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**Wealth in People:
Social Networks and Access to Resources
Among Female Market Gardeners in
Kakasunanka, Ghana**

by

Abra K. Adamo, B.A.

**A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of**

Masters of Arts

**Department of Geography
Carleton University**

Ottawa, Ontario

March 1999

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WEALTH IN PEOPLE: SOCIAL NETWORKS
AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES AMONG
FEMALE MARKET GARDENERS IN
KAKASUNANKA, GHANA

Submitted by Abra K. Adamo, B.A.
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Thesis Supervisor

Chair, Department of Geography

Carleton University
April 14, 1999

Abstract

The way in which people relate to their environment in the context of agricultural production in Africa is directly related to their ability to gain access to productive resources - land, labour, and capital - and to use resources effectively. All people do not, however, enjoy equivalent rights to access and control resources within a society or household. Macro-structural accounts of environmental processes often overlook local differentiation among resource users, particularly those revolving around critical productive inequalities mediated by gender, class, and age. These axes of difference play a key role in determining the kinds of resource rights that different individuals are able to call upon within local social relations of production and exchange. Although it is often assumed that women in Africa are powerless victims of male-dominated social structures and institutions which restrict their rights to resources vis-à-vis men, the purpose of this thesis is to look beyond social structure to explore the nuances of women's livelihood and resource struggles. Research with female market gardeners in Kakasunanka, Ghana suggests that women are, in fact, social actors who challenge established practices, experiment with new ideas, and renegotiate the rules and boundaries which they find unacceptable under particular circumstances. The case study findings suggest that by investing in social relationships and networks with women locally, women have been able to create opportunities, or spaces, through which to mobilize local and state resources, legitimate their individual and collective interests, and to effect change within local social and political relations. Diversifying channels of access have, in turn, shaped strategies of agricultural production and investment, and have affected the way market gardeners allocate and use resources.

Acknowledgements

The process of trying to capture and convey the lives and experiences of the women of Kakasunanka in their multiple and changing roles as wives, mothers, and market gardeners has been profoundly challenging, thought-provoking, and both personally and professionally fulfilling. The time spent with women, their husbands, their children, their siblings, and their friends has produced detailed, and at times dramatic, accounts of their lives and their relationships with others, which became, in the end, the focus of this thesis. From their stories, told both individually and collectively, I have learnt of the extraordinary strides taken by women to provide for their families, and of the strategic and symbolic deference to male authority which has purchased a measure of autonomy and freedom of social movement for women locally. The women and men of Kakasunanka have chosen to remain anonymous in this account, but to them and their families, and to the local women's group with whom I worked, I owe my most profound thanks.

Over the course of field research and writing of the text, I have been exceptionally fortunate to have benefited from the encouragement, expertise, and insight of many special individuals both in Ghana and in Canada. In the field, my research assistant Vivien Bediako was crucial to the success of the interview process, as was Peace Ambelegor who translated all group discussions. To their on-going interest and hard work I owe my thanks. In the Department of Geography and Resource Development at the University of Ghana, I must thank Dr. Jacob Songsore. Dr. Songsore was extremely supportive during the entire field research process and was a sounding board for many of my initial ideas and conceptual crises. Also in the Department, I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to Dr. Elizabeth Ardayfio-Schandorf and others with the Family and Development Program Library for access to the library's materials and for their assistance. To the faculty and students of the Department of Geography and the Department of Agriculture I would like to thank-you for your on-going interest in my work, and your insights offered during the presentation of my field research.

My profound thanks must go to Andy Kusi-Appiah who not only offered his insight and experience of Ghana prior to my departure, but introduced me to, and instructed me in, the Twi language in preparation for my field research. I must also extend my thanks and appreciation to both Andy and his family in Ghana for providing me not only with a place to stay, but also a home away from home when I needed it. Special thanks go to Dr. Angelina Jumah for providing me with a place to stay, and for offering academic guidance regarding the research. On a personal note, I would like to thank Andy Jumah, Perpetual, Phylis and Mama for their friendship, support, and laughter when it was most needed.

In Canada, there are a number of advisors, professors, and colleagues who deserve my sincere gratitude and acknowledgment. I owe particular thanks to Dr. Fiona Mackenzie and Dr. Villia Jefremovas who have provided personal and professional support and guidance throughout my academic career and who have, and continue to, inspire, motivate, and challenge me intellectually. I thank them for their advice and expertise during the field research process and in the writing of this thesis. From both the Department of Geography and from the Norman Patterson School of International Affairs I extend my thanks and appreciation to Alice Hovorka, Kari McLeod, Rob Opp, Sam Landon, Kim Haddow, and Mark Sunohara for their encouragement at different points in time and in different ways, and for their guidance during research and writing. Special thanks go to Ritu Verma, who traveled the road of research and writing alongside me, and who rescued me from the intellectual abyss on more than one occasion.

I would like to acknowledge the support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in cooperation with the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE) for their generous financial support of the field research on which this thesis is based.

Finally, I must give my sincere thanks to my family and friends for their encouragement and support, and especially to my niece, Emma, for providing on-going comic relief during the writing of this thesis.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADB	Agricultural Development Bank
CBIE	Canadian Bureau of International Education
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
ENOWID	Enhancing Opportunities for Women in Development
ERP	Economic Recovery Program
GAMA	Greater Accra Metropolitan Area
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MOFA	Ministry of Food and Agriculture
NCWD	National Council on Women and Development
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organization(s)
PAMSCAD	Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
TDC	Tema Development Corporation
VEPEAG	Vegetable Producers and Exporters Association of Ghana
WB	World Bank
WIAD	Women in Agricultural Development

Glossary

<i>abusa</i>	a form of land tenancy arrangement in which landlords are entitled to one-third of the harvest in return for a tenant's use of the land.
<i>banku</i>	staple meal prepared from ground corn and cassava.
<i>chop bar</i>	small restaurant or food stand.
<i>fufu</i>	staple meal prepared from ground cassava and plantain.
<i>garri</i>	ground cassava.
<i>kalabule</i>	profiteering.
<i>kenkey</i>	staple meal made of corn dough.
<i>koko</i>	a local porridge.
<i>Obruni</i>	European; an Akan word used broadly to refer to Caucasian foreigners.
<i>stool</i>	<i>lit.</i> chieftaincy. The concept of the "stool" can refer both to a customary landholding group for a particular area, and to the land held by the customary communities and its authorities.
<i>susu</i>	informal circular savings groups.

Map I Ghana, West Africa

Source: Department of Geography and Resource Management, University of Ghana, 1997

Map II Kakasunanka and Surrounding Area, Tema District, Ghana

Source: Department of Geography and Resource Management, University of Ghana, 1997

Chapter One

Female Market Gardening In Peri-Urban Accra In The Time of Structural Adjustment

At independence in 1957, Ghana had one of the most promising economies in Sub-Saharan Africa, and despite its heavy economic dependence on primary product exports, particularly cocoa, it was one of the most prosperous countries in the region. By 1983, however, the Ghanaian economy was in crisis after enduring more than a decade of declining exports, deteriorating infrastructure, and spiraling inflation, and as such, was poorly prepared to cope with the severe drought which affected much of West Africa in 1983-84 (Berry 1997; Loxley 1991). The crisis was further compounded by the forced return of over one million workers from Nigeria, causing severe strains on employment and domestic food supply.

In exchange for financial assistance, the Rawlings government, in close collaboration with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, introduced Ghana's Economic Recovery Program (ERP) in 1983, in an attempt to redress these economic imbalances (Brown and Kerr 1997). The primary objectives of the structural adjustment program were to arrest the long-term decline in production, to control and eventually reduce inflation, to rehabilitate social and productive infrastructure, to sustain economic growth and stimulate savings and investment, and to restore overseas confidence in Ghana (Kerr et al. 1995:5-6). These objectives were put into practice through a broad range of monetary, fiscal, trade and institutional reforms

including the decentralization of government powers, devaluation of the cedi¹, cost recovery measures in health and education, the elimination of subsidies to state owned enterprises, elimination of price controls on consumer items, suspension of subsidies on agricultural inputs such as fertilizer, and an emphasis on the rehabilitation of national infrastructure particularly in agriculture, education, and health (Loxley 1991:17-18). Aggregate economic indicators suggest that the overall performance of the Ghanaian economy improved considerably in the late 1980s and early 1990s and the country has often been cited as an example of the success of structural adjustment programs (Roe and Schneider 1992 in Brown and Kerr 1997).

While at the macro level of analysis, economic indicators may suggest an overall improvement in the stability and performance of the Ghanaian economy by the standards set by the World Bank and IMF, the implementation of the structural adjustment program has had a significant and severe impact on Ghanaian households in both rural and urban areas. According to Brown and Kerr (1997), the proportion of households living in poverty has increased significantly since the introduction of structural adjustment policies. SAPs have had an impact on overall household expenditure patterns related, for example, to significant increases in the proportion of the household budget devoted to food purchases with the elimination of price controls in the market. The rising cost of food and other consumer items in the marketplace, the spiraling costs associated with education expenditures and health services (as a result of user-fee cost recovery

¹ According to Kerr et al. (1995), the value of the Ghanaian cedi started at 2.75 cedis per Canadian dollar in early 1983, and its value declined over 230 times to reach 649 cedis per dollar by 1993. The cedi is currently valued at 1550 cedis per Canadian dollar (as of March 1999).

programs), and the loss of government subsidies for agricultural inputs have resulted in increased dependence on, and need for, cash among both female and male headed households for household survival, family maintenance, and farm management. As the need for cash spirals, the devaluation of the cedi has translated into a reduction in real wages for women and men in many sectors of the economy.

To address the adverse social effects of the ERP/SAP, especially for the more vulnerable social and economic groups - small rural farmers, the urban un/under-employed, retrenched public employees, and women and youth - in 1987, the Ghanaian government with external financial assistance instituted the Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment (PAMSCAD) (Clark and Manuh 1991). The overall intent of PAMSCAD was to add a 'human face' to the adjustment process (Loxley 1991), by focusing on enhancing the social and economic opportunities of vulnerable groups. Projects developed under the PAMSCAD program emphasize community initiatives to rehabilitate and construct social and economic infrastructure, employment and income generation strategies, credit schemes for small-scale enterprises and specific projects to enhance the economic and employment opportunities of women², and projects designed to meet the basic needs (water and sanitation, health, nutrition and shelter) of vulnerable groups (Boateng 1996:205-6). In conjunction with the PAMSCAD program, the National Council on Women and Development (NCWD), the government institution

² An excellent example of an on-going program aimed at providing income-generating and credit opportunities to women is the Enhancing Opportunities for Women in Development (ENOWID) program, targeted toward vulnerable women and households in the Western Region of Ghana. (Ardayfio-Schandorf et al. 1996). Although this program is currently operating only within the Western Region, a "scaling-up" ENOWID program is currently being considered within the National Council on Women and Development and other interested parties to enable to program to reach women and other vulnerable groups throughout Ghana.

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charged with ensuring that resources reach women through its regional and district offices, is also working to enhance women's opportunities to access and control productive and cash resources. However, as Manuh (1995) argues, few programs have directed assistance to female small-scale agricultural producers. The NCWD collaborates with the 31st December Women's Movement³, a politically appointed 'non-governmental' organization, in assisting women's groups in the country with primarily food processing, and marketing enterprises. The Movement also constitutes a vehicle through which women are able, collectively, to access and mobilize both state and local resources, and ultimately power.

In the peri-urban area of Accra-Tema, the increasing dependence of households on cash for day-to-day household survival, child maintenance, and the sustainability of market gardening enterprises and other aspects of agricultural production has precipitated a series of complex struggles over resources, in particular land and labour, and ultimately struggles over cultural and social meaning, within the charged contexts of local gender relations. Given the escalating importance of money within household economies, many women charge that husbands increasingly default on many of their financial obligations for family welfare (e.g. payment of children's school fees, medical expenses among others) while simultaneously misappropriating and allocating the proceeds of women's

³ The local women's group is associated with the December 31st Women's Movement in Ghana. The December 31st Women's Movement is a national level women's political organization which was inaugurated in 1982. The Movement is named for the overthrow of Ghana's 3rd Republic on 31st December 1981 by a coup d'état led by J.J. Rawlings who then became the country's head of state. Initially the Movement's primary objective was the mobilization of women to participate actively in the 'revolutionary process' in Ghana, contribute towards national reconstruction, and fight for a complete change in the social and economic conditions of women. At present, the organization has branches in all ten regions of Ghana and its areas of interest include literacy campaigns, economic ventures, provision of social services, educational programs, protective legislation, and the abolition of discriminatory laws (Tsikata 1989:85).

labour on household farms. This charge has led to an escalation of local gender politics centered around the renegotiation of the “conjugal contract” (Whitehead 1981) within many households in Kakasunanka, located in the peri-urban area of Accra-Tema. Public rhetoric regarding the inability or outright failure of husbands to fulfill their responsibilities as husbands and fathers, has fueled (and legitimated) the widespread withdrawal of the majority of women’s labour from household farms (which are under the material and symbolic control of husbands) and the subsequent intensification of female market gardening on individually-acquired lands in the village.

The withdrawal of women’s agricultural labour from the household, as I argue in the thesis, constitutes a serious challenge to the material and symbolic bases of male authority and to the terms of the conjugal contract. Expressed through local politics, women whose husbands seemed to neglect, or otherwise default, on many of their financial obligations have charged that their husbands have not fulfilled their “customary” roles as household breadwinners and as such could not make claims on their wives’ unremunerated labour. Men have returned the charge by claiming that, in withdrawing their labour from the household to establish gardens of their own account, women have “forgotten themselves”, that is, they have forgotten their socially-sanctioned roles as women and their obligations as wives. Although many husbands view women’s garden incomes and new-found economic influence in the household as an outright and deliberate challenge to male authority, their discursive assaults only go so far since their wives now wield considerable social and economic power in the household and community and, in a very real sense, women’s incomes relieve men of many of the

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economic burdens for which they were previously responsible. Similarly, women's strategies (e.g. labour withdrawal, verbal assaults) are limited as they need to win over their husbands in order to sustain their garden activities in the long-term. In order to placate their husbands, I argue that women strategically deploy their labour and garden income, providing occasional labour on their husbands' farms and providing their husbands with occasional loans. While such actions may appear, in some respects, to be a capitulation on the part of wives, it can also be read as both a symbolic gesture meant to convey, both privately and publicly, that a wife is still "invested" in her marriage, and a strategic gesture designed to purchase the freedom of movement and social interaction that market gardening demands.

Given these transformations within the social relations of marriage, women's involvement in market gardening in the peri-urban area of Accra, I argue, has depended upon their ability to access and control productive resources through extra-household channels. Although it is often assumed that women gain access to the means of production strictly through their relationships with men within marriage and kinship structures (Moore 1988), I argue that women's access to resources has to be seen in relation to the processes of resistance and negotiation taking place within and across multiple social boundaries in Kakasunanka. In the context of new economic constraints imposed by transformations in the national political economy under the ERP/SAP and experienced within the household, women who have been unable to retain a measure of control over the proceeds of their labour on household farms have been able to withdraw their labour and intensify their involvement in market gardening by investing in social

relationships and networks through which they are able to secure access to the means of production. In Kakasunanka, women invest in a variety of friendships, trading and savings networks, women's exchange labour groups, and formal organizations such as the local 31st December Women's Group which enable them to mobilize state and local resources under both customary and statutory law, and strengthen their position and bargaining power within local social and political relations.

In order to examine women's experiences in market gardening, this thesis examines the multiple ways in which women strategize and negotiate rights to the means of production through local social institutions, and informal relationships and networks. In Chapter Two I draw on relevant literature from feminist and poststructural political ecology to develop the conceptual framework through which I examine gendered resource rights within local social relations, institutions and structures. To move beyond structuralist analyses of resource relations, I emphasize literature which suggests that rights to resources are not fixed by the rules and structures of a society or local social institutions, but rather, that social institutions create flexible spaces within which women and men can manoeuvre, negotiate and contest the terms of production, authority, and obligation, and make claims on resources (Berry 1997). This involves conceptualizing local institutions as processes (rather than structures), through which people engage in struggles over material resources and, simultaneously, struggles over cultural and social meaning. Women, individually and collectively, are presented not as powerless victims of society and structure, but as social actors who resist, manipulate, and transform social relations, and in so doing challenge dominant cultural meanings.

