the height of the first multiparty legislative election campaign, a Dutch funding organization had decided to finance the construction of a *jardin* for Tira Chapeu, through a series of chance occurrences via OMCV. Another community the Dutch organization had funded was having trouble getting its labor participation organized, and so the organization had asked OMCV to find another *bairro* that could take these funds instead. OMCV named Tira Chapeu. Joana and some other women from the Tira Chapeu group participated in choosing the landsite for construction. The Dutch organization representative visited Tira Chapeu and decided to switch the funding for the *jardin* to this *bairro*. It looked like a promise finally fulfilled. I dropped, as a consequence, some preliminary efforts I was making to get information for the Tira Chapeu group about a small community self-help projects fund available from the U.S. Embassy.

Unfortunately, the Dutch funding fell through. A few months after the original commitment to Tira Chapeu had been made, two other *jardins* this organization was funding, and which were in midstream of construction, were delayed in their construction and suddenly cost more money. The funders sent a letter from Holland saying they had decided to dedicate the funds they had allocated to Tira Chapeu to finishing construction of the first two *jardins*. When those two were finished and a new funding cycle rolled around, they would see about funding Tira Chapeu's *jardin*. So Tira Chapeu was back to square one without any *jardin* at all. They had obtained the promise of what they wanted, and OMCV had helped them do this. But since the control was completely external, when the promise was broken there was nothing they could do. They went back to waiting. I renewed my own efforts, but it was late.

I asked a community leader whom I had worked with to follow up for me when I left the country two months later.

Caught in the middle was Joana, unable to successfully access outside funding for the 'real' *jardin* they wanted or to organize the community effort that would start one with local resources. She failed as *madrinha* to access outside resources because the resources weren't there to do what the community really wanted: build a beautiful clean new *jardin* for their children. She failed as leader of her group perhaps because the effort required more than one person to organize it; it would have been too much work and so she didn't get around to it. In addition, starting a *jardin* in a temporary situation was not really what she wanted, not really what the community wanted; perhaps this added to her hesitancy to start efforts in this direction. The women of Tira Chapeu were waiting for someone to give it to them, to start it, to get things rolling, and then they would follow. As long as there was hope for getting a new building, they held out and waited.

Joana's story of the efforts to get a *jardin* illuminated the many things that got in the way of success: her personal difficulties, troubles within the local Party organization, the political transition in the country and the shocks this local women's group felt as a result. Her explanations offered another view of the *madrinha* relationship. First she gave witness to the origins of the *jardin* idea: it had come from the OMCV organization.

I entered OM in 1979. The first conference was in '80. So at that time there weren't any *jardins* yet. The [only] *jardin* here was at the Red Cross, ...because the Party was still new then....And in 1982, they started to talk already about *jardins*, on the subject of children....In the Sector of OM they informed us they wanted to put kids in *jardin*, we were all formed in Terra Branca, and so I got the idea. I got the idea, I said this: we are called to go all over the



place. We have to try to have the idea to have a *jardin* too, in the neighborhood, since they said that in all neighborhoods that have groups with people, it's necessary to have a *jardin* to put kids in; they also talked about having a school--a school--and all this.

The wish for a *jardin* was closely linked to OMCV calling on the women to go places with the organization.

Because they were starting to call on us--we went to Santa Catarina, here and there. So that day I went to Terra Branca, and they talked about *jardins*. There was a president there, who worked in the Institute of Solidarity [ICS]....So, we went on a trip to São Martinho, we saw those kids [in a *jardin*]. Then, he talked to us about the *jardin*. I said to myself, that's the way we need it in Tira Chapeu too.

Unfortunately, much of the OMCV talk about the *jardin* remained just talk, to Joana's disappointment.

At that time the First Secretary also started to talk about it on the radio. And we were there, we were there, just having the *jardin* talked about, *jardin* talked about. In 1985, we divided the group [Terra Branca/Tira Chapeu group split]. When we divided the group and formed the group here, I went to a meeting in Praia and talked about this. So when I talked about the *jardin*, they only said: "You all deserve it indeed."

From there, I went and talked at every meeting about the *jardin* because--....So, they offered us--that one day we would have a *jardin*....OM [offered]. And when they had meetings for us, they would say: "In fact, you deserve it." But in collaboration with the Party, with JAAC in the neighborhood, we could have it--there was the *Tribunal Popular*,<sup>21</sup> there was the Residents' Commission, with the help of the Militia, of JAAC, of OM. OM only talked.

OMCV encouraged the women to work locally with other units of popular participation, the people's courts (*Tribunal Popular*), the Residents' Commission, the youth organization, the Party. But problems with the local Party cell blocked such efforts.

We collaborated with the Party, but the Party didn't pay any attention to it, give it any importance. So in 1986, I collaborated with Arnaldo, who was First Secretary [of the

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<sup>21</sup>The people's courts.

Party in Tira Chapeu]. He wanted to help, he was already getting organized for us to get a *jardin* and at that moment he went abroad to study. We came to a standstill. We stayed at a standstill, neither coming nor going. We didn't know whom to go to about it because the person who took his place was no good...

Joana herself thought that because the Party was the central structure in the community, she should work through it. But her efforts came to nothing.

...as the Party was the structure that was within the population, we thought that in order to have a *jardin* we should collaborate with them because it would serve us all....So we collaborated with them....the Party is a body of local power. So we communicated with the First Secretary of the Party and we told him that we should have a *jardin*. So, we remained like that, at a standstill; they didn't give us any opinion.

Joana attributed some of the problem of this "standstill" to the change of leadership in OMCV also.

The General Secretary left and another came in....That was when Maria das Dores left, and Crispina came in. Crispina, you know, she's a--you know, she is sort of closed off, I don't know if it was because of vanity or what. She didn't pay us any attention. I wrote her letters more than four times, she didn't pay any attention. So we just stayed without any trust, a little put off.

This feeling of having been deceived grew through the incident with the Dutch funding.

Later, time went by until the time when--since the time that the group was formed in 1985 until today in 1991--in 1990--in the month of December that they came and deceived us here again, that they want to give us a place for the *jardin*, that they see us with a *jardin*, so that I was very happy in fact. So we went to show them a plot. They measured the plot, they left it there, they took their time with the project [blueprint/plan] at the City Administration.

That day that Pedro Pires came here to campaign, they said they were going to inaugurate [put down the first stone] that day. We remained like that, and we are still like that. Saturday we took courage. We had gone to look at the plot, the ones who went with me were Nha Francisca plus two others who went to see it....Yes, in December, in December they came and offered us a *jardin*. But, there was not one woman who was at the meeting in 1988--we were 89

women--all talked about the *jardin*. We were called on [by OMCV] even during the week. Some said to me: "I'd really like to go but I don't have anyone to leave the kids with!" So we were behind and we still are. Up to now, we are still behind but I have gotten a little more animated with this General Secretary who said that we deserve this. And that she will make a real effort because we really do deserve it...

It was evident that because OMCV had started the talk about *jardins*, in Joana's view they should follow up on it. And in spite of the years of unfulfilled promises, Joana kept her faith that her *madrinha* would eventually come through, expressing her hope in the new General Secretary. She also showed hope that the Dutch funding would still be granted, countering other women's cries that the Dutch promise had been pure deception.

[In] our land, the truth is always told. Things are always promised, but doing things isn't as easy as saying them. Achada Grande Tras, it's this year that it has gotten a *jardin*. But Achada Grande Tras is really far out. For them to take kids from there to put in the *jardin* in Praia, or in Achada Santo Antonio, in Varzea, or in Achadinha, it's difficult. We here, we can take our kids from here and put them in a *jardin* either in Varzea or in Achada because we are close.

...when the one in Achada Grande is finished--and it's already finished now--and the one in Bela Vista, São Vicente, is finished--they will send all the necessary documents and then the documents will come back in order to build the one here in Tira Chapeu.

She came back to criticizing the Tira Chapeu Party organization for its lack of support, in contrast to that provided in Achada Grande.

...if I had help maybe--because Achada Grande had the help of all structures,<sup>22</sup> not just OM, no....And with the strength of the First Secretary there, and with the Residents' Commission there, with JAAC there, they even helped women ask. Women go to ask, they go around and they say: help us. And [the other groups] go here and there and they help women. We here don't have anyone to help us here

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<sup>22</sup>*Strutura*, referring to the various State or Party-linked organizations of the community, such as those Joana mentions.

because we...give them notes for whatever event we're doing, to invite them, but you don't see them...

So it's this way that our leaders made us fall down, like Dr. Luis said. As he said, they can't let me alone, a woman, blind, put out all the effort that they don't put out....So the reasons the population of Tira Chapeu stayed behind: one, the Party has to do one thing first, and then the other. Another is the little willingness of the population itself. Because just women wasn't enough.

Because with women, as much as you give your collaboration, it's not women who will go and build walls, it's not women who will go and make cement blocks, it's not women who will mix cement, it's not just one woman who should lead a population that has five or six structures. Yes. It was all the structures which should have gotten together, as OM already had promised us, we would have made an effort and the Party would have helped us, before they thought about just drinking grog and eating money here and there.

That 48 *contos* that the Party ate, before thinking about eating it, they should have distributed it for a *jardin*. And nothing would have been said.<sup>23</sup>

At the same time that Joana insisted that women were interdependent with the Party and other structures, she decried blaming the Party completely for Tira Chapeu's being "behind." This reaction was an outgrowth of the political campaign occurring at the time; people were blaming the Party for every ill the country faced in an effort to oust it.

We blame the Party for everything, we say it's the Party that hasn't worked....We, in old times, weren't we satisfied?<sup>24</sup> We lay down on sacks, covered with sacks, heads covered with lice, wore sacks on our body, eh? Houses of straw. It was another kind of house, with a little door and little windows like that of *Nhu Filipe* there. But today everyone has become a property owner, even me who is blind with a house that earns me 2 *contos*...

Let's not blame the Party, no....At one time, we didn't blame the Portuguese for whatever we were angry about. We *djunta-mon*, we planted. We *djunta-mon* and dug manioc and potatoes....We *djunta-mon*, we weeded. We *djunta-mon*, we harvested, we carried it and we put it in the house. ...Now we just want to sit and wait for the government.

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<sup>23</sup>A Tira Chapeu Party leader had been accused of embezzling 48 *contos* from the Party coffers.

<sup>24</sup>*Konfortadu*, in Kriolu.



I think that this is a thing that is very contradictory....I think that we shouldn't just sit and--every day just sit and wait. We have to make an effort to--since the time we were born under the Portuguese, we have done it. ...When we plant a field--well, in terms of this *jardin* here--we should be given the materials--if we were given material, we would do it because that is the government's. But we have to get together and dig and get together and carry stones in order to have a house for our kids. The State didn't do it. We have to plant a field, the State didn't plant the field.

...the harm that was done to us before [under the Portuguese] doesn't exist any more--and still we say that the Party did nothing--better little than nothing--one, two, or three things count....It doesn't have to be the State exactly [to provide resources for the *jardin*], it could be structures, organizations, yes. Organizations, once they support us, we'll get together and build it! But they should support us too! They won't just come and help us just like that, we have to go and tell them to support us.

Joana's words reveal the struggle with issues of dependency that not only she and her group were going through, but the entire nation as well. For she told the women not to depend on the Party and the Government and OMCV for everything and at the same time declared that they *must* depend on them. This reflected a struggle to change an habitual way of being and a reality: people were not only used to looking to *madrinhas*; they also had to because they had few resources of their own.

This tension between autonomy and dependency surfaced again as Joana discussed why the locally-initiated version of a *jardin*, held in a rented house, never came to be either. First, it was a problem of Tira Chapeu community members not coming to the organizing meetings.

It was like this. They [OMCV organizers] came two times to hold meetings, one in *Nhu Betu's* house and one in my house. Each mother who wanted to form a *jardin*--each one of us, we would give our kids a stool, we would--they would take our names--be it 20 kids or 30 kids, each one with his stool--...--we would report to them the number of kids--and in our own neighborhood we ourselves would look for someone to take care of the kids. So each parent would pay X--someone who



could might pay 100, another 150--like that, like they would pay in Achada or in Varzea or wherever, just to pay the *monitors* that would take care of the kids. So, UNICEF would support the kids--mothers with sustenance.

This was in June and July [1989] that they held these meetings. Rita was one of the young women who agreed with this. So, they told me that at the proper time, we would go around and take names. I went out that day and invited every mother to the meeting--it's that thing of not coming to meetings--they don't know what's happening. I invited as many as if it were a meeting of the world--in September, two times--not even one mother showed up at the meeting.

Next, the announcement of a change in political system, which put PAICV and OMCV in question and under attack, prevented Joana from calling meetings.

In February [1990], the political opening was announced.... No more meetings were held. So I said, okay, next year we'll do it. That next year, September arrived again. September arrived in the middle of problems. Problems of those two parties. So it wouldn't work. October, it didn't work either. Neither literacy nor the *jardin*--so the thing fell apart and until today, the 28th of March [1991], it just stayed like that.

At the same time that these events were occurring, the local Party group gave up its lease on *Nhu Betu's* house, where the OMCV women had planned to hold the *jardin*.

It was like this that it started--this thing, it was Party people who gave it to us....They were paying 3,500 [*escudos* rent]--that the Party was paying. They started going to the Sector, they said they didn't want to have meetings at *Nhu Betu's* house, because *Nhu Betu's* house has no respect, that people hang out in the *kintal* and listen and go out and tell what was talked about, that people of the Party are just too proud, this and that--and they fled and started having meetings over there....They were the ones who were given it, but they left the house. But we had already talked to the Party--to the Sector who was renting the house--and they had given us authorization to use the house for a *jardin*.

Joana had been counting on the free use of *Nhu Betu's* house because the Party rented it from him. Once the Party stopped renting it, this resource was no longer available.

Joana's viewpoint on the *jardin* efforts shows the difficult change process she and her group were involved in. She wanted the group to be independent from the State and the Party, but when I asked what the group had to do now to get the *jardin* going, she responded with the same solution: ask for it.<sup>25</sup> This time, however, she was thinking more broadly OMCV alone.

What we have to do to get there--we, each time, we should do our papers with the agreement of all the women, to put those papers in the Sector, to ask with all our strength for this *jardin* here, for them to support us with sand, with *kaskadju*, with cement, with water--for us to come and put our hands to it. Stonemasons will help us and we'll do other things too. There will be food because an empty sack doesn't stand up. We who are from here, we women we will remember that this thing is ours and we'll get together and make a lunch, every time that people give their contribution we'll make lunch with a little *grog*. And me also, as I get by easily...and know all the businesses, I will go out with my paper in hand and I'll ask for help so we can make that lunch. And we'll do it!

The help ties Joana counted on, however, would not be much changed. They would be more diffused. The *madrinha* system was still going strong, adapting to new circumstances. Joana was learning that to solve the dependency problem, perhaps one had to call on a wider variety of people and institutions for resources.

The other women's views of the *jardin* story were colored with feelings of having been deceived and not given their due. Aldira's words at the meeting held to discuss the *jardin* situation at the end of the research period illustrated this view.

Those who asked us first deceived us. Maybe you who have taken their place, maybe you could give us help to build a *jardin*, faster than with those who deceived us...since they offered and I've been coming to meetings, I haven't seen any *jardin* built. Not even a sign of land being dug yet...At

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<sup>25</sup>*Pidi*, in Kriolu.

least for OM to start for others to follow. At least that. They could start and another could accompany.

Sinta agreed that the *jardin* hadn't got built simply "because they didn't do it." Francisca attributed this lack of response by OMCV to lack of consideration and attention to Tira Chapeu's needs, in comparison to those of other *bairros*. "They didn't do it because they didn't pay us any mind...Because if they had paid attention to our group as they did to others, that's how it would have been done for us."

When talking about the effort to get a *jardin* constructed, most women referred to OMCV as "they." OMCV as an organization was seen as separate from the women of Tira Chapeu. "They" should get the *jardin* started or at least provide the resources to do so. A most important facet of this attitude came to light when I asked the women what they themselves could do to make the *jardin* happen. They enthusiastically cited their willingness and ability to help construct the building and make meals for other workers. Doing the organizing was someone else's job. They seemed to see themselves as laborers and cooks, but not leaders.

Women related the problems with getting a *jardin* to their general dissatisfaction about not getting what they asked for, about giving their time to OMCV but not getting their due in return. Rita contended that OMCV had not given the Tira Chapeu women their due, even though she also insisted that she was not a member of OMCV expressly for the purpose of gaining material benefits.

...everyplace they called on us, I ran together with Joana. But we asked and asked, and they haven't given us at least a place to keep our kids so we can be more relaxed. I have gone and come home late, at all times of day and night, gone to the interior [with OM]. But for all the asking we've done, even for just materials so we can build with our own hands, they haven't given us anything.

But still, I am PAICV until the end of my life. But the only thing that has been bad is this. They have done things everywhere for the population. But here in Tira Chapeu, we are even called whores--everyone picks a word -- some say: "look at those crazy people" because we do all these things but don't see any benefit. Of course they think we're idiots. Because nothing that we've asked for have they helped us with.

We go here and there--we always go. Nothing has obligated us to go, not because of the Party or OM or JAAC or whatever. We went on our own will. We like it, we want to go, and we go. But they haven't given us any support so that we are able to go. We have paid our dues, we have responded to their calling on us, we do what they tell us-- but they haven't helped us at all! The only bad thing I see is this....for us in Tira Chapeu, nothing has happened--not a jardin, not a school with good conditions, not a headquarters of the Party to hold meetings, not anything. We haven't seen anything!

According to Rita, not only did women go places for OM, but they also put up with abuse in order to be members of OM. This made having nothing to show for it more bitter.

We go to meetings at *Nhu Betu's* house, and there are lots of badly behaved people that come and say bad words and talk and swear at us, and this and that. The meeting gets disoriented so that we can't even hold it, because they won't let us.

She would have liked to have had at least a private meeting place provided by the Party, to avoid this problem.

But if we had our own place that the Party made for us to attend meetings, we would go in there and shut the door.... At least just to have our name written on the wall to show it's ours. Nothing has been done. That's why lots of people didn't vote for PAICV, because it doesn't do any good to vote for PAICV. They've worked a lot but we haven't seen anything....That's what I have to say.

Rita's complaint echoed the general dissatisfaction with PAICV expressed at this time of political transition. She related their lack of responsiveness to why people didn't vote for them.

Guida had similar views about OM's promises to provide jobs for women.



None of us of OM here was put into a job anyplace, has earned anything to be able to say: "I, because of OM, I got such and such job." Each one of us has her work here and there, selling fish or bread--hasn't found any job. Like those people in other places--Achadinha, Paiol, Len Katchor--each one employed, each one in her job. But here no! No one!

It's not just a question of their not having provided us a meeting place. It's not just a question of their not having provided us a *jardin*. Since they said in OM that all OM women would find employment, that they would arrange work for everyone--they said [this]--I have seen nothing from this....The only one who got anything is a niece of mine, a teacher--....She has hers. It was Joana herself that arranged this for me...

Joana supported Guida's view with these words:

I go out with you [Marla], door to door, house to house, I invite all these people here, I collect the money [dues] and take it to them and they put it there, they give me that receipt and I get back, my child without work, I ask them for a job for my child, I asked, they refused. I looked for something for Saunsa's daughter, for her to be a literacy teacher--she was in school. I looked for one for Julia. I looked for one for Rosinha. Instead, they put in someone that suspended us. They gave her work, but today she has abandoned it. She suspended us, and put us down, and left us here and went to another job because she found other work--me, with my girls here, OM didn't give them work. OM says that they have a guarantee in us, but we don't have any in them!

Her comments showed a feeling that OMCV had used women but hadn't rewarded them.

Other neighborhood and State infrastructures were looked at in a similar way. Malvina expressed this idea.

The things we want in OM, they don't give. We've asked for a lot. OM in Tira Chapeu, we've asked for a *jardin* for our kids. To keep them out of the street so they don't get hit by cars. I don't how long we've been asking for a *jardin*. We've asked for a place to raise pigs. I like it when we clean around here, but it lasts only about eight days at the outside. They haven't given us a place to throw the garbage. We've asked for everything in OM. But until today, we've haven't seen anything.

Here we need a lot of things. Even before I was in OM, people were asking for these things. But nothing.... They haven't done anything. Not a *jardin*. Not even a sewing room. Joana has asked a lot. But it's only Joana



who says these things....Here we have only really poor people. Fishermen, sellers of things. They can't afford to pay for the *jardin*. They can't do these things. Everyone has her difficulties. A *pai-di-fidju* who doesn't give support, sick people...

Malvina felt that this dependency on the outside reflected the reality of Tira Chapeu people. They didn't have resources of their own to do things. As in people's individual lives, when they didn't have something, they asked for it and/or hoped to get it from a *madrinha*. The group followed this same pattern.

Belinha's explanation of why people in Tira Chapeu didn't organize a *jardin* on their own, in a rented house, reiterated this kind of feeling.

We need so many things in Tira Chapeu, as we said at the meeting at *Nhu Betu's* house. A *jardin*...many want a place...for the kids so they can go try to make a living. If there's no one to stay with them, they stay in the street, with cars. So when the mother goes to earn a living, she can know her kids are okay.

Part of the reason a *jardin* was needed was apparently the breakdown of other help ties.

You can go to somebody's house and ask them to keep your kid, but the next day they might show you a nasty face. But if we had a [*jardin*], she would know they're fine. I don't have small kids, but I see many women in *Praia* who don't get out to make a living because they have nowhere to leave their kids...

Clearly, the responsibility lay with those who had resources to provide. When promises were not fulfilled, people stopped being willing to do their part.

Because people don't see action, they get discouraged. Many things we've had the idea would happen, haven't appeared. So we don't pay attention to *Joana* any more, lots of us, we think she's telling lies. We got discouraged. Lots of things--it was said they would be done, but they weren't. So we wait. Like that sewing room. It was said that *Joana* had asked for it. But it stayed like that; they didn't even come to do the preliminaries, to see if it would work.

Joana has asked for a lot...Maybe people don't rise up because Joana asked for all those things, but they never came to be.

Likewise, Fati claimed that if only they found that initial *ajuda*, people would get together and work to build the *jardin*. "Parents won't refuse. They won't refuse. If we just found some help, it would be done. Everyone will help."

From Antonia's words, it was clear that she saw Joana as the key actor in the *jardin* effort and, beyond that, she saw the OMCV organization as responsible for getting it going.

OM itself was saying they were going to make a *jardin* here. ...Joana told us, then we heard more conversation about it, but it stayed like that. Someone needs to rise up to give an order, to get the person who will watch the kids. We will give a certain amount to cover salary and rent. Like Joana and us, we are in OM, we are asking OM to help. So someone in OM should rise up, talk to everyone here who has kids to see if they want it--then it could start in *Nhu Betu's* house, with people paying, someone will take care of our kids for us.

So, although Joana and the organization as a whole might be slowly working for more autonomy, the women's views and beliefs--and the reality of scarcity that surrounded them--made that change a long way off.

Perhaps Nela best generalized the attitude about getting help from outside. She spoke of the expectations that came with the nation's independence.

I am still in agreement with Cape Verdean independence, but I would like it if when we ask for something, and we are putting forth an effort, that we are helped. It's not everyone who does things, it's few people who do things.... But we would also like it so that if we ask for something, to change something that's not good, that we get it, that we not just get told: tomorrow you'll get it. We should ask, and we should receive help...

We have a *jardin* here that we've asked for for a long time. But they just keep talking at us. Never more did we see it to actually put our kids in it. We haven't seen it.

A mother has her five kids. She's invited some place or she wants to do some work, she can't go because she has nowhere to leave her younger kids. When the older kids go to school, she has to leave the younger ones here, with the cars, fights, rocks being thrown--we have to leave our kids here. Because our situation is poor, difficult situation for a woman of Cape Verde. Not all Cape Verdean women, I will say, but many--we have a difficult situation. So difficult that I don't really know how to explain it well. Life is troublesome for us.

The women's reality is that there are few resources within Tira Chapeu that will make a difference in the quality of life there. They need to access outside resources. At the same time, by staying dependent on the outside, they are subject to outside factors and control and so don't always get what they need either. They participate in OMCV events because they want to, not because they expect some reward. Still, they think that they should be given support when they need it. They see this as OMCV's obligation toward their group, a part of the system of mutual help and loyalty that they see as right. The group's position as *fidjadu* gives them access to resources through their *madrinha*. In principle, the loyalty and help they provide to OM should be reciprocated. However, those resources don't always come through. The *madrinha* sometimes doesn't or can't do her job. In that case, the women's *fidjadu* position--and its accompanying dependency on *madrinha* resources--leaves them without alternatives.

#### Mobilizing Serra Malagueta: Barriers to Changing the *Madrinha* Mode

All around me was an awareness that the *madrinha* relationship with OMCV wasn't working as it should. Still, alternatives were lacking, both in practice and in vision. In spite of the Tira Chapeu women's negative experiences with their OMCV-linked *madrinhas*, few of them saw a different future. When OMCV's existence as a national organization came

into question, the Tira Chapeu women saw their own group questioned as well. In spite of this, the women continued to see their own future as a group in relation to the future of OMCV. Rosinha put it this way:

[The future] depends on the important people there....They are saying now that now OM has to rise up even stronger because now OM depends on its own means. Now it doesn't have any aid from the government any more. So it has to create funds by itself....From now on they won't be given anything. They have to look for ways to raise funds....If they don't raise funds, OM will end....Imagine all the employees that they have, for them to pay them--if they don't raise funds, how will they pay?...It's the same with OPAD-CV,<sup>26</sup> JAAC-CV, all of these.

When I asked her if the Tira Chapeu group would end if the OMCV national organization closed down, she responded: "If OM--if the mother stops, what can the children possibly do? They have to stop too....They have to stop....If OM continues, we will continue."

Joana insisted that OMCV would continue to find outside funds, with foreigners rather than the national government.

There are lots of foreign women here who will support OM also. They won't have government aid [*auxilio*], but they'll have this support [*apoio*]. Principally for funding for any *jardin* they might do, principally here in Tira Chapeu, the plot is already measured, but the ones who are supporting [OM] for the *jardin* of Tira Chapeu are the Dutch. They won't wait for the groups to raise their own funds...

We can't form a sewing group here to go and sell and create a fund, to put on an exhibition. They didn't give us that even when they had that aid, much less now when they don't have it....It's not because we are able--they are the ones who will make us able. It's not us. We can't do anything.

Her comments served to reinforce the viewpoint that local groups like Tira Chapeu's did not have to and perhaps could not be self-sufficient and/or autonomous. In Francisca's words, "we don't have the strength to stand it, to persist. We don't have that strength."

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<sup>26</sup>The national children's organization, a kind of scouts.

Only one member present at the discussion of the group's future, Flavia, suggested an alternative, doing small activities on their own that required few resources.

We could take a group of kids and have a dance....Get a group of kids and hold activities for them--dances, games, sports....I like kids, I always like to be around them, even though I'm not their colleague, I like it a lot. They've already asked me to organize trips for them, to hold dances for them. They pay 10 or 20 *escudos*. I get the cooperation of a friend to get the music and a tape-player...

But could the women realize this kind of vision in practice?

Joana herself had tried in fact to organize many events from the bottom up, but the real concentration of power and resources at the upper levels was continually reinforced. One stark example that took place during the election campaigns provided evidence that such a change would not be easy.

Joana had wanted to organize an OMCV group in her home village of Serra Malagueta. There was no OMCV group there, nor even a Party chapter. She had explained her idea to Sector level members of the Party with whom she had excellent relations. They had encouraged her and helped her organize until one day, word came from the First Secretary of the Urban Praia Sector of the Party that they couldn't do this mobilization visit to Serra Malagueta because there was no Party structure there. There could be no OMCV group if there were no Party. The First Secretary said she wanted the Tira Chapeu group to go to Trabesa Bashu instead, because the women's group there was falling apart. A strong leader there had gone over to MPD and the group was really losing strength. Joana's own idea was swept aside in the wake of this new plan.



Later I asked Joana what she thought of this decision. Although she had been about a month in its planning, receiving only encouragement from the Party before she got the "no" response, she expressed her agreement.

I thought it was right, because there's no [Party] structure there. The Party isn't there....You can't have an OM group if there is no Party structure there....That's just the way it is. You have to have the Party first....That's the way it is everywhere; there's the Party first; afterwards you create OM.