In order to examine the multiple and diverse ways in which women are able to negotiate rights to resources within local social institutions and informal networks, the research methodology of this thesis is based on an examination of social and economic structures, institutions and processes “as lived” through women’s daily lives. Chapter Three outlines, and reflects upon, the methodology used in the field research process and in the analysis and presentation of research findings. This chapter draws on recent literature on qualitative methods in social science research, placing particular emphasis on participatory and feminist perspectives.

The case study findings and analyses, from Kakasunanka, are presented in Chapters Four through Six. Chapter Four provides an introduction to women’s daily lives in Kakasunanka, by exploring women’s motivations for engaging in market gardening, the resources and secondary income-earning strategies they utilize to expand and sustain their gardens, and the multiple meanings that women’s gardens, and garden income, hold for them in fulfillment of their changing roles and responsibilities as wives, mothers, and women in Kakasunanka.

Chapter Five explores and deconstructs the meaning of marriage as a social institution and draws on women’s own words and experiences in order to demonstrate the negotiability of resource rights within conjugal relationships over time. This chapter emphasizes the discursive elements of local gender politics centered around the renegotiation of the conjugal contract between wives and husbands, arguing that struggles over material resources are simultaneously symbolic struggles over cultural and social meanings. The purpose of this chapter is to challenge the assumptions that women are

dependent upon marriage for access to the means of production; that, as women, they necessarily occupy a socially and structurally disadvantaged position vis-à-vis men; and that women are incapable or unwilling to challenge social rules and boundaries, and contest and renegotiate the terms of production, authority, and obligation within marriage, through both individual and collective strategies.

Chapter Six examines the social relationships and networks that different women invest in outside of marriage, and the ways in which membership creates opportunities, or spaces, through which women are able to negotiate access to resources. In this chapter it is argued that, in the peri-urban area of Accra, the plurality of legal structures and institutions, each characterized by its own set of rules, principles, and accepted procedures, overlaps locally, to produce a complex web of options and opportunities for women to negotiate rights to land through participation in a variety of social institutions (marriage, formal women's organizations) and informal networks and through market-based transactions. Within customary systems, the flexibility and negotiability of rights in land have enabled women to create new spaces within which to manoeuvre and to stake claims to land through the re-interpretation and re-invention of customary law. Through careful manipulation of rights and meanings, women have been able to effect some control over land outside of marriage and kinship relations by investing in "special friendships". Others have gained rights to land, labour and credit, recognized and legitimized under statutory law, through the modern medium of local collective organization, registered women's groups, and drawing on the material and political resources of the national 31st December Women's Movement as a legitimating symbol of

the state. Under statutory law, women in a position to mobilize the necessary capital and institutional support have also gained access to land and labour through market transactions.

Chapter Seven provides a conclusion to the thesis by revisiting, and tying together, the themes of the case study presented as a means to challenge a number of conventional assumptions about gender and resource relations and to identify potential avenues for future research. In particular, attention is drawn to the ways in which new categories of land in the peri-urban zone; the ability of women to accumulate and control cash earnings through their socially-sanctioned roles as market traders; and women's participation in diverse social relationships and networks through which they can negotiate rights to resources, shape women's involvement in vegetable cash-crop production outside of the material and symbolic control of the household.

Chapter Two

Conceptualizing Resource Struggles: Social Institutions, Relations, and Resource Rights

The way in which people relate to their environment in the context of production and land use decisions in market gardening in the peri-urban zone is related to their ability to access and control material resources and to use resources effectively. Individuals within a society do not, however, have uniform and equal access to and control of resources. There are many axes of difference that may shape people's experience and understanding of the environment and their rights to resources. Macro-structural accounts of environmental change often miss local differentiation among resource users, particularly those revolving around critical productive inequalities mediated by gender, class, ethnicity, and age. Although many scholars have emphasized the key role of social relations of production in influencing land use and resource decisions, as Moore (1996) argues, their analyses often employ social structure rather than the nuances of social actors' livelihood struggles to explain resource conflicts. Overly deterministic visions of social structure tend to eclipse the ways in which competing claims to resources are negotiated through local politics and the processes whereby conflicts over material relations become struggles over social meaning (Moore 1993).

As a means to explore the material and symbolic aspects of resource struggles and relations among resource users in the Accra peri-urban area, I draw on diverse empirical studies and theoretical debates from feminist and poststructural political ecology

perspectives. I begin by examining the concept of difference as it relates to resource tenure and the divisions of rights and obligations between women and men within multiple social domains (household, community). I argue that resource rights are not fixed by the rules and structures of a society or social institutions which define and dictate who has rights to specific resources (such as land and labour), but are flexible and negotiable over time. Patterns of resource allocation and management are conditioned by, or mediated through, local social institutions which not only define and enforce inequitable resource rights, but simultaneously create spaces within which such rights may be contested, negotiated and redefined. Thus, while women tend to have more limited rights to resources than men, I contend that women are not passive victims of patriarchal social structures and institutions, but rather are strategic social actors who challenge accepted norms and resist and renegotiate rules and boundaries which they find unacceptable under changing circumstances. Understanding gendered resource rights as flexible and subject to negotiation, requires conceptualizing social institutions as processes through which people struggle, individually and collectively, over both resources and meaning.

Through local institutions people engage in struggles over the material relations of production, the distribution of resources within society, and ultimately over power (Moore 1993). Drawing on the works of Agarwal (1994), Berry (1989;1993;1997), Carney (1988;1996), Carney and Watts (1991), Moore (1993;1996), and Schroeder (1996), I argue that struggles over material resources (land and labour) through local social relations, are simultaneously struggles over cultural or social meaning. The

purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to establish a conceptual framework through which to examine and understand both the micro-politics of peasant struggles over access to material resources, and the symbolic contestations which constitute those struggles (Moore 1993;381), and the ways in which people, through membership and participation in social institutions, invest in meanings as well as in the means of production (Berry 1989).

Gendered Resource Rights and Relations

To examine aspects of land use and resource management among female market gardeners in the Accra peri-urban zone, I draw on elements of feminist and poststructural political ecology. Political ecology begins by considering the historical, political, and economic contexts that shape agricultural and environmental practices (Peet and Watts 1996: 4), by recognizing both the major changes taking place in agrarian political economy which operate at national and international scales and the detail of household and group decision-making in land use and management (Blaikie 1989). Piers Blaikie (1989) argues that the capacity to manage ecological capital must be grounded in the differential patterns of access to and control over resources on the basis of class, race and ethnicity operating at a multiplicity of levels. Feminist political ecology draws on many of the same theoretical elements of political ecology but stresses the importance of gender in analyses of agrarian change (Rocheleau 1991; 1995; Rocheleau et al. 1996). These approaches examine the intersection of resource users within the social relations of production and exchange through which struggles over rights to resources are articulated.

Whereas political ecology emphasizes the material aspects of resource struggles from a structuralist perspective, poststructural political ecology goes a step further to explore the symbolic contestations which constitute these struggles (Moore 1993, 1996; Peet and Watts 1996; Watts 1989). I begin here by examining many of the gendered aspects of resource rights, articulated through local social relations and institutions, in order to provide a theoretical foundation for the discussion of struggles over resources and cultural meaning which follows later in the chapter.

Resource tenure involves both the rights to access, control and use of resources and the responsibilities and obligations to procure and/or manage resources for household, extended family, and community use (Rocheleau et al. 1996). Rights to access and control productive resources such as land and labour depend on one's participation and relative position within a variety of social institutions - marriage, kinship, local organizations and so on - as well as on material wealth and market transactions (Berry 1989). The distribution of resource rights within social institutions reflects complex relations of power, operating at multiple levels in a given society, through which persons of different social position and power are granted different degrees of control and use rights to material resources. Gender, class, age, race, and ethnicity (among others) constitute axes of difference which shape people's rights to resources and their responsibilities to procure and manage resources. Gender and class, in particular, play a key role in determining who has the right participate in making claims to land and labour. The kinds of resource claims that individuals can make are divided sharply between rights of control and rights of use. As Rocheleau et al. (1996) argue, wealthy

men are typically “owners”, while women and poor men are more likely to be users of lands (and other resources) controlled by others. Since the idea of shared uses and multiple user practices, as Rocheleau illustrates, are often beyond the legal definitions of property, it may be more useful to conceptualize resource tenure in terms of articulated “bundles of rights” (Fortmann 1985 in Rocheleau et al. 1996:12). The idea of bundles of rights is better suited to capture the complexity of gender issues related to resource tenure and to the notion of resource rights as nested and overlapping within local gender relations.

Women’s position, structurally, within marriage and kinship systems, tends to imply that women gain access to the means of production through their relationship with men. In many societies in Africa, male elders share the authority to control and allocate resources (such as land) among themselves and allocate use rights to women and young men. Customary rights to resources are distributed through marriage and inheritance laws and practices, and as such women’s rights are often nested within rights controlled by men, or women hold rights to resources that are allocated by men’s institutions or organizations (clans, lineages, cooperatives, political committees) (Rocheleau et al. 1996:12).

Kinship and marriage: Gender and property rights

Through kinship systems in Ghana, one of the major distinctions in inheritance practices, related to how land is transferred from one generation to another, is gender related: that is, whether a community is patrilineal or matrilineal. The patrilineal system

is the less complex of the two as both lineage and property are traced through the male line (in most cases from father to son), and control of land is passed from father to son. Land is initially allocated to male heads of household by community authorities. During his lifetime, a holder of customary land directly cultivates part of his land and gives access or cultivation rights to the remaining land to his wife (or wives) and other immediate family members, such as adult sons or daughters living at home, or to siblings (Nukunya 1992). Upon the death of the household head, his rights to land are usually conferred on his sons or other close male relatives. Daughters, according to Nukunya (1992), may receive a portion of land from their fathers as a "gift", although they are not usually entitled to inherit any land allocated to the household⁴. Although social norms might prohibit women from inheriting land, Vellenga's research in a patrilineal Ewe cocoa-growing area, demonstrates that women are able to inherit cocoa farms from their fathers⁵. Since residence in patrilineal societies is typically patrilocal or virilocal (see footnote 4) it is surprising that fifty-eight percent of women in Vellenga's study inherited land from their fathers. Vellenga (1986) does not elaborate on the details of women's inheritance of cocoa farms from their fathers, or on the extent of women's inheritance rights to such lands, making further analysis of her findings difficult⁶. Nevertheless, what

⁴ According to Nukunya (1992), women typically do not have the right to inherit land as marriage practices in most patrilineal systems are invariably patrilocal or virilocal, that is, the woman marries a man from outside her birth community and goes to live in her husband's father's compound or in a house her husband has built in his father's community. Since a daughter is expected to leave her community upon marriage, customary law does not give her the right to inherit as her husband's family or community would then control any inherited land upon marriage. However, as Nukunya (1992) demonstrates, the detailed application of the patrilineal system of inheritance differs considerably from place to place, and depends considerably on residential patterns and the kinds of property to be inherited.

⁵ In Vellenga's (1986) research, 58 percent of patrilineal women in the study inherited cocoa farms from their fathers.

⁶ Vellenga (1986) does not, for example, articulate whether the cocoa farms inherited by women from their fathers are farms established on lineage lands or on self-acquired lands, or the extent of daughters'

is clear is that there is considerable flexibility in the application of rules of inheritance under patrilineal systems enabling some women, under particular circumstances, to inherit land and other property.

Though the patrilineal system of kinship is by far the most common form or organization in Africa, the matrilineal system of inheritance is more common in Ghana. In matrilineal societies, lineage and property are traced through the mother's line, although property itself is commonly controlled and owned by the men in the family. Sons do not usually inherit land from their fathers but from their mother's male relatives. Among the Akan in Ghana, for example, the intergenerational transfer of land is through members of the matriline (Nukunya 1992; Okali 1983). Brothers of a deceased male are the first in line to inherit property, next in line is the son of his sister, third in line are the sons of the deceased mother's sister (Awusabo-Asare 1990). Daughters tend to have cultivation rights to a parcel of their family's land, even after they marry. However Nukunya (1992) argues that they often lose cultivation rights to their birth family's land, if they move away from their communities to live with their husband's households⁷. According to Vellenga (1986), matrilineal women often have less secure inheritance rights to lineage land than do women in patrilineal systems. Among women cocoa-farmers in the Brong-Ahafo and Volta regions, for example, Vellenga demonstrates that while women may inherit property from their mothers and mothers' brothers in a matrilineal inheritance system, patrilineal women are more likely to inherit property, in

inheritance rights in the study. It is unclear if daughters' inheritance rights include, for example, the right to pass on, or otherwise transfer, land intergenerationally.

⁷ Depending on whether a community is patrilocal or matrilocal (where a man, upon marriage, goes to live with his wife matrilineage).

this case, from their fathers⁸ (1986:72). In addition, a higher proportion of matrilineal women in Vellenga's study received property from their husbands, likely because more matrilineal than patrilineal women worked on their husbands' farms. Matrilineal women in the study often established inheritance rights through the contribution of their labour (1986:72-73; also see Okali 1983). Similarly, a greater percentage of matrilineal women have acquired farms "through their own effort" (i.e. outside of marriage and kinship relations) compared to women in patrilineal systems (Vellenga 1986:73; also see Mikell 1984:203). Thus, although resources in matrilineal societies are channeled through the female line, research in Ghana suggests that in terms of matrilineal inheritance patterns, women may have less secure rights to, and control over, resources in their lineages and more in their marriages (and perhaps other relations), the opposite of what one might expect (Vellenga 1986:73; Mikell 1984; 1986; Okali 1983).

Gender and rights to labour

Rights to labour are also mediated through marriage and kinship relations, and as such are highly gendered. Due to the nature of gender relations of power within marriage and kinship systems, men are often able to command and mobilize both unremunerated male and female household and extended family labour, while women's access to labour is comparatively limited (Okali 1983; Vellenga 1986; Whitehead 1981). Among the Kusasi of north-eastern Ghana, for example, Whitehead (1981) argues that men are able to command the unremunerated labour of family and are able to organize extra-household

⁸ In Vellenga's study, 33 percent of matrilineal women received property from mothers and mothers' brothers while 58 percent of patrilineal women inherited property from their fathers (1986:72).

exchange labour parties to work on household or private farms. Women, however, mobilize these social relations of production through marriage. Women's ability to mobilize family labour is severely limited by their lack of social power within household and kinship relations, and their access to extra-household labour (e.g. exchange labour parties) tends to be mediated through their husbands.

Vellenga (1986) argues that women and men, in fact, have differential access to various categories of labour. Among cocoa farm owners in Vellenga's study, men were more likely to use contract and daily-wage labour, while women relied more heavily on *abusa*⁹ sharecropping labour contracts (Vellenga 1986:69). Vellenga does not make clear the reasons for such differences, although she does suggest that most contract labourers in the study area were men. Women might experience greater difficulty mobilizing the income necessary to use contract or daily-wage labour. Women's and men's access to various categories of land and labour is mediated by their ability to command an income, and their relative position and power within intra- and extra-household social relations.

Conceptualizing "the household"

Resource relations between women and men are defined, negotiated, and "lived" within multiple social arenas, although it is often through marriage and other intra-

⁹ *Abusa* contracts are sharecropping arrangements which are highly institutionalized by custom in many parts of Ghana. Such contracts are established between a farm owner and a "caretaker", where the caretaker may be a family member, a member of the local community, or a migrant labourer who has moved up from contract or daily-wage labour. Caretakers manage the farm on behalf of the farm owner in return for one-third of the farm's crop (Hill 1963; Vellenga 1986).

household relations that social identities are constructed and gender roles, rights, and obligations are given practical meaning. Analyses of gender resource relations within households are often made difficult, however, by conceptualizations of “the household” as an intrinsically democratic and cooperative unit characterized by joint utility functions and a pooling of resources, and operating in the interests of all its members (Evans 1991). Recent research reveals that such approaches obfuscate any analysis of the household as a site of subordination and domination, of gender hierarchies of many kinds, of the conflicts of interests between its members, especially husband and wife, and of the uneven distribution of resource access and control within conjugal relations (See Dwyer and Bruce 1988; Evans 1991; Harris 1982; Kabeer 1991, 1998; Kandiyoti 1998; Leach 1991; Moore 1988; Roberts 1991; Whitehead 1981; Wilson 1991).

One of the most important issues related to analyses of “the household” has to do with the flexibility and permeability of household boundaries. Although households are often depicted as monolithic forms with defined social and spatial boundaries, organized independently of other households and actors in the economy, households are in fact shifting, flexible structures whose boundaries are often difficult to discern (Evans 1991:54). As Evans argues, households are composed of a great diversity of family and household compositions and social relations, mediated through marriage and kinship, creating a variety of conjugal and residential arrangements (*ibid*). Social relations of production and exchange cross household boundaries, and are diffused among a multiplicity of social groupings, which endure over different time scales, and which people contribute to or derive assistance from under different circumstances (Leach

1991a:49). Women and men participate in a variety of social relationships and institutions which intersect at the level of the household and, as such, intra-household relations should not be examined at the expense of other forms of social organization. Rather than take the household as a unit of analysis we need to treat it as a point of departure by questioning how membership in a household affect people's access to resources, obligations to others, and understanding of their options (Berry 1984).

The conjugal contract: Resource rights and obligations

The constellation of gendered rights and responsibilities within household economies are negotiated within what Ann Whitehead (1981) refers to as the 'conjugal contract'. The conjugal contract refers to the terms on which husbands and wives exchange goods, incomes, and services, including labour (ibid:88). An examination of different forms of conjugal contracts, and the changing terms and nature of such contracts according to the location of the household in the wider political economy, reveals considerable information about the role of gender relations of power in negotiating access to and control over resources through time.

Gendered rights and obligations within conjugal relationships are shaped in large part by local gender ideologies and social norms regarding who should enjoy specific rights to resources and the kinds of obligations that wives and husbands are expected to fulfill. Conjugal contracts are centered around a marked gender division of labour between women's and men's tasks, where women are commonly associated with the work of childbearing and childrearing, domestic service and maintenance, and the

provision of household agricultural labour, while men are typically associated with the roles of household breadwinners and financial and material providers. Within the sphere of agricultural production, the sequencing and segregation of women's and men's work by task, by crop, and by place, and the links between labour divisions and rights in products with changing values are especially important (Leach 1991a).

Whitehead (1981) stresses that the gender division of labour does not refer merely to a list of men's jobs and women's jobs, nor is it based on a set of cultural values about the suitability of various activities according to the specific gender categories (also see Guyer 1984; 1991). Rather, it suggests a system of allocating the labour of women and men to specific activities, and of equal importance, a system of distributing the products of these activities (Whitehead 1981:90). The allocation of different tasks to men and women consequently has significant implications for the organization of productive processes in that it involves issues of command and control, and creates the necessity of exchanging and distributing between women and men goods which their joint or separate labour has produced (Whitehead 1981:90).

The relative distribution of resource rights and obligations between women and men within the context of the conjugal contract is often uneven and inequitable. Women bear a disproportionate share of responsibilities for household maintenance, resource procurement, and the provision of unremunerated agricultural labour on household farms, and yet, as Rocheleau et al. (1996:13) argue, they have very limited formal rights, and limited political and economic means to secure access to resources and provide for themselves and their households. This is not meant to suggest, however, that women are

passive victims of social rules and structures or that, as women, they necessarily occupy a structurally-disadvantaged position vis-à-vis men. Although the gender division of rights and obligations are sanctioned and idealized by society as a whole, they are not naturalized divisions or the product of unchanging “tradition”; nor are they fixed or frozen by the rules and structures of marriage and other social institutions. As I argue in the remainder of the chapter, gendered rights and obligations are flexible, manipulable and subject to negotiation and reinterpretation within and through local social relations.

Social Institutions as Processes

Like the projected images of African societies as “closed, corporate, consensual communities” by colonial administrators, social institutions in Africa are frequently portrayed as traditional or “customary” systems characterized by fixed rules, structures, and boundaries, which are, in turn, incapable of coping with, and adapting to, externally-introduced change (Berry 1997). In much the same way that development discourse attributes environmental degradation to the persistence of “traditional” arrangements and agricultural practices (and knowledge), depictions of social institutions as internally stable and consistent social entities which exist outside of processes of political and economic change assume that such institutions are ill-equipped to manage resources under conditions of rapid economic, political, and demographic change. However, as Sara Berry argues, such arguments are fundamentally at odds with the complexity and variety of historical processes in Africa which are characterized by millennia of migration, adaptation, and cultural interaction among African peoples, as well as, trade

and other forms of interactions between Africa and the rest of the world (1997:1228). It is clear that institutions change in form, function, and meaning in response to economic and political transformations taking place at various levels, and hold different meaning for different members of a given society. As such, it may be more realistic to try to understand social relationships and institutions in processual rather than structural terms (ibid). As active and strategic members of societies and social institutions, people both individually and collectively transform institutions to meet changing needs and social and material interests:

In Africa, as in other parts of the world, changes in climate, population density, economic conditions or patterns of conquest and domination have often led people to question established practices, experiment with new ideas, and contest and renegotiate rules and boundaries which they find inadequate or unacceptable in new circumstances. In the process, social identities and institutions have multiplied and/or been reshaped so often that they appear to take on permanent qualities of fluidity, ambiguity, and creativity (Berry 1997:1128).

Thinking about institutions as processes begins with integrating the ideas of movement, interaction, and agency into analyses of social institutions and structures. As Berry argues, it may be useful to conceptualize social institutions such as marriage, household, local cooperatives, and community organizations, not as clearly bounded consensual social entities, but rather as “constellations of social interactions, in which people move, exchange ideas and resources, and negotiate or contest the terms of productions, authority, and obligation” (Berry 1997:1228). In this way, social institutions and relations between people are constituted less through the uniform application of written or unwritten rules than through multiple processes of negotiation and contest

(ibid). Thinking about institutions as arenas of struggle is contingent upon the idea of people, not as simply disembodied social categories (based on gender, class, age or race) or passive victims of social structures but as social actors, capable of strategizing and finding spaces to manoeuvre in the situations they face and manipulating resources and meanings within and across multiple social boundaries (Villarreal 1992:248; Long 1992). Rather than structure shaping (or dictating) action, social institutions are constituted by multiple, simultaneous and successive acts of participation, and as such, rules and structures are given meaning only through practice. Understood in this way, gendered resource rights and obligations within the conjugal contract, for example, are defined less by the rigid application of social rules and norms related to marriage (and the socially-sanctioned roles of the genders) than by the processes of negotiation through which such rules and norms are contested, reinterpreted, and redefined.

Richard Schroeder (1997) provides a striking example of the flexibility and negotiability of rules and norms within the institution of marriage in the context of changing economic circumstances in The Gambia's garden district. Drawing on his research with female market gardeners in The Gambia, Schroeder argues that gender roles, rights, and obligations are subject to on-going contestation, negotiation and redefinition within the context of the conjugal contract. The expansion and intensification of market gardening, which has produced a surge in female incomes and intensified demands on female labour, has led to the escalation of gender politics centered around the reworking of the conjugal contract (Schroeder 1996:70). As husbands' contributions to household finances have diminished with the undermining of male cash crop production

in recent times, women are becoming the primary breadwinners in many households. As women's ability to provide for the financial needs of the household increased dramatically in relation to the contribution of their husbands, women's positions within the complex system of gender relations at the intra-household level were redefined. These female market gardeners now hold the economic upper hand in budgetary negotiations within the household which constitutes a serious challenge to the material and symbolic bases of male power. While women experienced greater autonomy and decision-making power with their expanding role as economic providers in the household, the intensification of vegetable production has also forced women to default either on, or otherwise finesse, a variety of domestic labour obligations (Schroeder 1996). Husbands accused female market gardeners of failing to meet their specific marital responsibilities and obligations such as the fetching of husbands' bath water or the proper greeting of guests. With women spending increasing amounts of time in their gardens, husbands were forced, by default, to assume new domestic responsibilities. The mutual default of both marriage partners in their socially-ascribed gender roles and responsibilities has led to an escalation of material and symbolic struggle over the terms of the conjugal contract. I come back to Schroeder's (1996) research in the next section, where I examine social relations as a contested terrain involving negotiation and struggle over boundaries, battles over images and meaning, and the search for spaces within which to manoeuvre and stake claims to resources.

Struggles Over Resources, Struggles Over Meaning

Although meanings may sustain prevailing productive inequalities, as Moore argues, “meanings are always contested, never totalizing, and always unstable” (1993:383). Resource rights and obligations are tightly woven into the ideological fabric of societies, social institutions, and structures, factors obstructing the transformation of gender relations are simultaneously material and ideological, interacting with and reinforcing each other (Agarwal 1994:84). Change, as Agarwal argues, will therefore necessitate struggles over both resources, and struggles over social and cultural meanings ascribed to gender roles, rights, and obligations (Agarwal 1994:84). It is through both material and ideological struggle that the rules and accepted norms of society and its institutions and structures are challenged, manipulated, and transformed. In the context of ideological struggle, rules and norms are more than the object of resistance and subject of debate, they are used and manipulated, in multiple ways, through discursive means, to convey and legitimate a particular representation of reality between contesting parties.

Recalling Schroeder’s (1996) discussion of local gender politics revolving around the renegotiation of gender roles and responsibilities, and the terms of the conjugal contract in one of The Gambia’s garden districts, the discursive elements of struggles over resources (such as labour and income) become clear. The garden boom, according to Schroeder, precipitated a series of material struggles over gender roles and labour responsibilities which were fought out through intra-household politics and the strategic mobilization of marital metaphors. Men whose wives seemed preoccupied with gardening claimed that gardens dominated women’s lives to such a degree that the plots had become

the women's "second husbands" (Schroeder 1996:70). The phrase "She's gone to her second husband", used by men to indicate that their wives were not at home, but working in their gardens instead, became, as Schroeder argues, a shorthand for marking women's neglect of household labour responsibilities, misplaced priorities, decentered obligations, and shirked duties, demonizing gardeners as "bad wives" (1996:72). Returning the charge, women replied, in effect, that they might as well be married to their gardens since the financial crisis of the early 1980s had so undermined male cash crop production and, by extension, husband's contributions to household finances, that gardens were often women's only means of financial support (Schroeder 1996:70). In this case, struggles between husbands and wives are imbued with meanings associated with a failure to meet gender-specific, and socially-sanctioned, marital obligations. Women and men mobilize and manipulate local gender ideology and social imagery in order to convey and legitimate particular representations and actions: wives, for example, legitimate their gardening activities (and neglect of particular social responsibilities due to time constraints) by claiming that, as their "second husbands", gardens provide what their marriage partners are socially obligated to provide (income, food, and other necessities), but cannot. These discursive strategies, however, have limits for both contesting parties. For their gardens to be sustainable in the long-term, women acknowledge the need to "win over" their husbands by strategically deploying their garden income and providing their husbands with cash loans. While this may appear, in some respects, to be a capitulation on the part of gardeners, Schroeder contends that it can also be read as both strategic and symbolic deference designed to purchase the freedom of movement and

social interaction that garden production and marketing entail (1996:70). Similarly, since women's gardens enable husbands to seek and secure cash loans from their wives, husbands' social condemnations only go so far. Thus, processes of contest and negotiation also involve, in many cases, mutual accommodation.

Ideological struggles may result in structural change or material transformation insofar as meanings mobilize action, shape social identities, classify and categorize resources, and condition understandings of individual and collective interests (Moore 1993:382). As Moore argues, "historical patterns of access to, control of, and exclusion from resources emanate from and, in turn, mold competing meanings and cultural understandings of rights, property relations, and entitlements" (1993:383). The work of Carney and Watts (1990) in The Gambia is an excellent example of the ways in which rights to resources are embedded within local cultural categories of land and how struggles over rights to and control over productive resources are, at the same time, struggles over cultural meanings of land and property rights. In the case of Mandinka rice farmers producing under contract in The Gambia, the introduction of a new production regime which involved the transformation of land rights and vastly expanded intra-household labour demands had fundamental consequences for the micro-politics of the Mandinka household, giving rise to contradictory, and deeply gendered, developments with respect to domestic access to, and control over, and definition of resources (Carney and Watts 1990:231). The introduction of an irrigated rice scheme involved the reclassification of women's '*kamanyango*' (individually controlled) swamp lands as '*maruo*' (household) plots which translated into a loss of individual control over their

lands and the product of their labour. The naming of the project's plots as household fields enabled the household head to make claims on women's unpaid labour while in practice the plots functioned in part as his individual field capable of generating investable surpluses (Carney and Watts 1990:225). In addition, since *maruo* labour claims had historically evolved within the confines of a single agricultural season (there was no precedent for women to perform *maruo* labour obligations during two cropping periods), the introduction of a project which required that irrigated rice be cultivated on a year-round basis, meant that women's customary rights to dry season *kamanyango* production were also marginalized (Carney 1996). Co-optation by men of the term *maruo*, therefore, strengthened prevailing patriarchal power relations by undermining women's customary rights of access to rice land for income generation while enabling male household heads to capture surplus value (Carney 1996; Carney and Watts 1990).

In response to the redefinition of categories of land and tenurial arrangements at the expense of women's customary rights, what ensued was a symbolic struggle over the naming of resources, and an interpretative struggle over customary labour obligations within the context of the conjugal contract. Women challenged the changing lexicon of plot tenure by contesting the semantics of *maruo* precisely because it provided the mechanism for the loss of their customary rights. Struggles have centered around village women reaffirming claims to a portion of the surplus by requesting seasonal plot use as *kamanyango*; remuneration for their labour in the form of paddy rice for year-round labour availability; or, when labour benefits were denied, outright refusal to work on the household irrigated fields and entry into local wage labour markets (Carney 1996). In so

doing, women contested the basis of the conjugal contract, namely the right of their husbands to lay claim to their labour without commensurate remuneration, and thereby effected from within the household a challenge to patriarchal marital relations (ibid:226). What ensued, therefore, was not only a material struggle over the recomposition of labour and the reclassification of property rights, but an interpretative struggle over the naming of property and resources, and a symbolic struggle over meaning.

These struggles reveal that a good deal of what is socially passed off as natural and undisputable is in fact a result of ideological struggles between contesting parties (Agarwal 1995:111). The social and ideological construction of gender roles, rights, and obligations are extremely complex processes which shape not only the relative material circumstances of men and women, but also the ideological framework within which property rights are defined, negotiated, and contested within local social relations and institutions. Conflicts over the material relations of production, the distribution of resources within the household and community, and ultimately over power, are simultaneously struggles over cultural meanings defined and contested within the charged context of local politics (Moore 1993).

That changing political and economic conditions have often led people to question established practices, experiment with new ideas, and resist and/or renegotiate rules and boundaries they find inadequate or unacceptable in new circumstances suggests that social institutions are continuously reshaped by the processes of struggle and negotiation which occur between people interacting within and across social boundaries. Although participation in social institutions does not guarantee anyone access to resources, wealth

or power, it does affect the way people spend time, use resources, and think about their problems and possibilities (Berry 1997:1229). The case from The Gambia (Carney 1996; Carney and Watts 1990) discussed above reveals that women and men withdraw from, or invest in, those relationships and institutions which enable individuals to exert the greatest degree of control over specific resources under the terms which they are willing and able to meet. As competition for access to and control over productive resources intensifies in response to increasing economic, political, and environmental instability, Berry (1989;1993) argues that people will make efforts to diversify potential channels of access to resources by strategically investing in social relations. People, for example, invest in institutional channels - marriage, clientage, descent- as a means to access material resources such as land and labour, and proceeds from wage-employment, remittances, or pensions (Berry 1989). Whereas Berry's (1989) analysis focuses on the ways in which men, in particular, invest in kinship relations and other institutions (and more specifically their status within these institutions) to diversify their channels of access to productive resources, the case study presented in this thesis explores the diverse relationships and networks that women invest in as a means to expand their channels of access to productive resources required in market gardening in Kakasunanka. I argue that marriage and kinship relations, in many cases, do not provide most women with sufficient opportunities to negotiate rights to resources. For women who are unable to access and control productive resources through marriage and kinship relations, women engage in strategies directed toward establishing and strengthening social relations outside of these institutions. Women strategies include membership and participation in formal and

informal organizations, exchange labour groups, trading and savings networks, and investment in personal extra-household relationships, all of which create opportunities, or spaces, through which to negotiate access to productive resources and ultimately power.