This story showed me the complexity of changing the relationship between a group such as Joana's and the larger structures that surrounded it. She had to abide not only by the decision-making power at higher levels, but also by their agendas. An OMCV organizing campaign to Joana's home town had suddenly become a PAICV election campaign visit to a completely different town where PAICV was having a problem. Not only did the women lack alternative visions and concrete possibilities of a future not dependent on the *madrinha* relationship, but the organization had habits that reinforced the dependency aspects of *madrinha* relationships. These habits went almost unnoticed and therefore virtually impossible to change.

#### A Closing Word

The system of social/economic ties that seems to be the propellor of Cape Verdean life was clearly whirring in the Tira Chapeu women's group and OMCV. Although women saw the group as a social outlet, they could not help but also see it as serving their many survival needs. This expectation fit with the patterns of help ties that occurred throughout Cape Verdean society to make life work. In the modern setting, the *madrinha* tie took on a particular institutional form which

blended personal ties with group ties. These ties often worked for the group, helping it access resources of various types. But they did not work to the extent that the women needed them to. They failed to obtain for the women one of the things they wanted most and which had been "promised" to them: a *jardin* for their children. And with that failure, the women, who depended almost exclusively on their ties to this particular *madrinha*, had no alternatives.

Yet they were beginning to envision alternatives within the new political framework of their country. Change in this realm would be difficult: *madrinha* dependency made sense because *madrinha* dependency did in fact work much of the time. But the women were beginning to come to terms with its failures and were making small stabs at different modes of operation, adapting the *madrinha* system by looking to *madrinhas* other than OMCV, PAICV, and the State.

Some of these attempts were related to the women's growing awareness that OMCV relations went against their belief that "we are all the same," that in some ways OMCV upheld rather than combatted the differential valuing of people that put Tira Chapeu women at the bottom of the heap. In the next chapter, I deal with the issues of status, control, and breaking out as they manifested themselves in the women's group.

## CHAPTER X

### BREAKING OUT: THE PROBLEMATIC STATUS OF OMCV MEMBERSHIP

This chapter treats the themes of self-respect and status (Chapter VII) and control and change (Chapter VIII) as I saw them in the Tira Chapeu women's group. These complex issues reveal important dimensions of the significance of group activity for these women. On one hand, group activity and its accompanying symbols appeal to the women's sense of pride. They receive special recognition and status because of their membership. In addition, some of the group's practical activities, such as literacy classes, address women's desire for self-respect along with their need for practical benefits. However, group membership decreases women's status to the extent that it falls outside the image of 'good woman'. Women must contend with their men's efforts to control them and the social criticism related to this in order to remain members. Thus, they must see some advantage to being members that makes this negative effect worth it. On a larger scale, OMCV's existence is changing how people think of a 'good woman' by encouraging respectable women to get outside of some of the customary bounds. Although still problematic, the image of 'good woman' is broadening to include women who go to school and attend activities outside the home.

Another aspect of women's concern with status and control is problematic in the women's group. They see enacted differential treatment according to social status, something they do not like. In addition, although OMCV encourages them to break out of certain controls, it also means conforming to new ones. In some instances, when

the women are unhappy with the new rules, they act out their belief that "resistance means separation" and leave the group.

### Pride in Membership: Symbols and Status

The women took pride in the symbols, activities, and leadership of their women's group. These were both pleasing in and of themselves and important for the status they showed. Through symbols and the recognition they got for participating in certain activities, the women were set apart as OMCV members. The uniform that some of the women wore to OMCV events was one such symbol. Sinta expressed her pride in wearing one:

We have our uniforms, we would put them on, so when we went places we went in the right<sup>1</sup> way...We go and where we go, we aren't ashamed...We know that we don't go all grouped together...When we all dress so that we each have our color, our clothes, all the same, we can go places...But if you go the way I'm dressed now...it's ugly...--in a place where there are lots of people, strangers that you don't know, you want to go dressed nicely, clean.

In the same way, Linara was proud of her OMCV shirt, which she had obtained when she joined while living in Sao Vicente. When OMCV women wore these shirts, she claimed, "people would see that we were an organization. No explanation needed."

Another symbol of status was the vehicle that came to take women from the *bairro* to various events. "When we go, we go with head held high; when we go, we go nicely with our cars, because they come and get us in a car. Get in the car, we go. *Sen konta*."<sup>2</sup> In a similar way, Artemisa seemed to view her membership card, dance invitations, and

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<sup>1</sup>Dretu, in Kriolu.

<sup>2</sup>Without shame, proudly.

receipts for dues paid as badges of importance. She had received these from the group she was a member of in Boa Vista, where she did business, although she was also a member in Tira Chapeu, where she lived. She kept these in a small plastic sleeve in a drawer and showed them to me during one of our interviews.

But the symbols were not the only things the women took pride in. Women also expressed pride in the group's activities. Sinta:

Everything [that OM does] is important. If we're called to go to such things, we go with our *tchabeta*.<sup>3</sup>...We do a great *batuku*. We are filmed. I think it's interesting! We get all *sabi*, this one hugs me, we are happy and *sabi*. When we're called, it's for this....Because when Joana is invited to such an event, she gets people together to play accordion, with guitar, we go and do all these things. But *sabi*! Everyone is happy with us! We are just conceited, old conceited women!

Rita expressed similar sentiments, but about different activities.

I've gone a lot of places, learned a lot of things, gotten to know places I never knew before. Before I would have been shy just approaching people I didn't know...You learn to talk to people, how to make friends with people, how to enter someone's house and greet them. You learn how to be among people, at ease, without worry...Even when those people came from Praia to hold meetings we used to feel ashamed. You'd go a long time before you'd speak.

Not only was she proud of the group's activities, but these activities taught her and increased her own self-esteem. According to Rosinha, OM actually taught women to have self-respect, in teaching them about their rights. I asked what kinds of rights women had that OM had taught her, and she replied: "That a woman can't let a man act certain ways to her; a woman can say things to a man, not just the man who can tell the woman."

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<sup>3</sup>The clapping and drumming done for *batuku*. For drumming, women used drums or, in recent times, wads of cloth tightly wrapped in plastic or paper to make a thumping sound when struck.



But this general attitude was not the only thing that OMCV taught. Through literacy classes, it collaborated in teaching women to read. This effort was closely tied into women's desire for self-respect and status. The ability to read and write conferred both of these. For many women, literacy was not simply a way to get a job or pursue further schooling. It was tightly entwined with their self-respect. They could go to someone to have a letter written for them but they wanted to do it themselves. They wanted to write their own names, to read and write their own letters, to "be somebody." When I asked Rita why she had wanted to go to the OMCV-sponsored literacy classes, she responded:

So I could learn!...Somebody who doesn't know at least how to sign his/her name is nobody....I wanted to know.

I was put in school [as a child]. But at that time, people didn't pay any attention to school. Children were put in school, but if you didn't go one day, two days, it was nothing. It's clear that mothers and fathers didn't pay any mind to school. So I started to go and then hide on small pathways, I didn't study and I came home. They [her parents] didn't care if I was going or if I wasn't going. It became so that I just missed [class]. I didn't take exams to pass in school. So I stayed not knowing anything--nothing!

I learned at literacy class. That's when I came to learn to do something. I saw grown men, everyone wrote letters, everyone read, but I didn't read. I used to cry because I didn't know how to read. People have written me secrets,... but I didn't know, I cried,...

She claimed that this was just a feeling inside herself; it didn't come from anyone else belittling her because she couldn't read.

This is just me who thinks like this. It's not because anyone put me down. Because here people don't have schooling. There's no one who has to put someone else down because he doesn't know how to read. To each his own. Each one with his own head. But I myself thought that someone without schooling was nobody.

Fati also wanted to learn to read and write, to be able to do it for herself.

I wanted to go [to literacy class] to learn to read so I could sign my name....to sign my name by myself, to go to school to

be taught so I'd know how to write. That way, when I went to Praia, instead of going to someone [to have something signed, written, or read], I would write with my own hand!...I wanted to know my own by myself, to read and know it just me!

Her wish was related to a personal experience: when she lost her husband to emigration, she couldn't read and write the secret things that might have saved her marriage.

Listen here, if I knew how to read, maybe my husband would have left me or maybe he wouldn't have left me--because I would have written him a letter that would have made him cry so that even if he'd wanted to leave, he wouldn't want to leave [any more].

The idea of guarding secrets was an important one for learning to read and write, for Rita as well.

Me, if you write me something that's only meant for me to know, I can't know it just me, because I don't know how to read. Me, I have to go give it to Joana or another person for him/her to read it...[that person] can go out and tell another person, until everyone knows about it.

The ability to guard private affairs was closely linked to self-esteem as well as status. If you kept your private affairs to yourself, others couldn't use them against you or criticize you for them.

The women who participated in literacy classes took great pride in their new abilities. Joana, too, although she didn't really learn to read herself, was extremely proud of the new-found skills and status of the women in her group, and her own involvement in the process. On International Literacy Day, September 8, two members of the Tira Chapeu class, one a woman, went to present a message at a celebratory assembly.

...the ones who went to present a message were Aldira and Lando. I did the message that was--their letter--...it wasn't the teacher who dictated it to them, it was me who dictated it. I even taught just like the teacher!...Yes!...When they went and said, "message from Tira Chapeu," when Firmino got up and gave his and sat down, and Aldira got up and gave hers and sat down, [there was] so much applause that I was puffed up, I felt just great! When I gave my message then with my own

mouth, that Corsino Tolentino [the then Minister of Education] was very thankful.

The women's new-found ability to read and write was important in and of itself, but clearly also because of the pride and self-respect it instilled. In this way, it became a group accomplishment, one that conferred status on the group, its leader, and the community as a whole.

Given the importance of status and respect, it's not surprising that the women also felt strongly about the status of their group's leader. The recognition she commanded from important people was one of the things that gave her esteem in their eyes, along with her ability to get things accomplished without hesitation. She was admired for her intelligence, boldness, and organizing skills. It was these qualities, and the respect they inspired, that confirmed her leadership of the group. Some group members qualified this esteem by her blindness. For others, her blindness increased their esteem or didn't even enter into consideration.

Francisca, for example, respected Joana because she wasn't afraid to go places and to speak out. Linara also admired this quality.

Joana will talk, she sure will. Joana goes right to the superior, she doesn't go to the secretary. She goes to Mr. Director, or if she wants, to the Minister, she'll wait and go to the Minister. She'll go to his house. A few days ago, she said to Tony: "Oh Mr. Tony, I don't want to go to the manager. I'll tell him what I want and he'll send me here and there; I want to go to the Minister. Me no, me, I'll go directly to him."

Joana's image as a leader who went places and got things done was part of what held the group together. Her status in the larger community and in high places was the glue.

But this ability to get out and speak out was not universally admired. Many criticized her outspokenness and considered it unseemly

for a respectable woman. Her behavior fell outside that of a 'good woman'. All of the women struggled with this aspect of their membership in the OMCV group. While membership conferred status, it also threatened it. In the next section, I discuss how this happened.

"We Were Called Whores":  
Control and Breaking Out

The issues of control and breaking out were perhaps some of the most important themes that emerged from women's words about how they saw their group. On one hand, men exercised control in the realm of the group by giving or denying permission to their mates to join. In addition, social reputation and the image of 'good woman' played a role in determining whether and how women participated in the group. On the other hand, many women defied these controls to join the group because they desired the benefits they saw: the group represented breaking out, opening their horizons, and going places. Moreover, the activities of the women's organization as a whole emphasized the idea of women learning, expanding, and finding valid alternative life choices. Its rhetoric contained the idea of changing the image of women as well as their reality, bringing them into contact with other women, new ideas, and into new relationship with their partners.

Women took a risk in exploring these new dimensions. In order to explain those risks, I revisit here the control exercised over women's actions--via men's direct control and social image, as discussed in Chapter VIII--as expressed in the women's group.

Men exercised direct control over women's decisions in the domain of the OM group, as they did in other domains. Many women talked about asking their mates for permission or approval to join the group. Sinta

waited until she was free of her mate and child-raising duties to become really involved in the group. She explained that her husband would not have let her go.

He wouldn't have let me, he would say: "You're going out to all these places, you'll do this and that." So I just sat. I didn't go anywhere. Well, I went to church but not regularly. Because, you see, he would say: "Oh, you're going to church?" You would go to church, you wouldn't want to...because [he would think] you had someone on the side.

So many of the women in the group were not living with partners that they had no need to ask. Yet others were controlled by the more general force of the image of 'good woman'.

Because women got out and about with the OM group, an activity that didn't fit the picture of the 'good woman', the group had a less than spotless reputation with many people in the community, among both men and women. Rita linked mates' refusal to let their women join to this problem of social reputation.

Some, their husbands won't let them. Because at one time, we were called whores--if we went out people would say: look at those whores there, where are they going?...Everyone mistreated us. Now it's better, but there are still some who say these things--men and women both. So some men don't like their wives to go. Because we go out and about at any hour with Joana. Wherever there's a party or a meeting, we go at the hour it occurs. Lots of husbands don't like it--say that we're whores. Even today, there are many women who don't join because of that. They want to join, but they can't because their husbands won't let them. This is the reason I've heard most.

Aldira also talked in some detail about this issue, denying that OMCV activities made them bad women.

They say it's not good, that we teach a bad example. But it's not so. Ever since I've been with Joana going here and there I've seen that the thing is okay. It's okay, it's interesting, it shows you a lot. People say [though] that women learn a lot of things [in OM], to do wrong things. Joana said that they say that women sleep around, get men--people find fault with Joana for all that. But none of this is true, because I've already gone with her, I've seen how we



women are, when we get out of the car, how we act. I for one will not accompany someone who's doing wrong; that, I won't go along with.

Sinta reinforced my understanding of this image of the group. She claimed that it was harder for young women, still controlled by mates and reputation, to join OM activities.

Young women are few among us; mostly we are old women of my age, but we go and we play and we are just fine. Lots of young women don't go. They don't go because they say we go out and wander--Joana must have told you this--that we go and we don't have anything to do, that we accompany Joana, that we don't gain anything by this activity, that we don't find anything [material] in it.

It would have been acceptable for women to "wander" if they gained some material benefit from it. That way, it would be part of their survival duties, fitting the 'good woman' mold.

The women who joined and participated in OM in spite of its mixed reputation were breaking out of the social expectations of the 'good woman' image, for better or for worse. They suffered the consequences of their spoiled image, but their willingness to suffer shifted the image itself. As an illustration of this dynamic, Joana herself both commanded respect and was disliked because of her outspoken behavior. Linara explained that the reason that many people didn't like Joana was because she did in fact break certain rules of conformity.

...they [people in Tira Chapeu] don't like her very much. Because she doesn't fool around. She's like me; me too I don't like to mince words. I don't say things behind their backs; I say it to their faces....she says things straight out. They don't like that. Myself, that's how I like a person.

There was obviously enough reward in OMCV membership to make women willing to deal with this kind of problem. The women who participated in the study in fact identified the group's activities that got them out

and about as a big part of what they liked about the group. To these women, breaking out of their relatively small circles of movement was a big part of what they seemed to be in it for. Joana explained how in the beginning of OMCV, women's relatively sheltered situation had made many hesitant to join.

...a lot of women were afraid to join. They didn't know what it was, they weren't familiar...we did more and more activities...we did campaigns, we went to Terra Branca, we came to Tira Chapeu, we went to Achada...we went and mobilized, mobilized people...

Thus, getting a group started required active mobilization, literally getting women out.

For Joana personally, joining OM and PAICV was an act of breaking away from the despair of her troubles. The contact with other people and the activity outside her small realm of daily survival brought her joy and new life.

At the time that I joined the OM group--...it was despair because of my husband that caused me to do this. To the extent that I really am obliged to that husband now, because if it hadn't been for that despair I probably wouldn't have joined. It made me happy because it was a lot of activity, very animated.

Saunsa too cited this very personal reason as one of those that brought her into OM activities. "The education, the social contact, and also I was a bit isolated, you could say, so I thought, let me join this organization of women with these trainings that they have and those other things. And we will organize, because I always like organized things."

Rita talked about getting out in two ways. The first was the chance to get out, literally, visiting places and seeing events.

I think it's good because you get to know a lot of things you didn't know, you go to meetings and you understand a lot of things. If you don't understand something, you ask....

Saturday we went to the gymnasium....I was really amazed by all those things they did there [a gymnastics exposition]....I had never been there before.<sup>4</sup> Me, I just go back and forth to Praia.

The second was getting out of shyness, widening her horizons, and learning how to do new things.

Before, I never went anywhere. It was only after I started to go to OM meetings that I knew how to act in a group of people. I just stayed with my family: I didn't go to dances, I didn't go to *batuku*, I didn't go to the movies, I didn't go to any meetings. But when I started to go to meetings, I felt pressure being among people. But I kept going and going, until I got oriented among people and now--in a meeting like this among people I have to talk! But before, if I had been at a meeting like this I would have been embarrassed and quiet and would have already left by now....Now if you ask me something I have to give you an answer.

To Flavia, going and knowing were what set OM women apart from women who were not in OM:

We in OM, many times, we go to other islands, or we go to the interior, or even within Praia here, we are called and we go to activities, unlike women who are not in OM. They don't go, they don't see many things that happen.

Fati, too, spoke enthusiastically about this element of group life.

Joana invited us to go to a meeting, we went to meetings, we went on trips, we went here, we went there, everywhere!...Many didn't know any place. But because of Joana, now we know. We went on trips all over Tarrafal, all over the interior, everywhere here in Praia, everywhere. It's only Joana that we went with....Lots [of those places] I got to know by going on these trips. I didn't know them.

Similarly, Toka wished she had "been in it even longer. It's good, beautiful. I like everything about it. It's nice. *Batuku, funana*. I love those. These modern dances on the radio I can't do, but I love those." Aldira claimed that without Joana, she wouldn't be familiar with many places.

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<sup>4</sup>This gymnasium is a ten-minute walk down the hill from Tira Chapeu and had been built several years before the time of this study.

When you go with her, if you didn't know certain places, you'll get to know them...If you see, she invites you to go with her to different places. When you go, only good places, you have fun...Me, for example, I went with Joana to a place in Achada that I'd never been to before, a place the Chinese had built [the National Assembly]. I'd never been there; it was Joana who took us there. If it weren't for Joana, I still wouldn't know that place.

Julia was a delegate to the Praia Sector Conference, along with Joana and two other young women in the group. When she went to the Conference, it was the first time she'd gone to such an event. "My first time, I wouldn't know [what to say there]." Undoubtedly, with more exposure, she would also learn how and what to say at such a meeting, a part of women's learning and growing through their OM group.

This kind of learning and growing seemed to be what made the women risk a tarnished social reputation. The goals and activities of OMCV as a whole supported the women's image of their group as a way of breaking out. OMCV implemented efforts at educating women in a number of realms. Up to the time of the study, their principal activities in education had been for literacy education and health and family planning education. They also did civic education through information-sharing about what was happening in the political life of the country, teaching women about their rights, disseminating information about the family code and the abortion law. They provided scholarships for women to continue schooling both in Cape Verde and abroad. They conducted various types of training for their staff and members at various levels. They organized exchanges among women from different parts of the islands. They encouraged the revitalization and practice of traditional music and culture. They organized trips for women to go places, to see the national assembly, the new port, the television station.

In their rhetoric, too, the element of 'getting out' was emphasized, especially since in the Cape Verdean social context, communication and contact were seen as so important. Getting out, getting to know, learning--these were all key phrases in OMCV documents. Following the 1990 Congress, the new aspect of this domain to be emphasized was vocational and professional training for women, seeking both to expand their horizons and to help them meet survival needs.

Yet women's being closed in still plagued some OMCV activities. As mentioned above, when the OM-sponsored literacy class was moved to nearby Terra Branca, several women who had participated in Tira Chapeu stopped going. It was too far to go at night, according to Rita, and she was too busy working to survive. "Me, I don't go out at night," she explained. Joana elaborated, "If there were a [literacy] school here, they would continue school....But for them to leave here to go to Terra Branca or to Achada [Santo António], that they won't do."

On the whole, then, OMCV activity represented 'breaking out'. The women's group was at the forefront of trying to expand women's horizons. At the same time, it was caught in the risks that this incurred: women who expanded their horizons would be looked at askance. But slowly, OMCV was contributing to the changing image of 'good woman' by continuing to get women out while showing that this didn't make them 'bad'.

The women themselves fought against the negative aspect of their group's image, in keeping with their belief that all people deserved equal treatment, discussed in Chapter VII. But the question of equal treatment was complex within OMCV and brought to light the women's



dissatisfaction with this element of OMCV internal relations. In the next section, I treat these issues.

"We Are All the Same":  
Respect and Status Differences within OMCV

In the face of the criticism group members heard, the women asserted that they deserved respect as much as any other women, defending the principle that "we all belong to God" discussed in Chapter VII. Fati wondered how people outside OM dared criticize them. "Are those who are not in the group better than those who are in it?! It's not obligatory, it's whoever wants to join." Sinta also defended their respectability in light of the criticisms.

...they see something else in it. They badmouth us even. They badmouth Joana. Us, even if we hear, we don't pay any attention. We don't pay attention. There were even two or so who came to see that the thing was good, and they joined too. But we don't pay any attention....In the way of the world, today you're here, tomorrow you're gone....In the midst of it, you have to put pleasure. Because the more displeasure you have, the more pleasure you have to put in the midst of it, because it's God who allows it. Only displeasure, no. You have to struggle with life.

For Aldira, the OMCV car that came to pick them up for activities was a symbol of the respectability of OMCV activities.

Women go out and fill up a car, but not because they've hired the car. It's OM people who send the car to get us, who take us, and who bring us to our homes again. I myself have gone so many times, I've gone a lot, but when we come home, undisciplined men, badly behaved men make it out to be something else, to the point where Joana hears it. They scold, it's not pretty, those things that they say. But this is only jealous men who do this. Nowadays one has to stay on the right road, and put others on the right road.

But this was not the only way that the women were concerned with everyone being "the same." They also felt that within OMCV, all groups and women should get the same treatment. When they didn't receive the

treatment they felt they deserved, they were unhappy. They felt the tension between the ideal of treating everyone as equal and actual differences in status. This tension wove through the women's group, as it did through their personal lives. Women considered that groups with more influence and power got more attention. They believed in the equality ideal, while struggling to reserve a place for themselves in a system of hierarchical status.

The problem of unequal treatment related to a dilemma of the *madrinha* system. Because of control over resources being outside Tira Chapeu people's hands, they often did not get resources when they needed them. As in individual lives, the problem was: "if you don't have the right ties, you don't get the resources."

The story of the group's efforts to hold clean-up campaigns in Tira Chapeu illustrated the problem of differential treatment. This story started when, as part of the celebratory events surrounding its first Congress, OMCV sponsored a clean-up campaign which was to be a contest among the *bairros* of Praia. The date set for the cleanup contest was July 1, 1990. Joana called out her troops in Tira Chapeu, even though the center of the organizing commission was Nela and the Residents' Commission. Joana made sure I knew I was invited, and I said I would go.

I got there the day of the campaign in the afternoon, just after one o'clock. I found the clean-up largely finished already, but piles of garbage collected at various points around the neighborhood were still sitting. The removal equipment (pick-up and dumpster trucks) that the city sanitation department had promised to send hadn't arrived. Joana and a few other women stormed off to Terra Branca to get help,

Joana exclaiming that Terra Branca had equipment because "people with degrees and [government] ministers live there." But the promise she secured from the OMCV women at work in Terra Branca to lend their trucks also did not come through and by the end of the day the garbage still sat.

The next day, the winner of the clean-up contest was announced: Terra Branca. The Tira Chapeu people who had helped clean up, including many women, were discouraged. They complained that they were willing to work but they never got the support or resources they needed in order to do a job well. The organized structures of government ignored them and their needs. Why was it that Terra Branca had no trouble getting the cooperation and resources they needed and Tira Chapeu did? It was a rhetorical question; they knew the answers.

Weeks later in Tira Chapeu, the trucks had still not come and garbage had been rescattered by the wind. One afternoon in mid-August, I was talking to Nela and asked her if the trucks had ever come that day. 'Never', she said, 'they haven't ever come, and the garbage is still piled up today.'<sup>5</sup> I started to tell her what happened when I went down to Terra Branca with Joana. But she interrupted me, asking me if I didn't see the difference between the campaign there and the one in Tira Chapeu. 'We fight to make this a better place, but they don't give us any support. They say they're going to do something, but they don't do it.' She described Terra Branca as the neighborhood the government built. 'No wonder they won first place,' she said. 'No one even looks there, they just know it's the best place. The people who sat on the

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<sup>5</sup>Quotes appearing in single quotation marks are paraphrased statements as recorded in my research journal.

judge's panel to judge the cleanup were all from Terra Branca, so no wonder they won.'

Nela further commented on the campaign later, linking it to the idea that the poor people of Tira Chapeu didn't get the treatment that others did.

We in Tira Chapeu we are a little miserable. We have few means. Sometimes I feel as if we were not Cape Verdeans. In our OM group. Because we do things like a clean up campaign. We ask for some support to be given. So we can clean our *bairro*, as women, for our *bairro* to be clean, and we aren't given this support. They deceive us with their trucks, their garbage containers, with their materials so we'll do our thing--but we don't ever see this material when the time comes.

Our group of OM should be a strong group, as it already is. In every part of Praia, there is an OM group. But in my way of seeing, our OM group here is strong, full of good will. Our First Secretary, *Camarada Joana*, is blind, but she has a strong spirit, that, joined with us, we can do anything. I am a member of OM, militant of the Party, popular militia, many things. President of the Residents' Commission of Tira Chapeu--I think that we work okay--because we have a lot of deficiencies, but if we were given support, lots of things that we've asked for help to do would move ahead.

Her words that "sometimes I feel as if we were not Cape Verdeans" hinted at the same idea of preferential treatment that came clear in Francisca's statements about the clean-up efforts.

There [in Terra Branca] there are Ministers, so they have to have a garbage truck there. Here in Tira Chapeu, there's no one so [our garbage] is not picked up....There was a [garbage] container here but I don't know what happened to it. . . . it's not here anymore like they have them in Terra Branca. There, they have servants who take the garbage out to the containers...But Tira Chapeu is dirtier than any other place, like that place over there [points to it] where the garbage comes right up to people's doors.

But the story of cleaning up wasn't over. This incident, piled on top of what I got the feeling were countless others like it, had its effect on further clean-up efforts in Tira Chapeu. In October of that same year, the Red Cross youth group sponsored a Tira Chapeu clean-up

campaign. They asked for local participation in planning and cleaning up. Joana was contacted by the group, and she again went to work, enlisting the Party's support by asking them to put an announcement on the radio about an organizing meeting to be held at the end of October in Tira Chapeu. The organizing meeting was held, and a local Party leader explained how things had gone in the last city-wide campaign, how neighborhoods that really didn't have the problems Tira Chapeu did got a lot of trucks and other material support, and Tira Chapeu had got one truck for one hour. The Red Cross leader reaffirmed that his group had support of the necessary type and that they knew that Tira Chapeu lacked this kind of help which was why they'd chosen it, besides the fact that it had a big garbage problem. Red Cross's mission was to reach those areas where the State couldn't go ('because it's too big, it can't reach into little holes'), he said.

The next day, Sunday, October 28, was the campaign. Down at the worksite, the long hill looking off toward Monti Burmedju, the Red Cross people gathered, but not too many Tira Chapeu youth. A few more showed up later. Between 'us' of Tira Chapeu and the Red Cross youth, there must have been 40 people ready to work, yet the group had provided rakes enough for another 20 at least. A huge hillside down into the dry riverbed was cleaned. But several Tira Chapeu people sat at the top of the bluff watching the action, or went about their business. Some of the comments from Tira Chapeu people up above who didn't work included these:

- A woman cleaning chickens: 'I've cleaned up so much. If everybody cleaned up around here like I've cleaned up, this would be a clean neighborhood.'



- One of the women I was used to seeing at Toti's: 'I didn't know about it and am involved in cooking lunch now. But I'll help the next time; clean up has to be more than one time, doesn't it?'
- A young man: 'Me, I only work if it's paid.'
- Another man: 'I don't even have a house. I have nothing. How do you expect me to be doing this work?'
- Elena: 'I clean up the area in front of the bath house everyday; I don't think I need to do that other cleaning too.' (She was cleaning that area while we were down below working.)
- Arlete (Julia's mother): 'Two days. That's all the longer it will stay clean. You'll see; two days later people will have dirtied it again.'