Conclusion

As a means to explore the lived experiences of women in the market gardening sector in the Accra peri-urban area, I draw on critical insights from feminist and poststructural political ecology which emphasize the nuances of social actors' livelihood struggles, the ways in which competing claims to resources are negotiated through local politics, the processes whereby conflicts over material relations become struggles over social and cultural meaning, and the ways in which people, through membership and participation in social institutions, invest in meanings as well as in the means of production. Drawing on women's own words, experiences, and struggles, I explore the multiple and diverse ways in which women, as social actors, have been able create spaces within local social relations and institutions to strategize and negotiate rights to resources and power through individual and collective action.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology:

Exploring Women's Lives as Lived

Exploring social relationships as potential channels of access to resources, particularly among poor women, involves the conceptualization of women (and men) as social actors who challenge boundaries, explore opportunities, establish alliances, and create change. An analysis of social relationships and networks as strategic attempts to expand and secure channels of access to resources moves beyond conventional structuralist analyses that construct women as passive, powerless subjects of particular cultural and socio-economic systems. Such an analysis considers how 'externalities' enter the existing life-worlds of individuals and groups and shape the resources and constraints underlying actors' strategies (Verschoor 1992:117). Analyses of "life as lived" by women in particular contexts is achieved through critical ethnographic research which stresses the particular circumstances and histories of individuals and their relationships, within the broader context of the forces and dynamics of extra-local and long-term processes which are always manifested locally and specifically (Abu-Lughod 1993:8). Such research opens up a new conceptual space for the examination of social and economic structures, institutions and processes as lived, resisted, manipulated, and transformed by women and men in the context of daily life.

Analysis of social relations in cross-cultural research requires a qualitative approach. Gaining access to, and knowledge of, the daily lives of women involves personal interaction, direct communication between researcher and the researched, and

experience of and participation in the daily lives of research participants. These requirements can only be met by engaging in ethnographic research to gather qualitative data as a means to examine how women define their situation, resist constraints, and explore new opportunities in their everyday lives.

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect upon my experience with the research process during fieldwork conducted in Ghana. The first section of this chapter explores my initial concerns about developing an appropriate and ethically-sound research methodology for my field research with female market gardeners, and examines key issues, drawn from recent literature on feminist research, that address these concerns. The second section of the chapter reconstructs the field research process, highlighting the approach and methods used. The remainder of the chapter explores my experience with the research process, reflecting upon the conceptual and methodological difficulties encountered in the field and my responses to, and insights derived from, these experiences. This discussion is meant to provide the reader with an enhanced understanding of the context within which the field research was conducted in collaboration with female market gardeners in Ghana, West Africa.

Developing an Appropriate Research Methodology

During the initial development of a research proposal for the study of access to resources among female market gardeners in Greater Accra, Ghana, I grappled with many of the key insights associated with critiques of western feminist scholarship in the examination of the lives of “Third World Women”. Although western feminist discourse

is neither singular nor homogenous in its objectives, interests, and analyses, some of it draws heavily on the assumptions, analytical categories, and codifications of hegemonic, modernist discourses (Mohanty 1988). The grand theories of Enlightenment thought presuppose the existence and permanence of a universal reality which transcends gender, race, culture, and class - a reality which can be located, reflected, and reproduced through objective scientific inquiry. Many strands of western feminist theory identify the significance of gender as an axis of identity and difference but, like Enlightenment discourses, operate on the basis of essentialized categories. Some western feminists have 'explained' women as if the reality of white middle-class women applied to women from all classes, races, and regions of the world, ignoring the possibility of difference among women themselves (Mohanty 1988)¹⁰. Third World women, having been created and defined as 'other', are presented as uniformly poor, powerless, and vulnerable, while western women are the referent point for modern, educated, sexually liberated womanhood (Parpart 1993:444). These analyses, according to Chandra Mohanty, "discursively colonize the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the third world, thereby producing/representing a composite, singular 'third-world woman' (1988:62). My dissatisfaction with the "totalizing" tendencies of classical western feminism caused me to explore aspects of feminist poststructural approaches to researching the lives of women in the South.

¹⁰ Chandra Mohanty first proposed the idea that Western feminist discourses operate on the basis of essentialized concepts of gender, in the journal article *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses* in *Boundary*, Spring/Fall 1984.

Feminist post-structuralists offer new insights into women's lived experiences through local, specific, historically informed analysis of different realities. Critical feminists who draw on poststructural theorizing have sought to develop new paradigms of social research which do not rely on traditional philosophical groundings (Butler 1992; Scott 1992). They have criticized modern foundationalist epistemologies and political theories, exposing the contingent, partial, and historically situated character of what has passed in the mainstream for necessary, universal, ahistorical truths (Fraser and Nicholson 1990:26). They have rejected the possibility of 'unmediated truth' about the world, calling into question the dominant philosophical project of seeking an objectivity that transcends any situation or perspective. Four themes of feminist poststructural theorizing have been particularly relevant in developing an appropriate research methodology for my fieldwork: the rejection of processes of generalization; the emphasis on the importance of difference in social analysis; the recognition of the role of human subjectivity in the process of knowledge creation; and, the multi-dimensional relations of power between the researcher and researched in the interview process and the production of written accounts of women's lives.

Rejecting universalisms, exploring difference

Social scientific discourses, whether seeking laws of human sociality or simply characterizing and interpreting ways of life, use the details and particulars of individuals lives to produce typifications, or truths (Abu-Lughod 1993:7). My concern about these forms of social scientific discourses is that in the process of generalization theorists

construct and reify the conceptual boundaries that separate self from other, and make people living in other societies seem more coherent, self-contained, and different from ourselves than they might be (ibid). Generalization organizes (or forces) the complexity and richness of the social world into discrete categories and templates for analysis.

According to Lila Abu-Lughod, researchers have two reasons to be wary of generalization. The first is that as part of a professional discourse of objectivity and expertise, it is inevitably a language of power (1993:8). It is the language of those who seem to stand apart from and outside of what they are describing. The gap between the professional and authoritative discourses of generalization and the languages of everyday life establish a fundamental separation between the researcher and his or her readers on the one hand, and the people being written about, on the other, that in turn facilitates the construction of these 'others' as simultaneously different and inferior (Abu-Lughod 1993:8-9).

The second, and more serious problem with generalization, according to Abu-Lughod, is that by producing the effects (or illusion) of homogeneity, coherence, and timelessness, it contributes to the creation of "cultures" (1993:9). The process of generalizing from the experiences of a number of specific people in a community, for example, may flatten out the differences among them. "Producing" generalizations of people's lives, experiences, beliefs, and actions

... risks smoothing over contradictions, conflicts of interest, doubts, and arguments, not to mention changing motivations and historical circumstances. Besides being theoretically unsound, this erasure of time and conflict is misleading because it makes what is inside the external boundary set up by homogenization seem essential and fixed. The appearance of a lack of internal differentiation makes it easier to conceive

of groups of people as discrete, bounded entities ... populated by generic cultural beings who do this and that and believe such-and-such. Although we have come to take this notion of separate cultures for granted, there are good reasons to consider such entities dangerous fictions ... (Abu-Lughod, 1992:9)

The tendency of some western feminists to essentialize the lives of Third World women has confronted similar criticism (Mohanty, 1988). Western scholars have been accused of creating and representing Third World women as an undifferentiated 'other', a homogenous social category across races, regions, and cultures. Marnia Lazreg calls for a new approach, one that recognizes difference and accepts the need to explore the concrete, lived experiences of women within and across different cultures (Lazreg 1988 in Parpart 1993:445). Breaking with coherence and introducing time, by insistently focusing on individuals and the particularities of their daily lives, enables us to see the context and content of women's lives and the diversity of experience among women of different race, class, caste, and age. The research process then seeks to differentiate rather than homogenize, to focus on diversity rather than universality, on "variability rather than averages" (Chambers 1992:14). Instead of marginalizing differences, contradictions, and exceptions to the rule, they become the subject of inquiry.

Approaching subjective experience

Our perceptions of the social world, of others, and of ourselves, are shaped by our identity and relative position within society, defined by the complex interplay of race/ethnicity, gender, class, caste, age, marital status, and other axes of difference. Feminist poststructuralists argue, for example, that "women" as a group are differentiated

on the basis of these categories, and that these categories are not fixed (Butler 1992). Women have multiple identities over time, and at any one time, often conflicting with each other (Mbilinyi 1992:45). According to Donna Haraway, "there is no way to 'be' simultaneously in all, or wholly in any, of these privileged (subjugated) positions" (Haraway 1988:586 in Sylvester 1995:948). Individuals possess multiple, fractured, overlapping identities, which suggests that all knowledges and realities are subjective, partial, situated, and locatable. Our accounts of the "real world" are mediated, or filtered, by the multiple, complex, changing, and contradictory nature of our positions (individually and collectively) to produce an infinite number of ways of seeing, interpreting, and understanding the social world. Given the presence of multiple subject-positions, feminist poststructuralists propose that researchers examine the impact of their positions and subjectivities on research, writing, reading/interpretation (Mbilinyi 1992; Shields and Dervin 1993).

Positionality is inevitable in research. As Abu-Lughod (1993:15) insists, a story is always situated, having both a teller and an audience. Its perspective is partial (in both senses of the word) and its telling is motivated (ibid). The kinds of data we collect, and our interpretation of them are shaped by positionality - who are we for them, and who are they for us (Caplan 1993:178). Our positions and the positions of research participants are shaped by, among other things, our gender, age (stage in the life cycle), class, marital status, race, nationality, and occupational status and affiliation (real and

perceived)¹¹. As such, our positions vis-à-vis others, and the meanings we and others attach to them, are flexible, and constantly changing. The research process is thus an ongoing negotiation of positions between the researcher and the researched.

The inevitability and power of positionality in social research has prompted some to suggest that it is inappropriate and unethical for researchers to study that which they have not experienced personally (Harding 1992:177-78). The idea of 'like studying like', that is, the possibility of total identification between the researcher and the researched, is however, problematic (Mies 1991). As Mohanty (1988) points out, even in the case of the Third World feminist studying women's experiences in her own society (home town or village), different perspectives, shaped by factors such as class, education, and mobility, will make total identification between researcher and researched unlikely. What does this mean for a young, white, educated, middle-class researcher (such as myself) wishing to examine the lived experiences of poor Ghanaian women? Since, as researchers, we cross multiple boundaries (political, geographical, emotional, experiential) within the process of research, Mies (1991) insists that the researcher put herself into the terrain of investigation and analysis. Researchers need to engage in conscious partiality, through which the positions and realities of the researcher and researched, and the interface between them, are made transparent to the research audience (ibid:79). In other words, the researcher needs to make explicit how he or she has

¹¹ Pat Caplan (1993) explores her changing position over the period of 1965-85 in a coastal village of Tanzania during which time her position changed from a single childless young woman who thought the world was her oyster to a married mother of two, struggling to maintain a career. Her insights into the role of positionality over time in social research are a useful way of conceptualizing the flexible, dynamic, and relational nature of our positions, both real and perceived, and its impact on the research process.

worked, including the assumptions and biases brought to the research, the expressions and relations of power between the researcher and the researched throughout the research process, and the steps taken to make research a reflexive process.

Reflexivity: Dealing with power in research and writing

The research interface between the researcher and the researched is an interface between individuals of different positions. Power is expressed within and through this relationship of positions, and shapes the process of research. Feminist literature tends to assume that the researcher, by virtue of her education and status, is always more powerful than her respondents (Stanley and Wise 1983 cited in Cotterill 1992). However, respondents also exercise power and control over the research process (Cotterill 1992:599). The balance of power within research relationships is not fixed and may vary according to the age and status of women being interviewed, and respondents' perceptions of the researcher and the research process itself. Power is therefore negotiated at the interface between the researcher and the researched and their respective positions (real and perceived). Despite the fact that power is a process of negotiation, relations of power tend to be unequal. The researcher exercises considerable power during the fieldwork process and in the written account of the research findings. The potential vulnerability of the research informants is particularly pronounced in the interpretation of informants' testimonies and in the preparation of the written account, both of which are often completed by the researcher independently (Cotterill 1992:604). Since the researcher and researched occupy different positions and bring their own

subjectivities to the research process, Pieter de Vries (1992) suggests that we need to problematize our role as researcher and author in representing the life-worlds of the researched.

A reflexive approach to social research implies that the researcher put herself into the terrain of investigation and analysis (Mbilinyi 1992:46). Reflexivity involves making the social location of the researcher explicit, and drawing attention to the process by which the ethnographic text is constituted. As researchers we need to explore the research process as a communicative endeavor between individuals with different interpretive frameworks (through which people ascribe meaning to the social world) and different types of knowledge. A theoretically reflexive approach makes visible the hidden power to orchestrate the voices of participants and our role in shaping the words of people living in societies other than our own, and enables others to question the ability of our social scientific concepts to capture the complex realities of the individuals we represent (Abu-Lughod 1992:17). As researchers we must never purport to speak as or for the researched (Harding 1992:189). Reflexivity makes the research process transparent to the reader, enabling the reader to identify the assumptions and biases brought to the research and to draw their own informed conclusions about the claims and recommendations made in the written account of the research (Mbilinyi 1992:59).

The Research Process

With these methodological issues in mind I set out for Ghana in September 1997. Prior to my departure I had developed a basic conceptual framework for exploring issues

of access to productive resources among female market gardeners, with a specific emphasis on the kinds of social relationships and institutions (marriage and kinship) which provide women with potential channels of access to productive resources. I intentionally left the research question open-ended so that the research would reflect the specific dynamics of the village and region and not marginalize potential avenues of inquiry which would present themselves during the course of the field research.

The field research was organized into four methodological components, the findings of each method informing the process and progress of the others. The first component of the field research used semi-structured individual interviews and participant observation to explore the diversity of experiences among female market gardeners related to farming, household and market issues. Interviews were also conducted with government personnel in the Department of Agriculture and with the Director of the National Council on Women and Development in order to examine their perspective, or platform, on women's issues. The second component of the field research used participatory rural appraisal methods to organize complex information on household labour allocation and the timing of farm activities among multiple crops within an agricultural season. The third component of the fieldwork used personal narratives to explore, in greater detail, the lived experiences of female market gardeners over time, and to gain further insight and clarification on issues raised during individual interviews. Based on the insights of these research methods, four focus group discussions were organized with the local December 31st women's group¹². The group discussions

¹² The local 31st December women's group is a registered women's group within the national-level 31st December Women's Movement in Ghana.

provided the opportunity to discuss and confirm preliminary findings with a large group of women, many of whom did not participate in other research methods.

The four research components were organized and conducted as simultaneous research activities during my twelve weeks in the field. The benefit of conducting the field research in this way is that the insights gained from each method can be explored through the others, enabling the field research to be an iterative process. Upon completion of the field research I presented the preliminary findings in a seminar for the Department of Geography and Resource Management at the University of Ghana, Legon, and in a comprehensive written report for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) which funded the fieldwork.

Upon arrival in Ghana, I was registered as a research affiliate with the Department of Geography and Resource Management at the University of Ghana in Legon, Accra. After consulting personnel and students from a number of departments at the university about research-related issues, and selecting a research assistant, Vivien, to translate and transcribe interview and group discussions, I began the field research by locating a suitable community to participate in my research.

Selecting a research site

To find a community within which to conduct my field research I began by speaking with market women dealing in vegetables around Accra, inquiring as to where their vegetables had come from and the types of trading and transport arrangements they utilized. I also consulted individuals with the Department of Agriculture (Crop

Services), the Department of Geography and Resource Development, and the Department of Botany at the University of Ghana in Legon, and personnel at the Vegetable Producers and Exporters Association of Ghana, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture in both the Extension Services and WIAD (Women in Agricultural Development) offices, and with the regional WIAD administrators for Eastern, Greater Accra, and Ashanti Regions.

After visiting communities in the Eastern region of Ghana where women were engaged primarily in trading activities, I began a series of visits to villages in the peri-urban area of Accra-Tema along Akosombo Road (See Map II), where according to local women vegetable traders, women and men were said to be engaged in market gardening. After four days of field visits to homes in the village of Kakasunanka I was satisfied that the village was suitable for my field research. Women and men in Kakasunanka were engaged in small-scale vegetable and food crop production in conjunction with trading and other income-generating activities. Women and men farmed together on household plots and on individual plots, the latter being more common. The presence of an active women's group in Kakasunanka was also a factor in choosing the village. The group was affiliated with the national 31st December Women's Movement and worked to improve women's income-earning capacity and household food security through better access to credit, seeds, and extension services. It was my hope that this group of organized women would form the basis of thematic group discussions during the course of the research.

Despite the numerous attributes of the village favourable to the research requirements, there were issues of concern associated with choosing Kakasunanka as the study site. Conceptually, I struggled with how the socio-cultural dynamics of the village

would affect the research. Kakasunanka is a recently settled village (since 1948) with its residents being predominantly migrants from other regions, most of whom chose to settle in the peri-urban area of Accra-Tema because of its proximity to large urban markets. With residents of Kakasunanka originating from Greater Accra, Volta, Eastern, Central, and Ashanti Regions, many having lived in Kakasunanka for less than ten years, I was concerned that the lack of social cohesion, and the existence of multiple over-lapping social forms, would confuse the research, making analysis of change over time difficult. In retrospect I can see that I was searching for a “typical village”, that is, a village located in the rural hinterland, which is socially self-contained, whose residents have close social bonds which extend back through multiple generations and who share, for the most part, the same practices, beliefs, and organizational forms. I was looking for the model village. After due consideration, I decided that this community represents a new (and increasingly common) phenomenon in peri-urban settlement and for that reason would add an interesting dynamic to the research.

Selecting research participants

The process of selecting a sample group of women and men to participate in the research was challenging as I wanted the sample to reflect a diversity of experiences (by gender, ethnicity, class, and age) within the community. This effort was mediated however by the social networks through which I was able to gain access to the residents in the community. Our search for participants began with an elderly woman who seemed interested in the study and willing to introduce us to a few women who resided nearby.

Having met with them, they then introduced us to women with whom they were acquainted, women known to cultivate vegetables for home consumption and market sale. It was through this social network of friendship, using purposive sampling, that I selected the women and men who would participate in the research. Given the difficulties that we encountered from the point of entering the community as a result of our outsider status, I felt that accessing pre-existing social networks as a means of introducing myself to the community and selecting participants was the smoothest means of entry.

Since the community was made up of individuals of different ethnicities, ages, genders, relative wealth, household headship and household composition, I felt it important to ensure that such axes of difference were accounted for in the selection process, as they might play a significant role in the ability of individuals to access, control and use resources on a daily basis. The ethno-linguistic diversity of the community in Kakasunanka created a logistical problem as there were three different languages operating in Kakasunanka at the time of the study - Ga-Adangbe, Ewe, and to a lesser extent, Twi. Vivien (my research assistant) spoke Twi, but was unable to speak Ewe and Ga-Adangbe competently. I was concerned that interviewing only women and men who spoke Twi would skew any analysis of data, especially since Twi-speaking Akan people made up the minority in Kakasunanka. To overcome this short-coming I hired a young woman named Peace from the village who spoke both Ewe and Ga-Adangbe, as well as Twi and English, to translate particular interviews in Ewe and Ga-Adangbe, enabling the research to recognize the ethno-linguistic diversity of Kakasunanka.

The sample group of participants was made up of thirty residents, twenty of whom were women, and ten of whom were men. Since the research emphasized the experience of women in vegetable production and resource access I wished to ensure that the majority of respondents were women. However, in order to examine the gendered aspects of local livelihood and resource struggles it was crucial to engage with the life-worlds and perspectives of both women and men. For this reason, I felt it important to have at least one third of the sample group be male. Ensuring that individuals of different age, and relative wealth, and that individuals from both male and female-headed households, and households of various forms and compositions were represented in the study, was also a research priority.

Semi-structured interviews and participant observation

I conducted several interview sessions with the twenty female and ten male participants during a twelve week period. All participants were interviewed at least twice, with more than two-thirds of respondents being interviewed on three separate occasions, and a select few being interviewed for a fourth time. In most cases however, I was satisfied with the information gathered from the first two interviews; the third, and in some cases fourth, interviews were organized to fill small gaps in the data, to investigate particular issues in greater detail, and to ask questions which arose out of group discussions and interviews with other respondents.

The personal interviews covered a range of issues which varied for each respondent. Rather than imposing a standard interview structure and set of questions on

each participant, I preferred that the interview process be flexible and open-ended. Each interview was conducted using an interview guide which listed the main topics and sub-topics to be covered. Participants were encouraged to express themselves in as much detail as they wished, and to discuss issues which they felt were of greatest relevance and interest to them. Overall, the issues explored in the personal interviews included the participants' daily activities both in the household and on the farm, their role in income-generating activities and relative responsibility for household expenditure, the allocation of family and hired labour in farming with particular emphasis on the gender division of labour by task, crop and place, access to land for farming, access to and use of farm inputs, perception of soil degradation over time, and the kinds of social relationships and networks that provide women with temporary and long-term channels of access to resources (marriage, kinship, friendship, trading and savings networks, formal women's groups) among other issues.

In the early stage of the field research, interviews were conducted on the basis of direct translation in which the interviewer (myself) would pose a question in English, it would then be translated and posed to the participant. The participant would then respond in his/her own language, and their response would be translated by Vivien or Peace. As this proved to be an unsuccessful method of conducting an interview as it was extremely disruptive for all involved, I gave the translators greater control over the interview process itself, having them stop to translate to me only periodically over the course of the interview. All interviews were audio taped, which were then translated and transcribed after each interview by Vivien, allowing me to examine the issues discussed during the

interview and to identify areas of inquiry to be further explored in the interview(s) to follow.

As I depended to a significant extent on the interview transcriptions for information and insight, I insisted that they be translated and transcribed literally, on a word for word basis. Instructing Vivien in this way minimized the likelihood that responses given by the participant would be abbreviated, or omitted altogether, in cases where my research assistant may have thought the responses unnecessarily long, trivial, or irrelevant. Insights into the daily lives of women are often revealed through discussions of seemingly insignificant daily activities, quarrels with family and friends, or mention of childhood remembrances. For the same reason, I insisted that in the case where responses were articulated more than once that the research assistant record the exact dialogue however many times an issue might have been expressed. Issues or occurrences which respondents tended to emphasize or consistently reiterated might have particular significance, as the very act of repeating oneself tends to be an attempt to call attention to a particular issue.

Without a direct translation of questions and their responses during the course of the interview session, I was concerned that my understanding of what was said would be limited as I relied so heavily on transcribed version of the interview. Reading a transcription of an interview with the subtle nuances produced by changes in mood, gestures and body language omitted, made the interview, and my understanding of what was said, very mechanistic. In order to deal with this problem, I began to take notes on the facial expressions, changes in mood, gestures, and body language of both the

participant and translator as they occurred during the course of an interview. As I had a rudimentary grasp of the languages spoken, I was able to pick out particular references to words such as family, husband, wife, children, land, farming, and money, so that immediately following the interview I would ask Vivien to describe and explain particular portions of the interview which appeared to be quite animated or which seemed to change the mood of the conversation. This enabled me to associate the words which were spoken and the issues discussed with the feelings, gestures, and tone expressed during the course of the interview.

In conjunction with personal interviews I engaged in participant observation of daily life particularly in farming and post-production activities, as well as the weekly meetings with the local women's group. Participant observation gave me the opportunity to observe and experience daily life and to cross-check what was discussed in interviews with what was observable in the community, around the household, and in the garden.

Participatory rural appraisal exercises

During the course of personal interviews with participants particular discussions yielded extremely complex and complicated responses, and I felt it necessary to employ alternative research methods in order to explore these issues further. I found that the personal interview needed to be specifically structured in order to examine the way in which family labour, for example, is allocated by gender and age in both farm and off-farm activities and tasks for which hired labour tends to be employed. In order to organize the information given on labour allocation during interview sessions I

constructed a table, adapted after Paris (1994), which broke down and illustrated the allocation of labour by crop and by task (See Appendix A). Under each activity the different sources of labour (family, hired) were classified by gender and age (male adult, female adult, and male and female children). Information gathered was based less on social norms related to labour allocation than on the specific day-to-day and seasonal labour practices of individual respondents¹³. The construction of such a table allowed me to recognize and analyze trends in labour allocation, and enabled me to explore more deeply such issues in later interviews. Comparison of labour profiles for different farm households also enabled a more sophisticated examination of difference, that is, the way in which the gender, age, and relative wealth of the principal farmer and factors such as household headship and composition influence one's ability to access, allocate, and command the labour of others.

The sequencing of crops and agricultural activities over the course of a farm season was another complex issue that required that the interview be adapted in order to accommodate such complexity. The difficulty stemmed from the fact that most farmers were engaged in the production of a number of vegetables and food crops (such as corn, beans, and cassava) which were either cultivated simultaneously on the same or separate fields or cultivated in sequence over the course of a season. This meant that farm activities were often overlapping which made understanding the complicated organization of activities challenging. In order to make sense out of the bulk of information gathered

¹³ During the construction of labour allocation tables with participants, I attempted to move beyond generalizations and norms regarding gender divisions of labour by asking questions related to daily practice. For example, I often asked participants the following question: "Who came with you to your farm today/yesterday/last week".

during interviews on this subject, I constructed activity calendars with the assistance of the participants. Adapted from Simms Feldstein and Poats (1994), the activity calendar disaggregates the timing of individual farm activities such as land preparation, nursing, transplanting, fertilizing, harvesting, and marketing for each crop cultivated over the course of a farm season (see Appendix B). The organizing of such information in this way revealed the existence of labour bottlenecks during particular months in the farm season, and enabled a more coherent and organized discussion of farm-level decisions related to the timing, sequencing (both intra - and inter-crop sequencing), and spatial organization of crops; the sequencing of farm activities for each particular crop; and the competing demands of each crop for land, labour, inputs, and other productive resources at any point in time.

The use of an activity calendar allowed me to examine the reasons behind many farm choices which I might have otherwise taken as obvious or irrelevant. I will give an example to illustrate this point. During preliminary interviews with a number of participants I had been confused as to why most farmers chose to cultivate three to four plots of the same vegetable crop (such as onion) in sequence (one after the other), so that as one plot is ready to be harvested, one is ready to be transplanted, and yet another is being planted in the nursery. From my perspective this practice of intra-crop sequencing seemed to be a waste of time, labour and input - surely if one cultivated one large crop all at one time there would be less labour required given that all weeding and harvesting, for example, could be done at one time, and all input application could be performed at once rather than over the course of an entire season. Conversations that accompanied the

development of an activity calendar revealed that for the female market gardeners in the sample group, access to family labour was often limited as many children, often the bulk of the family labour force in farming, were enrolled in school and could not assist on the farm on a regular basis. Moreover, most women could not command the labour of their husbands whereas women were customarily required to spend two to three days out of five on their husbands' farm as unremunerated labourers. Access to cash was often difficult for farmers in my study group as well. Since cash is required for the purchasing of inputs and the hiring of wage labour, farmers often opted to sequence the cultivation of three or four smaller plots of one vegetable over the entire farm season. Farming in this manner minimized labour peaks during the farm season as weeding and harvesting, for example, was done on a number of occasions but on a very small scale and requiring fewer labourers. This had the effect of reducing one's dependence on hired labour as farmers could usually accomplish much of the labour themselves with assistance from their children and spouse. This system also spreads out the financial costs of labour and agricultural inputs over the entire season rather than at concentrated intervals which is significant given that most farmers suggested that access to large sums of cash at any one time was difficult to secure, whereas access to smaller amounts of money over the course of a season was more manageable. This system made more intensive use of the land, which is significant given that most farmers have difficulty securing access to large land acreage for farming. Sequencing one crop in this manner enabled farmers to take advantage of fluctuating market prices for vegetables over the course of a season, it was more attuned to the behavior of buyers who came to purchase and market their produce

(most buyers prefer to buy produce in small quantities over the course of a season rather than in bulk at any one time), and it was a method of avoiding the risk associated with erratic rainfall so that if one harvest failed the others were likely to have a reasonable yield.

The gender disaggregated labour profile and the farm activity calendar were both useful tools to organize complex and complicated information on two very significant issues in the research, while providing a means to cross-check information already collected. Experimenting with different methods and maintaining flexibility and adaptability in the research design were critical elements in the success of the research project.

Personal narratives

Personal narratives, I hoped, would provide greater insight into the particular circumstances which shape women's lives, and the changing meanings and interpretations different women ascribe to their changing roles and responsibilities (Abu-Lughod 1993; Goebel 1994; Mbilinyi 1989). Since people's lives are "shaped through and evolve within relationships with others", I sought to explore the relationships which contextualize the lives of the women, including the ways such relationships are forged, negotiated and experienced (Personal Narratives Group 1989 cited in Goebel 1994:26). Through the personal narrative I examined the particular and unique role that farming has played in the lives of the three women, and how specific relationships - marriage, kinship, friendship,

group membership, information and savings networks - shape women's lives in the home, in the community, and in their gardens. Participants also discussed how particular issues, such as women's role in the household, women's access to income-generating activities, and women's access to resources have changed over the course of the women's lives and in response to particular events such as migration, marriage, divorce, and widowhood.

Issues explored during personal narratives complemented those examined during interview sessions. In fact there was not a clear distinction between discussions that constituted interviews and those which could be characterized as personal narratives. In both interviews and personal narratives, participants were encouraged to explore issues and ideas of interest to them and in as much detail as they wished, although personal narratives were primarily participant-led explorations of women's lives. The kinds and quality of information collected during interviews and personal narratives were not significantly different; both explored women's lives through women's voices. Nevertheless, I was interested in giving particular women the opportunity to construct and convey their stories and to reflect, in depth, upon their experiences over the course of their lives.

The three women chosen to work with me to construct personal narratives were selected because of their diverse backgrounds and experiences. Women were asked to participate in the personal narrative because they were of different age, class, and marital status, because I felt their lives were particularly interesting and relevant, and because of their ability and desire to articulate their experiences, thoughts, and ideas.

The personal narrative gave the participants the opportunity to tell their stories in their own voice, as they wished to tell them, and to discuss the issues they felt were relevant and interesting. Women perceived the narrative as an opportunity to reflect upon their lives and to give voice to women's experiences. The content of the narratives was rich and thought-provoking, and provided new insight into women's lives as lived, including women's perceptions of their changing roles as wives, mothers, producers, and traders, and the multiple and changing ways in which women have "lived" the social institutions of marriage, family, and household.

During both interviews and personal narratives I was sure to reflect upon women's discussion, and to express my understanding and interpretation of their words back to participants. Discussing women's responses gave participants the opportunity to clear up issues of confusion or mis-communication/interpretation, and to enable participants to add further elaborations in their initial narratives¹⁴. Feedback and revision of narratives and interview responses also created greater trust between participants and myself, as women realized my concern to understand and convey accurately their words (and meanings) as spoken.

Group Discussions: The 31st December Women's Group

The presence of the local 31st December Women's Group in Kakasunanka afforded me the opportunity to organize thematic group discussions as a means to explore some of the issues raised during the personal interviews and narratives. I organized three

¹⁴ For detailed discussion on participant-researcher feedback activities during the construction of personal narratives see Marjorie Mbilinyi, 1989.

group discussions each emphasizing a particular theme. The first meeting explored the expectations women had of the women's group and group membership and the main issues on which the group is presently focused, as well as their perception of the government and what it has and has not been able to do for them. The second group meeting examined women's motivations for engaging in market gardening and other income-earning activities (household food security, income-generation and cash savings), and their reasons for diversifying their activities between agriculture and trading. The third meeting explored the importance (and meaning) of money and cash savings in maintaining the household and investing in women's horticultural and trading enterprises, and women's expanding economic roles and responsibilities within the household vis-à-vis their husbands. The final group meeting also provided the opportunity to reflect back to the participants some of the insights produced through the interviews and group discussions. I was interested in the extent to which my thoughts on the experiences of the women participants reflected their lives as lived in Kakasunanka.

After the difficulties I experienced with direct translation during the preliminary personal interviews, I decided to give Peace, the translator for the group meetings, almost absolute control over the direction of group meetings in order to create a comfortable social space that would minimize disruption and allow the discussion to flow naturally. In preparation for each group discussion, I listed the main issues I hoped to explore, and spoke with Peace and Vivien about the kinds of discussion and interaction I hoped the group meetings would produce. All three group discussions were audio taped, and immediately following each session, Peace, Vivien, and I listened to the tape together.

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Peace translated word for word what was said, while I made detailed notes. Listening to the tape together allowed me to hear and recall the individual and collective expressions of humour, sadness, frustration, and hope that accompanied the group dialogue, which I believed to be important.