I felt disappointed in the lack of participation of Tira Chapeu people during this second clean-up campaign, organized with such good intentions by the Red Cross youth. At the same time, I could well understand it. The experience of the OMCV clean-up campaign, on top of many other similar experiences and the lack of permanent solutions to the garbage problem, had taught them not to participate. Clean-up campaigns didn't accomplish much. They didn't even necessarily make the place any cleaner when the workers didn't get the equipment they needed to pick up the garbage. And when they did make things cleaner, it was only temporarily. People just had to keep cleaning up. The people to whom the OM group had ties did not come through with resources that would help them change their situation permanently. They treated them in a way that emphasized, rather than changed, their position in the social hierarchy.

In spite of this problem, women held to the ideal of equal value within and outside their group. During a group meeting, I asked the participants whether women in OMCV were the same as women not in the organization. "We are the same. We are one. We are all women," Rita defended, thinking I meant to ask if their intrinsic value were different. Others joined her in this defense. "We are all the same," Joana explained. "Everyone is OM, just that some women have wanted to enter and I've invited them and they've entered. But everyone is the same." Only when I finally made myself clear that I wondered if they didn't have some different or additional experiences, or some benefit, because of their membership that other women didn't have, did they respond with ease that OMCV participated in things that non-OMCV women didn't have the chance to do.

So while OMCV provided women certain opportunities which 'liberated' them from their traditional confines as women, it continued to reinforce their socio-economic position and the hierarchy itself through the differential treatment that was part of the way things worked. The way things worked also involved other constraints, new ways the women had to conform. In the next section, I discuss how some of these appeared.

The Abortion Law Meetings:  
Conformity to Connections and Resistance as Separation

Although the OM group represented breaking out of certain social norms, it also meant reinforcing others or conforming to new ones. The ideas that resistance meant separation and connection meant conforming, explored in Chapter VIII, played themselves out in the women's group as they did in the women's lives. Some of the requirement to conform came

from the group's alliance with PAICV. Another, more subtle, factor was the State's top-down approach to solving women's problems; women seemed to have to accept these solutions or leave the institution.

The binding connection between OMCV and PAICV was illustrated in the story of Joana's attempts to mobilize Serra Malagueta, described in Chapter IX. In that case, Joana had to follow the needs and rules set by the Party. In another instance, the Terra Branca-Tira Chapeu group, which had been one, split into two groups following the Party's own split. Aside from the fact that the Party had split in this way, there didn't seem to be any reason why the Terra Branca-Tira Chapeu OMCV group should split. Joana herself told this story.

The group decided to form two groups--but it was really because of...the Party members of Tira Chapeu. Members of the Party from Tira Chapeu were included in Terra Branca. The First Secretary was from Terra Branca. But there was a Tira Chapeu committee. Then a young man came along--he wanted to be First Secretary--he put his pride in the middle of the affair...so he asked to divide the groups. He went to the Party--to the Sector--the Sector accepted and so they formed two groups: one in Terra Branca and one in Tira Chapeu...

After they founded the Party here--JAAC too was Terra Branca/Tira Chapeu. JAAC also divided...then OM was requested to divide too. OM divided last...At first all of the members were sad. They didn't want this. But now the group is much more satisfied...this way. If Tira Chapeu wants to call on Terra Branca for an activity, we call on them--an exchange; also if Terra Branca wants to call on Tira Chapeu for an exchange, they call. We are happy this way.

In spite of this insistence that the group was now "satisfied," at other moments Joana declared that the split had left the Tira Chapeu group out in the cold afterwards, Terra Branca members having more economic power and clout. She felt that they had used this clout to benefit the entire group and both communities when the groups were unified, and would have continued to do so had they remained together. As it was, the low-income members of Tira Chapeu had little influence and few means.

Regardless of whether it was "satisfied," the OM group had to follow its PAICV partner's lead. Because of being connected, it seemed, the group had to conform.

The story of the abortion law meetings presented an illustration of the other facet of the conforming/resisting dilemma. The State, in taking a stand legalizing abortion, sought to serve women's interests and help them solve problems. But the State's approach, carried out through OMCV, seemed to many women to require them to agree. Many of them didn't, and left the organization as a result, or expressed their dissatisfaction by diminishing their participation. In other words, they resisted by separating.

Around the time that the abortion law was being considered and then passed, OMCV held meetings to inform people about it and discuss the issue. The law legalized abortion during the first trimester, when performed by a doctor in the hospital, on demand by the pregnant woman. Clandestine abortion, and abortion performed by unqualified persons, continued to be heavily punished.

In this largely Catholic country, abortion is a complex issue. Most people, including women, disagreed with abortion and felt it should not be legalized. Some felt that it should be legal in order to save a mother's life but not otherwise. At the same time, in spite of this overwhelming voice against abortion expressed aloud and in public, clandestine abortion has been--and in fact continues to be--widely practiced.

It was in the process as much as in the content of the abortion law meetings that crisis was provoked in the OMCV group. Many women felt that their voices against the law were not heard, that they had to go

along with it because it had already been decided. Some left the group altogether as a result. Clarisa, for one, felt she couldn't stay with a group of people she so strongly disagreed with.

It was this matter of the abortion law that made me turn away [from the group]. I had my opinion that I gave that was negative, that an abortion law shouldn't exist in our land--or in any land...when I advanced my opinion, I felt that many people there [at the meeting] didn't agree with me, weren't happy with that. I said to myself I would remove and leave you all.

Others' participation diminished. Saunsa, who stayed with the group even though she disagreed, spoke about these meetings in her interview, articulating views similar to those of many women who had in fact left OMCV.

I don't know if they were unhappy or what. But from that time, I felt this problem [with OM]. Then I began not to participate much in meetings because I found that it's not an open meeting for one to bring one's problems to it. Because if it's an open meeting for one to bring one's problems, I even think we here would be more developed.<sup>6</sup> Because I might bring up my problem and be given ideas. But clearly so that I can understand concretely. It's not right to hide things from me when I am seeing those things.

For example, those people [the OM leaders]--I might have some knowledge of that thing but not too much, there might be people who have more knowledge than me. But there are also people who have less knowledge than me. And they will stay ignorant. We have to proceed with things clearly. My conscience tells me to go and I go, another's tells her to go and she goes. But if it doesn't, she shouldn't go.

Because if I lead a group of people, I have to proceed clearly. I can't go deceiving the people I'm leading. Wherever I go and people bring up problems or issues, they should be dealt with clearly...If it gets to being falsehoods, I can't...

She contended that there had been no room for disagreement at the meeting. She was also upset that other women seemed to just go along

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<sup>6</sup>*Dizinvolidu* - also means: educated, advanced.



with the idea of abortion because the State thought "there are so many people in the world."

Neither that girl [who led the meeting], nor those people who were there, none of them agreed with what I said, they were all against it...Everyone showed that they thought the thing was good because there are so many people in the world...

We have ways to avoid [pregnancy] that everyone should know about, everyone should know how to avoid [pregnancy], as individuals. Because our country is poor, they don't have means...But we have to look for a way. We shouldn't do this contrary thing.

But everyone was against this...Even other women. Some who didn't go against me, didn't support me either...But others showed their discontent [with me] very clearly...I was shocked, upset by that.

So I really don't go much anymore; even if I go I don't participate a lot. I don't give my opinion, because it's not an open meeting where one can put forth her idea. I should have to go along with the idea of someone else?! I should be able to put forth my idea, clarify...

Clearly, Saunsa was upset not only by the fact of legalized abortion, but by the process and attitude with which it was introduced. Because the State felt the law was good for the country, women were supposed to accept it.

Indeed, part of the rationale for this law articulated to the women emphasized control rather than free choice. Clarisa remembered some of the reasoning used at the meeting:

I remember they said that in China, a couple has only two children...that in China the population is small. And that in our land, our land is poor, and there are a lot of children and not enough food to feed them...that's what I remember about this abortion law.

Although the OMCV discussion leaders later addressed the matter of protecting women's health, Clarisa remembered the idea of population control as the main motive behind the law. Because of her stance against abortion, she felt she had to resist. She did this by separating from the group.

Later in the research, Saunsa spoke at more length about what was, in her view, behind the problem of conforming. One day, she listened again to her original interview and on hearing the part about the abortion meeting, she laughed. I asked her why. She responded:

I was courageous to say that--at one time it was a dictatorship, those things weren't said--at that [abortion law] meeting, I spoke out, but if you spoke out, at the headquarters they'd put a mark against your name if you didn't agree with something. I speak out but even the women around here don't agree with me, think I should just go along.

That's the way people are educated here, to just follow what one person says; they don't have a voice. That's Tira Chapeu and Cape Verdean tradition. Always one person saying what to do and others following. Maybe because of the slavery tradition--people were always afraid of being hit or killed, and that stayed until now. Maybe that will change with time now...

In OM, they sometimes say something's black when I see it's white. They don't say, "well, it's white but there's this and this and this."

Saunsa sought an ideal of more openness within the group.

Interestingly, she was the group member at loggerheads with Joana on occasion. As the country moved into its multi-party phase, Saunsa supported the new *Movimento para Democracia* (MPD) with ardor while Joana remained the staunch PAICV member she had always been.

Saunsa's daughter, Tina, also supporting MPD, recognized the impulse toward separation that most people associated with change, but expressed hope that change didn't have to mean this, that people would learn that connection didn't have to mean conforming to one rule. "We don't need to be enemies just because we're different parties. People think this, though; they confuse one thing with the other. The atmosphere of the campaign is confused, but it will straighten itself out."

By her very actions, Nela also expressed this hope. She remained in support of OMCV and PAICV during the 1990-91 election campaigns, but openly critiqued both and talked of change. She felt that PAICV had not lived up to its promises, that change was needed. But instead of abandoning this party, she hoped to change it from within.

I entered the OM group with the spirit of a militant of the Party. The number one woman of the Party here in Tira Chapeu, in 1974, April 25, 3:00 in the morning, after we were given liberty, I had my eyes wide open right along with men for Cape Verde's independence. I felt strong support for seeing a black flag here....I am still in agreement with Cape Verdean independence,...But we would also like it so that if we ask for something, to change something that's not good, that we get it, that we not just get told: tomorrow you'll get it. We should ask, and we should receive help...

We are full of poor people, poor until we can even feel that we are poor, but we have a strong and rich spirit. It's enough that we have our health, our spirit is rich for our land, Cape Verde. Rich! I won't give up--always PAICV! But I want it to be a strong PAICV. I want it to be a PAICV that, if we go out into the street and we hear a person talking badly of PAICV, it will shock our hearts. I want us to be a strong PAICV, that no one will speak badly of us.

The idea of change within an existing situation that Nela expressed was new and challenging. During the period of political transition, the questions of conformity and change involved OMCV and its members in profound and personal ways. The issue of conformity through connection became key to OMCV's very identity: was OMCV a women's organization or was it a branch of the system of power in place under PAICV? Could it be both? As discussed in Chapter IV, when I left the country in May 1991, the organization was still struggling with these issues.

#### Dealing With Change: The Pivotal Position of OMCV

OMCV and its member group in Tira Chapeu were key sites of activity in regard to changing the rules of social status both for women and for

society as a whole. Their pivotal position was characterized by a series of seeming contradictions or paradoxes. Caught in the dilemmas of self-respect, differential status, and control and change discussed in this chapter, the group was also challenging them. Frozen in the image of 'good woman', the group also offered women a way to broaden their horizons and still remain respectable. Bound by the importance of social status, women found ways to improve their self-esteem through activities of their group. Tied to rules of differential treatment according to the socio-economic hierarchy, the group also brought women of different levels into close contact. Women of the 'lower' levels of the hierarchy were contesting the treatment they were handed out. The relationship between the State and local groups was challenged by women's insistence that the State's policies and procedures take their wishes into account. OMCV women were both maintaining the status quo and slowly and subtly changing it.

## PART IV

### FURTHER ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

Two chapters comprise this concluding section of the dissertation. Chapter XI, "Implications and Questions Remaining," seeks to further interpret and analyze the data presented in Chapters V through X. In this chapter, I attempt to look at the OMCV organization in its social and political context, based on the implications that can be drawn from the perspective of the Tira Chapeu group. I pose some dilemmas I see facing OMCV and women in Cape Verde, in light of this study. Some of these dilemmas appear to me to need resolution in order for women to move forward in their struggle in Cape Verde. Others are posed simply as issues for the organization, and others working with it, to be aware of. The questions emerging from the study and remaining to be explored also appear in this chapter.

In Chapter XII, "Looking Back," I reflect on what the research experience has taught me about doing 'feminist' research and 'ways of seeing.'



## CHAPTER XI

### IMPLICATIONS AND QUESTIONS REMAINING

In this chapter, I further interpret and analyze the themes discussed in the previous six chapters. What conclusions--both practical and theoretical--can be drawn from studying this women's organization in depth? What can I say now about the problems and value of this women's organization and how its problems might be resolved, its value increased? In this chapter, the tentative answers to these questions are interspersed with some of the many questions emerging from the study which remain to be explored. In footnotes, so as to construct parallel commentaries, I relate this interpretation to the 'ways of seeing' proposed in Chapter II. The commentary in the principal text is a grounded interpretation of the field data and the commentary in footnotes relates this interpretation to the theoretical frameworks in relevant ways.

#### The Big Picture: Women's Realities and Women's Consciousness

The theme of the economic imperative pervades the picture of the lives of women in Tira Chapeu, intertwining with other themes, especially the theme of help ties.<sup>1</sup> These women live on or near the

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<sup>1</sup>Because of the pervasiveness of economic questions, it might be said that my interpretation is fundamentally based in the gender-class 'way of seeing', which highlights the importance of such questions. In fact, the issues brought up in the gender-class perspective resonate through my interpretation, in consonance with what I 'saw' in Cape Verde. My familiarity with the issues of this viewpoint, a tendency to give credence to dependency theories of development, and the realities of Tira Chapeu life all contributed to my seeing in this way. However, these themes do not stand alone. I see them within the perspective of the ideology-consciousness framework, which poses economic issues in *relation to* the cultural beliefs and social patterns that interact with

edge of survival. Those who bear the unique responsibility for the survival of their families depend most heavily on the help ties that ensure survival, social relations upheld by both cultural values and economic realities. As Finan and Henderson (1988:100) state, "to manage one's life as an individual is as culturally unconvincing to a single woman as it is economically unwise." Single or coupled, women seem to bear the bottom-line burden especially when economic conditions grow more difficult. Given this, all women choose strategies of association and mutual help.

This picture of Tira Chapeu women situates them in a particular place in Cape Verdean class structure. For the situations they face and the choices they make are not those of all Cape Verdean women. As Nela said, life is difficult for Cape Verdean women--but not all Cape Verdean women.<sup>2</sup> The Tira Chapeu women are different from women of the Praia plateau, different from the wives and daughters of heads of state or old land-owning or civil servant families with schooling. And while most Cape Verdean women are poor, even within this poverty, they differ. The women of Tira Chapeu are different from the rural poor, whose close ties

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them, social structures *in relation to* the individual consciousness and actions that create and are created by them.

<sup>2</sup>The gender-class and ideology-consciousness 'ways of seeing' suggest that women are not an undifferentiated group, that their experience can be fully understood only in terms of the other social categories that define their lives in relation to gender. It's clear that this is the case for the Tira Chapeu women, particularly in terms of socio-economic class. In Cape Verde, socio-economic 'class' is a complex thing. It blends factors of income with family background, connection to Portuguese or Kriolu culture, access to schooling, access to emigration opportunities, and, to a small but diminishing extent, race. In addition, within the lowest class, there exist variations according to location in rural, peri-urban, or urban environments. As becomes clear throughout the discussion following, these distinctions are essential parts of how women relate to each other and organize.

to the land and extended families give them some resource base to depend on. They are the peri-urban poor, cut off from agricultural survival strategies. Also not fully integrated into typical urban strategies of formal employment and schooling, they create and re-create new strategies of their own.

In this scenario, it's not surprising that a 'modern' State-organized women's association such as the Tira Chapeu OMCV group would play a role in the help tie strategies that are part of peri-urban survival. The OMCV version of the *madrinha* system is only one of many modern adaptations of broader mutual assistance relationship models. It is part of the continued fight for security in an insecure situation.

The idea of security dominates women's rationales and words, in a context that provides them very little of it. Relationships are looked to for the increased economic security they might offer. And yet, perhaps because this need for economic security dominates, the women of Tira Chapeu are--and always have been--in some ways freer to remove themselves from relationships that are unsatisfactory in terms of security, especially relationships with male partners.<sup>3</sup> They seem less bound by tight emotional dependency, perhaps because survival is such a pressing issue. This seems to be especially true of older women whose

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<sup>3</sup>This line of reasoning enters into issues raised in the ideology-consciousness 'way of seeing'. It is not only their bare economic need that leads the women to follow that need even beyond societal norms. It is also the fact that as members of Kriolu Cape Verdean culture (see Chapter IV), they are more loosely bound by the expectations of Portuguese Cape Verdean culture. The socio-cultural and ideological norms of Cape Verdean society are complex, not unitary. There is not one clear dominant ideology for all people. The co-existence of conflicting ideologies affects women's ways of being and interacts with women's own consciousness of how they should be. The following paragraph continues discussion of this point.

grown or almost-grown children can help the family survive. For many of them, it appears, 'breaking out' is a practice that has a kind of tradition. As Sinta suggested, in leaving her mate, she did only what her mother had done before her; she pursued alternative survival strategies when her mate proved more of an obstacle than a support. At the same time, with the modern State, a new awareness grows that a "government job is a husband," perhaps even more reliable than a husband, and reinforces women's 'tradition' of being providers, the logic of leaving mates who don't provide.

On the side of cultural values, another phenomenon supports the women's relative freedom. The Catholic-founded ideals of monogamous Church marriage and the 'good woman' seem to float more lightly on the surface of life for women of this class than they do for women of classes more closely involved in Portuguese Cape Verdean culture and the structures of power. In Tira Chapeu, few women have Church weddings before the birth of their first child, although they may marry later when their economic circumstances permit. Everyone understands these realities of life, that it takes money to have a Church wedding; no one looks down on those who are not married. Everyone understands that it makes no sense to stay with a man who's not providing. Everyone understands that a woman must have children, whether married or not, in order to have some help in later life, given the unreliability of male partners.<sup>4</sup> The Church is important and its sanctions are taken

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<sup>4</sup>Finan and Henderson (1988:101) argue that "the single-mother household is a social institution that has arisen to meet subsistence demands in a context of economic scarcity and low-yielding agriculture." In rural society where the resources of land and labor are more accessible to families than to single women, forming a family serves as an alternative survival strategy in rural Santiago island, even in the face of the the social stigma attached to it. I would argue that

seriously, but only when life's harsh realities permit. Everyone "is the same;" their life circumstances don't allow them to sit in judgment on one another.

Even legal developments support women's freedom to move out of unsupportive relationships with male partners. The protective law now allowing women legal recourse to child support from the fathers of their children applies to single parents as well as married, those living apart as well as those living together. This law recognizes the widely practiced *reality* of Cape Verdean life instead of conforming to *ideals* which are unattainable for most.

But this argument does not intend to imply that exercising this freedom is unproblematic for women. Making choices is difficult, influenced by complex dynamics of economic realities, class structure and social status, and power. As I heard woman after woman describe her choice to leave an unsupportive mate, and looked around at her difficult life circumstances, I began to wonder if this looked like "freedom" to me only because of its difference from my own background, one in which the norm is monogamy involving strong emotional interdependency. To what extent was leaving her mate a choice she made, and to what extent the result of the absence of an option he didn't or couldn't even offer? A general social expectation asked but didn't obligate men to give. A

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similar dynamics surround women's choice to form families without marriage partners in the peri-urban setting of Tira Chapeu, although I disagree with some of the other points made in the article. For instance, they argue that having children out of wedlock creates very slim chances for a woman to marry in the future. In Tira Chapeu, however, it was normal for couples to have even three or four children before marrying either each other or some subsequently chosen mate. This was true of older women from rural areas as well as younger ones raised in Tira Chapeu.



woman's self-respect required that she leave a man who had done so poorly by her. The demand on women, on the other hand, was much more than a vague expectation; it was the very stuff of survival. As Joia said, a woman can get out and walk all day selling from a tray of fruit or clothes or fish on her head because she's thinking about her hungry children waiting for her at home. 'Breaking out' of relationships with male partners does not alleviate this burden, but in fact emphasizes women's responsibility for survival. Is 'breaking out', then, a new pattern of freedom or a reinforcement of women's role as central provider in circumstances of need? The new consciousness that "a government job is a husband" perhaps both liberates and maintains a status quo. It frees women from feeling they have to find a husband to provide for them. It frees them from the restrictions and abuses men often impose when providing for a woman. If in fact a woman can find a government job, it does provide her with more security than some husbands might. At the same time, it reinforces women's central position in supporting the family, customary in this class. It does not ease any burden. And if a woman can't find a government job, she continues in the same cycle of struggle, with or without a mate.

Moreover, the women *desired*, on some level, to conform to the more respectable standards associated with remaining with one mate. The fact that they had to abstain from going to confession all the years they were living in a common law union with a man, either resident or non-resident, was not meaningless to them.<sup>5</sup> This norm is part of the

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<sup>5</sup>For at the same time that people don't judge each other, they do heavily judge each other; thus the power of public opinion as a social control mechanism. People's beliefs are in a state of flux, creating a situation of co-existing but contradictory ideologies. The laws ensuring child support for children born within or outside of marriage

complex of Portuguese Cape Verdean standards which still, to some extent, confer higher status. But women had to put this problem aside in face of the more compelling demands on their lives. In addition, although the women denied that people were of unequal value, this very denial sprang from their daily encounter with class stratification and even mistreatment because of it. They resent their place in the scheme of things and combat the mistreatment with their sense of pride. They are aware that society operates on the basis of preferential access to resources. They are aware that their 'differences' cast them outside the inner circle.

Their relationship to the inner circles is not membership, but rather access through *madrinha*-type ties. This relationship is also not so "free." Their role in it locates them in the class structure. And like the paradox of the belief that "we are all the same" co-existing with the resentment of difference, being the asker carries the stigma of lower status and at the same time carries no stigma at all; it's just the way life is. The bonds that allow women access to the inner circles also have their obligations. The *fidjadu* can't complain about the gift offered and must show loyalty to its giver. In addition, only a very substantial gift allows the *fidjadu* to make any permanent change in her life situation. These do occur, but not every day; there are not enough *madrinha* resources to go around. The *madrinha* system works; it does help people to survive and even improve their lives. But the very fact

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are part of a wave of attempted social change following independence aimed partly at de-valuing Portuguese Cape Verdean norms and valuing Kriolu Cape Verdean norms. But this kind of change is incremental. The shift is a struggle, the result being that people believe both systems at the same time. Women believe both that being unmarried is no problem and that they should be married to be truly respectable.

that it does work calls it into question. Doesn't it depend for its continued existence on there always being a *madrinha* with many resources and a *fidjadu* with few? Individuals may rise, but society as a whole doesn't become more egalitarian. Power attaches to the *madrinha*. A *madrinha* relationship carries with it conformity to the *madrinha's* wishes and ways.

For OMCV, this interpretation of the lives of the Tira Chapeu women who participated in the study has many implications. Here I pose some of these implications as questions to OMCV for self-analysis and suggest some tentative ideas on important issues based on the data of the study.

Acting it Out:  
Realities and Consciousness in Organizational Action

"These Days, Things Are Only With a *Padrinhu*": OMCV's Ties to the State

What is the nature of OMCV's relations to PAICV and the State?<sup>6</sup> How have those relations affected the organization's identity, goals, strategies, and actions? The relationship between OMCV and PAICV has been close and mutually beneficial, as well as problematic. A *madrinha* relationship in the most positive sense of that word, OMCV's close association with the Party gave it access to power and resources. Perhaps the legal conquests it has battled and won, for example, would

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<sup>6</sup>This question is central in the gender-class 'way of seeing', as is the role of the State in maintaining class structure. This question became important in the field study as well, for two main reasons: 1) I was studying an organization with close ties to the State and Party; 2) those ties were hotly debated and heavily criticized as part of the wave of political change washing over Cape Verde at the time of the field study. The analysis points out the existence of the dilemma of whether State-women's organization relations are relations of cooperation and support or relations of cooptation. This dilemma is suggested in much of the research on women's organizations of this type in other African countries, as outlined in Chapter II.

not have been possible had not OMCV leaders been on the inside of Party structures. Moreover, considered a public good, OMCV lived in part on the beneficence of the State, in the form of a subsidy for the salaries of its employees.

This association has also carried with it the imbalance of power of the *madrinha* relationship. When Party needs conflicted with women's development needs, Party needs often won out. As an illustration of this, while OMCV had declared its independence from PAICV at the July 1990 Congress, during the December 1990 election campaigns, OMCV Sector visits to the base groups went begging because they conflicted with Party activities that OMCV Sector members were involved in. In another case, when the Party needed Joana's group to campaign in a village where support was waning, Joana's own plans to mobilize a women's group in Serra Malagueta were abandoned. The mere statement that a women's group could not be initiated in a village where there was no Party structure was telling. The relationship was clear: at its best, OMCV and PAICV served the same goals and interests and OMCV's positioning with the power structures gave it the support it needed to advance women's causes. At its worst, when goals diverged, PAICV took priority. OMCV women might not even have time to consider the trade-off they were making. Many would not even see it as a trade-off since they also believed strongly in PAICV.

This relationship was also clear in the statement of the "development" goals of OMCV. Women were to be "integrated" into an on-going development process under the guidance of PAICV. What if that vision of development was not beneficial to women? What about alternative visions of development partly based on the worldviews of

women? OMCV had not entered into these realms of discussion. What if some conclusion they came up with would be in opposition to the Party's development strategy? In other words, what if PAICV and OMCV goals were not the same? Perhaps they were not prepared for the conflict such a situation might provoke. The *fidjadu* must conform in order to continue in smooth relationship with the *madrinha*. Within that relationship, there is little room for an opposing opinion.<sup>7</sup>

Intertwined with this problematic was the issue of social control and the image of 'good woman'. OMCV tempered its talk of "emancipation" with cautions to women that the organization was not promoting the idea that women be like men, that they take many male partners simultaneously, for example, as men took many women. The organization promoted the image of 'good woman'; its emblem showed a woman with a baby on her back and a hoe in her hand, a book under her arm.<sup>8</sup> Women had to defy the charge of "*puta*" in order to be members of OMCV; but the charge of "*puta*" persisted.

But public opinion acted in an even more powerful way to keep the organization attached to this image, at the highest levels. The visible women leaders were highly criticized, even to their personal lives. The organization's founding General Secretary had been deposed in 1986 following an accusation that she had had an affair while on a business trip to an outlying island. Her husband was a powerful man in the PAICV

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<sup>7</sup>There were exceptions to this trend, however, perhaps indicating the transition process these organizations--and Cape Verdean society in general--were undergoing. According to the founding General Secretary of OMCV, for example, women leaders in the Party who were also leaders of OMCV had fought against an entrenched old-male-guard within the Party in promoting the legalization of abortion. And they had won.

<sup>8</sup>Notably, the book represented a new facet of women's image.



central structures and government. Because she didn't keep up the desired image, OMCV had to get rid of her, although she was much beloved among the women in this study. In an interview with me in 1991, this former OMCV General Secretary claimed that her ousting was in part an effort to get at her husband, who was becoming too popular for some people's tastes. Shaming him by accusing his wife of this crime was a way of weakening him. As long as OMCV and PAICV were tied together so closely, PAICV could bring its power to bear over OMCV internal workings in this way, even if it were against the best interests of the organization.<sup>9</sup>

But what are the interests of the organization? The cloudiness of this issue also reflects its relationship to PAICV. Are its goals related to development of and for women or the use of women's labor for the country's development strategies? Granted that these two can be closely connected, the emphasis on one or the other is important in defining the organization and its own strategies. The blurriness of OMCV's stance led to ineffectiveness on strategic issues for women. In

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<sup>9</sup>This discussion relates to points raised by the woman's sphere and woman's power 'way of seeing'. Control of women through social image is a way to relegate them to a certain sphere of life. In this case, criticism of women's "private" lives affected their ability and willingness to participate in "public" organizations. Did OMCV's relationship with PAICV support women's relegation to a separate sphere of less influence? My analysis does not move in this direction because this line of questioning did not appear particularly relevant in the field. Perhaps my perspective from Tira Chapeu influenced this. If I had studied women at higher class and organizational levels, I might have focused more on this realm of analysis. Still, my interpretation does note, as discussed in the woman's sphere and woman's power perspective, that women are criticized for leaving the domestic sphere and that women in public positions are criticized in their personal lives in a way in which Cape Verdean men in public life are not. These personal criticisms, as in the case cited, can have a direct impact on women's ability and willingness to be in public life. This does not appear to happen to men in Cape Verdean public life.

a way, the organization seems to have moved only slightly beyond the "mobilization" phase of its development. This phase involved mobilization of women both for women's development and for support of independence. Getting women up and out was part of that mobilization, to start opening their horizons both to each other and to what was happening in their country. But the organization was also concerned with the practical interests of women, programs around family planning, maternal-child health, income generation and employment, literacy and schooling, etc. Yet for neighborhoods like Tira Chapeu, such concern hasn't had much impact. And in this realm of activity, the cloudiness of the organization's interests affects its approaches and successes or failures.

The meetings held about the abortion law seem to present a clear example of this. The organization, in presenting the law to Tira Chapeu women, used the argument that women *should not* have so many children because of the over-population problems of the country. This approach, dictating a policy decision to women, was not something new for the women. However, it struck many of them the wrong way because it went against deeply ingrained beliefs about the blessing of children, and against their awareness that children are sometimes their only hope for some security in the future. The approach failed to take into consideration women's reliance on children, both economically and socially, and their likely resentment and confusion at being told they must not have them. In addition, the process of the meetings seemed not to have allowed for the free expression of disagreement or a clear discussion of all the elements of the problem, without a feeling of coercion or control. The leaders of the meetings seemed to defend the

position of the law aggressively, making some women feel they could not continue with the organization. Secondly, they discussed the protection of women's health through child-spacing and the abolition of clandestine abortion. Many women accepted the idea of abortion in order to save the life of a pregnant woman at risk. The OMCV leaders who fought for this law held an attitude more along these lines.

This dual approach reflects the confusion about "whose interests" the organization is serving, and how. OMCV seemed to be *both* handing down a command to women to stop having so many children, prescribed in conjunction with the government's goal of controlling population growth, *and* seeking to protect women's health by offering them the possibility of a safe legal abortion. The idea of women's control over their own fertility, and their right to choose, seemed not to enter into the discussion. Both in process and content, for many women in Tira Chapeu, the abortion law became one more dictate from above on how they were supposed to behave. As such, the help it offered was unlikely to reach them.<sup>10</sup>

In Cape Verdean society, it may be inappropriate, as well as difficult, to talk about such issues as women's control over their fertility, women's freedom of reproductive choice. The organization's

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<sup>10</sup>This line of argument might be thought by some writers in the woman's power and woman's sphere 'way of seeing' to oppose women's interests to other interests in society in a way that does not reflect how all these interests are really interlinked. Many Cape Verdean women, among them many OMCV leaders, would argue this point. Still, in the way the abortion law meetings were handled, many women felt that their interests were not represented and their feelings were not listened to. Thus, the question of "whose interests" becomes relevant, not only between women and other groups, but also among different kinds of women, as suggested by the gender-class and ideology-consciousness 'ways of seeing'.

association with PAICV was not the only factor that controlled discussions of this strategic nature. Rather, that association and the control it entailed represented in a direct way much larger forces of control over what women could discuss. Many leaders of the organization in fact wanted to move into more strategic issues for women, and debate about these issues was always included on their agendas. But little action had been taken on this front. As long as the organization maintained its conforming ties to the structures of power, perhaps this action never could be taken. As long as its stand on key strategic issues remained foggy, clouded by its role as agent of PAICV's and the State's goals, it could not be free to open strategic discussions. Time to devote to such discussions would not usually be available because OMCV was busy carrying out other agendas.<sup>11</sup>

This question of "whose interests" is related to the control of visible women leaders discussed above. After the legislative elections of January 1990, the new MPD government asked the former OMCV General Secretary who had been ousted in 1986 to take up a position as head of a new institute for women's affairs in the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. She told me that she had refused. After the personal turmoil following her ousting, she had finally reconciled with her husband, who was distancing himself somewhat from his PAICV colleagues. He had taken a position in Sao Vicente and she was going with him. She was not willing to enter the fray again, she said, to have her life once again picked apart by social criticism and gossip.

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<sup>11</sup>Of course, if they were outside the mainstream of power, perhaps they wouldn't succeed in getting those discussions heard. This would certainly have been true in the case of the abortion law.

This reluctance to enter "public" life because of the social criticism it entailed was echoed again and again by women refusing positions of power offered to them. But until more women are ready to battle the powerful social control that acts to keep them from choosing positions of influence, organizations like OMCV may not be able to address fully women's strategic interests. And until organizations like OMCV galvanize around strategic interests as well as practical and mobilizing ones, women will not be able to battle the powerful social control that acts to keep them from choosing positions of influence. The possibility of 'breaking out' of this circle exists, however: while social criticism is a powerful control mechanism in Cape Verde, at the same time, almost every lifestyle or way of being is accepted. Who will take the risk?

Resisting the *Madrinha*: Class Structure, Relations Within OMCV, and the Autonomy/Dependency Dilemma

How do issues of class affect the workings of OMCV? What problems face OMCV as it struggles to move toward more local autonomy and away from central dependency?

Joana's position among OMCV leaders paralleled her group's position in the organization and symbolized Tira Chapeu's general position in Cape Verdean social structure. Joana was a woman who did not shirk a position of influence. In spite of the criticism she received, she sought her position of leadership in her community. It allowed her to rise above the ordinary, both in status and fact. Through her ties to *algen grandi*, she gained the benefits of respect and improved economic status.



However, like her group, Joana didn't seem to be able to get beyond the constraints of her place in Cape Verdean class structure in order to participate as a member of OMCV equal to women of higher socio-economic status. Joana's place was signalled in several ways. Her uncertainty that she could always afford the bus fare kept her from accepting an invitation to join the Sector committee.<sup>12</sup>

At large OMCV and PAICV meetings and rallies, her speeches were welcomed with gentle smiles, given ceremonial acknowledgement, but rarely acted upon. She was called upon mostly to perform *batuku* or to enlist the presence of Tira Chapeu women at mobilization events. Even she was accustomed to this and knew what it meant about her position in the larger organization. Once when JAAC-CV, the youth organization, sent her an invitation to attend a conference about a particular youth problem, she thought she was being invited to perform *batuku* because the invitation was addressed to her as leader of the *Vale a Pena batuku* group. She did attend, and found in fact that she had been invited as a community leader to listen and respond to the conference. She was pleased at this, but surprised.

At the same time, Joana fought against her prescribed position and challenged the structural divisions by her actions and words. Her speeches, spoken in traditional Kriolu ways and words, forced important people to take notice. They respected her ability to command large numbers of people in her community and always went through her to mobilize locally. In some subtle ways, she was shifting the balance of power by forcing upper class and powerful people to recognize her. And

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<sup>12</sup>As far as I know, the Sector did not offer to resolve this problem so that she could participate.

they did recognize her, if only sometimes for their own ends. This was one of the reasons she was both respected and suspected in her own community.<sup>13</sup>

Parallelling Joana's relationship to higher echelon OMCV leaders, Tira Chapeu OMCV group members started out as cooks and *batukaderas* for OMCV events, reflecting their place in the hierarchy. Tira Chapeu women work as maids for women like the General Secretary of OMCV and her cohorts. Thus, the relationship between their group and OMCV makes sense to the women of Tira Chapeu: it is similar to their relationship with the women who represent OMCV at the highest levels.

Their schooling level reinforces this relationship. Schooling is highly valued in Cape Verdean society, and people with more schooling are considered to know more and be smarter. They are also usually richer. Some women of higher classes often consider the 'native' wisdom of women like Joana interesting, but quaint. At the same time, the middle class women who inhabit the middle rungs of OMCV hierarchy are closer to this way of thinking and speaking and seem to understand and respect it more. On a practical level, the inability of Tira Chapeu women to read--and the organization's inability to find alternative ways to invite the active participation of this part of its membership--cuts them off from direct access to many OMCV powers, especially decision-making powers. They are caught in the position of being receivers of

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<sup>13</sup>This line of argument follows an idea of the ideology-consciousness 'way of seeing' that accomodation and resistance can exist at the same time, sometimes even within the same set of actions. Joana's behavior both accomodated to the existing structures and norms and subtly challenged them. Moreover, her own consciousness didn't question her worth. It was just a matter of getting others to recognize it.

information and policy, never writers or policy makers, their potential contribution de-valued because they are not schooled. In a case in point, the discussions held in the Tira Chapéu base group supposedly to discuss the Congress "thesis" and get women's input on it consisted of explaining parts of the already-written "thesis" out loud and asking if the women agreed with it.<sup>14</sup>

But the relationship among levels of OMCV women involves more than status and respect, consideration and participation. It also involves the ever-present economics. Here, too, the relationship among levels makes sense. It is the relationship of *madrinha* to *fidjadu*. The central levels have resources, as women who employ maids do. The base group levels don't have resources, as the women who work as maids don't. They depend partly on the largesse of the *madrinha* to survive.

And in fact, this system does work to help people and groups survive. But its consequences, as mentioned above, include the continuation of a stratified structure which goes against the organization's and government's stated ideals of popular participation. The dynamics of how the *madrinha* system works must be examined in several aspects if this dilemma is to be addressed and the organization is to move toward its stated goal of more autonomy of local structures.

First of all, the system works because resources are in fact concentrated at central levels. OMCV obtains resources from outside sources, principally the government and international donors in order to carry out projects at the local or national levels. The central organs

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<sup>14</sup>Clearly, this reasoning relates to the claim of the gender-class 'way of seeing' that schooling level contributes to dividing women along class lines.

of OMCV act as *madrinhas* to the base groups in the same way that Joana acts as *madrinha* to her own group, gathering resources and sharing them at the lower levels. They use their influence and ties to access resources from other even bigger and richer *madrinhas*. They also maintain decision-making power over who gets the resources when and how.

But more important, the system works because people in communities like Tira Chapeu are in fact very poor and do need outside resources to accomplish major community development. The question then becomes not how to disarm the *madrinha* system, but rather how to bend its rules. How best can the resources passed on to local communities be used for permanent community development and improvement? How can decision-making power over their use be shifted? How can the number of possible *madrinhas* be increased, in order to diminish dependency on one and to create alternatives?

A first step toward making these adjustments is recognizing what keeps them from happening. This study brought out many of the events, ways of acting, and ideas that hold the power imbalance in place. OMCV's wish for more local initiative can come only once they recognize the contradiction between that wish and actions that keep power centralized. More local autonomy means more local control over decisions and resources. Can an organization built on the *madrinha* principal shift to this new way of being? Perhaps only if the local groups themselves generate alternative resources independently.

This dilemma is now being echoed at all levels of the country, in government and the parties, in the youth organizations, football clubs, and schools, as the entire country struggles to move beyond its post-independence "mobilization" phase into a more real participatory

democracy. This change, like any change, is not easy. The ties holding change back are not just material ones, but also strong socio-cultural, ideological and emotional forces connected to the economic base. Change demands more genuine respect for people of all class levels, schooled or unschooled. It means assistance in the process of making local decisions, not making decisions for local people. These are difficult changes in people's ways of thinking. To push them forward, perhaps a crisis is necessary. Perhaps OMCV's new precarious financial condition is the biggest push toward change they could have gotten. Perhaps being forced to find a new way to survive will overcome the emotional and psychological bonds that keep the negative aspects of the *madrinha* relationships in place, just as women look beyond their emotional ties to husbands and *pai-di-fidju* when their children need something to eat. But will this change also limit the positive aspects of *madrinha* relations, the mutual assistance and solidarity, as people loosen and change ties? This brings us to what change in this realm might involve and imply for Cape Verdean women.

#### Organizing for Change in the Context of "Resistance as Separation"

Can OMCV or organizations like it mobilize women for mass resistance and change? What problems have kept OMCV from doing more along these lines? From most feminist perspectives, women's organizations are considered effective when they mobilize mass resistance to achieve change. OMCV also measures its achievements in this way. OMCV has been particularly effective on the legal front, achieving change in regard to women's rights to child support, birth control, abortion, and equal wages. But in terms of practices, both



women's and men's, change has occurred in very small personal ways as a result of OMCV activities, not on any mass scale.

Such change is not easy in the Cape Verdean context. Nor are the alternatives proposed always desirable. For example, one practical 'recommendation' evident from this study might be a program of protection and legal rights for women working as maids, including standardization of hours and benefits, and access to health insurance and social security. Such a program would aim to change the general patterns of abuse of maids and at the same time raise the status of the occupation. It would keep Nisia and her colleagues from leaving one bad job for another, only to have another woman who desperately needs a job fill her shoes.

If change were only a practical issue, a question of the right time and the right organizing, this program would be well under way. But class and power issues, as well as social and emotional ones, also come into play. Can an organization led by women who employ maids lead the fight to protect them, given the lower status position of women who work as maids within that same organization?<sup>15</sup> Would the women who employ maids willingly give up the prerogatives that go with their status? Would the women who work as maids give up their relationships to their employers, who are also often their *madrinhas*? Assuring women's security by legal means may mean breaking down the security provided by

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<sup>15</sup>The gender-class construct suggests that the answer to this question will generally be "no." It argues that women will preserve their class advantage before they work for change that will benefit their poorer sisters but break their own advantage down. My analysis of the Cape Verdean situation indicates that the poorer women themselves may also not want to break down these relationships, for reasons outlined in the discussion.

these customary social ties. Are women ready for this transition? Is it even a good one? Might there not be a way to bolster these customary supports rather than trying to substitute state-provided security systems? Is the state secure enough in itself to provide this security to its people? Do women know the state well enough to trust it as they trust a *madrinha*?<sup>16</sup>

It's clear from Cizaltina's remark that "a government job is a husband" that some women are involved in such a transition. And as economic and climatic conditions change, the security of *madrinha* ties grows weaker and less reliable. Nevertheless, many farmers on the island of Santo Antão rejected and still reject the post-independence land reform that broke their obligation to work for landowners, but also broke their bonds to those landowners who served a *madrinha* role in all the emotional-loyalty-mutual assistance aspects of that relationship (Lof, et al, 1983). The bare fact is that in the generally insecure conditions of Cape Verdean life, these ties make sense. Without viable alternatives, they are going to continue to make sense to women on both sides of the *madrinha* relationship. Will women organize for maids' rights if it means alienating the good will of their *madrinha*-bosses? It would mean struggling against a deeply-ingrained centuries-old system of relations involving both material and ideological life, a system that

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<sup>16</sup>The gender-class 'way of seeing' suggests that colonialism and capitalism have broken down solidarity systems. In the Cape Verdean situation, increased involvement in a cash economy certainly seems to have contributed to changes in the help ties discussed in this thesis. I suggest here not to abandon those help ties but to reform and reinforce them according to new needs and ideals. In fact, Cape Verdeans do this almost automatically as members of a small, adaptive society. But making this process more conscious may help women preserve more of the strengths of interdependency and avoid more of the pitfalls of increased individualism.

in many ways works and provides the strength of Cape Verdean socio-economic life. Current trends suggest that Cape Verdean women are in the midst of such movement, largely due to economic and political changes around them. But the struggle is slow and fraught with difficulties and the resulting alternatives uncertain. The future may depend on women's ability to create more equitable, empowering versions of help ties, revitalize those that already exist, and establish ties with a wider variety of *madrinhas*.

#### Girls Just Wanna Have Fun: The Opportunity Cost of Women's Development

What about the practical side of women's development activities of OMCV? What are the problems and successes surrounding these and how can they move forward more successfully?

Women's views of their organization dominate this discussion. Women in the Tira Chapeu OMCV group associate their group primarily with fun activities, amusement, and traveling about. They are also keenly aware of how their participation in these activities has broadened their horizons and thus has helped them "know" more than they did before. The rest of their daily lives are primarily concerned with survival, which takes higher priority, both in fact and in terms of the social image attached to a woman who works hard and one who gads about doing things unrelated to survival and her family. As long as this is true, participation in OMCV activities will probably be sporadic because women can't afford for it to be otherwise. They actually do not have the time to take away from survival activities, and because of social image, they do not always have the freedom or support to do so. The importance of maintaining women's social image acts as a mechanism of control, through the subtle interplay of direct control by families and mates, economic

power, and women's own ideas of what is right. For most women, life is a collection of duties and obligations, not a collection of rights.<sup>17</sup>

In this way, OMCV activities are too 'costly' for the Tira Chapeu women to participate in them on a regular basis. A vivid illustration of this dilemma arose just as I was preparing to leave the research site. OMCV started a family planning outreach project that targeted young people 15 to 21 years old in a few *bairros* like Tira Chapeu. The idea of the project was to train a core group of neighborhood women as family planning outreach workers who would counsel young women, dispense certain forms of birth control, and provide access to others. The project imagined that local women would be better able to reach the young women who were its targets. The problem was getting the local women. Through the Sector representative, Joana was asked to muster a group of 10 or 15 women to participate in the program. About 10 showed up at the first meeting. The Sector representative came with a nurse who was coordinating the program and would do the training in the communities. She was pleased and encouraged by the number of women who attended and their interest in participating. At the next meeting two weeks later, however, she began to get discouraged. Although even more women showed up, they were not the same ones who had appeared at the first meeting. By the third meeting, she gave a speech about how she would not be able to do the training if different women appeared every

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<sup>17</sup>I am indebted to my colleague and friend, Deborah Fredo, for the articulation of this idea. The woman's sphere and woman's power 'way of seeing' and the ideology-consciousness 'way of seeing' might both suggest that the concept of "women's rights" is socially and culturally constructed. Its meaning and use vary according to context. Sometimes it appears as part of a dominant or external ideology and sometimes as a counter-hegemonic ideology (Weiler, 1988; see Chapter II).

week. The same women had to come for the duration of the program, to be trained and then to work.

I do not know whether the program was able to succeed in gathering a constant group of women to be trained as outreach workers, because I left Cape Verde at that time. But I perceived a problem in the project's approach, from the perspectives I had learned at the women's side and have presented in this thesis. Women were being asked to take time away from survival activities to do a job, in essence. Of course the knowledge and experience would benefit them personally, and the project's goals, if reached, would help their own community and families. But beyond these rather long-term benefits, they were not being compensated in a way that would allow them to take away the amount of time required from their daily survival tasks. These particular women were too close to bare survival to be able to act in those terms. Thus, their survival activities, planned and unforeseen, would continue to get in the way of the same women showing up at every meeting. The cost of participating was too high in the short term to be able to realize any of the long-term benefits. If OMCV seriously wanted to advance this program or any other, it might have to consider offering payment for work, as in this case, or some other more visible benefit which would warrant participation in the short term. This would also respond to the women's criticisms of OMCV that the practical needs of their community were not addressed adequately. OMCV could successfully carry out more practical projects with wider participation if they approached them with women's cost-benefit scale in mind. Even more important, central and Sector level awareness that Tira Chapeu women have to think in these terms would bridge a gap of understanding between



OMCV levels, perhaps deterring the frequent criticism from upper levels of local women's lack of good will in such situations.

Yet, while women in Tira Chapeu want more practical results from OMCV activities, they also want a way to get away from their practical needs, to forget their survival worries. OMCV activities have successfully provided a way for women to gather and have fun, and at the same time learn. Tira Chapeu women value this aspect of OMCV so much that they are willing to fight the name-calling that goes along with their participation in such gatherings. While emphasizing practical needs, OMCV should not lose this aspect of its role in women's lives, a role that women want and appreciate. Out of necessity and in line with Cape Verdean social norms, women's groups like these will continue to be sites of fun as well as sites of practical action and learning.

#### What's It All About? The Process of Change

Although OMCV faces seemingly immutable obstacles in its path toward helping women improve their lives, the forces at work are deeper and more complex than that surface reality. As the ideology-consciousness 'way of seeing' suggests, the analysis of gender is complex because multiple, even contradictory, ideologies about women's activities co-exist. The way these ideologies--and women's own individual and collective consciousness--interact with material realities of women's lives is the crux of understanding the data of this study and the meaning of OMCV. My interpretation seeks to explore the complicated web of interplay between people's own consciousness, the dominant ideologies of their groups and societies, and the concrete actions they take to perpetuate or change their world.

In Cape Verde, the obstacles--both material and ideological-emotional--to change are in fact large. It is even questionable if change as it is occurring is 'good' for women and Cape Verdean society, especially in the face of a lack of articulated alternatives. But in both small and important ways, the *Organização das Mulheres de Cabo Verde* has made a difference. Women themselves are making a difference. They are struggling with contradictory visions of themselves in order to build better lives. They are dealing with the key issues of autonomy and dependency, central to Cape Verdean life throughout its history. They are changing the way they relate to their male partners. They are struggling to end patterns of abuse. They are creating laws that make self-protection and protection of their children easier. They are striving to learn beyond the confines of their communities and the limitations of their positions in society. They are getting out and gathering in communities where getting out and gathering are suspect activities for women. They are seeking new ways to be better providers.

As the site of this activity--even as the site of conflict--OMCV has played a role in changing women's views of themselves and their actions. The change is slow, the resistance is strong, the long-term outcomes uncertain, in Cape Verde like everywhere. But slowly, the meaning women make of their experience is subtly shifting--in relation to the material realities of their lives--to change their lives.

This study has been a way to explore the dilemmas embedded in this process. In particular, I have sought to understand the consciousnesses of a small group of women involved in the process, through an exploration of their words and ways. I have strived to see how they theorize about their lives and their group activity, and how those

theories relate to their actions and the institutional structures they are part of. I have struggled to learn from them, though it was a bare beginning. Only they can say whether I learned anything at all.

## CHAPTER XII

### LOOKING BACK

In this chapter, I take a look back at the research process, assessing what I learned through carrying out fieldwork and writing this text and reconsidering some of the precepts--both theoretical and methodological--that I started out with. This chapter is an effort to reveal the learning that took place throughout this research. The thoughts contained here are preliminary ruminations and questions to myself which continue to grow each day that I am involved in this process.

#### Revisiting the 'Ways of Seeing' Idea

The research process and results reinforced my orientation toward a multi-perspective view. The four themes of Part II might be seen as four 'ways of seeing' women's lives from different points of view. These then provide different ways to understand the group. I paint a large picture, a kind of whole, but within this the four themes highlight different--and sometimes contradictory--aspects of the group's reality. The contradictions are part of getting at the wholeness; all reality includes contradictions.

Thus, as I claimed in Chapter II, how ones sees and what process one uses to see help determine what aspects of a phenomenon one does see. I started out with certain theoretical issues in mind. The issues that seem to have been important to my final analysis of the women's group are power, class, the relationship between power and class, and the interaction between how women see and how they act to create or re-

create social structures and conditions. Some of these issues were vague to me at the outset, especially their construction within the ideology-consciousness framework. I knew this framework made the most sense to me, was the most encompassing of the 'ways of seeing', but the literature review only barely began to give me an idea of what it meant in reality.

The research process helped me define these issues in terms of a particular reality. Especially, I got to see and live aspects of the ideology-consciousness perspective. I felt and saw how people's consciousness interacts with their material world to create and re-create social institutions and patterns. I saw how the Tira Chapeu women's economic situation intertwined with how they viewed that situation to create ties of interdependency to overcome poverty, a strong sense of self, and ways of relating and helping across economic and status differences. Economics did not "determine" their ideology; rather the two circled each other in a process of creation and recreation. I feel that I can now articulate much more clearly what the ideology-consciousness 'way of seeing' means, from having lived some aspects of it and challenged others. In this, the research accomplished its goal of re-casting theory in light of Cape Verdean women's reality and my experience of it.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The final analyses I propose could now benefit from much deeper document analysis, comparison to the points of view of OMCV leaders, and further integration with quantitative data on women's socio-economic situation. Through this study, I increasingly saw the value of integrating different types of research that explore different dimensions of the same issue. "Women's voices" are important, but should not be isolated from other views.



Interestingly, the themes and conclusions I've drawn about the women's lives and group, as I read them out to women colleagues and friends from various countries, seem so 'universal'. I believe that women are different according to their social and historical realities and so must define their own ways of being 'feminist'. I try to steer away from essentialist arguments. I feel I have discovered some of the unique qualities of Tira Chapeu women, things that make them feminist in their own ways. Nevertheless, as I tell their lives to other women, I hear again and again, "You could say that about my life too." How much of this is because the view presented is ultimately *my* view, that of a highly-schooled, highly-feminist-in-the-Western-tradition woman like most of my listeners? How much of it is because people tend to hear what they identify with in their own lives? How much of it is because there are common aspects of women's experience? I believe there is a part of all three of these in the answer. As two of the other goals of this research were to reflect Cape Verdean women's experience back to themselves and to share Cape Verdean women's experience with the rest of the world, I am anxious to hear what Cape Verdean women and women from other countries will also have to say.

The Nature of 'Ways of Seeing':  
Continuing Interaction with Others' Work

The research process illuminated for me the nature of theoretical frameworks. From much social science literature, I often got the feeling that a researcher started out with a theoretical framework and it guided the study in a fixed kind of way. I found the process much different than this. Granted, part of the purpose of my work was to explore the validity of certain frameworks through empirical research.

Still, it seems to me now that all work which articulates theories and then works with them over a period of time must have the in-flux character that mine seemed to have. Initial theories change not only in relation to the empirical data but also in interaction with continual exposure to other theories and ideas.

I came under many further influences while doing research. While in the field, I continued to read works on research method, writing and learning, including Geertz's (1988) Works and Lives, Marcus and Fischer's (1986) Anthropology as Cultural Critique, Morgan's (1983) Beyond Method, the Personal Narratives Group's Interpreting Women's Lives, and Coles' (1989) The Call of Stories. These works had an impact on the direction my own work took, in a way that is not apparent in the text itself.

Geertz reinforced my view of research and researcher as intertwined. In reading Works and Lives, I became more aware of the interactive co-creation process that collecting data is, whether one wants it to be or not. I began to own up to my own influence on the shape of data even more than I had before. I also began to understand something about the intricacies of constructing a text based on field research.

Marcus and Fischer (1986) and Morgan (1983) continued to expand my view of research in organizational and intercultural contexts. In particular, I was attracted to Marcus and Fischer's idea of setting the study of "other" cultural experience in relation to political economy questions. Their critical view of traditional ethnography and even "newer" more reflexive ethnography sensitized me to pitfalls I was likely to encounter and issues to watch for.

Morgan's collection of essays on various research approaches included several that either reinforced my earlier research plans or gave me new, more detailed ideas. Glennon's "Synthesism: A Case of Feminist Methodology" suggested radical tenets but a fairly conventional "participant observation" approach that I was already well steeped in (Glennon, 1983:269). Forester's "Critical Theory and Organizational Analysis" elaborated the assumptions behind critical theory, suggesting that investigative methods uncover lived experience and interpretations as well as their economic, political, and social contexts (Forester, 1983:245). This suggestion harkened back to Marcus and Fischer (1986). Wilson's "Anti-Method as a Counterstructure in Social Research Practice" highlighted some of the practical difficulties in carrying out research which includes the researched as empowered participants. Some of these, such as "indifference on the part of the researched subjects" (Wilson, 1983:256) were similar to some of the issues I was facing in the field. This work raised my already fairly keen awareness of these issues and encouraged me to do what was possible under the circumstances. In Jones' "Life History Methodology," I was attracted to the ideas of focusing on "the continuous, related character of experience over time" and the association of the social context with the action of the person (Jones, 1983:154). These two ideas seemed to reflect the research and life reality that I was experiencing in trying to understand a group of women in Cape Verde.

As I mulled over how to actually get at what I was trying to find out, the "life history" approach appeared to me to be the place to

start. Not only did I need to know women's "life stories"<sup>2</sup> in their social, economic and political context, I also needed to know the group's life story. My exposure to the Personal Narratives Group's (1989) Interpreting Women's Lives and Coles' (1989) The Call of Stories at just the point in time when I was considering these issues clinched my decision to use a "life story" approach. The Personal Narratives Group focuses on what can be revealed by listening to women's narratives and explanations. It also highlights the problems of doing personal narratives research, such as issues of co-optation, authorship, and control. Coles emphasizes the importance of listening to people's stories as a way of learning. Coles' own way of laying out his points in a series of stories magnetized me and pushed me in the direction I was already moving.