Dissemination of Preliminary Research Findings

In preparation to complete the fieldwork component of the research Vivien and I reviewed the transcripts of the interviews, narratives, and group discussions and my field notes to draw out some of the preliminary findings from the field research. A seminar presentation was given for colleagues from the Department of Geography and Resource Management as well as faculty members and students from other departments and schools at the University of Ghana. The seminar afforded the opportunity to share preliminary findings with colleagues, and to receive feedback on my findings and conceptual framework. The presence of my research assistant also afforded me the opportunity to grasp the extent to which my understanding of the findings were compatible with her experiences and impressions of the field research.

Research findings are to be presented, in the form of a report, to government offices and NGOs working on women's issues in Ghana, such as the Greater Accra regional office of the December 31st Women's Movement organization, the National Council on Women and Development, and the Women in Agricultural Development office at the Ministry of Food and Agriculture for Greater Accra. A final copy of this thesis is to be given to the resource library at the Department of Geography and Resource

Development at the University of Ghana. Dissemination of research findings in this way will enable academic and professional colleagues, government officials, and development agents and advocates to access current information on the changing social and economic roles and responsibilities of women and men, and the strategies of local actors to secure and maintain sustainable livelihoods.

Through the Looking Glass: Reflections on the Research Process

Field research is not simply the process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data and producing written accounts detailing conclusions and recommendations drawn from the data. The process of fieldwork, according to Michael Ashkenazi (1997:471) is an *intentional* one, and such intentions are *bi-directional*. In other words, just as researchers manage questions and conversations with informants, so too do informants (ibid). Field research is a process of social interaction and exchange between the researcher and participants, each bringing their own subjectivities, expectations, and intentions to the research interface. Both researchers and participants perceive and expect different things from the research relationship, and both have their unique ways of guiding, manipulating, and transforming the research process. Knowledge, then, is the product of these social and interpretative negotiations between individuals who bring different (and potentially conflicting) experiences, interests, and agendas to bear. In order to understand the meaning, implication, and limitations of knowledge produced through social research, Johan Pottier suggests that researchers need to “develop a particular sensitivity for assessing the precise circumstances under which interviews take place”

(1991:4). According to Pottier, this involves an awareness of 'who' attends, an awareness of 'how' the people attending perceive the occasion of the interview and 'what' the interview stands for, and how people perceive 'who' the researcher is, and what s/he represents (Pottier 1991:4).

Throughout the course of the field research process, my research assistant and I became increasingly aware of the complex interplay of socially constituted perceptions and expectations of both the participants and ourselves which shaped the context within which the research progressed. The perceptions and expectations of both researcher and researched influenced the social posturing of participants, the dynamics of conversation, the issues and experiences explored, and the negotiation and assignment of meaning to issues, events, and experiences between ourselves and the participants. In these ways, the social dynamics of the research process had considerable bearing upon the content and quality of the research findings. In the paragraphs which follow, I explore the perceptions and expectations of the research participants towards Vivien and myself, and towards the research itself, the role of my own assumptions in shaping the research process, my attempts to grapple these situations at the interface between researcher and researched, and the role these assumptions and expectations have played in the unfolding of the research process and its findings.

"Obruni¹⁵, we are suffering!": Research and the politics of representation

Introductions to, and interaction with, research participants and other community members during the research process were mediated by a distinct politics of representation. From the earliest research encounters I realized that people's oral accounts of their lives and experiences were both factual and simultaneously "constructed" (Moore and Vaughan 1994; Scott 1992). The way in which participants and other community members presented and represented themselves, and their assumptions about who or what I represented, were not stable, unified, or consistent throughout the course of the fieldwork. The multiple, and often contradictory, ways in which women and men represented themselves both individually and collectively were related to the changing perceptions and expectations they had of me (and the expectations they believed I had of them) - as an obruni, as a development researcher, and as a woman.

As an obruni, residents of Kakasunanka assumed that I was wealthy, well-educated, and capable of accessing and mobilizing resources and institutional support for the community. Although I did not introduce myself as a "development researcher" to community members, the combined identity of being an obruni and a researcher implied to others that my work had a "development" agenda, and in turn, that participation in my research would yield financial or material benefits to participants. In order to ensure that participants understood that I was not associated with a development agency or missionary, and that participation in the research would not involve financial or material

¹⁵ *lit.*, European; an Akan word used broadly to refer to Caucasian foreigners. The term is commonly used to call attention to the wealth, privilege, and education ascribed to Caucasians by Ghanaians. The term, in its multiple meanings and usages, plays a powerful role in relations between researchers and researched.

compensation, I described in detail the purpose of the research, how research findings would be used, and their rights during interviews and other research activities. In conjunction with my own description of the research, its uses, and the rights of the participant, my research assistant translated the content of the informed consent form which was given to all potential participants¹⁶.

Despite consistent efforts to redefine my position and purpose regarding my research, community members continually manoeuvred themselves and manipulated the interview process in order to assess what financial and material resources I had to offer (such as improved seeds, technologies, or information services). My attempts to make my position and purpose clear were made more difficult when, on my sixth day in the community, a Christian-based NGO by the name of Save Our Souls (S.O.S.) arrived in Kakasunanka:

... the women and men of the community had set up tent-like structures at the north-eastern edge of the village where the new school was to built and well dug. The tents were so the S.O.S. team would not get wet by the coming rain. The women of the community, dressed in bold colour with white scarves in their hair, were preparing to dance and sing alongside the drummers. All of the local chiefs and elders came to greet, and be greeted by, "the whites" coming to build the school. We waited two hours, in the rain, for them to arrive. When almost all were convinced that they were not coming a helicopter flew overhead. It landed about 500 meters away from the tents, and the group slowing made their way - in a procession - towards the meeting place. They were cheering for themselves, and the community was cheering for them. As they found their way to the seats, kissing babies and shaking hands as they passed the row of chiefs and elders, the village assembly man gave a prayer beginning with "God Bless the White Man". In the speeches to follow, community members and

¹⁶ The Informed Consent Form was reviewed and approved by Carleton University's Ethics Committee prior to my departure for Ghana. Only participants who were able, or comfortable, to sign the consent form did so. In all other cases, potential participants were read the content of the informed consent form in their language, after which potential participants were asked if they understood what had been said, if they had any questions, and based on the information given, if they wished to participate in the study.

development personnel alike spoke of the virtues of formal education, employment, and “development” more generally, for the “empowerment” of “poor black people” in communities like this one. Both parties were calling upon the same colonial characterizations of “poor black people” - although for different reasons. The development workers operated on the basis of colonial rhetoric, the communities members wanted a school. As someone new to the community, and an obruni, it will take considerable time to distinguish myself and my research from that of the obruni development workers in the helicopter (Personal Journal, 12 October 1997).

This event revealed the multiple, and often contradictory, ways in which people present and represent themselves to outsiders. These representations are based on what community members perceive our expectations, as researchers and/or development workers to be, and what such representations will yield in terms of access to project resources and institutional support. As Patrick Sikana argues, the primary concern of local people regarding participation in research is not “how to be involved”, but “how to access resources” from a research project (1995:3). To that end, participants strategically manoeuvred and repositioned themselves throughout the process of research in response to opportunities to access resources or support which presented themselves.

During interviews sessions and group discussions participants’ individual and collective representations of themselves were complex, contradictory, and constantly changing. In response to particular events, in the context of specific discussions, and in the presence of particular persons, community members wore different “hats” (or socially constructed identities), presenting various identities and interests outwardly. Initially, and at strategic points in the research process, residents represented themselves as uniformly poor, powerless, and uneducated peasants. They did so not because they subscribed to

these characterizations. It was clear from the discursive language and dialogue at the community's S.O.S. welcome celebration described above, and my own experiences interviewing residents, that they believed these characterizations to be consistent with western ideas and beliefs about "African people", and that development intervention and assistance was predicated on the existence and self-identification of African people as poor, powerless, and uneducated. In other words, residents strategically mobilized (or manipulated) colonial discourses of representation to identify themselves as "needy", as a means to secure access to resources they believed I had at my disposal. Individuals' references to themselves as poor and struggling within interviews were almost always followed by petitions for financial or material assistance or compensation for their participation in the research.

Although women and men commonly referred to themselves as poor, struggling, and uneducated within interviews, they also spoke of themselves as knowledgeable, progressive, and powerful. In fact, such apparent contradictions often surfaced within the same interview session. During interviews which examined farming practices and resource use and management, for example, farmers suggested, among other things, that they use commercial fertilizers and pesticides routinely on their farm - activities which they associate with 'progressive farming'. During participant observation and the constructing of seasonal activity profiles, however, participants referred more commonly to the use of organic manure (purchased within the village) than chemical fertilizers. In a discussion of the apparent contradiction, one market gardener replied that:

The Agric. people¹⁷ tell us that to be a 'progressive farmer' you must use fertilizers and pesticides on your land so that you produce many bags to sell, [and] make a profit, so that next year you farm twice as much land. If you are not progressive, they think you are stupid and will not come again (Personal Interview, 23 November 1997).

Concerned that I, too, would view their choice to use locally-derived organic manures instead of commercial products as a sign of backwardness or ignorance, participants were wary of giving certain details about their thoughts, ideas, and practices¹⁸. Participants wanted to appear 'progressive' as they believed that it would impress me (as a Western 'development researcher') and ensure a favourable report to the local extension officials for Tema District.

Similar to representations of the "progressive farmer", both women and men called upon other powerful and popular images, such as the "empowered woman" as a means to construct and reconstruct identity and position, and to access particular resources (such as credit) which women believed participation in the research project could provide. Since my research sought to explore the daily lives of female market gardeners, community members interpreted this to mean that my research had a feminist

¹⁷ Agricultural Extension officers.

¹⁸ My experience with extension services, and local perceptions of extension personnel in particular, parallels an argument posited by Johan Pottier (1989) who discusses the ways in which extension services operate on the basis of top-down power structures which construct modern, technologically progressive farming practices as ideal and local knowledge as inferior and backward. James Fairhead (1993) explores the imagery of the 'new farmer', the rational, experimenting, knowledgeable farmer who is 'put first' by state-of-the-art agricultural research organizations and government institutions. Michael Dove (1994) similarly explores how social categories, such as the 'small farmer' can be manipulated to support a particular vision of how government agencies and rural peoples should relate. During my own field research, it was clear that local producers clearly understood that extension offices and personnel valued 'progressive farmers' - and that resources were allocated or awarded to progressive farmers. Farmers in Kakasunanka recognized and strategically mobilized such concepts within my own research as a means to secure favour - and resources - from myself and extension personnel as they perceived it.

agenda¹⁹. Furthermore, my status as a white western woman seemed to suggest to community members that women's empowerment was a crucial concern of the research. That my research assistant was a young, upper middle-class, university-educated woman also implied that empowerment was a part of our research agenda. During interview discussions, many women referred to themselves repeatedly as "having empowerment" or "being empowered" in the context of household decision-making and women's increasing economic responsibilities in the household vis-à-vis their husbands and other male family members. However, in subsequent interviews many women presented a different image: that of women who experience significant difficulty exercising power within and outside of the household because of the subordinate position of women vis-à-vis senior men in the household and community²⁰. Men also employed the concept of empowerment to refer to their wives in particular conversations, and yet in other discussions would insist that husbands themselves make decisions about how money is allocated and spent in the household and that husbands, rather than wives, take primary economic responsibility for all household needs. These contradictions suggest that relations of power between women and men in the household and community are complex, contested, and changing.

¹⁹ In Ghana, women's political organizations have a long history and are well established. Organizations such as the December 31st Women's Movement are based on, and actively promote, western discourses of "empowerment", which women and men, across classes, associate with radical "feminist" principles. The platform of these organizations include issues of women's access to wage-employment, education, and health care, and well as issues of family, nutrition, and women's roles in the household. As in the West, concepts of feminism and empowerment carry with them considerable conceptual baggage among Ghanaians.

²⁰ Women suggested, for example, that men's ability to command the unremunerated labour of their wives meant that women had little control over the allocation of their own labour time, which had repercussions for their ability to complete farming tasks in a timely manner. Men's control over the labour of their wives also meant that even if women had the economic resources to expand their farming enterprises by renting larger plots of land, they were rarely able to do so because they lacked the ability to command their own labour and the labour of others (See Chapter Five).

However, both men and women perceived the discourse of “empowerment” to be a strategic opportunity to ensure women’s participation in the research and access to perceived financial and/or material benefits from the research project. The women’s group in the community collectively mobilized a discourse of empowerment during group discussions with Vivien and myself. The women’s group has strategically co-opted terms such as empowerment and progressiveness as a means to attract institutional support (in the form of loans and access to resources and improved technologies) for their activities.

Every aspect of the research process was mediated by similar discourses of representation. As mentioned earlier, social actors have multiple, fractured, overlapping identities, some of which conflict with or contradict others. Within interviews and group discussions, participants mobilized and presented particular identities and social experiences, both individually and collectively, to produce particular results. As such, participants played an equal role setting the tone and agenda of discussions and were able to manipulate findings and conclusions in the early stages of the research process. As this posed a significant problem with respect to analysis and interpretation of data - distinguishing one ‘truth’/representation from another - I needed to develop a way of filtering through what became a complex web of representations. I began by reflecting upon how participants perceived and understood my position vis-à-vis their own, and their expectations of the research project. For the purposes of analysis and interpretation of interview and group discussions, I also needed to problematize participants’ responses by situating them within the context of the research interface, and by making issues of representation part of the field of study. This opened up conceptual space that would

allow for a multiplicity of interpretations to coexist and that would highlight, rather than obscure, the contradictions and tensions inherent to peoples' accounts of identity and experience (see Moore and Vaughan 1994).

"Speaking Ghanaian": Language and life-worlds

During interviews, group discussions, and informal day-to-day conversation, my inability to speak any of the local languages competently created logistical difficulties for the research, and maintained a social distance between myself and the research participants and community members. Although the process of translation was logistically necessary for the purposes of communication, even day-to-day chat with community members seemed unnatural and bogged-down by Vivien's efforts to translate conversations. As discussed earlier in the chapter, I chose to give my research assistant greater control over the interview process which allowing for easier flow of discussion, ideas, and enthusiasm between my research assistant and participants, but this process translated into a significant social distance between myself and the participants, and between our respective life-worlds in all research encounters.

Unable to communicate directly with the participants in my research, I experienced a sense of detachment or exclusion from conversations and from the lives and experiences of the women being interviewed. Although everyday conversation with participants and others in the community is not a crucial component of qualitative research, it would have greatly enhanced the research process and its findings. Direct communication and conversation with participants and community members would have

enabled me to establish greater rapport and trust between us, and more importantly, to more fully embrace the life-worlds of women and explore the subtleties, sensitive areas, and nuances of women's everyday lives - what one woman referred to as "speaking Ghanaian". Language to some extent reified my position as an outsider in the community and within the research process, and my presence during interview sessions, at times, constrained conversation between my research assistant and participants. The result, in some research interfaces, was what Pottier (1991) referred to as "polite conversation" instead of in-depth exploration of the real life-worlds of women.

Seeing beyond social norms

During interview and group discussions, one of my primary methodological concerns was to enable participants to talk about their lives and their relationships with others, and to reflect upon women's multiple and changing roles as mothers, wives, and market gardeners in their community. I had hoped that interviews would be informal participant-driven processes, through which participants could explore and express their thoughts, opinions, and recollections in whatever way they were comfortable and in as much detail as they wished. During initial interview sessions, however, participants were careful with their words, and their responses tended to reflect accepted norms rather than the detail, nuance and contradiction of daily life. Participants' references to 'norms' or ideal situations as opposed to daily life as lived is related, in part, to their assumptions about the research process and my expectations as a researcher. Through the interview process, women were attempting to construct and convey a generalizable ideal picture,

from their perspective, of life in their community and household. Participants seemed to assume that as a researcher I was looking for generalizable data, and that the detailed aspects of daily life - as lived - were consequently irrelevant. References to social norms became a significant problem when oral accounts conflicted with what was observable in daily life. One woman, for example, insisted that her husband routinely assisted her in maintaining her gardens, and provided labour for the completion of critical farm tasks. However, over the period of three months I had neither been introduced to, nor seen, her husband around the home. During my final interview with her, I inquired about her husband and what he did for a living. She informed me that he had obtained employment in a town some distance from home several months ago and would only visit occasionally when time and finances for travel were available. She indicated that "typically" he did provide labour to help maintain her gardens, but that this season he was unable to do so. Thus, while reference to norms, or typical behavior, reveals something about the lives of women it does not reflect the complex and changing circumstances associated with women's daily lives.

Presenting norms or ideal situations, may also reveal deeper processes of change and renegotiation within gender or social systems. As Frank Salamone (1977) discusses, lying or misdirection by informants during the interview process is a meaningful "form of communication not negation". Asking why participants lie or mislead researchers may lead to important new insights into personal, social, and cultural aspects of women's lives (Salamone 1997; Bleek 1987). Women's initial accounts of divisions in economic responsibilities between husbands and wives, for example, reflect the gender ideology of

the male breadwinner and female subordinate. In subsequent interviews however, women discussed their increasing financial responsibilities (for the payment of school fees, clothing, food, etc.) vis-à-vis their husbands and the importance of women's market gardening and trading enterprises to meeting their changing responsibilities. The reason for the different accounts regarding women's changing economic responsibilities vis-à-vis men (especially husbands) within the household, was associated with their unwillingness to challenge public discourse on gender roles in the presence of outsiders, with whom trust and rapport were not yet firmly established.

As my presence in the village and my interaction with women in the community became more familiar, participants were increasingly forthcoming about the details, nuances, and sensitive areas of women's lives. Participant observation in the community and around the home enabled Vivien and I to identify apparent contradictions between what had been described as typical behavior and actual behavior in the context of daily life. I also found that drawing on specific instances (for example, did your husband help you in your garden yesterday/last week/last season?), instead of speaking in general terms, enabled participants to speak more concretely about activities, events, and social processes as lived in daily life.

*The multiple meanings of marriage:
Towards an examination of diversity and difference*

Just as participants brought their own assumptions and expectations to the research process, my own biases, assumptions and expectations played a significant role

in the way in which the research unfolded. My assumptions and expectations regarding the form, function, and meaning of marriage as a potential channel of access to resources for women had a profound influence on the research process. In the early stages of the field research I had expected that 'marriage' would carry similar meaning among women, that women would access similar kinds of resources (namely land and labour) through marital and other intra-household relationships, and that resource relations between spouses would be relatively consistent and unchanging over time.

Throughout the course of the field research I maintained an interest in the role of marriage and kinship relations as potential channels of access to resources for women. To that end, I wished to explore women's relative position and power vis-à-vis their husbands and kin members, women's ability to negotiate their interests within these institutions, and the extent to which these relationships provided reliable access to and control over productive resources such as land, labour, and cash. Although I was conscious of the cultural and historical specificity associated with institutions such as marriage, kinship, and patriarchy, I was not prepared for the diverse expressions and experiences of these social relationships as described by women locally.

At an early stage in the research process, I sought to explore gender-differentiated resource rights and obligations between husbands and wives and among extended family (including, for example, "customary" land rights, labour obligations, and economic responsibilities). As I explored these issues in greater depth however, I began to question the generalizability of marriage and kinship relationships in terms of form, function, and meaning in women's lives. I encountered considerable variability in the extent to which

these relationships provided a stable channel of access to resources for different women, the kinds of resources that women could obtain from these relationships, the meanings that different women ascribed to marriage and kinship as channels of access, and the changing dynamics of such relationships over time and in response to particular events. Moreover, in addition to intra-household resource relations, many women also mobilized a variety of extra-household social relationships and networks as a means to secure temporary or long-term access to particular resources. My concern about the methodological implications of such a diversity of women's experiences created an impasse in the research process:

... speaking to women about their marriages and their relationships with husbands and extended family, it is clear that 'women' as a category have not experienced these relationships in the same way. The meaning that different women associate with marriage and other intra-household relationships as potential channels of access to cash and other resources, appears to depend upon conjugal living arrangements (e.g. husbands' migration to cities for employment), the presence of co-wives, male or household wealth, the age and health of the husband, the quality of the relationship between spouses, and generally the level of commitment husbands express towards their wives and family. Moreover, as the social and economic circumstances of marital relationships change over time, so to does the level of support between spouses, the kinds of resources that women can obtain through their husbands, and the extent to which women are required to explore alternative channels of access to resources. A number of things are clear at this point ... the meaning ascribed to marriage as a channel of resources and other forms of support does not have some kind of universal applicability, and in many cases conjugal and other intra-household ties are not the most significant channels of access to resources for women. Given this diversity of experience, I am uncertain how to proceed in the field research. If women are mobilizing a variety of social relationships in order to access resources, and if women give different meaning to such relationships ... meanings which change constantly over time and in response to specific events in the lives of different women, what kinds of claims can I make about the meaning and importance of such relationships in the lives of women (Personal Journal 13 November 1997).

Having identified the overwhelming diversity of women's experiences related to their participation in a variety of social relationships, networks, and institutions, I realized the need to modify my methodological approach to seeing, interpreting, and understanding the content and meaning of these relationships for women and the diversity of women's experiences over time. By stressing the particularity of women's individual experiences in marriage and their relationships with others, I hoped to build a picture of social relations in Kakasunanka from individuals' discussions, recollections, disagreements, and actions. Drawing on the insights of Lila Abu-Lughod (1993), I sought to develop a description of the actual circumstances and histories of individuals and their relationships by emphasizing the diverse, contradictory, and changing ways in which women "live" the institution of marriage and their relationships with others.

Through personal narratives in particular, women reflected upon significant moments in their lives (adolescence, schooling, marriage, the birth of children); spoke of their relationships with family, friends, and associates; and grappled with on-going preoccupations, circumstances, and struggles in their daily lives. Over a period of months women became increasingly comfortable discussing their marriages and other relationships (friendships, family, and local groups), the ways their relationships have changed over time, and what these relationships mean to them as potential channels of access to resources.

The next four chapters examine the multiple ways in which women "live" the institution of marriage and other social relationships, the potential of diverse social relationships to provide channels of access to specific resources, the changing meanings

that women ascribe to different social relationships as potential channels of access, and how 'investments in people' have shaped women's involvement in market gardening and trading enterprises and their daily struggles to meet changing gender roles and responsibilities. The thesis focuses on women's own words, as expressed and documented in interviews, group discussions and personal narratives. The exploration of participants' experiences as market gardeners, traders, and strategic agents of change which is presented in the chapters which follow, therefore privileges women's own descriptions, explanations, and interpretations as it seeks to convey the meanings these women give to their own lives - as lived.

Chapter Four

“Investing in Ourselves”: Women’s Experiences in Market Gardening

Situated along Ghana’s southern coast, approximately twenty-five kilometers north-east of Accra, the capital and largest city in Ghana, Kakasunanka is a peri-urban settlement just outside the city of Tema. A rapidly expanding village of migrants who have relocated from cities and towns in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA), Kakasunanka has a population of 7012²¹, although any census count of a community like Kakasunanka is somewhat arbitrary since, at any given moment, people who consider themselves as residents of Kakasunanka may be farming, trading, working, or visiting in other places.

A village in the peri-urban area of Accra-Tema, Kakasunanka benefits from its proximity to large urban markets which stimulate a wide variety of agricultural and entrepreneurial initiatives ranging from food and cash crop production, and trade of agricultural produce and other petty trading activities, to services including carpentry, tailoring, and sale of prepared foods. Its favourable location along Akosombo Road, a major transportation link with the Accra-Tema autoroute (express highway), ensures excellent access to vital urban-centers such as Tema, Accra, Takoradi and Kumasi (See Map I). Despite the diversity of entrepreneurial activities locally, Kakasunanka is best known for women’s individual and collective enterprises in market gardening, producing

²¹ This census was conducted by the Tema Development Corporation as a part of an initiative to provide electricity and other infrastructure to the village. This figure was provided by the village Assembly Man and the Secretary of the Stool for Kakasunanka.

a variety of vegetables for urban markets throughout Southern Ghana and, to a limited extent, for export to neighboring countries of Togo and Cote d'Ivoire.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce and explore women's roles and experiences within the booming market gardening sector of peri-urban Accra. Drawing on the reflections, descriptions, and explanations of women in the study, this chapter examines women's motivations for engaging in market gardening, the resources and secondary income-earning strategies they utilize to expand and sustain their market gardening enterprises, and the changing and multiple meanings that their gardens, and garden incomes, hold for women in fulfillment of their responsibilities and obligations as wives, mothers, and women in Kakasunanka. These explorations establish an understanding of the lived experiences and multiple realities of female market gardeners in the context of processes of conflict and renegotiation of gender roles and responsibilities which will be the subject of discussion in Chapter Five.

Women's Gardens and Livelihoods

Women's experiences in market gardening in the Accra-Tema peri-urban fringe are rich and complex, and vary according to age, class, marital status, and household headship and composition. Just as women's gardens vary in size, scale, and level of investment and return, the meanings that women attach to their gardens - as a livelihood, a source of food and medicine, a business and source of income, and a means of enhancing women's autonomy vis-à-vis husbands - are diverse and vary over the course of a lifetime. Women's farming and supplementary business activities are dynamic and

flexible enterprises, whose form, function, and scale change over time in response to their changing needs, responsibilities, motivations, and ability to access, control and use resources. The changing temper of marital relations and women's relationships, alliances, and networks with others, shape and reshape, over time, the nature of their gardening enterprises and the options and opportunities that market gardens afford them in their multiple and changing roles as wives, mothers, gardeners and entrepreneurs. Drawing on the lived experiences of four women, of different position and status, this section explores the diversity of their experiences in market gardening, and the dynamic character of their involvement in market gardening over time and in response to changing personal, social, and economic circumstances.

Nana²²

Nana reflects here on her years growing up, and her experiences working with her mother selling fish in the market and assisting her father on the household farm. Once married, she began trading and farming enterprises to assist her husband with household finances:

I am a 64 year old woman, widow, and mother of six. I came from Dzode in the Volta Region. As a child I would help my father farm his corn and cassava, and I used to help my mother sell fish and other things in the marketplace. From the experiences of both parents I realized that farming and trading were very important for one's livelihood, and I made up my mind that one day I would do the same.

I was married at the age of twenty-two and my husband was a soldier. He was stationed at Takoradi and there I used to cook beans to sell. At Takoradi, I was able to secure about one acre of land from a friend and I started growing corn and cassava as my father had. The corn and cassava

²² The account of Nana's experiences is a series of excerpts from her personal narrative, and is presented here in her own words. For the purposes of anonymity her name and the names of all other women whose narratives I include in the chapter have been changed.

were used in the home²³. I gave birth to five of my children in Takoradi and the last here, in Kakasunanka. As my children began to grow, I realized that I had to support my husband in taking care of them. I realized that selling beans was not enough and so I started a chop bar²⁴ from which I could get another source of income. I cooked *banku*²⁵ and *fufu*²⁶ and fried fish, and people came to the bar to eat and buy small supplies.

We stayed in Takoradi for fourteen years and then my husband was moved to Michel Camp. At Michel Camp ... I continued with my chop bar. My husband often had difficulty with expenses and my children were furthering their education in secondary school and at Legon²⁷ so I decided to sell provisions to get more money to cater for my husband and children. When my husband had no money, I took it upon myself to pay the children's school fees, books, uniforms and other major expenses. I sold items like sugar, milk, matches, soap, drinks, sardines, tuna, and many other things.

Upon her husband's retirement and eventual death, and the loss of his income, Nana was obligated to generate more substantial earnings in order to meet her family's material and financial needs. Market gardening provided Nana with a reliable income while also producing food for home consumption:

I had farming in mind for some time, because as you know, if you're a soldier and you get retired, you will be asked to leave where you are staying in the barracks. I had this in mind always, and made sure to save money from my businesses for my family's future. When I finally secured land here to do my farming I started with pepper and tomatoes which I have been doing for fifteen years now. The chief gave my husband about twenty acres and my husband gave eight or nine acres of the twenty to me. When I first arrived here, I found that women were earning good money from vegetables so I decided to start the gardens you see over here (around the home) and across the highway. My gardens brought much money into my household, and we always keep small portion of vegetables for meals for the family, since food is very expensive at the market.

²³ i.e. home consumption as opposed to market sale.

²⁴ small restaurant or food stand.

²⁵ staple meal prepared from ground corn and cassava.

²⁶ staple meal prepared from ground cassava and plantain.

²⁷ University of Ghana in Legon, Accra

Shortly after I started my gardens, my husband died. Now that I have no one I must work very hard to look after my children, two are presently in university. So four years ago I started with this poultry farm business. It was pepper money that I used to invest in the poultry farm, and the money from the poultry farm and my chop bar I invest in my gardens each season. All the business ventures that I've engaged in help me to take care of my family, to pay for my children's education and medical expenses, and to buy things for myself and my home. You see this house here was built out of my savings that I made from my gardens and my other businesses, and now I have somewhere to lay my head.

Brazine²⁸

Brazine reflects here on the circumstances of her childhood after the unexpected death of her father. Brazine's describes how her mother struggled to sustain a livelihood for herself and her children:

I am 45 years old, and I was born at a village called Kwaboanta near Nsawam. My mother is an Ewe and my father is from Ada. I am the fifth of eleven children. My mother was a fishmonger for much of her life and my father was a palmwine tapper. My father died very young, and my mother was left to care for all of her children. I started school at the age of six but at the age of thirteen I stopped schooling as I was not performing well and my mother experienced difficulty with money for the payment of my school fees. When I stopped school I started assisting my mother in fishmongering.

At the age of sixteen I got myself involved with a certain guy and became pregnant. My mother was angry and upset, and concerned that she could not take care of me and my baby. The man insisted that I get an abortion, but I refused. Fortunately the boy's parents and elder brother came to see my mother and said they would take care of me, and so they performed the customary marriage rites. When the baby was eleven months old, her father died, and I was alone. At the age of twenty-one, I left, at my mother's request, to go live with one of my aunts who operated a bar at Darkuman in Accra. It was there that I met my present husband. After we were married my husband found us a home at Dansoman, and he found work at Korle-bu as a mechanic.

²⁸ This account is a series of edited passages drawn from the participant's personal narratives and interviews. The name of the participant has been changed in this account to ensure anonymity.

After marrying, Brazine engaged in diverse income-earning strategies, even illegal activity, to make the money needed to care for her family in her husband's absence:

After loosing his job as a mechanic, my husband left for work in Northern Togo. At this time I was living with my husband's aunt at Aflao. After giving birth to my second child, I needed to make an income since my husband was not sending us money. I started selling fried pork and smuggling kerosene from Aflao to Togo ... I was desperate. One day my aunt and I were caught by the authorities and our goods were seized. My husband's aunt then taught me the preparation of *koko*²⁹ and so I started a business of selling porridge. When my husband returned, I told him that I wanted to move to Kakasunanka where my brother was living.

With many children to care for, and the continued absence of her husband, Brazine became interested in market gardening as a means to generate an income and produce food for her family. Brazine describes how she maintains her gardens while engaging in market trading activities to supplement her garden income:

After arriving in Kakasunanka, my husband continued to move around looking for work in Accra. It was here that I gave birth to my last three children. My husband came and went often, and was not able to send us much money, so life was getting difficult. It was then that I started my gardens. With my daughters' help and support I grew pepper and onions for sale, and corn and beans for my our meals. My husband is now a mason but does not get contracts often. As money became short and household expenses worsened, my gardens saved us. In order to make the most out of my money from vegetables, I decided recently to invest it in making *kenkey*³⁰ for sale. I sell kenkey and fried fish outside my home everyday. Kenkey making is good for me because I make an income daily, which gives us our chop money³¹ and daily bread. I am thinking about expanding the kenkey-making business with some friends from our women's group. Working together with these women will allow us to buy more fish and sell more food in the village. So our gardens and other businesses work together, and save us when our husbands are unable to provide.

²⁹ a local porridge.

³⁰ a staple meal made of corn dough.

³¹ money for the purchase of daily food for the household.

Abena was married, and divorced, at a very young age. After her divorce Abena went to her father and asked him for land so that she could start gardening. Here, she describes how her gardens are maintained and the multiple uses of garden produce:

I am 34 years old and I have been living in Kakasunanka since the age of 22 years. My mother and father lived here for many years, as my father was a soldier at Michel Camp. After my first marriage ended in divorce, I returned to Kakasunanka and my father gave me land to farm. I was a teacher until the age of 28 years, and I was keeping my gardens at the same time. Teaching was not bringing in much money, so I decided to expand my vegetable farming business. Around my home, you see I grow three kinds of edible leaves for soups and stews. *Ayoyo* leaf is like okra and it is used for soup, *gboma* and *alefi* [leaves] are used in stews. Of all three, a portion is kept for the home and a portion is sold; *alefi* brings in the most income per bed. In addition to the five acres of land my father gave me, which I use for corn, I also rent one and a half acres from the soldiers at Michel Camp and I pay for this with a portion of my pepper harvest. I use this land for my pepper, tomatoes, onions, garden eggs³³, and okra. Pepper is our cocoa here, you see, it is the most profitable of all the vegetables. At the beginning of each season, I sell some of my pepper seedlings which helps me to pay for the tractor to plow the land, and to pay for labourers to come and plant. I plant one acre of pepper each year, which I then dry and store, so that it may be sold in the dry season when the prices are very high.