In terms of feminist theory, the two works that most influenced me while in the field were bell hooks' (1989) Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black and Ferguson's (1984) The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy. bell hooks discusses the idea of the "right speech of womanhood" (hooks, 1989:6). She claims that in the southern black community in the United States, women are not silent as some of the mainstream feminist literature purports women to be. "This emphasis on women's silence may be an accurate remembering of what has taken place in the households of women from WASP backgrounds in the United States, but in black communities (and diverse ethnic communities), women have

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<sup>2</sup>In the research literature, "life history" and "life story" are sometimes used interchangeably. I prefer "life story" to label the kind of process I used. It more accurately reflects the creative, interactive process of its telling/writing and the dominant viewpoint of the narrator/actor. Being also trained as an historian, I feel that "life history" would have to include a broader, more "verified" view.

not been silent" (hooks, 1989:6). They are, however, punished for speaking outside the "right speech of womanhood," she claims.

"Certainly for black women, our struggle has not been to emerge from silence into speech but to change the nature and direction of our speech, to make a speech that compels listeners, one that is heard" (hooks, 1989:6).

This idea struck me as essential to my understanding of the women of Tira Chapeu. They, too, were not silent. They told stories, talked at ease, recounted proverbs and wise sayings. They sang and danced.<sup>3</sup> It seemed to me, though, that some of their speech was "right speech" and some was not. And in the case of OMCV, some of its speech was "right speech" and some was not. This tension between speaking "right speech" and speaking freely was extremely important in shaping the themes of control and breaking out that emerged in this study. I don't use bell hooks' metaphor in the text because the idea of "getting out" is closer to the women's own way of expressing this issue. But the ideas of "right speech" and "talking back" reverberate throughout my interpretation of these issues, key to understanding Tira Chapeu women and the Cape Verdean women's organization.

The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy provided another important viewpoint at a key moment. In this work, Ferguson (1984) claims that "feminist organizations, even those that routinely encounter and work

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<sup>3</sup>I tentatively suggest that this may be partly a class/culture related phenomenon in Cape Verde. Although I have no systematic data to this effect, for the most part, middle and upper class women more heavily steeped in Portuguese Cape Verdean culture expressed themselves less vibrantly than did the Kriolu Cape Verdean women of Tira Chapeu, and certainly were less well-versed in Kriolu expressions of song and dance.



with bureaucracies, cannot be themselves bureaucratic or they cease to be truly feminist" (Ferguson, 1984:211). This uncompromising statement finishes off an insightful analysis into the workings of bureaucracy and their antipathy to feminist discourse. Bureaucracy, her argument goes, is created from and recreates a system of domination and subordination which feminism should be trying to break down.

I read this work while I was struggling with my own relationship to OMCV, an organization I experienced as highly bureaucratized and hierarchical, in the spring of 1990. I was feeling closed out of OMCV's preparatory activities for the 1990 Congress, whereas I'd hoped to gain an intimate insider's view of the organization's concerns by being allowed to participate fully in Congress activities. I attributed the organization's ambivalence about me to their fear of critique at this critical moment in their existence. They had reason to be fearful, though not of me. The organization depended on its relationships with the State and PAICV for its existence. It needed their approval. At this moment, Ferguson's critique of bureaucracy provided a way for me to understand some of the problems OMCV faced and how they were affecting me. This crucial moment in the research process and the meaning I made of it definitely influenced my subsequent views of OMCV in regard to the *madrinha* system and the relationships among OMCV, PAICV, and the State.

Even beyond these written works, I constantly came in touch with new ways of thinking throughout the fieldwork and writing phases. Thus, my own initial theoretical ideas were in a state of flux, not only in interaction with the data I was collecting, but in interaction with daily life and thought. A researcher, after all, is a human being. A researcher embarking on a long research project such as this one must

constantly keep in consciousness and rearticulate her viewpoint as it changes. Even in research whose purpose is not to revise theory, initial 'ways of seeing' never stay fixed for long.

### Issues of Validity

I set out to abide by Lather's (1986a) measures of validity for openly ideological research (Solomon, 1989c:49-51): triangulation, construct validity, face validity, and catalytic validity. In looking back, I feel the research met two of these measures well: triangulation and construct validity. Face validity was also achieved, but to a more limited extent. Catalytic validity, as I originally suspected, was not possible in the short term of this research project. However, the impact of the research continues beyond the fieldwork phase; perhaps some catalytic validity will still be demonstrated.

Lather suggests that triangulation "of multiple *data sources, methods, and theoretical schemes* is critical in establishing data trustworthiness" (1986a:67). I clearly incorporated into my research multiplicity in all these domains. I gathered data from the women themselves, my own participation and observations, documentary sources, and other members of Cape Verdean society and the national women's organization. I used methods of participant observation, interviews of various types, and document review. I used four initial theoretical schemes (the 'ways of seeing' outlined in Chapter II) and proposed others based on the field data (the themes of Chapters V through X).

Construct validity, according to Lather, requires examination of a *priori* theory in light of people's daily experiences as a systematic part of the research procedure. In this study, this examination was not

only an integral part of analytic procedure, but was also one of the underlying purposes of the research, that is, to re-examine in light of Cape Verdean women's experience suggested theories about their organizing efforts, to build explanations that are relevant to the realities of their lives. I built theory moving in from two sides, from the women's views in relation to my own observations and preconceived theories.

Face validity, however, brings me to stickier issues. Face validity demands that the credibility of the data be checked. In openly ideological research, the key method for establishing face validity is the "recycling of analysis back through at least a subsample of respondents" (Lather, 1986a:67). These two sentences themselves point out the problem I faced. Is it "the data" that is checked or "the analysis" of that data? I was able to ask participants to review their interviews, correcting, adding to, or deleting from their original thoughts. This in itself was a challenge because I was working with mostly non-literate women. As discussed in Chapter III, I came up with a re-listening procedure that satisfied the requirements of face validity. But what about other kinds of data? And what about the analysis of the data? I did manage to share with the group the four events in their history that I saw as most critical, and ask them to comment on these as a way of analyzing. But is this enough? I never got to tell them about the four themes I categorized their lives into, largely because I devised those only once I'd left the research setting.<sup>4</sup> What would the Tira Chapeu women have said if I'd shown them

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<sup>4</sup>This process was delayed because of the political changes afoot and their effect on the Tira Chapeu group and OMCV as a whole.

these themes? What will they say when I do have the opportunity to tell them in the near future?<sup>5</sup> If the idea behind face validity is, in part, giving research participants control over the interpretation of their lives, then is re-checking the transcripts (which is what most interactive research I've examined does) enough? Who's in control? Who's analyzing?

The work--and the final analysis--is clearly mine. There is nothing wrong with this except in light of some of the assumptions of "empowerment" and equalization of researcher and researched involved in much interactive research. The process of carrying out this research confirmed my doubts that this kind of research was necessarily "empowering" to anyone but the researcher. Instead of seeking for "empowerment" as a way to equalize researcher and researched, I sought this end by laying bare my own learning in "telling the story." It seems to me this succeeded in making me vulnerable in the academic community, but did it make me vulnerable to the women in Tira Chapeu, thereby equalizing us? Not really. Power is not so easily adjusted. Or maybe it doesn't even need to be. Isn't "empowerment" still my agenda and not theirs?

Who's Zoomin' Who?:<sup>6</sup>

"Empowerment," "Co-optation," and Assumptions of Interactive Research

If other interactive research is anything like mine, the concept of "empowerment" of research participants is much more slippery than most research reports would suggest. First of all, the word itself implies

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<sup>5</sup>I plan to return to Cape Verde in 1992 to feed my interpretations back to the women of Tira Chapeu and to OMCV.

<sup>6</sup> A phrase from Aretha Franklin's song of the same title. I am, again, indebted to my friend and colleague, Deborah Fredo, for its use.

that the research participants are disempowered in the ways that are important (ways, presumably, defined by the researcher). It also implies that they want to be empowered in the ways that the research aims to empower them. In my case, both of these implications proved somewhat false. These women were quite powerful in their social context, in many ways that I was not powerful. And the ways they weren't powerful--and wanted to become powerful--were largely economic ways, ways the research could not address in the short term.

As a novice in Cape Verde, I felt I was the one being empowered. After I got used to this idea, I felt this was as it should be. I remembered that I had earlier said that I, as researcher, was the learner. Teaching me was, perhaps, empowering in some way for the women. As for them learning about themselves, and thus feeling more "empowered," this happened on an individual basis with some of the women, some in ways I don't even know about perhaps. As for them learning about their group and thus taking new actions, that process would take a lot longer than the year or so I had with them, considering where I started. I feel more ready to take on that kind of research now, but it would have to be with this group that I've already spent 20 months getting to know.<sup>7</sup>

That process of change-oriented research (not what I set out to do, although I would have loved to do it) is also difficult to communicate to people, much less implement. And if 'we' have to communicate it to

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<sup>7</sup>However, the research had a positive impact on the group by giving it some momentum to stay together through the stress of the political transition, when many other such groups were falling apart. The Tira Chapeu group had something (the research) going on while other groups were at a standstill. There may be other benefits to the group that I'm not aware of or are still to come.



'them', perhaps it can't really be of them anyway. Maybe Paul Reisman was right that "'there remains an inherent contradiction between treating the natives as equals and using the knowledge they give us for goals they would never imagine themselves. . .'" (1982, quoted in Abu-Lughod, 1988:11). I had also been right in my caution about "empowering" participants. I had always been wary of promising change that might never occur while not adequately acknowledging how the research participants helped me. I knew this reality from the outset. Why did the question still bother me in the field? Is it so deeply ingrained in me that I, as sojourner to a Third World country, have to be helper and never helped?

Perhaps this unwillingness to accept being the helped maintains rather than breaks down the hierarchical power separation between me and the Cape Verdean research participants. Still, it's not as simple as that. Being helped as a researcher can and does exploit research participants when they have no control over the use of the knowledge generated. In this case of a dissertation study, they do not in fact have control over the knowledge generated. The only way to be more egalitarian is through the process and through whatever may still be to come in our future relationship. Perhaps my hope of alternative research products--ones that they shape and produce--will still come into being, although it wasn't possible to accomplish during my initial field stay. When I return this year to share with them the research results, I hope they will comment on them in ways that continue to shape my 'ways of seeing'. What's needed is a much larger time frame for learning.

To what extent, then, does this product reflect their "voices"? One of my initial precepts was to seek to hear women's voices, their theories. But the dynamics of getting to hear their voices were much more complex than I had thought. What does it mean to write down another's words and use them in a text I construct? Are their voices being heard? If the research is "openly ideological," can it truly hear voices that don't go along with its ideology?<sup>8</sup> My answer is, "Both yes and no." Yes, the women's voices are being heard in that I strove to focus on their words, their analyses of their lives and group. I even completely reshaped my thesis after the first chapter drafts seemed to portray too narrow a view. I was conscious that this was principally my view, that their view was somewhat different. I re-wrote in order to portray more of their view. But no, they are not being heard 'purely'. Their words are laid out in the way I chose. They are shaped by my vision, by my hearing. In other words, their views and my views are so closely intertwined at this point that it's hard to separate them out.

Perhaps, however, rather than revealing that their views have been "co-opted" through my interpretation of them, this intertwining shows that I have been taken in by the women's views to the point where they have become mine or at least part of mine. I often feel this latter way of seeing the research process is truer to reality. It is also part of

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<sup>8</sup>A 'cultural' assumption of my own seems to dominate my concluding arguments: a belief that change is good. In many ways, OMCV and the country as a whole were also promoting the idea of change at the time of this study. Still, a large portion of the Cape Verdean population does not believe that change is necessarily good or to be trusted. I would like to have examined more systematically the influence of such beliefs (my own) on the shape of the study. An understanding of the dynamics of culture and power is essential to cross-cultural research. Although I indirectly address many of these dynamics, they deserve more explicit exploration.

the cross-cultural process that occurs in this kind of research. Of course, these questions can never be fully answered, except to say that our views came together in a lived experience that created new meaning. The process is much more circular and fuzzy than most research guides I found seemed to suggest.

One of the requirements of most of these guides is a consent form that research participants sign. This form is meant to guarantee the safety of research participants, to protect them from the use of their words for purposes other than what is stated on the form. The idea of explaining clearly the research process and obtaining their signed consent is also meant to give research participants some feeling of control and voluntarism. But this practice, I found, assumes, first, that research participants can read it and, second, that signing a document will make them trust you to not harm them.

In Tira Chapeu, as discussed in Chapter III, signing the consent form was a major dilemma. Most of the women didn't read or write. I have a collection of papers signed with thumbprints. I had to read the paper to them. It was written in Kriolu so I could speak it to them, though the language of legal documents in Cape Verde is Portuguese. Most of them couldn't verify for themselves what it said. Therefore, in the end they had to trust me as an individual anyway, rather than trust the legal bonds of the paper they were signing. Trust, generally, is not based on papers in Cape Verde. Neither is protection. This is an assumption of a legalistic society (mine) that doesn't transfer too well to theirs.

The consent form signing was not a futile exercise, however. It forced me to clarify to them the process of the research. It generated

enthusiasm and commitment; they were excited about putting their signatures or thumbprints on the papers. Many women, after hearing about it, wanted to sign up too. I took no more names because I was already overwhelmed with the number I had. But other women participated more informally without a consent form. It was the way they did things. I had to learn this way.

#### And So?

This experience reduced my ignorance and my arrogance, as it was meant to. I came to realize the complexity of the cross-cultural research process. I learned about "empowerment" by being empowered. I became a part of a growing community of researchers and practitioners seeking to lay bare their own learning, to be consciously reflexive and critical in their work. I told the story, as I wished that more researchers had done before me and as many more are now doing. I reaffirmed my commitment to ongoing learning and my knowledge that I have much to learn. Early on in my stay in Cape Verde, I came to see my work with the women of Tira Chapeu as a bare beginning of understanding, as only the tip of the iceberg of what we could learn together. The learning goes on, *si Deus kre*.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>"God willing." In Kriolu, hardly a statement about the future is uttered without this wise caveat attached.

APPENDIX  
SELECTIONS FROM TRANSCRIPTS OF KEY INTERVIEWS



Symbols codes:

Initial of participant's first name: Participant speaks

M: Marla speaks

. . . inaudible or unintelligible part of tape; unable to transcribe

[ ] Notes on expression, clarifications, references

\* \* \* portion of transcript not included

Transcription note: In general, the Kriolu orthography used here follows that developed for use in the experimental Bilingual Literacy Program of the *Direcção Geral da Educação Extra-Escolar* of the Ministry of Education. However, due to the in-progress stage of development of this orthographic system and since the transcripts were done by two different transcribers, the spellings are not completely standardized.

Aldira

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A: Trabadju sikritariadu N atcha-l dretu, ami dja N ten 6 anu na el. N gosta d'el propi pamodi kuze: gosi vida e trabadju, pamodi gosi kenha ki ka ten vida di trabadju sa ta fase tolera propi. Pamodi N ta bai gosi N ta fla-u: "Pista-n kel saia," bu ka ta da-n el, nau. Un bes, sin. Gosi ki kuza sta tudu alteradu ta da-n medu nhu, pamodi N ta bai, N ta bisti-u el di mas, bu ta ten medu di mi pa pista-n. El ta fla si N pista-l el e ka ta da-n el, e ta bisti-l di mas, ki gosi dja sta un bokadinhu kunplikadu.

M: Pamodi ki kuza muda si? Bon, antis gentis ta daba tudu kuza pa otu algen, tudu kela. Ma gosi e ka sta da mas; pamodi?

A: Keli dja, keli propi nen N ka ta sabe splika-u el pamodi, ma un bes kuza era otu. Ago de ves en ves ki kuza ba ta bai, anu ba ta bai, ta kunplika mas. Ago gosi li sta ropa tcheu di nhu kunpra, sta kuza di bende tcheu. Si bu ka kunpra ropa pa bu bisti propi bu ta popa tcheu. E tudu kel-li. Pamodi e sta baratu, mas tudu algen tanbe ka gosta, nhu ta kunpra, kuza ki ta gosta ta kusta, tudu kel-li.

M: Nton talvez pamodi kuzas sta mas tcheu, algen ta pensa ma algen debe bai kunpra.

A: Sin, e kel. Ki alen li ku es saia bistidu gosi li sta fla pista-n el. N ka ta kre da-l el mas purki kuzas sta tcheu, ropa sta tcheu di kunpra y mi N ta atcha . . . m'e ta kaba p'e fika ku di sel.

M: Ma inda ti gosi nhos ta da, purizemplu, si un familia . . . un kuza si ben ku problemas, s'es ka ten kumida, tudu kela.

A: Na kel N ta da, kel ti mi ki ka ten nada n konparason, N pode pega N da-l, ka ta due-n propi, pamodi algen si, si e diferenti. E

koitadu. Mi propi kel Albertina ki entra li si-sin ki sa ta kontan ma si fidju sta nternadu, ami kela si N ten N ta da. Kel-la e un koitadu ti di mas; e ka ten nun meu p'e vive. Mi propi N ta atcha diferenti si e ta manche e ta kume tudu dia, N ta atcha diferenti. E ka ta sta na trabadju, fidju ka ta sta na trabadju, maridu duenti, ki vida go! Kantu fidju, ki vida e isu?

Mi N ta fla ma N sta mas midjor di ki el, pamodi ami N ta sta na trabadju mas e ka un dinheru pa trabadja kel ora pa da-n kel ora. Mas N ta ben na kasa nha mai, N ta kume, N ta bati, N ta fase un kusinha si; ora ki N ta chinti dja noti, N ta pasa pa otu dia. N ta dispasa. Ma el, e ka ten keli p'e fase, koitadu.

- M: Sin, pamodi dja N rapara tanbe ma povu kauberdianu, na kasu di Joana purizemplu, si un dia e ka ten un kuza algen ta da-l un kuza. Si e ta disaraska.
- A: Sin, mi propi N konvida-l runion di kasa Joana. Sin, ma e ka fla-n go si e ta bai s'e ka ta bai. Inda e ka fla-n. Kes kuzas di Joana N atcha ma e dretu go. Joana ael ses kuzas e ta mostra algen, e uns kuzas k'e ta fase algen. Nhu ta kunpanha ku el, si nhu ka konche sertus kau nhu ta konche. Ten otoridadi. Si nhu ta odja, e ta konvida-nhu uns kau pa nhu ba ku el. Oras ki nhu ta bai, so kaus dretu, nhu ta strai propi, algen k'e kuzadu si ta strai propi, moda mi li N ba ku Joana un kau la Tchada ki N ka baba ti ochi, la mei di Tchada, la nun kau ki chines faseba.
- M: Ah, la na Sembleia.
- A: Ala. Ti ochi N ka baba, mas Joana ki po-nu na kel kuza. Si ka era Joana ti ochi N ka ta koncheba el. Bon, tudu kel-li ki nu ta fla na kuza li e mutu dretu propi, dretu sin.
- M: Rita fla ma un bes, mesmu ti gosi, otu algen ta fla si (ma un bes era mas tcheu): mudjeris ki ta bai na kes grupu si, omi ta fla ma . . .
- A: E verdadi me, mudjeris ta sai gosi ta intchi karu, ka pamodi nos ki ta paga nau. Karu gentis di OM ki ta manda pa ben buska-nu, ta bai ku nos, ta toma-nu la, ta traze-nu nos kasa. Mi propi dja N bai kantu bes, dja N bai tcheu, mas kelo ki ben na karu [kasa?], ki omi k'e mal disiplinadu, makriadu, ta poi otu kuza, ti ki Joana ta obi. Sin, ta koba, ta koba ka ta fika sabi propi, na kuzas k'es ta fla. Joana otu ora, ka pode ser, mas e so na omi siumentu ki ta da keli. E si. Algen gosi e pa poi algen na kaminhu di dretu, so pa dretu, kel ten gentis ki ta kre propi.
- M: Talves es ta pensa si es ta sai si, ka ta teni tenpu pa fase kes kumida o fase kuzas pa kuida di mininus.
- A: Sin, tudu keli. Tudu keli ta briga. Tudu keli trimodi si nhu ten un kau di poi mininus, si nhu ta sai nhu ta bai sen priokupason pamodi nhu ta fla N teni mininu la ben konserbadu. Ago na kenha ki ka ten algen ki fika-l ku mininu, e p'e sai p'e pidi fabor na algen algen sima algen di kunfiansa.

- M: Sin, kela k'e difisil.
- A: Si mininu kai e ta djobi, si mininu kume un tera ta tra pa k'e kume, tudu keli. Mas ten ki ka ten kau decha ku mininu, ta un bokadinhu mariadu, dja ka ta bai, nen si kre ka ta bai. E keli.
- M: Sima na nhos kasu li, algen ten ki fika, ka si? Si e ten ki ser Toti, Rita o -- .
- A: Ami kel ora ki N ta mesti bai, ami o Rita, Toti ta fika. Kelo ki Toti kre bai ami N ta fika pamodi, dja bu odja-l, ba tudu si ka ta da, si nau, kes mininu ta fika tudu na rua. E uns kuation mininu pa la mas kabesa e richu.
- M: E nhos sistema di djunta-mon, e ka si? Ten ki ta djobi kes mininus di otu algen.
- A: Sertu.
- M: Ma nhos ka sa ta decha mininus ku vizinhu si, o nau?
- A: Nau, nunka, nunka ki nu ta bai nu ka decha ku algen. So ku Toti ki ta fika ku es. O ki el e sa ta bai tanbe, nu ta fika ku mininus, pamodi e ka ta da pa mas ki si.
- M: Nhos ka ten kunfiansa o e pamodi?
- A: Nau, kunfiansa o nu ten o nu ka ten, ka ta da pamodi ami ochi, N pode bai, N bai N fla-u: "Fika-n ku mininus." Otu viaji N ta fla nau, ochi pa N ka sai ku mininu, otu nau, N ta decha-l e bai el, N ta fika mi purki mi ku Toti ku Joana ku Rita si ki nu ta fase kunpanheru. Pa Toti odja, pa nos nu odja tanbe, pa Rita tanbe pode odja, nu ka ta bai so nos pa el e fika nau. Nu ta, nu ta rende-l ma--ma rende kunpanheru guarda, dja bu odja-l, si odja pa nu bai so nos ka ta da. Nu ta po-l bai tanbe, ki uns tenpu e baba N kontenti e fla-nu m'e sabi m'e ta bai tudu bes ki ten.
- \* \* \* \* \*
- A: Joana fla m'es ta fla ma ta deta, ma ta ranja omi, es ta falta Joana tudu keli. Mas nenhun go, pamodi mi dja N bai ku el, dja N odja modi ki nos mudjer nu ta sta: kelo ki nu dichi di karu, modi ki nu ta fase; ki mi N ka ta kunpanha ningen na kuza ka dretu, kel N ka ta kunpanha.
- \* \* \* \* \*
- A: Bu fla ma kazadu ku solteru kal k'e mas midjor. N fla ma solteru debi ser mas bon pamodi solteru livri la. Kazada alves pode fase nhu mutu abuzu.
- M: Sim, ma N ka sabe pamodi kazadu ta fase mas abuzu ki solteru.

- A: E pamodi e pode julga ma el e kazadu, kazadu e maradu. Nton solteru e livri, alves si un ka da-u sertu, bu pode konta-l un dos anu o kuantu, bu ba pa otu ki ta da-u mas midjor. Ago kazadu bu ka ta bai pamodi ta fladu kel nomi, "diskaradu," e un bokadinhu fastentu. Kazamentu tcheu ora e ka bon, ami N ta atcha m'e ka bon tcheu ora. Menus abuzu.
- M: Kazadu e maradu?
- A: Sertu sin. Ami N ta atcha. As ves algen ta guarda ka ta fase nada ki algen ta kre, ago kazadu go e modi, e difisil.
- M: Ma mesmu asi purizemplu, bu ten fidju ku un pai di fidju y si bu ta troka algen pode fla.
- A: Pode fla otu kuza, ki ta fladu propi, ta troka nomi. Ago si nhos ta vive un vivensia mas dretu pode e ta fika ku medu manba mi N larga, ael e pode fika ku medu, e fla nau, el ki fase-l si e ta ba djobi otu mudjer, tudu kel-li. Nton asi sta mas midjor pamodi dja nu ta bai na mesmu vida, ago kazadu go e ka si.
- M: Pamodi pa mudjer ki ta ba si e ta troka omi, purizemplu, ta troka nomi tanbe?
- A: Ta troka sin, dja e ta fladu m'e ka seriu.
- M: Pamodi pa mudjer e si, pa omi e ka si? Mudjer ta trokadu nomi, ka si? Pa omi e mas ---
- A: Omi e voluntariu ki nu ta obi ta fladu ma omi e voluntariu na rua, mudjer . . . paradu. Mudjer si ka ta ranja . . . omi dja e voluntariu, omi ta tchiga ta fase, mudjer dja ki si fase si dja ta fika mal, ka ta da pa fase propi, na kenha ki gosta di si propimenti si pisa pa ka fika bandonadu e ka ta fase nada si kontra pa algen ka fla sin. Si ki mi N ta atcha.
- M: Pai di fidju ta trabadja? Ta da algun kuza?
- A: Mutu poku dimas, poku N ka ta konforta N ba trabadja tanbe, pa pode djuda pa nu fika mas tcheu. Ka pode mas, mudjer e tantu, e dos mudjer. Ka ta da. Abo propi dja bu konche propi, e sta la kasa Joana, ta ba ka Joana, amigu di Joana propi, e sta na grupu propi djuntu ku nos.



Joana

\* \* \* \* \*

J: Nu ta trabadjaba na tera di morgadu. Ker dizer, na Sera Malageta kada un di morador tinha si pokadinhu. Me kel terenu ta daba konta kume verdi a si. Na mumentu ki dja pruduzi genti ta kumeba.

Ma nu ta trabadjaba na terenu di morgadu. Mas, anton e--kel terenu di morgadu ki nu ta trabadjaba n'el e pobreza--e genti pobri na mezma. Purki nunka genti sai di pobreza. Genti vive e pobri dia a dia. Purki na janeru genti ta faze kulheta ta parti ku morgadu ki pode da pa konvensia di familia, ma ten ki da metadi pa morgadu, metadi pa ken ki trabadja, pa renderu. E--ma bu ten ki buska karega tudu pa bu po na kaza di morgadu y inda bu ten ki tra tres dia trabadju o dos pa bu ba trabadja na kaza di morgadu--pa fla e paga kontratu.

Nha pais tinha dozi fidju. Filizmenti ben more sinku fika seti. Na kel seti ki fika da na kuartu so segu--segu ka more ninhun! Prumeru segu e mi. Ali N li, so vista ki N ka tene, ma, mas sabidu ki mi--e--

M: Ka ten!

J: Kuazi ka ten, nau. Pamodi mi N ta pucha pa kabesa. Bon, nton, ba un altura ki N staba ku katorzi anu. Kel bida di morgadu ta tra dizimu mi N atcha-l m'e mutu stranhu. Anton, ten un Dimistradoru ki tchoma Kinkin Rubeiru, anton morgadu ba tra dizimu N da morgadu ku pedra--

M: Un!

J: Dupos morgadu leba nha pai pa Santa Katarina na Dimistradoru. Kantu nha pai tchomadu pa mostra kel mininu ki da ku pedra, era mi, anton Dimistradoru manda da-n dozi palmatoriada, 6 n'un mon, 6 n'otu mon. Mas nu bai pa kaza.

Morgadu ka fla nha pai s'el ta tuma-l lugar--terenu. Anton na mes di Judju, nha pai leba midju, fichon--leba povu ba po na lugar pa simia--morgadu ba tra-l di lugar, tuma-l lugar. A kel anu nha pai dja ka ten nada di vive n'el. Nha pai bai ta trabadja na jornal pa da se fidju di kume.

Gentis ta faze kulheta na mes di Janeru. Na mes di Junhu gentis ten ki kunpra kumida pa kume pamo dja ka ten kumida. Bu ten un porku, un baka bu ten ki bende pa bu aguenta trabadja azagua na tchon di morgadu.

Si ki N leba nha vida! E si ki N leba nha vida. Si ki N leba nha vida.

\* \* \* \* \*

J: Purtantu, ami era nha ideia ki N tinha ma anti di N more ma N ta odjaba liberdadi. Era nha sonhu. Ami leba mutu ingratidaun.

Nha pai po-n na skola--morgadu ten dinheru, ten tchon--anton Kabu Chefri bai papia ku prufisor tra-n di skola poio mininu di



morgadu. Ami e pobri, bai poi mininu di morgadu. Ami N perde skola. N tinha dez anu. Ma, si N kontinuaba nha skola ku dez anu, agora N ta ben fika ka ta odja, ma N ta fikaba ku el tudu na siensia. N ta kontinuaba ta skrebeba.

\* \* \* \* \*

- J: Kel pai-di-fidju era di li. E pai di Edina. Agora e avo di Olivia. Mas dja N ka kontinua ku el pamodi el dispreza-n ma mi e segu el ba kaza ku otu mudjer.
- M: Antis di nha bai Santume o dipos?
- J: Anti di N ben dja-l dja kaza. N ben, kumo mulher e fraku, N torna ben N kontinua ku otu omi. Dja ka da sertu, N bandona N fika mi so. Desdi '75 N sta mi so.
- M: Ma nha dura anton ku kel otu?
- J: Keli N dura sin.
- M: Nhos vive djuntu li?
- J: Pai di Melinda.
- M: Kantu tenpu ki nhos fika djuntu, tcheu anus?
- J: '65 ate '75. Dez anu. Na '77 li ki nu ka djunta mas.
- M: Pamodi ka da?
- J: Pamodi ka da. Mas e pamodi un dizastri di karu ki N panha el bandona-n, el decha-n dentu di kaza. Partidu ki ben tuma konta di mi. Purtantu, mi nha maridu e Stadu ku Partidu. E Stadu di Kauberdi y nha Partidu PAICV k'e nha maridu.
- M: Anton, dipos di kel dizastri el larga nha?
- J: Dipos di kel dizastri el larga-n el ba ranja otu rapariga.
- M: En! Kela--nha fika li duenti tcheu tenpu?
- J: N fika li duenti--gentis di Partidu di Tera Branka ku di Tira Chapeu ben li, dipos es odja-n es manda-n pa ospital, es manda-n pa ospital. Dja N ben ten kunhisimentu, dja N ben tuma kunhisimentu na gentis di Partidu. Inda ka tinha dipendensia. Nau, es es da kunhisimentu di mi anti di dipendensia, na liberdadi di '74, 25 di Abril. Anton na '75, dia 28 di Junhu, N ta sai pa N bai pa un runiaun pos N panha dizastri. Es konvida-n kes runiauns e dja k'es tuma kunhisimentu. Maridu tanbe kantu ki dja odja ma karu dja bate na mi el bandona-n. Kes gentis ki konvida-n runiauns tuma konta di mi. Es ki tene-n ku kunhesimentu ochi. Ma na '74 kantu dada liberdadi di 25 di Abril, nha maridu staba na Lisboa. Anton kuandu k'el ben k'el atcha N ka kel runiaun el ka da akordu. E ka da

akordu, el fla-n ma s'el sabia ma mi N staba na runiaun dja e ka ta binha, si N staba na PAIGC m'el ka ta binha.

M: N! Pamodi?

J: Pamodi el ka kria. Agora, tanbe, kantu ki karu da na mi el fla m'e finadu di Purtuges ki dja da ku mi na tchon.

M: Anton el ka staba d'akordu ku independensia?

J: Nau. Kantu ki N fika midjor N fla-l ma finadu d'Amilkar Kabral dja labanta-n tanbe. Ami kantu ki N fika midjor--mi dj'el larga-n ku pankada, e Stadu ku Partidu dja tuma konta di mi dja N fika midjor. Asuntu Susiais manda-n pa Fogu. Ala N ba tra chapa na Fogu N ben faze tratamentu N fika midjor--kantu N fika midjor N fla, "Nau, dja N ka kre maridu mas." Pamodi el el larga-n ku fomi. Ami tanbe gosi e Stadu ki ta da-n di kume n ka ten ki ba djunta ku el. Dja N bandona-l, el fika na se lugar, N fika na di meu.

Sin, anton, es kaza li e propriamentu apoiu di Statu, apoiu di Obras Publika ki da-n kel kaza li.

M: Nhos ka ta moraba li na kel tenpu li?

J: Nu ta moraba na kel otu la, na kel otu pra la. E--kel dja e terenu, nha pai bende un padas di terenu ki N tinha na bera sin, e d'un litru di simintera, ele da-n N ben faze kaza li na Praia.

M: Kela era diipos di ben di Santume?

J: Dipos ki N ben di Santume. Dipos e di mi ku nha maridu. Dja nu staba djuntu. Agora, keli, keli dja kantu N ta faze mi N ka staba dja djuntu ku el mas. Keli e fundadu na '83.

M: Era atraves di Asuntu Susiais k'es faze es kaza li?

J: Nau. Atraves di pidimentu ki N faze--apoiu ki N pidi na Titu Ramus k'era Ministru di Obra Publikas. El ki da-n apoiu N faze.

Ami ochi N ta vive atraves di apoiu di povu Kabuverdianu, di genti grandi, di prizidenti, dus ministrus, di prumeru ministru, di impreza, Asuntu Susiais, prinsipalmenti di Asuntu Susiais. Asuntu Susiais, ami dja N ten 37 anu ta vive na Asuntu Susiais, 37 anu ta vive ku apoiu, ku subsidiu di Asuntu Susiais.

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J: Na kel tenpu ki N entra na grupu di OM--propriamenti N ben entra--ser militanti di Partidu--e duzuseru di maridu ki po-n entra. Ate N fika es maridu obrigadu purki si k'era duzuseru kreki N ka ta entraba. N fika kontenti purki e uma grandi animasaun.

Na '79, ten un Juana na Tera Branka--bo bu konche-l--Juana manda-n kuantu ficha pa N konvida Amilia, Celinha, Lucinda, ami--kuatu. Anton N ba konvida kel Lucinda ku kel Celinha es ka entra. Atnon nu faze ficha mi ku Amilia. Mi ku Amilia, na '81, nu entra.

M: Kel Amilia ki ta sta na kaza di--pertu di kaza di . . .

J: E. Nu entra na grupu. Ma dja tenba runiauns, na '79 dja nu tivi un siminariu, dja N tenba un konfrensia na liseu, anton nu ben agora funda grupu na Tera Branka/Tira Chapeu--ala na Tera Branka. Propriamenti na Tera Branka, menbra di Tira Chapeu ku menbrus di Tera Branka. Nu ta bai runiaun so la na skola na Tera Branka. Sin, tudu atividadi era na Tera Branka.

Mas nu ben bira ku tcheu menbru, tcheu menbru--menbrus ben entra, entra, entra, entra--dja na dia 18 di Abril ate 18 di Maiu dja nu tinha vinti y tal menbru dja. Anton Abril d'otu anu dja nu tinha 35 menbru--karu e tcheu--mas e dja staba--tcheu tenba medu d'entra. El ka sabe e kuze, ka sabe era kuze, ka koncheba--dja nu bira ta faze tcheu atividadi, tcheu atividadi--nu ta faze kanpanha, nu ta ba pa Tera Branka, nu ben pa Tira Chapeu, nu ta ba pa Tchada--nu ba ta mobiliza, mobiliza pisoas ate dja na '85 dja nu ben dizenrola grupu, fika un grupu na Tera Branka otu na Tira Chapeu. Kumo mi era Kumite di menbru, N ta mobiliza menbrus na Tira Chapeu y tinha un otu Kumite na Tera Branka, dja mi era di kumite di Tira Chapeu. Mas dja N ben fika Purmeru Sikritaria na Tira Chapeu na '75--na '85, diskulpa. Dja nundi na '88 dja nu tinha pertu di setenta y tal menbrus. Dja ki dja torna kebra otra ves. Kapaz di sta la un sinkuenta y tal. Otu dja inbarka, otu dja muda rizidensia, otu dja more--y otu ka sta ta partisipa ta ba pa Dakar, ta ba pa Saunvisenti. Na buska vida e sin--dja vida sta mariadu, ta partisipa poka genti. Ma es ten mutu boa vontadi tanbe.

M: Kel tenpu ki nhos dividi entri Tira Chapeu y Tera Branka, pamodi grupu disidi faze dos grupu?

J: Bon, grupu disidi faze dos grupu--mas e propriamenti pamo inpuru di menbru di Partidu di Tira Chapeu. Menbrus di Partidu di Tira Chapeu era inkluidu na Tera Branka. Purmeru sikritariu era di Tera Branka. Mas tinha kumite di Tira Chapeu. Mas ben parse un rapas--el kreba ser purmeru sikritariu el faze kel--el mete kel orgulhu na meu--dipos el pidi pa dizenrola. El ba pa Partidu--ba pa Sector--Sector seta y dipos el foi dizenrola dos grupu: un na Tera Branka un na Tira Chapeu.

Dipos k'el dja funda Partidu li--JAAC tanbe era di Tera Branka/Tira Chapeu. Dizenrola JAAC tanbe. Fika grupu li na Tira Chapeu, grupu la na Tera Branka. Dipos pidi pa dizenrola OM tanbe. OM ki ben dizenrola ultumu.

M: Nha ta staba mas kontenti ku grupu djuntadu ku Tera Branka o--?

J: Ben, en prinsipiu--en prinsipiu tudu menbru fika tristi. E ka kria. Mas dja pa agora grupu sta tudu mas satusfetu, fika satusfetu ku asi. Fika satusfetu asi, si Tira Chapeu kre tchoma Tera Branka pa un atividadi, nu ta tchoma--un intrikanbiu; tanbe si Tera Branka kre tchoma Tira Chapeu pa intrikanbiu ta tchoma. Nu ta fika kontenti asin. Abertu asin fika bon. Fika bon.

Bon, nton agora, agora n'es mudansia, n'es mudansia na '90 li, ki tene un bokadinhu di difikuldadi li pamodi povu sta tudu ku

medu. Mas--el sta ku medu ainda pamodi inda es ka odja fin di  
trabadju. Ma, o k'es odja fin d'es dos partidu konsentra trabadju  
sertu, dja el ta fika mas bon.

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## Linara

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L: Antis di N bai Lisboa, N sta na Sant'Anton. Kel sinhora ki manda toma-n, nha mai ta staba ku el. Nha mai antis di ten fidju e tinha dos fidju pamodi nha mai ten tres fidju, antis e tinha dos fidju, nha mai ta staba ku el e dura un anus ku el, dipos nha mai torna ben panha mas un gravidez, e ben bai Sant'Anton. Dispos e manda fla nha mai si nha mai ka tinha un minininha la pa mandaba el, dja N ben bai.

N bai ka ten mutu tenpu nu bai Lisboa, N ka para un anu na San Vicente, N bai Lisboa. La N ten seti anu la, mi N ben, es fika la. Es manda-n, dispos N ben N bai Sant'Anton. Dja kustumada ku kes kriason di Lisboa dja otu, otu viver, dja bu ta sta stranhu ora ki bu si dja ---

M: Bu ben ku dizaseti anu dja bu sta grandi.

L: Pa N fika si na pe di nhas pais, pobri pa N spera p'es da-n tudu. Nha pai dja more, nha pai more ta fase un anu go na Otubru. Es da-n tudu kuza, kes tudu mininus. Dja N pidi-s pa N ben San Vicente pa N ben trabadja. Kel bes kuze, trabadju era kuatusentu chkudu, kinhentus. Gosi un empregada, na San Vicente es sa ta paga ate dos kontu, dos kontu kinhentus ma e raro na San Vicente. Ali dja e tres kontu, tres kontu kinhentu. N ben N ben ganha kel kinhentus, prumeru era kuatusentus, dispos N ba ta ganha kinhentus. Ma sime inda ka ta da pa nada, e konta bu fla N ta kunpra un kueka, un pasta di denti, e kuze. Pa bu ka pidi bus pais tudu kuza, kel trabadju kel vida sakrifikadu na Sant'Anton, p'es ka kes mas pikinoti, p'es ben da-u abo.

Ma nha pai ka kria, nha pai fla ma nau, ma si fidju ka ta trabadjaba. N fla-l ma nau. Nu ten un irmon k'e tropa, e sorjenti, gosi e sta na Sal . . . N ben pidi nha irmon p'e fala ku nha pai pa decha-n bai, bai trabadja pa nha vida, dja nha pai ben decha-n, N bai trabadja. Dipos N ben konche Tony nu ben mora djuntu mi ku el. Nu ben ten kel, pamodi mi N ka dura ku Tony dja N panha gravides, N ben panha Tchico dja N ben mora na kasa di ses pais. N ben ten Tchico, N ben trabadja pamodi mi nunka N gosta di sta paradu dja tinha uns mes N ka ta trabadja. N ta ganha kuatusentu chkudu, ku mininu pa da leti, pai ka tinha trabadju, kuatusentu chkudu.

Kel bes inda leti era baratu, era duzentus sinkuenta un lata, es ta paga mi kuatusentus, N ta kunpra un lata leti ta fika sentu sinkuenta. N ba ta trabadja, N ba ta trabadja, dispos N ben pasa ta fase nha ganhu. Ta fase nha asukrinha, li na Praia es ta tchoma dosi. N ta fase rapusada ta bende. Nta ganhaba nha tiston na rapusada pamodi N ta bendeba kuartu kilu de asukar pur dia so na rapusada. Purisu N kema kel mo li. Li na Praia propi N ka faseba ma N ka sta atcha trabadju, pa N fika paradu dja N ta fla ma N ta ganha un dinheru di un kuartu di asukar, un kuartu pitroli, dja N ka ta fika so paradu.



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- L: Ta bai, nha mai di kriason na Lisboa di anu en anu--pamodi mi N ka ta skrebe, mi e prigisoza na skrebe.
- M: Inda e sta la?
- L: E sta la. N obi ta fladu m'e ta ben go na fin di mes.
- M: Si maridu staba la tudu?
- L: Maridu sta la. Maridu era imigranti. Kes imigrant na kes tenpu, dja sta raformadu. Agora es ta vive la, desdi kel tenpu ki nu bai, es sta la. Dj'es kunpra kasa la. Nha mai di kriason dja abri supermerkadu la.
- M: Ma es ka tinha fidju?
- L: Ten, es ten des [10].
- M: Pamodi es kria tinha mas, pamodi? E pa trabadju?
- L: Pa djuda-s. Dja di ves en kuandu es ta djuda-n, ta ba ta leva vida si.
- M: Si bu ta fikaba la, bu ta trabadjaba la?
- L: N ta trabadjaba la, N ta trabadjaba. Bon, N ka sta raklama pamodi N ka sta mal pa pior tanbe. Pamodi ten ki sta mas mal di ki mi. Ma N kria staba kun situason di vida midjor. Mi la na Lisboa N atcha un kasal ki ka tinha fidju--era ja velhoti--pa tomaba mi pa fase-n ses erderu. Kel-li go era un eru di sel, e ka da-n, e ka da-n. Kes gentis, mi, es gostaba di mi.
- M: Era Kauberdianu?
- L: Nau, Portuges. Es gosta di mi. Es fla k'e p'e daba mi, k'e p'e fase-n ses erderu, ma e nega da-n.
- M: Ma vida e si. Pelumenus bu atcha un bon pai di fidju.
- L: N atcha un bon pai-di-fidju. Pamodi gosi e ka tudu ora ki bu ka atcha ta bebe, ki ta da-u purada. Ora ki bu ta atcha ten un monti rapariga, un montu problema, un monti difikuldadi. Mi dja N ka ten kecha fla. Ami inda onti N sta ta fla, Linara, ami N ka ta sai di kasa, dja bu po-n na bu jetu.
- M: E--bu teni sorti.

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- L: Ma N ka ten kecha fla. P'e ka da-n e so s'e ka ten. E mostra boa vontadi p'e da-n ma e ka ten. Mi tanbe N ta konforta, s'e tinha dja N sabe m'e ta daba mi, ma e ka ten. N ta konforta. Haja boa

vontadi. Si ten boa vontadi, bon tratamentu, mi ku el nu ka ta da gera dentu kasa, nu ta da dretu. Dozi anu, gosi e ka tudu kazadu ki fari solteru, ki sa ta guenta.

M: Dozi anu e tcheu. Nhos ta da djuntu ben.

L: Nu sta mas ki sertus kazadu, ora ki N fla nha maridu--kaverdianu e ingonuranti--dja, nha maridu, bo e kazadu, dja pa bu fla maridu so si bo e kazadu, mi N ka kazadu ma N sta mas midjor ki sertus kazadu.

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L: Ami propi N sa ta obi-s ta pidi jardin, pidi jardin, ma mi N ka sa ta odja-s fase nhun.

M: Pamodi nhos ka ta kumesa na kel kabu di Nhu Betu?

L: Nau, e kele k'es flaba m'es sa ta kumesaba, ma mi N ka purgunta Joana mas, ma s'es kria kumesaba es anu dja es tinha di da movimentu na el desdi gosi. Pamodi jardin, minis di jardin ta toma feria na Agostu, Setenbru, Otubru. Parse-n na Otubru dja jardin ta abri. Ma mi N ka sta odja-s ta fase nhun jetu. Un bes N fla Joana n'el N ten . . . di meu li, e ka ta ba inda ma, mas dia, dja e ta bai. Pa li ten kantu mininu, bu ta odja na rua tcheu. Si ten un jardin un mai ta paga sinkuenta chkudu o mesmu sen chkudu, dja bu sabe ma mininu sta la ka ten prigu ku karu. Ala e ten un algen pa toma konta del. Nos--N ka ta fla es pamodi ami me N sta inkluidu--ma nos nu ta fla nu kre, nu kre, ma e pa nu atcha tudu prontu. Sima kel jardin la ki dj'es fla. S'es atcha tudu prontu es ta poi mininu, ago p'es fla: "ranja un bankinhu, bu ten ki ranja kel lanchu pa bu da bu fidju p'e leba pamodi sta na prinsipiu," dja prontu, dja kaba.

M: Pamodi?

L: Dja kaba. Dja es ka ten fidju. Nu kre, nu kre si nu atcha prontu. Sima es fla la. Kada mai ta ranja un bankinhu ta leba, pamodi sta na prinsipiu, ta faze kel lanchu di kel mininu ta leba. Ta paga un X tantu tudu mes, pa pagakel algen ki sta toma konta kel mininu. Asi dja nau. Ma s'es faze-l si sima es fladu, ora ki un serku divididu pa jardin, k'es odja un prinsipiu, dja es ta ten boa vontadi dja es ta ka djuda. Nu kre, nu kre, tudu algen kre. Ago poi mo ki ta falta.

M: Pamodi e asi? Kuze ki bu ta atcha?

L: Mi N ta atcha es kre faze jardin. Nu kre jardin li na nos zona, pamodi kuazi tudu kes zona di Praia ten jardin. Tira Chapeu ka ten. Ma si tudu populason djunta pa paga un sen chkudu un karpinteru pa faze bu fidju un bankinhu, e ta po-l la. Pamodi kasa Nhu Betu e grandi. Ta poi la dos turnu, un di sedu, otu di tardi. Bu ta ranja bu fidju kel kopu sumu, ku kel pon o kel . . . bu ta po-l e ta bai, si bu sta bai sirbisu, bu ta bai ku chintidu

diskansadu. Ma es ka ta liga. Odja kel problema di agu ali na Tra Chapeu. Nu ten problema agu. Tudu kel pupulasaon es ta manda un ora di agu. As ves, mi kantu N ta panhaba agu la nen ka ta tchiga un ora. Es ta mandaba agu seis ora, antis seti ora agu dja bai. Kantu algen ta fika sen agu, ami propi dja N fika sen el, ma purkausa di ke, s'e pa trivimentu bu ta atcha-nu li sin des chintadu, nu ta odja-bu ta pasa nu ta faze-u trosa, bu sta mal bistidu, bu sta mal kalsadu, nu ta odja kelotu ta pasa, nu ta torna faze trosa pamodi e sta bistidu sen lisa, or'e sta chuchu, or'e sta mal kalsadu. Pamodi gosi primeru kusa k'es ta djobe-u e na pe. Ma pa nu djunta mos trinta, o nos korenta di li, pa nu bai la sikritariadu pa nu ba poi problema di agu, kel ka ta bai nau. Ningen ka ta bai. Mi N ta fla-s el, mi N ta fla-s klaru. N ta fla-s: "Li nu ten falta di agu pamodi kel problema; pa djunta trinta, korenta o sinkuenta algen, si bai la na sikritariadu ba fala ku injinheru ta fla ma nos pupulason di Tra Chapeu ka sta mandadu nen un ora di agu, bu ta odja m'es ta midjora agu."

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## Nela

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- N: Sin. Na grupu di OM di nos di Tira Chapeu, ka sime? Nos e so pobri, koitadu. Y--nu ta vive un vida dretu si komu sidadaun Kabuverdiana. Mas, un vida un poku difisil. Pamodi anos a pechera, tradera di kaskadju, areia--trabadjadera di obra. As ves nu ta trabadja obra, ta ten dos kinzena ta kumesa di tres ka pagadu. Nu ta fika ku vida difisel ku nos fidju. Li na--anos li na Tira Chapeu, anos na Tira Chapeu, anos e un poku koitadu. [rizu] Sin. Anos na Tira Chapeu nos e un poku koitadu, ku poku situasaun. As ves nu ta chinti sima ki nos e ka Kabuverdiana, na nos grupu di OM.
- M: Pamodi?
- N: Pamodi nu ta faze uns kuzas di manera di--uns kanpanha di linpeza, nu ta pidi uns apoiu pa nu dadu pa nu linpa nos bairu, komu mudjer, pa fika linpu, nu ka ta dadu. Es ta ngana-nu ku ses karu m'es ta da-nu, ku ses danpa, ku ses matrial pa nu faze, nu ka ta odja-l o ki tchiga ora.
- M: Nton nha ta atcha ma purizenplu, kel grupu di OM debi ser kuze?
- N: Nos, nos grupu di OM, N t'atcha ma nu debi ser un grupu di OM forti sima nos e! Na tudu zonas di Praia ten grupu di OM. Ma mi na nha manera di odja, N t'atcha ma nos grupu di OM di li m'e forti, cheiu di boa vontadi! Nda nu ten nos primera sikritaria, k'e kamarada Joana, e segu, ma el ten spiritu forti! Y ta djunta ku nos nu ta faze un kel--kel kuza!  
Ami na nha banda kumo--ami e menbru di OM, militanti di partidu, milisias popularis--
- M: Nn! Tudu! [rizu]
- N: An! Un monti kuza!
- M: Kumisaun di Moradoris tanbe?
- N: Prizidenti di Kumisaun di Moradoris di Tira Chapeu.  
N t'atcha ma nu ta trabadja un bokadinhu ka dretu. Pamodi ku difisensia tcheu. E un bokadinhu razuavel. Ki si nu ten apoiu, tcheu kuza si nu pidi ki nu dadu apoiu ta ben pa frenti. Ta ben pa frenti!  
Nu ten un jardin li ki nu pidi li tcheu tenpu. Nu fika so ta fladu, so ta fladu. Nunka mas nu ka odja-l pa nu po nos fidju n'el na Tira Chapeu. Nu ka odja.  
Un mai ta tene se sinku fidju, bu ta konvidadu un kau, bu ta kre faze un trabadju, pa lonji, bu ka ta bai pamo nu ka ten kau di decha kes mininus mas pikinoti. To ki kes mas grandi ba skola, kes mas pikinoti nu ten ki decha li. Ku karu, ku gera, ku pedra, ku tudu kuza, nu ten ki decha nos fidju li. Pamodi nos situasaun e

pobri. Situasauñ difisel pa nos mudjer di Kabu Verdi. Tcheu, poku! Ka tudu mudjeris di Kabu Verdi. N ta fla, ma jeralmenti tcheu mudjer di Kabu Verdi, anos, nu ten situasauñ difisel. Difisel, difisel ki N ka ta mutu splika-l dretu. Pamodi-- [rizu]

M: Aian. Sta bon.

N: --nos vida fastentu pa nos.

M: Y--e purisu, pa faze kes tipu di trabadju ki nha entra na grupu di OM?

N: Ami N entra na OM ku spiritu di militanti di Partidu. Numer un mudjer di Partidu na Tira Chapeu na mil novisentos stenta kuantu--ki dadu vinti sinku di Abril. Tres da manhan. Dipos . . . liberdadi. N tinha odju ragaladu djuntu ku omis pa independensia di Kabu Verdi.

M: Pamodi nha staba ntirisadu na kel kuza?

N: Pamodi N tenba gana pa N odja bandera negra sana na bentu!

M: Aian.

N: N tenba tcheu vontadi! N ka koncheba! N ta obi senpri ta nomiada nomi di Amilkar Kabral, undi k'el ta staba. Mas era pribidu flaba. Senpri! N ten un irmaun kuriozu, ta abri radiu di Guine Konakri p'el panha undi ki Amilkar Kabral sta. Mas, t'atcha PIDE na porta ta sukuta ku radiu transmisaun pa sabia kuza ki sta ta pasaba. Ta prendia, ta njuria, ta sota.

Ma N tinha vontadi di odja independensia--tchiga sinku di Julhu di stenta y sinku, pa N odja ndependensia di Kabu Verdi.

N sisti-l na Stadiu da Varzia. Sinku di Julhu di stenta y sinku, nu tuma nos ndependensia nasional. N tinha tcheu vontadi propi, N ta intchiba nha bolsa di pel ki rapazis di Ponta Belen ta da mi N ta binha ku el li Tira Chapeu nu ta lansaba na rua di noti. Ta mancheba, gentis ta fla, "Dimoni dja lansa-nu papel."

Pamo N tinha vontadi di odjaba Kabu Verdi ndipendenti. Te nda ami e di akordu ku Kabu Verdi ndipendenti. Di akordu. Mas N ta kre o ki nu pidi, ki nu po mon pa nu djudadu. Si kre, kuzas ka tcheu algen ki ta faze. Poku algen ta faze kuza riba. Pamodi, si bu odja un korpu, uns monti algen duenti, bu ka ta kre. Bu ta kre dez pruntu, firmi pa nu po mon pa nu djudadu. Ma nu ta kre go, o ki nu pidi tanbe, tal kuza sta mal ki nu pidi, pa nu ka pidi pa nu fladu so si, "Manha nu ta dadu." Pa nu pidi pa nu djudadu ku nos pididu tanbe. Cheiu di pobri-pobri. Te ki nu chinti ma nos e pobri--mas ku spiritu forti, spiritu riku!

Basta ku saudi. Spiritu riku pa nos tera Kabu Verdi. Riku!

Dja mi N ka ta dizisti! Senpri PAICV! Ma N ta kre ser un PAICV forti!

O ki nu ser un PAICV, manhan nu sai nu odja otu algen ta da mal ta nchoka-nu nos korasaun. Nu kre ser un PAICV forti. Ki



ningen ka ta da mal di nos. Ma--N ka ta splika pamo N ka ta se splika e pamodi ki--nu ka ta mutu sabe kes kuzas li.

M: Nton. Kel ki--bon, nha fla ma nha era dja militanti di Partidu, nha entra na OM. Ma kuze ki nha pensaba atchaba diferenti na OM ki nha ka ta--nha dja fazeba tcheu kuza komu militanti di Partidu, nton, kuze ki nha pensaba atchaba na OM mas ki na Partidu o diferenti ki na Partidu?

N: Nau, N ka t'atcha. Grupus di OM ku grupus di Partidu normalmenti, pa mi N t'atcha-l tudu dretu. Y N gosta propi di sta! N gosta propi di sta!

Ami ka era OM pamodi OM ka tinha li na Tira Chapeu. Kantu ki OM fundadu na Tira Chapeu, ki fundadu OM na Tira Chapeu, N entra na grupu di OM na Tira Chapeu pamo N gosta. N gosta di sta na organizasaun.

M: Desdi kes purmerus tenpu di OM li?

N: Nau. N ka sta lenbra fikisi--data ki N entra na OM. Pamodi e tenha--gentis dja entra mas frenti. Pamo situasaun ikunomiku ka ta daba. N staba na Monti Burmedju ta tra kel jora pretu. Anos, ami, Nha Dori, un minininha ki tchuma Maria di Nha Vira, anos e prumeru algen ki tra kaskadju pretu na Monti! Prumeru algen ki tra-l! Nunka nu sabia si na Monti Burmedju tinha kaskadju pretu. Anton, nu bari kes riba tchon, Nha Dori fla-nu, "Nu sromenta koba nu odja si nu ka t'atcha."

Nu koba ku inchada nu atcha rusu, nu koba nu da ku pretu. Nu koba nu ta da ku modjadu--nu ta kore mon n'el si. As ves si ta sta kenti, komu fladu e orijen vulkanika--anton, e la ki nu tra. Ki propi ami, pa N ten kel kaza li, e jora na Monti Burmedju ki N tra.

M: E!

N: N tene-l sin, ka kubridu, ka nada. Mas e jora na Monti Burmedju ki N tra. Na kel braku pretu grandi la frenti.

M: Aian. N konche.

N: Ala ki N pasa nha vida ku nha tres fidju ki dja N tinha. Mi ku ses pai nu riparti, N fika ku tres fidju. Ta tra jora, o ki nu sai di tra jora, ba mar djobe polvu ben bendi, faze kumida da mininu, torna bai. Asin pur dianti ki N leba nha vida, ka ta mutu daba.

Dipos N ben decha di ba Monti. N trabadja li na prujeti di Taiti--ben abri ba oitenta y kuartu, abri na oitenta y sinku. N trabadja na obra di prujetu di Taiti li. Obra di prujetu di Taiti para, njinheru Djonsa ben ranja-n un trabadju na Sikritariadu komu osiliar di fiskal na konstrusaun klandistina. N fika ta trabadja na Sikritariadu. N atcha un bokadin di tenpinhu, N entra na OM.

M: A sin.

N: Na militanti di Partidu, di Milisia, N entra na Agostu stenta y sinku. Dadu ndipendensia dia sinku di Julhu, na Agostu stenta y sinku dja N sta Milisia. Primeru kanpamentu di Milisia ki foi fetu na Praia, N staba la.

M: Ku arma ku tudu?

N: Ku arma ku tudu. [rizu] Ku jetres. Kel bes era ku G-3 na kosta. Dipos di G-3 decha di izisti, e AKM na mon.

\* \* \* \* \*

N: AKM na mon ta sapa tchada.

E ku fe vivu na PAICV! Nau, sakedu na kanela! Si tchiga tenpu di pega, N podi more, ma N ka ta kore!

M: Aian. Y, nton, antis di kumesa kel trabadju di Monti Burmedju, mo ki nha ta viveba, antis di kela?

N: N ta trabadja na obra--na Apoiu.

M: Kela era antis di ndipendensia nton?

N: Antis di N tinha fidju--gravida di kel nha primeru fidju la. N trabadjaba na obra. Dipos N fika ta mar pega polvu. Ta mar--ti Santa Klara, ti djon Ani, ti lonji di Sidadi Velha, pas Portu Moskitu, la lonji. Pa li ti tchiga Farol di Lesti. Nu ta labanta di madrugada. Nu ta durmi un sonu nu ta korda nu ta bai. O ki nu ta ben tchiga li, as ves, di noti otu bes. Nu ta bendi na Otel Praia-Mar, nu ta bendi na dona Tujinha Bosa Nova, nu ta bendi tudu kes ristorante ki ta kunprada polvu, na Mina na Tchada li, na mudjer ki tchuma Marilena, na Linda, na un monti kau ki ta kunprada polvu--nu konchedu, nu ta bendeba. Dipos di kel, jora na Monti Burmedju. Jora, des ki ta fazeda Nbachada Purtuges dja nu kumesa ta bendeba jora na Monti. N ka lenbra ki tenpu ki nu kumesa. Ma jora e dipos di independensia. Nu kumesa ta tra jora, pode ser un anu pa li--pamo el [si fidju] tinha un anu--nu kumesa ta tra jora na Monti.

M: E kantu anu gosi?

N: Katorzi.

M: E! Nhos diskubri-l si nhos so?

N: Nton. Nu kumesa ta bare kes riba tchon ta bendi si, ta djunta kes kaskadju ta bendi. Nton nu rasta saku nu odja kel kau. N fla, "Nha Dori, nha odja li, nu sromenta koba nu odja si nu ka ta odja kel jora li pretu." Nu kobe nu tra tera nu atcha uma brankasenta. Nu kumesa koba nu atcha pretu. Nu koba ti tchiga fundu, ti ki tudu algen kontinua ta tra.

Ma, primeru: ami, Nha Dori, Maria di Nha Vira. Primeru algen na tra jora pretu na Monti. Si kre nha obi otu algen ta fla, nha

fla-s m'es konta ka si! Prumeru e nos ki tra! Prumeru e nos ki tra!

M: [rizu] Nhos faze un trabadju duru.

N: Dja N pasa mal tcheu. Ku dor na kosta, karega kuzas pizadu, magi, padja, un montis kuza pizadu. Mas, vida difisel. E ti si ki nu fika. Nu ka meresi ten nada, nu ka ten.

\* \* \* \* \*

M: Di kel ladu, vida tanbe di mudjer Kabuverdiana e difisil. Nha fla--

N: E difisel si kel manera. Bu ta ten fidju, bu fika ku fidju pur konta sen pai. Pai s'es nbarka es ka ta lenbra m'es decha-bu ku ses fidju p'es da kumida. Li na Praia bu ta ten fidju ku un algen, basta nhos ka sta djuntu mas, e ka ta da kel fidju kumida. P'el da-l kumida e so pa bu ba kecha d'el, pa Tribunal obriga-l da kinhentus chkudu. As ves ki ka ta tchiga un mininu pa nada.

Mas vale bu kre sufri, bu ta kecha d'algen. Nhos ta subi tribunal, nhos ta dichi, pa kuza ki nhos tudu dos ki faze.

M: Sin!

N: Ami N ka ta da-l konsidirason. A ba kecha di ningen p'el da mininu kumida k'e sim'el ten obrigasaun di da.

M: Nha ka kre?

N: Ami N ka ta bai.

M: Pamodi?

N: Na. N ta trabadja, kel ki N atcha N ta da-s. N ka ta kecha di ningen pa da nun kumida. S'el atcha m'e si fidju, el kre da e da. S'el atcha m'e ka debe da, problema e di sel. N ka ta kecha.

M: Nton e kel primeru ki nbarka? Nha fla e sta na Merka.

N: Ah-han. Na Brokitin k'el sta.

M: Aian. El ka ta manda nada?

N: Nada!

M: Aian. Ta skesi.

Sin, N ka sabe, talves, N ka sabe pamodi kel kuza ta kontisi. Pai-di-fidjus ka ten meius o es e so runhu! [rizu]

N: Es ta gosta di ta ranja mudjer tcheu. Djon, kantu nu viveba e ka tinha nun mudjer. Dipos k'el ta ganhaba poku, kantu el vira ta ganha tcheu el sai ta ranja un monti mudjer. N larga-l. N ben fika na nha kau mi so, djuntu ku nhas pais.

Un algen nobu e ka ta vive el so. Kel bes odju sta tapadu, N ka sabe si tinha PMI ki ta tumada ramedí. N ten mas dos fidju. Nu vive kuantu anu, mi ku es pai, el torna ba ranja minina la pa Rubon Chiker, el ta njuria. Omis di Kabu Verdi gosta di sota mudjer! Ta dadji, ku rostu ntchadu, ku kes njuria, algen ka ta podi ku el, bu ta larga. O ki bu larga, mo ki bu ta fika? Bo so bu ka ta fika! Prublema e keli.

M: Ka ta teni nau.

N: Ka ta konsigi. Mi N ten sinku anu mi so, ta trabadja N ta da nha fidju. Ma N ka konsigi fika mi so. N ten mas dos!

\* \* \* \* \*

Nisia

- M: Tudu dia nhos ta fazi kel tipu di trabadju li?
- N: Tudu dia. O--dia e bati, dia e liza.
- M: A sin.
- N: Ora N ta bati la Tchada.
- M: Mm-hmm. Na kaza?
- N: Na kaza di patroa. Ora N ta liza.
- M: Aian.
- N: Pa divirti ku fidju, pa kiria fidju ti ki kiria. Fidju na skola--ses pai ten un monti anu prezu.
- M: E verdadi?
- N: Mi so ki ta trabadja pa N da-s.
- M: E prezu? El sta prezu?
- N: Dja el sai go. El sai a dias la.
- M: N!
- N: Ma el ten oitu anu prezu.
- M: Na--li na--
- N: La na kadia sivil.
- M: N! Kela e un tristeza go.
- N: E. Nda ben ki N ka ten fidju tcheu.
- M: A sin.
- N: E dos pikinoti.
- M: Mm-hmm.
- N: Si N tinha es un monti propi, N ka sabe kumo N ta fazeba. Nes vida li--di Kabu Verdi karu li.
- M: Aian.
- N: Nun sirbisu ki bale algen ka ta atcha.
- M: Mm-hmm.



N: E trabadju na kintal d'algen. Kintal d'algen ora ta da dretu, ora ka ta da. Bu ten ki ben kaza.

\* \* \* \* \*

M: Nhos dura djuntu?

N: O! Dja nu ten dizanovi anu djuntu.

M: N!! Kazadu ku tudu?

N: An?

M: Kazadu ku tudu?

N: Nos nu ka kazadu. Nos e solteru.

M: Mm-hmm. Ma kuazi. [rizu] Senpri djuntu, e ka?

N: Dja nu ten dozi mininu. Ago, mori tudu. N--N ta ten fidju ta mori. Ta ten fidju ta mori. E! Mi dja N ten fidju tcheu.

M: E! Dozi?!

N: Dozi fidju.

M: Ki ta fika so dos?

N: Tres. Keli ku dos rapazinh.

M: Tres. Aian.

N: Kel otu--

M: Normalmenti es mori mininu?

N: Mm-hmm.

M: N!

N: Di un anu, un anu y tal.

M: Aian. Duense--

N: Ta da stomagu, diareia, otu febr--

M: Aian.

N: N ta interna-s, si kre. Dja N ten pasadu mal ku fidju tanbe . . .

M: Aian. Keli k'e mas grandi?

N: Mm-hmm.

- M: Kantu anu k'el teni?
- N: Vinti y un.
- M: Aian. Y kes otu?
- N: Kes otus, un ten onzi anu, kel otu tene oitu anu.
- M: Li es ta decha algen--? Es ta decha algen ba vizita prezu?
- N: Mm-hmm. Dia duminu ku kinta-fera.
- M: Mm-hmm.
- N: Un bes era li kadia sivil li. Ma gosi sta la San Martinhu.
- M: A sin.
- N: Pa bu paga karu pa bu ba.
- M: Mm-hmm. Bu ta ba tudu simana?
- N: E! Tudu simana. Kinta-fera. Si N ka kinta-fera N ta ba dia dimingu.
- M: Mm-hmm.
- N: Si N bai dia dimingu, dja kinta-fera N ka ta bai. Pamo, si N sta na sirbisu tudu dia, N ta manche N ta bai trabadju genti N ka t'atcha modi. Kelo ki N sta na kazi li, dja k'e pa N bati, pa N bati algen, pa N liza, dja N t'atcha mas tenpu di ta bai kinta-fera ku dia dimingu. Ago, s'e na trabadju undi ki N staba propi, la Prainha, N ka ta atcha tenpu.
- M: Mm-hmm.
- N: La N ta trabadja ti dia dimingu. N ta trabadjaba ku Juzé Iduardu Barboza. Kre nha ka konche?
- M: N-n.
- T: Sikritariu di Asenbleia.
- M: A sin.
- N: N ta trabadja--N dura ta trabadja.
- M: A sin.
- N: N ten kuantu anu ku es la. N kansa N ben nha kaminhu. Trabadju e mutu tcheu.
- M: [rizu] E tudu kuza e ka so bati ku--?

- N: Tudu kuza! Tudu kuza. N ta bai sedu pa N bai faze kafe pa se mudjer ba trabadju sedu. Seti ora ta da-n la Prainha. Kel o ki N ta ben e seti tal, oitu ora! Kel o k'es ten jantar anton, e meia-noiti, meia-noiti y tal ki N ta ben tchiga kaza. Sedu pa N torna bai. N ka ten dia dimingu di diskansa.
- M: N!
- N: Pamodi ka ten folga! E pa manche tudu dia pa N bai!
- M: KREDU!
- N: Kantu N chatia N ben nha kaminhu.
- M: [rizu] Kantu k'es ta paga?
- N: El konche ben buska-n propi. Na. N ka bai mas. N fla-l, "Na, ami da N kansa. Ago N ta ben trabadja li na nha kaza." Kel o ki N atcha un ropa N ta bati.
- M: Mm-hmm.
- N: Kel o ki N atcha ropa pa liza N ta liza. Mi N ta bati, N ta liza N ta ganha nha dinheru dretu. N ka sa ta trabadja. Trabadju kansadu di mas! Kaba kaza grandi! Pa N linpa, pa N faze kumida, pa N lava, pa N liza, pa N faze tudu kuza mi so!
- M: Mm-hmm.
- N: Mi so k'e tudu kuza!
- M: Es mesti dos.
- N: An?
- M: Es mesti dos algen.
- N: Sin.
- M: Pa trabadja.
- N: Kela e kaza di dos algen.
- M: Mm-hmm.
- N: Ago, gosi es sa ta paga algen un porkaria di dinheru es ta pruveta na algen. Kel un algen.
- M: Mm-hmm.
- N: Pa trabadja tudu kel kuza. Ka ta da. Mi N kansa N ben nha kamin. Purakazu es kreba-mi tcheu go. Pamo mi dja N dura la.

- M: Mm-hmm.
- N: Kel o ki N chatia N ta ben nha kaminhu. Es ta torna ben tuma-n. Ma go d'es bes N ben N ka ba mas.
- M: Aian.
- N: N ten un lugar ki N ta ba bati so pa sumana, sabadu, N ta ben nha kaza.
- M: Kela e la Tchada?
- N: Mm-hmm. N ta ba trabadju.
- M: Kantu k'es ta pagaba la na kaza di kel--?
- N: Di Sinhor Ze?
- M: Mm-hmm.
- N: Kuatu kontu k'es ta paga mi.
- M: Mm-hmm. Pa seti dia na simana? Kela e poku.
- N: E! Kuatu kontu k'es ta paga mi. So purki go la e un kaza ki ka ten fomi.
- M: Sin.
- N: E kaza--mi es ta tenea-mi sima familia, avontadi, ku tudu kuza. Es ka ta . . . nada. Tudu kuza ki tinha es ta daba-mi N ta trazea nha fidju. Ora ki N dura ku ben es ta po-n na karu es ta traze-n.
- M: Aian.
- N: Es e dretu algen. Ma so pamo trabadju bira tcheu. N bira kansadu. Mi e duenti di figadu, mi e duenti di tensaun altu. N odja ma tronbozi ta panha-n la, N ben nha kamin. N fla, "Na! Kapas N duense li!" Sen diskansu! Ki po-n ben go, pamodi N ben pidi si mudjer pa ta da-n un folga di dia dimingu. El fla-n klaru, ma el inpregada e ka ta da folga dia dimingu p'el ba trabadja ku se mon. Pamo ma el e ta ba sirbisu ma dia dimingu e p'el diskansa. Dja go N fla, "Bon, mi tanbe N ka skravu!"
- M: [rizu] A sin!
- N: Dja dja N bai. Si k'el fla-n! Ael go, se ripartisan nen ka ta trabadja sabru nen e ka gosi ki--gosi nun kau ka sta trabadjadu sabru, desdi kel bes es ka ta trabadja sabru. E ta trabadja la na INADI o INIDI o kuze, mo k'es ta tchoma kel kau--pa riba di Galarias. La na Galarias, la di riba.
- M: Sin.

N: INADI o ENADI--

M: A sin. Kel kuza di informatika o kuze.

N: Mm-hmm. La k'e ta trabadja. E sabru e ka ta trabadja. El ta sta la na kaza sabru. Dia dimingu el ta fla m'e ka ta da-n folga pamo ma el e ka ta trabadja ku se mon dia dimingu pa inpregada ben kaza.

M: E!

N: Sin k'el fla-n!

M: [rizu] Kela e falta di rispetu.

N: Ku kuartu anu y tal pa li--

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N: Es ka ta da-n folga dia dia dimingu pamo el e ka ta trabadja ku se on.

M: Y!!

N: N fla-l, "An! Nha ka ta trabadja dia dimingu? Nha ka ta da folga? Bon, ami dja N bai pamo mi e ka skravu! Skravu era na Santume ki tinha un bes." N ben nha kaminhu. N ben N ka bai.

M: Aian.

N: El ta konche ben buska. N fla ma N ka sa ta ba mas.

M: Era p'el ranja mas algen so pa dia duminu.

N: Mm-hmm.

M: Sin. Nton.

N: Na, kel manera--kel e ka ta ranja. El e un algen, e un algen. Kaba ten la di riba, ten li di bachu.

M: Mm-hmm.

N: Pa bu konpo la di riba, la di riba ten kuartu d'el ku se maridu; ten kuartu di un rapazinho. Pamo e--e dos fidju k'el ten: un matchu un femia. Ten un kuartu di rapazinho; ten un kuartu di minininha; ten un salon grandi di vizita; ten sala di tilivizaun; ten gabeti di Senhor Ivu ki N ta konpo tudu dia; ten un kaza di banhu; ten un kuartu di si mai, ten un kuartu di si mai; ten go un koredor go kunpridu ben bachu, ben skada.

Li di bachu ten mas un kaza di banhu; ten sala di jantar; ten un dispensa. Ta ben sai na rua. Ta ben kintal ta ben sai na rua. Ten varanda di kel otu ladu. Tudu keli go e pa algen linpa-l; pa



faze almosu ki ta da tudu pa pruntu nda. El ta ben di sirbisu uma ora.

S'el ben k'el ka atcha un kuza ao ki fika di pa tras sen sta, el ta papia! Ta papia ki ta da-n raiba, nu ta tranka.

N fla "nau!" P'el ta lenbra ma un algen--m'e so un algen! M'e ka makina. Algen ten ki trabadja ti undi ta rendi. Di mas ta faze mal. Pa N faze almosu, tardi go N ten ki po kel ropa--si ochi si N bati, manha N ta liza.

M: Mm-hmm. E si me.

N: N te N ben li na rua k'el tene--An, nda ten un garaji ki N ten ki linpa-l n tres n tres dia.

M: N!!

N: [rizu] Garaji, skada na rua ben bachu pa N bari. Sima sabru go e un dia ki N ta stafa di nha vida propi. Pamo sabru e linpeza jeral. Linpa paredi, linpa porta, linpa vidrasa, linpa tudu kau, tudu kau, tudu kau, tudu kau! Pa dia dimingu pa N bai pa N bai faze kumia, pa N da uns ritoki na algun lugar si ki tene chuchu--N ta pasa basora.

M: Mm-hmm.

N: Dja N ka ta laba tchon. N ta pasa so basora. N ta konpu kama. N ta ben faze kumida pa N pode ben. Istu e, dia dimingu o ki N ta sai di la e sinku ora si me. Pamo ka ta da-n tenpu pa N ben mas sedu ki si.

M: Sin.

N: Ami go, ku mininu na skola, mi N ten ki bati nhas fidju, N ten ki liza-s--Ami e kel un mininu femia di me. Tanbe el ten si fidju, el ten si maridu di kuida d'el.

M: Sin.

N: Mi tudu dia e manche bai, manche bai. E ka ten un dia k'el ta da-n di folga. N konche fla-l "Dona Ana, nha ta da-n folga un dia. Pamo mi N ten mininu na skola, N ten ki bate-s ropa, N ten ki konpu pa nha fidjus ka skola tanbe sima katchor."

El ta fla-n "Na." Ma dia dimingu go, pa N lenbra ma dia dimingu go e dia k'el ta djobi tudu kantu si kaza.

M: Kela--

N: Dona Ana e abuzada propi!

M: [rizu] Aiaiai! Kela ka ta da. Pelumenus el ten ki labanta mon un dia na simana, ka?

N: E! Na! N fla "Ah, nha tene-n moda karasku!" Ael go, el moraba li prediu. Tudu algen ta fla m'el ta poba inpregadu ma ka ta ten nen

mes. Pamo ka ta pode tora-l, ta ba se kaminhu. El ta po otu. So si. Mi kantu N entra la, tcheu algen propi fla-n, "Ui! Nisia, bu ka ta dura li. Pamo Dona Ana go ka ta dura ku algen."

N fla, "Vamus a ver." Mi tudu kau ki N trabadja N ta dura. N ta dura pa trabadja. Kel o go ki N chatia go, pamo mi tanbe N ten un kabesa--si N chatia go, dja N ka ta sta. N fla go ma N ta ben. Kantu tenpu N ka--N dura la go. N ten kuantu anu la.

M: Sin. Nha dura sin. Antis di kela nha trabadjaba na otu kaza?

N: Sin. Mi desdi rapariga tanbe--

M: Senpri na kel trabadju.

N: Senpri e keli k'e nha vida. Mi N kumesa trabadja di duzi anu. Na ki N tinha mai. Mundu era otu. E ka sima gosi ki tudu kuza sta karu. Algen ka pode vive, ka pode bisti fidju. Nen si nha kre lucha fidju di nha nha ka pode mas. Kel ves nau! Kel ves un algen--ami N tinha duzi anu N ta trabadjaba N ta ganhaba sinkuenta skudu pur mes. Kel sinkuenta skudu sa ta da pa mil y tal skudu di gosi, o mas. Kel sinkuenta chkudu ki un algen ta ganha un bes. Pamodi azagua tanbe ta da na nos tera tcheu. Mi dja kantu nda--mi N t'atcha nha mai ta kecha fomi go. Ma mi dja N ka ta kecha. Pamo N ka se di fomi. Nha mai ta kecha, ta konta. Ago, mi nau. Mi dja N ka ta konta di fomi.

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N: Ten tcheu algen ki ka se da kriada valor.

M: Aian.

N: Ta konsidera algen mo katchor, ta trata algen mariadu.

M: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

N: Ami kel kuza N ka gosta d'el.

M: Sin.

N: Ki mi N ka ta trabadja ku tudu algen. N ta trabadja ku algen ki sabe ma nos tudu, nos e algen.

M: Mm-hmm. Kela e bon.

N: Ka pamo e pa N ba tuma bu lugar. Pamo N sabe ma bo e patroa, ma mi e kriada. Mas tanbe go pa bu ka trata-n sima katchor. Pamo N ka gosta. Dja N ten nha kaza. N ta ben trabadja li nha kaza. N ta pasa.

Kel dos fidju la, Deus ta djuda-n ku es.

M: Antis di sta prezu, maridu di nha tinha un trabadju?

N: Mm-hmm. El e karpinteru. Antis d'el sta prezu N ka ta trabadja.

M: An!

N: N ka ta trabajda pamo e ka ta gostaba kela.

M: Mm-hmm. [rizu]

N: Mi N trabadja na kintal d'algen. Kantu N kumesa ten fidju, mi N para pamo el ka gosta. N ka trabadja mas. Ti k'el ba prezu go, N torna kontinua ta trabadja go.

M: Sin, ten ki ser.

N: Pamo dja ka ta da sen sirbisu.

M: Sin. Pamodi e ka gosta?

N: E ka gosta di--el e ka ta gusta pa mudjer sai di kaza.

M: Aian.

N: El, mudjer e pa fika na kaza. E ka ta gusta p'el sta ben di trabadju p'el k'atcha kumida, p'el k'atcha ropa batidu.  
Gosi el sta la pa si kaza. Mi N sta li pa di meu. Pamo el ranja otu mudjer--

M: E verdadi?

N: --nu dividi kada un pa si banda.

M: Mo k'el ranja otu mudjer na prezu?

N: E!

M: E! Na kadeia!? [rizu] Mo k'el ranja?

N: E!

M: En! [rizu] An!?

N: Mi ku nhas fidjus nu ta trabadja nu ta vive. Omis di Praia? Omis di Praia e ngratu!

M: N! Dentu prizaun el ranja otu mudjer?

N: Nton.

M: [rizu] Ave Maria!

N: Senpri el tinha el artis el baba.

M: A sin.

N: Senpri el tinha el.

- M: So ki el ka ta moraba la ku el?
- N: Sin. Kumo go ka sta da mas pa nu vive djuntu, dja N ka kre mas. Kada kenha fika na si braku.
- M: N. Nton. Kela e otu kuza. Dja nha sabeba--o dja nha sabeba k'el ka ta ben fikaba li?
- N: Mm-hmm.
- M: Mm-hmm.
- N: Na, mi senpri dja N flaba el propi ma o k'el sai p'el ka ben.
- M: P'el ka ben mas.
- N: El ten si kaza, mi N ten di meu. N ta fika na di meu, el ta fika na di sel. Si dja el kre da si fidju kume, s'el ka kre da, dja, pruntu. El oitu anu prezú, N pasa ku es. Mi ki trabadja ki da-s. Nton, gosi me Deus ta d-n N ta d-s. So ma dja N ka duensi, ma dja N ka mankisi. Komu mi e duenti--algen di tensaun altu ta sa te tronbozi ta panha-l.
- M: Aian.
- N: Si N ka duensi, N ka mankisi, N ta trabadja pa nha fidju tudu. Ti ki Deus kre.
- M: Aian.
- N: Ma dja go N ka kre-l mas. Omi ki nu vive dizanovi anu--duzi mininu--p'el ba ranja mudjer p'el fika ku el, N ka--
- M: Na, kela ka ta da. N! Mas, kel tenpu antis di sta prezú, e ta--e ka ta--el tinha fidju ku kel otu mudjer dja?
- N: Mm-hmm. Dja es tinha dja.
- M: Nton, ka dechaba falta li na kaza?
- N: E! Falta el ta decha.
- M: Mm-hmm.
- N: Si un omi ta trabadja pa dividi pa dos kaza--
- M: Sin.
- N: --dja nha odja-l m'el ten di decha falta. Mas, el ta daba mas midjor. Ma, gosi go--gosi el ka sta da propi. Nen pa si mininu dja e ka sta da.
- M: N?! Y nha ka sta ba kecha?

N: An?

M: Nha ka sta kecha?

N: Ami? N ka ta kecha.

M: Pamodi?

N: N ka gusta. Kecha, dja sipunhamus, N sta ta ba lichoncha-l. N ka gusta. Mi omi s'el e kre da si fidju e da. S'el ka kre da, pa N ba obriga-l? El e se ma fidju e di sel. Kela e obriga!

M: Mm-hmm.

N: N ka ta kecha d'el. Na ta fika ku nha fidju. Deus ta da-n--

\* \* \* \* \*



## Saunsa

\* \* \* \* \*

S: Sin, ki entra komu menbru di OMCV. Mi N ta baba mesmu ku tudu intuziazmu. Ma, dipos--ali ten--ten un sertu difikuldadi. Dipos--y--N ka sabe se nha nprisaun o kuze, ma di ves nkuandu N chinti sima kuza ki ta ten truki, kualker kuza a si--ker dzer, N t'atcha purizenplu, ma riuniaun o k'el ta fazedu, si ten un difikuldadi ma algen pode fla "sin" di karas. Purizemplu, bu ta po-l kel problema sin di kara. Purizenplu, si mi N teni un difikuldadi, N ta diskuti kel problema. Ma es ka ta diskutidu sin. Purizenplu, o ki algen ka sta ta podu kel kuza. Ta fika moda un ntriga, kuze N ka sabe. Dja N ba ta fika sin un bokadinhu afastadu.

Dipos, tanbe tinha kel riuniaun un bes, tinha un riuniaun la k'era sobri kel kuza di "Lei d'Abordu."

\* \* \* \* \*

S: Bon, kuantu podu, ami N ka bai di akordu ku el. Purki N foi idukada desdi pikinoti na igreja. Alen disu, mesmu na vida susial N ka atcha-l na nha kaza di nha mai ku nha pai. N k'atcha-l. Senpri era un kuza ki nha mai e kontra el. Senpri N vive so na nbienti ki ta fladu senpri ma kel kuza li e kontra. Y, nton, mi N ka bai di akordu. N fla. Mi N ka gosta di sukundi kuza. Mi N fla, "Nau, mi N ka di akordu ku kel kuza." Tantu mi ku kel un ki tchuma Nha Clarisa ki staba un dia li. Nos dos ki fla ma nos e kontra kel lei li. Pamodi m'e kontra umanidadi, e kontra--ker dzer, nu e ka kontra. Ami N ka sta p'el ba faze-n nha vontadi. Ma nha ideia ki ka sta di akordu ku el. Mi mas e kuza di greja ki N ta kunpri.

Nton es poi la, ker dzer, ma keli e un lei ki e pa ken ki kre.

N fla, "Sin. Di fatu e ken ki kre ki ta faze. Mas, si e lei algen dja ta ten mas vontadi di faze. Justu ki e un lei." Purtantu, y na kel kuza li N ka sabe s'es ka fika kontenti o kuze. Desdi kel bes N ba ta chinti difikuldadi.

Dja N bira go ka ta partisipa na riuniaun pamo N atcha m'e ka un riunian abertu pa algen poi problema. Pamo si e un riuniaun abertu pa algen poi problema, ate N ta atcha ma li ta sta mas dizenvolidu. Pamo mi N ta poi nha problema, nton N pode dadu ideia kel kuza. Ma klaru ki N ta konprende konkretu. Agora, e ka pa ben bafa-n kuzas ki mi N sta ta odja kel kuza.

Agora, purizenplu, kel pisoas purizenplu, N pode ten sertu kunhisimentu--ma ka tcheu--sta algen ki pode ten mas kunhisimentu ki mi. Ma sta algen ki ten menus kunhisimenti di ki mi. Ta fika go na ignoransa. Nos nu ten ki poi kuza klaru. Ami nha konsensia da-n pa N bai N ta bai; si kel otu da-l el ta kontinua ta bai. Mas si ka da-l, p'e ka bai.

Pamo, mi N ta orienta un grupu di pisoas, N ten ki bai ku kuza klaru. N ka pode ba ngana kes pisoa ki N sta orienta. Mi tanbe na undi k'es ta poi problema N ten ki poi problema klaru pa N ser orientadu tanbe.

M: Mm-hmm.

S: Dja N fla, "Na, si e pa kuza ki algen ta bai ta fika moda un kuza falsu." Dja N ka kuza. Ma N gosta di partisipa. Dja N bai pa tcheu paseiu. Dja nu faze kantu kuza li ki dja N partisipa. Nu faze na Tera Branka. Kuandu era Tera Branka propi, N ta partisipa nda mas ki gosi. Dipos, un bes ate es nomiaba mi komu kuza si di Kumite--N ka sabe e kuze go--di OMCV.

Y di la N ta--o ki ten un konvokatoria, Joana ta daba mi N ta distribuiba tudu kes--mas--di la ben surji un difikuldadi kualker, es ka fla-n "bu ka pode sta mas purki a istu, a istu," nen nada. Bira si es bira ka ta faze-n.

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S: N sta na kel kuza di Kumite. Dipos es ka fla-n nada. Es ka fla-n pamodi N ka podeba kontinuaba n'el, nen di ben nen di mal. Bira si so--es ka tchuma-n mas pa kel riuniaun nen nada. Dipos go N fika ta supunha ma konserteza ovi algun kuza la. Ma mi dja N ka fla.

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S: Sin, ami pa mi, kel "lei di Abordu" ami e kontra.

M: Ma na riuniaun propi, kel--bon, kel ora ki nha fla "N ka sta di akordu," mo k'es riaji?

S: Kel ora, kel minina ki fazia riuniaun--e un minina ki tchuma Carmen ki ta ben li di ves nkuandu--ael kel ora dja e ka fika kontenti. El ka fika kontenti. El fla, "Na, e kenha ki kre. Ma keli e un lei ma e pa ken ki kre."

N fla, "Nton si un lei e pa ken ki kre, anton m'e ka un lei. Pamo lei e obligatoriu. Ma un lei ma N atcha ma un lei e obligatoriu. O ki e un lei nu ten ki kunpri. Si Stadu da un lei e obligatoriu pa kunpri kel lei. Purizenplu, nau purki es ta manda-n ba faze. Ma ami si N ba faze N ka ta dadu purizunplu un prizaun purki dja N faze kuza.

Ma--y, asin-- e fla nau, ma purizenplu, ki ta kunsidiradu krimi e ken ki faze fora. Ma kel ki ba faze purizenplu na ospital un kuza si, k'e ka klandistinu, ma kel dja m'e legal. N fla, "bon, mi go e kontra tudu. Tantu kel klandistinu komu kel na ospital. Pamo mi N t'atcha ma di kualker manera e mata. E mata un algen. Un algen indifezu."

Pamo, mi sima mi, si algen ben pa ben mata-n, mi N ta faze tudu jetu di difendi. Si N chinti m'el sta mata-n. N pode mata-l. Ka si? N ka ta kre mata algen. Ka si? Ma s'el ben p'el ben mata-n ki mi N tene jetu--nton, nha maridu nton. Purki ki N afasta? Pamo N afasta d'el? E pa ka ten krimi. Mi N ka ta ben pa N ben ataka-l, ma s'el ben, mi e obligadu difendi. Ami e obligadu difendi. Mas un mininu e un mininu indifezu, el ka pode difendi. Mi N ta konsidira-l pior di ki propi mata un algen grandi. E pior. E un krimi mas gravi. Y greja ta konsidira-l. Y mi komu N ta

partisipa, mi e igreja, N ka pode seta un kuza di kela. Ami N ka ta seta.

Nton, nen kel minina, nen propi kes pisoas ki sta la dentu, ninhun ka bai di akordu ku kel kuza ki N fla. Es fika tudu kontra. Tudu dja fika kontra.

M: Tudu la na riuniaun?

S: Sin. Tudu es es mostra, dja es mostra ma--ker dzer, ma sta dretu. Pamodi algen sta tcheu na mundu. Ma ten ki parti.

N fla ma nen ki ta parti e ka di kel manera. Ma nos nu ten maneras di ivita. Ten manera di ivita ki tudu algen debe sta a par d'el. Tudu algen debe sta a par d'ivita komu individu. Pamo nos nos pais e pobri, ma ka ten pusibilidadi. Mesmu ma li ka pode sta ta ten fidju un riba d'otu. Pa un mininu ta anda otu na mon, sin pur dianti. Ne? Mas nos nu ten ki purkura manera. Ka nu ben faze un kuza kontra. Dja tudu algen bai kontra.

M: Mesmu otus mudjeris di grupu li?

S: Mesmu otu mudjer. Otus mudjer, otus ki ka bai kontra ka apoia. E so mi ku Nha Clarisa. Mas otus mostra klaru ma diskontentamentu. Dja N--

M: Nton nha fika un poku--

S: --N fika chokadu ku kel kuza. Dja N fika N ka ta bai sin mutu runiaun. As ves, nen ki N bai N ka ta mutu partisipa asin. N ka ta da nha opiniaun pamo N atcha ma opiniaun dja e ka un runiaun abertu ki algen pode poi se ideia. Mi N ten ki bai ku ideia di algen? Mi N debe poi nha ideia N dadu un sklarisimentu ki N ta odja m'el sta--

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S: Ker dzer. Mas o menus. N ta gostaba di tinha mas un bokadinhu di skola. Pamo mi propi nha ideia--N ka tinha ideia propi di kazaba nau. N ka gostaba mutu di kazamentu.

M: E verdadi? [rizu] Pamodi?

S: Mi N ka gostaba. Desdi pikinoti N tinha ideia, nha vontadi era di studa irman. N gostaba. Dipos, kuandu nu bai pa la, tinha kel difikuldadi nas rosta--di la kuandu N sta na rosta--kuazi N tinha un duzoitu--parse-n un kinzi anus, N poi kel problema li na un padri. El fla ma N sta mutu nova nda. Ma N ka ten un ideia sin klaru. Te ki N ten mas idadi.

Dipos, kuandu N tinha dizanovi anu N torna poi problema. Nton kel padri sta ta djudaba mi pa N baba pa Purtugal. Dipos el fla ma N ta baba pa Angola pa N ba studa. Ma dipos es manda uns kuantus mininas bai ka da sin un bon rizultadu, torna volta. Es fika ku medu di manda. Nton es kria manda mi pa li pa Kabu Verdi. Nu dispacha tudu kuza ki e pa nu binha djuntu ku nha pais--dipos pa nha pai volta pa mi N fika li pa N studa li--irman.

- M: Na siminariu?
- S: Li na--N ka sabe. Li nen ka tinha, pa N fikaba na ospital talvez ku irmans ki tinha li. Dipos pa N--N ka se pa N ba Purtugal o ke--Dipos, na vespira di dia ki nu ta binha, nu ka tina dukumentu--bilheti di ntidadi, kes kuza si--es ka decha-nu ben. Es ka decha-nu nbarka. Dja N fika dja--N ka ben pa li, pa la tanbe N ka bai. Fika.
- Purisu ki N ta fla ma nha vida foi un bokadinhu difisil. Nton kuantu N fika sin go, es fika ta fla-n so pa N spera, spera, spera, spera--pa N spera--N fika ta spera, ta spera, ta spera--dipos tchiga di sertu altura, padris fla nau, ma mi dja komu mi e unika filha, nha pais dja sta di idadi, midjor pa N ka bai. Pa N fika pa N kaza pamo ma sin N ta fika lonji nha pais. M'es ta meste nha apoiu.
- Dipos go N ba ta pensa. Na prinsipiu N ka setaba. N fika rivoltadu. Ma dipos ba ta perde-n kel ideia, ba ta perde-n kel ideia. Ka tinha tanbe la, nen irmans ka tinha na Prinspi--so Santume.
- Purisu o ki N ba Santume N ka ta kria voltaba. La N tinha apoiu, N tinha kulegas mas instruida, mas kuza--N ka ta kria volta pa Prinspi. Mas nha mai ta faze tudu pur tudu pa N binha Prinspi pa N sta na si pe, ka ta kre pa N staba lonji. Ate purki tinha nfrimera la ki gosta pa N studa nfrimera. Es ta fla pamo N tinha jetu.
- N manda fla nha mai ma N ta studa nfrimera. El ta fla nau, ma N ta fika na Santume lonji. El t'atcha ma algen sin na un sidadi mas grandi ma N ka podia daba dretu.
- Ma mi N ta parse sin simplis, mas mi k'era sin mutu--ker dzer, pa N fla ma N--mi era simplis, di fatu. Mas go ma N ka a sin kel--sorna sima el ta flada ma ta decha algen ngana-n. Algen ka ta nganaba mi, rapaz purizenplu, ngana-n.
- M: Sin.
- S: Dja go el fika ku kel ideia ma N ta decha rapaz ngana-n o kuze--pamo ma mi e mutu simplis; ma N kria so. El ka decha-n fika na Santume pa N studa nfrimera. Dja N ben pa si pe.
- Purisu ki gosi go nos fidju purizenplu, nha fidju, Tina ta pidi-n purizenplu pa ba--ma sertu algen kre leba-l Fransa, Purtugal, o kuze p'el ba studa o p'el ba trabadja, pa N sabe m'el ta bai--mi, ker dzer, N ta fika--N ta kre faze kel kuza ki nha mai faze, N ta fla si, "Bon, as ves e midjor N ka faze pamo sinau el pode pasa sima mi N pasa."
- Pamo, pur kauza nha mai N perde tcheu kuza. El e sta djudaba mi, pa el. Mas talvez s'el dechaba mi N podia ser midjor. Purisu as ves N ta ba ku kel ideia N ta fla--
- M: Nton nha ka kre pa fidjus di nha tanbe perde nun kuzas pamodi nha?
- S: Sin, perde oportunidadí. Nha irmaun tanbe perde--N pode fla. Purki el tinha padri ki kria lebaba el pa li pa Santantaun p'el



studaba. Mas nha pai nega. Ker dzer, es ta fla ma kumo e so kel dos fidju k'es ten pa ka fika lonji d'es.

Ker dzer, mi tanbe N ka tinha vontadi di saiba lonji d'es, N ka gostaba. Mas, pa baba irman go N ta baba. Kel N ta baba.

M: Ntirisanti.

S: N pudia baba--talves, N ka sabe--talves N pudia--si k'era nha lugar la, N pudia voltaba, mas sta-n go ma ta tinha un lugar pa mi. Pamo mi ti gosi si tinha pusibilidadi--

M: Nha ta baba.

S: --N ta baba sin.

M: E ka tardi. Nha pode bai.

S: Pur kauza nhas fidjus ka ten asin--ka sta nda orientadu pa N decha-s na un kau asin. Mas, te gosi nda si N ten pusibilidadi--

M: Mm-hmm. Nha teni 53 anu?

S: 53 anu.

M: Nton nda sta bon.

S: Mi N t'atcha m'e tardi go.

M: Ka ta da.

S: Nda poku tenpu, padris sta ta flaba ma ten pisoas purizenplu, ta kaza ka ta--ta sta siparadu maridu o maridu sta siparadu, as ves te ta tuma un akordu ma ta entra. Ma mi go ta sta-n m'e difisil. Ta sta-n m'e ka ta da.

M: Pamodi?

S: Sima N ten fidjus, kes kuza si--ta sta-n--ta fika-n nton--si ki ta sta-n.

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## Sinta

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S: Mo ki N faze? Mi nha vida era bendi karbon na rua. N ta manche, si N atcha-l li mas pertu, N ta kunpra N ta ku el N ta ba bende la Praia. Dia ki nu ben ka atcha--ki nu k'atcha pertu--pamodi dja ben bira ka ten. O ki N sai di li--nos era tcheu--nu ta kunpra la Santiago. Nu ta po na karu, nu ta paga karu nu ta ben ku el. Nu ta kunpra tres, nu ta kunpra kuartu, konformi nu tene dinheru. O ki nu ka bendi tudu, nu ta djunta kel dinheru nu torna po na karu nu ta kunpra la . . . . Mas as ves ki nu ta bai nu ta durmi na tchon. Pamo si nu k'atcha karu pa torna traze-nu Praia, si nu atcha karu di Praia nu ta ben, si nu panha karu di fora nu ta durmi la Santiago, na metadi kaminhu. Sapu ta grita-nu na obidu--N ten ramatizmu na duedju--N ten es pe li odja--odja, N tene--keli N ka teni ngana di bai Praia. Ali, ali, ta due-n. Ali e kansadu.

Bu ka odja mo k'el sta? As ves el ta due-n. N ka ta pode bai. Ami dja gosi, dja pa N ba Praia, N ta bai a forsa. Riba del. Si N ka tene dinher pa N paga karu N ta forsa riba d'el N ta bai. Mas dja se ku pe dja kel o ki N ta ben ku el dja el ta kansa-n. Si N ka para na kaminhu N ka ta tchiga kasa. Pamo el ta due-n, el ta kansa kel o.

Sin sinhora, nu ta ben. O ki nu ben, es k'e nos vida. Dja nu sta konfortadu ku el. Nos nu ka tinha otu vida. Na kiriason di fidju, nu ta bran-bran nu t'atcha kel pon di kada dia, nu pasa. la ki N ta kria fidju. Ma kansadu!

M: Nha staba senpri li na Praia?

S: Ami senpri li--mi e la fora.

M: Di undi?

S: La di Fonti. La di San Dumingo--la k'e nha Fregezia.

Pamo tenpu sta kansadu--na korenta y seti--kantu ki nos mai ka pode sriba ku nos--pamo nos era seis. El tanbe se vida era omezma. Mudjer pikinotinha ki mora la n'un kaza bedju la kaminhu. Djuntu kel kaza ki ten kel luz, na kamin d'agu. La nundi bu atcha-nu chintadu. La nundi bu tchaba-nu un dia la na kaza di kel mudjer manku di pe-di-po. Kel kaza bedju ki ten la e si kaza. E el ki e nos mai: ami, mai di Rita, mai di kel Aldira ki ta bendi pechi li. El kiria-nu kansadu. Nos era seis.

M: N!

S: Na korenta y seti, kantu k'e odja ma fomi ben perta--ka ten nada rekursu--el bota-nu dianti nu ben.

M: Tudu? Tudu, tudu, tudu?

S: Tudu djuntadu ku mai. Mai ki ben ku nos. Ael tanbe el ben trabadja, nu kiria, nu vive.

M: Mm-hmm. Kel tenpu ki nhos tchiga li nton, nhos ben mora li na Tira Chapeu?

S: Sin. Anos dja nu ben. Nu ben bafa un paredi ki fika frenti tchafaris, ki ten un parduero, kel kabu tinha un entrada. El djunta-nu nos tudu--nos tudu seis--el ben nu nos el ruma-nu la tudu rapariginha, otu rapazinho, nu fika la. Nu fika la. E sin k'el el pran-pran ku nos na korenta, ku fomi, ku tudu kuza. Ku morti, mas--el el e rasgata-nu pa nu ka more.

Ala gosi, agora na kel idadi k'el el sta tanbe, dja el e foi sortiada purki dja el ben ku nos--moda Mina, Mai di Rita, ami--el ten otu matchu ki mora la riba . . . mudjer pikinotinha.

M: Mm-hmm. Nhos e tudu irmaun?

S: Se maridu e nha irmaun. Dja nu fika si--si mi N ten N ta da-l, si kel otu ten ta da-l--nos e na pratu, nu ta konsola. Pamo el tanbe e el ki da-nu. El trabadja. Nau, e kel k'e nos vida.

M: Sin. Nhos ka tinha pai?

S: Nha pai tinha otu algen--dja kantu ki nos mai dja--rapara ki fomi dja sta ta perta bu ka . . . di morti, ael dja p'el fla anti di nu mori la di fomi, el bota-nu dianti el ben ku nos. Dja nu ben Praia un bes. Dja nu ben ka kiria li Praia.

M: Pai ka ben?

S: Nau.

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S: Kantu ki N sai di kaza di nha mai, dja N tinha un fidju. Dja N tinha tres fidju. Dja N ben ranja nha kaza N tchuki dentu d'el. Dja N ka pari nha fidju dentu nha kaza--kel kaza la--keli. Dja N pode fla m'e di meu.

M: Nha ka faze? Nha ki faze kel kaza li?

S: Nau. Keli dja e pai di nha fidjus ki faze-n el.

M: Nhos ta moraba djuntu li? O nhos--

S: Mi ku nha mai?

M: Nau, ku pai-di-fidju.

S: Nau, nau. Na.

M: E ka ta moraba li?

S: E ka ta mora li. Dja kantu ki mi dja--mi dja ka kirira nha fidju, dja N fika mi so. Ali dja e mi ku nha fidju. Kada un raparti pa

se kau. N faze sima nha mai faze. E sin ki nha mai faze. Ami tanbe e sin ki N faze.

M: Pamodi? [rizu] E ka ta daba tanbe?

S: Na, el ta daba mariadu. Senpri--era kuza ki N fla-u. N fla ma mi kela ki N ten fidju, ki nha fidjus kiria--ten un pratu di janta pa da-n, ma nu ta rasolbi go, el ta ba fika la si kaza ami N ta fika na di me. S'el ben nu ta da kunpanheru "bon dia," "boa tardi." Prontu, bai. El ta torna decha-n li. Mudjer e si ki ta faze.

M: Pamodi?

S: Ka ta da. Si ta da rizultadu, bu ta sta djuntu ku el. Ago, dja kel o ki bu chinti m'el tene gana di abuza di bo, bu ta pintcha-l. Dja el da-bu fidju pa da-bu djanta. Bu ta ruma-l bu ta po-l la! E sin ki ta fazedu.

M: Si ka trata dretu, e ka?

S: Sin, e ka tratava dretu. Na kiriasan di fidju el ta anda mi ku malandrisa. El tinha p'el daba. Ago, el ta daba mi el so mariadu. N konforta go. Deus da-n kel fidju, kantu ki fidju dja pode da-n djanta go, N po-l na kaminhu. N fla'l, "bai go."

M: Nton nhos dura un bokadu djuntu? Ma dispos nhos ben sipara?

S: Nu dura. Nu dura djuntu, nu ben sipara un bes.

M: El tinha un trabadju fikisu o nau?

S: Kenha? Kel rapas?

M: Kel pai-di-fidju.

S: Nau, el tinha trabadju. Ago, e era malandru! Ago, e pamo dja N kumesa tinha fidju tcheu ku el, dja N tinha fidju, dja pa N ka ben fika pa N ka ben mostra nha fidju, "keli e bu pai," kel otu li, "keli e bu pai," ago N konforta go.

M: Nn. So kel un.

S: Fika so kel un.

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M: Y na manera ki algen ta trata otu algen, na kela tanbe nha odja mudansa o--?

S: Ta trata kunpanheru?

M: Sin.

S: Bon, ta trata. Bon, ami sima mi, N ta trata ku tudu algen. Ami dja--ami N ta trata ku tudu. N ta trata ku manku; N ta trata ku segu; N ta trata ku riku; N ta trata ku pobri. Tudu N ta trata ku el. Tudu fepu! Mi N ta trata ku tudu algen.

Ago, N ta ba panha un algen N ta distranka-l. Pamo algen ki al distranka-n. Pamo mi dja si N tene nha pobreza N ta trata ku nha pobri, e ka? Si N odja-bu [rizu] ta pintcha-n pamodi bu tene un kafe, mi N ka tene-l--bu ka ta da-n el--N ta ba la na nha pobri N ta fla nha pobri, "Ochi e di nos kunpanheru. Nha da-n un chikra kafe." O! Mi kel o ki N ka teni N ta pidi! Na, kel go N ta pidi.

Pa N atcha kel kuza li sin pa N panha? N ta ba N ta fla-l, "Da-n un bokadu djanta o da-n un bokadu d'almosu." Pamodi pobri ta falta. Pobri ta ten dia bu ta manche bu ka ten un tiston! Nen pa bu ba tchafaris as ves panha un lata d'agu! N ta fla-bu klaru. Mi a dias ki N ta manche dentu kel kaza li, nun tiston di ba panha agu. Ami N ka ten, nha fidju ka ten. Mas mi N ta bebe keli. N ta ba N ta pidi N ta fla, "Da-n dos ton N panha un lata d'agu." Kel otu, "Da-n dezton N panha un lata d'agu." Ta da-n. Pamo mi N sabe entra n'algen. Pamo mi N ka malkriada: ami N ka ta falta algen--si bu kre bu buli Joana. Bu ta konta-l nha informidadi e modi. El ta konta-bu. Pamo Joana dja nu manti tenpu.

M: Aian. Nhos entra na grupu di OM mezmu tenpu?

S: Nau.

M: Desdi kel epuka di--

S: Joana e antigu. Mi dja kantu Joana entra, mi N ben ba entra. Kantu ki N staba na vida di pari, N ka ba nun kau. Kantu go ki N kiria N fulia ken ki ta stroba mi anda--N pintcha-l go el ba kai la--N bai igreja; N bai tudu kau. Mi dja N tuma tchada pa ponta. N ta ba ku Joana, nu ta fora. El bai paseiu na Tarafal dos bes. Pamo mi nun kau N ka ta ba. E so pa N pari pa N kiria mininu. Kantu ki N sai di kaminhu tanbe--! [bate palmu]

M: Aian.

S: Es ta faze-n trosa ta fla ma dipos ki N fulia omi ma N bira ta tudu kau. N fla, "Gosi N ten vontadi livri pamo N ka ten satisfason pa N da ningen." Gosi-- [rizu]

M: E dretu. Nha teni razaun.

S: E! N ta fla, "N ta chinta to ki morti mata-n, N ka-- [rizu] N ka ta konche nada? N ta fika sin? Na, N ta ba undi ki for!"  
Dja N fla Joana, "Vamus!" Si N teni pe ki ta ba, N ta djuntu ku es. Untrun dia li, el ben konvida-n ba nu ba Tchada--Ginu--nu ba . . .

N diskulpa-l un bes, na kel di dos N bai. N odja N ben. Ma kel kuza li e un pa bu strai bu vida. Bu ka ta ganha kue l, e pa bu strai. Dja nu ba Tchada Grandi, dja nu ba kanpu kontra ku prizidenti ki binha--N ben tchiga kaza not; dja nu ba Tarafal,

paseiu dos bes. El undi k'el ta bai e djuntu ku nos. Nu ta bai. Nos e tcheu! Penas otus dja mori. Basta ser ki OM propi ki ta ligadu mas e nos. E nos ki ta ligadu. Pamo nos nu ten nos fardanu ta bisti o ki nu ta bai, nu ta dretu.

M: Nhos ten farda?

S: Anos? Nu ten farda sin.

M: An-an! N ka sabia.

S: Nu kunpra di nos go nu faze--saia azul, buluza branku, lensu branku. Nu ta bai. O ki nu bai pa ka da-nu virgonha. Pamo nos dja nu ta podu partikular. Anos senpi nu ka ta ba djuntadu.

Un tenpu ki, kes bes ki prizidenti binha--Tchada Grandi--anos nu tradu so nu podu la. Kada un so. Ki binha gentis Santa Katarina. Tchada Grandi podu pa un banda, kel otu podu pa kel otu banda; kel otu podu pa kel otu banda--pa ka djunta ku nos. Pamo nos--nu ta pa pode mistura, ma es ka ta decha! Pamo kuze? Farda.

Kel dia propi, ten dos li, tres ki bai ki--kes gentis mas grandi fla pa tra kes pisoas pamo es ka sta n kondisons di ba mistura ku nos. Pamo nos nu ta tudu fardadu. Es ka tinha farda igual. Es botadu tudu pa rua. Es ben ses kaminhu.

\* \* \* \* \*

M: Kel kuza--an--kel manera di faze vida di--bon, di--vivensia sin, di pai-di-fidju sen kazamentu, era senpri sin li na Kabuverdi?

S: Senpri! Senpri. Desdi senpri e si. Senpri el ten. Dja kazamentu e ken ki meresi. Si dja nu nase pa bu kaza--o bu ta vive ku el bu ta ben kaza ku el, o bu ta vive ku el te ki Deus ben riparti nhos, bu ka ta kaza purki bu ka meresi.

M: Algen ta spera tene un verba pa kaza, ka?

S: Sin. Ago, si bu dadu kazamentu bu ta kaza. Si algen ka da-bu el? Si ka da-bu bu ka ta kaza.

M: E ntirisanti. Y--N ka lenbra si nha bai kel kongresu di OM ki pasa gosi li.

S: Gosi li?

M: Na Sembleia.

S: Na, N ba un bes.

M: Ahan. Mo ki nha atcha?

S: O! Sta sabi! [rizu] Kantu ki N bai N kontenti. Kantu N kanba--pamo Joana dura bai--mai kel poku ki nu atcha, N fika kontenti. Kantu ki N chinta, N fla Joana--Joana fla, "Sinta, nu bai pamo dja kaba." N fla, "En! Dja kaba dja? O Joana, na!" [rizu] N fla



Joana, "To ki torna ten, si fladu dez ora, bu ta ba tchuma-n novi ora." [rizu] Na, na, mi N atcha sabi. Mi N gosta. Ami N gosta di anda ku Joana. Joana e koitadu, e segu--mas--N ta kontenti ku ses kuza pamo tudu algen ta liga-l. Tudu algen ta tchiga n'el. Ningen ka ta subi riba del.

M: Mmm-hmm.

\* \* \* \* \*

S: Joana e ka ten vista, ma Joana e intilijenti! Pamo tudu koitadu, tudu gentis, tudu kes gentis grandi, tudu ta ben "Nha Joana! Nha Joana! Nha Joana! Nha Joana! Nha Joana!"  
Nu bai kel dia, la na porta, un minina ben la di dentu, el fla "Joana! Minina, dja N konche djobe-bu li! Forti bu dura ku ben! Sima dja nu spera-bu?!"  
El fla, "Nau, mi N atraza."  
Ma mi N gosta. Mi N gosta di kuzas . . . . Mi N gosta di kel kuza bunitu. N t'atcha sabi propi. Pamo e un kuza intirisanti. But ta ba bu ta odja, bu ta konche.

M: Kuza ki nha ta pensa m'e inpurtanti na kes kuza ki OM ta faze pa mudjeris di li? Kuza ki nha t'atcha en inpurtanti?

S: Tudu! Anos nu ta faze tudu . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

S: Anos, kel o ki nu tchumadu pa un kuzas a si, nu ta ba tudu ku nos tchabeta. Nu ta podu go kuluradu si, nu ta faze kel uma batuku bedju. [rizus] Nu ta filmadu--  
Ami dja N ta atcha-l intirisanti. Pamo dja--nu ta fika tudu sabi--kel dia di nu ten lenbrason, nu ta fika tudu kontenti. Nu ta fika tudu sabi. Anos lo ki nu ben tchumadu--e purisu. Dja nu ba la Sun Susial. Tudu dja nu ba po batuku la. Dja nu ganha--[rizu] ta fika sabi. Di la es po restu di kel gentis kunpanha-nu, traze Joana, ben raparti otu pa Tera Branka, otu pa Tchada. Ma nos nu ben bachu di toki gaita, ku tudu kuza. Pamo Joana, o k'el konvidadu pa kuza si k'el ta konvida rapazis ta ba ku violaun, ta ba ku gaita--nu ta bai el ta ba faze kela. Ma sabi go! Tudu algen ta kontenti ku nos.

M: Nau, es ta fika kontenti propi! [rizu]

S: Nos e so kunfiada.

M: An!?

S: So bedjas kunfiada! [rizu]

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