Abena also engages in market trading activities which supplement her garden income, and enable her to take care of day-to-day household expenses, particularly during the lean season, and to save money for the future:

In addition to my gardening I am a businesswoman. I hire a truck and travel to the Northern Region twice a month to purchase yams, beans, groundnuts, and *garri*³⁴ which I then sell in Kakasunanka. I market these items most afternoons and evenings, and I sell full-time during the lean season. The money I get from trading I use for day-to-day expenses like

³² This account is a series of passages drawn from the participant's personal narrative. The name of the participant has been changed to ensure anonymity.

³³ a variety of eggplant

³⁴ ground cassava.

food, kerosene, and soap. For the last six years I have also been saving a portion of this income in the Ghana Commercial Bank at Ashaiman. I am saving for my future.

When Abena remarried, her husband left to work and live in Accra. With children to care for, Abena sent for her sisters to help her to maintain the household, enabling Abena to tend to her gardens and trading enterprises:

When my husband left to live in Accra, I sent for my sisters who came to live with me here. My sisters are of great help to me. While I am tending to my businesses, they take care of all cooking and cleaning, and they tend to my children when I am in my gardens or selling my goods. Without them, I would not be able to keep my businesses and make the money I need for myself and my children.

Although her husband lives outside the home, he sends Abena portions of his income as she needs. According to Abena, her husband takes his financial obligations seriously:

My husband is a businessman in Accra but he helps me a lot with household expenses such as the children's school fees and medical expenses, and he often helps me with money to buy my seeds and fertilizers, or to hire labourers, when I am in need. He is a very good man, but I can say that in this village women are more stronger than men. You see, we women always have our children on us, and our husbands, if they work at all, make poor salaries. When my husband cannot help with the children's expenses, it is my gardens that pay for my children's school fees. Because of my gardens, I can get my daily bread, so if my husband ever divorces me or loses his business, I will survive and so will my children. So you see, that is how it is. Women are better providers in this village.

Sara reflects on the multiple ways in which divorce has affected her ability to maintain household sustenance. As a woman head-of-household, Sara struggles to meet her households material and financial needs given the high cost of living in Ashaiman:

I am 29 years old, and I have lived in Kakasunanka for five years now. When I was married I lived with my husband in Ashaiman. In Ashaiman I worked as a seamstress, until my divorce six years ago. After my husband divorced me, I stayed for some time in Ashaiman with my two children, but I found that the cost of renting [a home] and food were very expensive, and I could not pay. When I was living with my husband he took care of the children's school fees and our hospital expenses, and we both helped with the cost of food for the family. I paid for my own personal expenses, such as clothing, with my earnings from sewing. Since the divorce, my husband helps with school fees from time to time, but not always. I am burdened with all other expenses. When life became too difficult in Ashaiman I moved to Kakasunanka to escape the high costs of living in town. I wanted to be able to grow food for my children so that I would no longer have to buy.

In response to a high cost of living in Ashaiman, Sara moved her family to Kakasunanka where she could produce food for her family and generate an income from her gardens and her seamstress work:

When I arrived in Kakasunanka I made an agreement with a soldier at Michel Camp for one acre of land for which I pay 10,000 cedis each season. On the advise of a neighbor, I also joined the 31st December women's group because I could get land as a member. From the group I received an additional acre for which I paid only 4000 cedis³⁶. I grow one acre of corn and a half an acre of beans for home consumption. On the remaining half acre I plant pepper and onion. I keep some onion for home use, and sell the rest. As for the pepper, I cook, dry then store the pepper so that I can sell during the dry season. When I experience financial

³⁵ This account is a series of excerpts drawn from multiple interviews with the participant. The name of the participant has been changed to ensure anonymity.

³⁶ Six years ago, the local 31st December women's group, with financial assistance from the national-level 31st December Women's Movement, purchased 60 acres of irrigated (piped water) land from Michel Camp. Part of this land is currently being used for a group onion farm, while the remainder is rented out to group members at an annual rate of 4000 cedis per acre, which is far less expensive than renting irrigated land from Michel Camp directly (at an average rent of 15,000 cedis per acre/ per year).

difficulties, I sell a basket of pepper for quick money, but I try and store as much pepper I can to sell when the prices are highest.

In bad years I am often left with only a few bags of pepper to sell during the lean season, so I do my sewing to make extra money. Business is good around Christmas time when women and children need new church clothes, so I try and save as much money as possible for the next season of farming. ... My sisters have come to live with me to help with cooking and washing when I am on the farm, and they help with my sewing. I am training my youngest sister to be an apprentice. My sisters have been very important since my divorce. You see, as a single mother you take help where you can find it.

The oral accounts of Nana, Brazine, Abena, and Sara presented here, begin to reveal the diversity and dynamic character of women's lives as lived. Each woman has experienced different challenges, opportunities and obligations over the course of her life, and in her relationships with others. The extent to which women have been able, or obligated, to provide for the household, and to expand their gardening enterprises and initiate secondary business activities to supplement their garden incomes is different for each woman and has varied over time and in response to particular events. In response to the changing social and economic circumstances of daily life, women evaluate and re-evaluate their options and opportunities to establish alliances, generate income and provide for the material and financial well-being of their families.

The ability of women to sustain and expand their gardens, and to take advantage of new business opportunities has depended to varying degrees upon marital status and residence arrangements between spouses, household headship and household composition, and the social networks that they invest in as a means of accessing resources and other forms of support - all of which change in form, function and meaning over

time. Based on these and other differences, women have different options, opportunities and obligations, and employ a range of livelihood strategies to meet their multiple and changing needs. A popular livelihood strategy among most women in Kakasunanka is the diversification their activities in gardening and in their supplementary small business and trading ventures.

Diversity and Diversification: Exploring Women's Strategies

The diverse, dynamic, and flexible character of women's garden and business experiences, illustrated in the above narratives, reveals the capacity of female market gardeners to evaluate and adapt to changing circumstances in the household, in the field, and in the marketplace. Among women's gardens, as in their other business and trading initiatives, women experiment with strategies of diversification as a means to minimize risk, ensure food security and self-sufficiency, and expand channels of access to income and savings. Although most women diversify their options and activities in gardening and business initiatives to meet changing needs, the kinds of business opportunities women explore, the size and scale of women's initiatives, and the ways in which women balance these activities with other social responsibilities and obligations, differ sharply among women of different age, wealth, marital status, and household headship and composition.

Maintaining "Colourful Gardens"

Many, if not most, women in Kakasunanka engage in market gardening as a means of generating income and supplementing household diets. Although pepper production yields the highest return on investment, all market gardeners whom I interviewed produced a variety of vegetables, such as onion, tomato, okra, eggplant, and edible leafy greens in conjunction with pepper. Most vegetables are grown on fields of one acre or less (with the exception of a small number of individuals with access to larger landholdings), although most gardeners cultivated more than one plot of land. Pepper and onion are typically planted on separate fields of 1/4 to 2 acres depending on relative wealth for the purchase of farm inputs, and access to labour for transplanting, weeding, and harvesting tasks. In addition to their pepper and onion fields, most women also reported cultivating tomatoes intercropped with eggplant and okra. Among local gardeners, it is common to plant onions and tomatoes two or three times during the year, while pepper plants continued to bear pepper as long as the rains hold out. A field might be used for one or two consecutive crops but would then be rotated with other vegetables in order to maintain soil fertility and structure. In addition to the agro-ecological value of diversifying garden production, there are a range of economic and social rationales for exploring strategies of diversification.

Maintaining "colourful gardens", according to many female market gardeners, is a livelihood strategy which minimizes risk associated with erratic rainfall, losses due to pests, and price fluctuations at local and regional markets. The vegetables cultivated are known by local gardeners to have different water and soil nutrient requirements, and to be

susceptible to different types of pest infestations. Thus, periods of drought or excessive rainfall, the loss of particular soil nutrients, or the onset of pest problems, while potentially damaging one vegetable species may have little or no effect on another. Diversification of women's gardens, therefore, ensures that the household will yield, at the very least, a moderate harvest, providing food for household meals and a source of income and savings. Given often dramatic fluctuations in the price of pepper and other vegetables in the marketplace, diversification also provides a buffer between the market and the household, making households less vulnerable to market uncertainty.

Since different vegetables mature at different rates, cultivating a small amount of a number of vegetables results in the scattering or sequencing of harvests over the course of a farming season. The sequencing of vegetables in this way reduces labour bottlenecks during peak periods (transplanting, weeding, harvesting), and the need to hire labour for the timely completion of such tasks. Moreover, the sequencing of farm tasks spreads the cost of labour, fertilizer, and other input application, and similarly distributes the income generated from the market sale of vegetables, more evenly over the entire farm season. This constitutes a useful strategy among female market gardeners who experience difficulty mobilizing labour and cash resources in large amounts at any given time in the farming season.

As women are often the primary providers of food in many households, colourful gardens mean enhanced food security, especially among the poorer, more economically vulnerable households in Kakasunanka. All market gardeners whom I interviewed reported they cultivate food crops - primarily corn, cassava, and beans - in conjunction

with their vegetable gardens. In the case of food crops, the bulk of the harvest is kept for home consumption, although small amounts may be sold or traded locally for different foods or household supplies. Among women's garden produce, a significant portion of all vegetable harvests is sold to local and regional markets, with small to moderate amounts kept to supplement household diets, and reduce a household's dependence on the market for the purchase of food. The proportion of food crops and vegetables that are stored for household use, sold at market, or used in trading, differs from household to household depending on immediate and long-term priorities, and in response to changing needs, responsibilities, and personal and household circumstances. Sara, for example, is careful to avoid risk, growing mostly food crops for home consumption and a small amount of pepper which she commonly sells, out of need, during the farming season when price potential is lowest³⁷. Conversely, Abena is able to farm an entire acre of pepper, which, because of the financial support of her husband living in Accra, she is able to dry and store, and sell during the lean season when the market price for pepper is highest. With the proceeds of her pepper sales, Abena is better able to reinvest in, and expand, her gardens and trading activities.

The diversification of vegetable production stabilizes the household economy, and allows gardeners to capitalize on the dry season sale of pepper - the most financially

³⁷ According to Jean Due (1991), female headed households tend to plant different crops than male or joint headed households. A prevalent strategy among female-headed household is to allocate a greater percentage of their land to food crops. Although the provision of food is a high priority in all households, female headed households often cultivate a greater proportion of food crops compared to cash crops because they tend to farm smaller land sizes than other households (lacking male labour resources) and have more limited financial resources (to purchase food at market) compared to joint headed households. This is particularly significant giving the rising cost of food and other household necessities since the implementation of structural adjustment programs throughout much of Africa.

lucrative of all vegetables cultivated locally. The production of different vegetables alongside pepper enables gardeners to cook, dry, and store as much pepper as possible for sale during the dry season when pepper prices at market are the highest and when household income is insufficient. Gardeners could not afford to dry and store pepper without marketing other vegetables that generate a quick and steady income and provide a constant source of food during the farming season. With the exception of extremely vulnerable households (such as Sara's), which sell fresh pepper at a lower price during the farming season out of financial desperation, most households dry and store as much pepper as possible and use the income generated from tomato and onion sales to sustain their livelihoods throughout the farming season. Storing pepper for the dry season enables gardeners to maximize income while providing a reliable source of income during the dry season when few women maintain gardens³⁸.

In addition to the marketing of fresh and preserved vegetable produce, different vegetables have other related income-earning advantages. Like many women in Kakasunanka, Abena, sells pepper and tomato seedlings to local buyers for substantial income. Vegetable seedlings are cultivated in nurseries mainly around the home early in the farming season. Although a significant proportion of seedlings are transplanted to women's gardens to grow to maturity, many women reported selling as many as fifty percent of their seedlings. According to many women, "seedlings are big business", providing a source of quick and substantial income at the beginning of the gardening

³⁸ Many gardeners in the study did not have reliable access to irrigated lands and thus did not farm during the dry season. Even in cases where gardeners may have access to irrigated lands, they continued to dry and store as much pepper as possible, in case they were not able to generate the income necessary to rent an irrigated field during the dry season in a particular year.

season, when money is short and early-season farming expenses are considerable. Abena, for example, sells pepper seedlings so that she can generate enough income to pay for a tractor to plough her land and to hire labourers to assist her in planting. Women in Kakasunanka also make a business of selling vegetable seeds locally and at nearby markets. Since many women routinely select and preserve pepper, tomato, and eggplant seeds from their gardens for the following year's planting, seed sale provides additional income for minor household expenses.

The diversification of market gardening activities is a livelihood strategy which minimizes the agro-ecological and market-based risks associated with vegetable production, enhances household food security and income-earning capacity, and enables women to take advantage of related income-earning opportunities in gardening. In conjunction with their gardening enterprises, women in Kakasunanka engage in secondary income-generating activities which supplement their garden incomes, provide a means of investment and savings, and afford a measure of security among vulnerable households in particular.

"Gardening is not our only business": Diversification of income-earning strategies

As Berry's (1989) work suggests, the reinvestment of agricultural earnings into multiple short-term non-agricultural pursuits constitutes a critical livelihood strategy in the presence of economic uncertainty in many parts of Africa. Women engage in trading and small business initiatives to meet changing budgetary responsibilities, to improve income-generation during the lean season, and as a source of investable income to sustain

and expand their garden enterprises. The kinds of trading and business ventures women establish, the extent of their business experience, the amount of time and financial resources they invest in secondary business opportunities, and the meanings that their businesses and business incomes hold, differ and change over time.

Among the women interviewed, most engaged in one or more supplementary income-earning activities in conjunction with market gardening. In addition to her gardens, Nana, for example, manages a “chop bar”, a poultry farm, and engages in petty trading. Women have diverse experiences with trading and small business (Figure 4.1), depending on the means and opportunities available to each woman at any given time. These activities are attractive as they require little or no capital outlay, training, or experience, do not divert resources away from gardens in any measurable way, and generate income on a daily rather than seasonal basis. Moreover, the flexible character of these enterprises enable women to organize their time and resources in such a way that they do not seriously conflict with their gardening and household responsibilities.

Figure 4.1 The Diversity of Women’s Income-Earning Activities³⁹

Production - Agriculture

food crops (corn,
beans, cassava)
vegetables (pepper,
onion, tomatoes)
plantain
watermelon
poultry
eggs
manure
seedlings/seeds

Production - Food

banku
kenkey
fufu
fried fish
smoked fish
local liquor

Petty Trading

charcoal
cloth/clothing
crafts
earrings
firewood
garri
groundnuts
salt
scarves
sugar

Services

hairdressing
medical
dispensary
restaurant/
food stand
sewing

Source: Interviews, personal narratives, and group discussions.

³⁹ This list demonstrates the range of women’s income-earning strategies, but is not meant to be exhaustive.

Although most vegetables have a short maturation cycle, generating income anywhere from three to ten weeks after transplanting, trading and small business opportunities enable women to generate income on a daily basis. Women reported using this daily income to purchase food for meals, to take care of minor, and often unanticipated, household and gardening expenses, and to save towards larger future expenses such as school fees and children's books and uniforms. As one woman explains:

When my vegetables are still in the ground, my trading provides for our daily chop⁴⁰, and makes it so that I can dry and store as much pepper and corn as I can. Before trading I sold much of my pepper fresh because I was in constant need of money, so when the dry season came I had nothing. My charcoal selling now lets me store my pepper and corn for longer, maybe until February or March when the prices are very good. This gives me the money to get labourers and buy my onion seeds and fertilizers at the beginning of the season. Selling also gives me money to take care of my children's needs. My husband is bad with money, so when school fees need to be paid or an emergency comes up it is you the woman who has to solve it when the man doesn't come. You see, this is why trading is very important to women in Ghana.

The kinds of trading and small business activities that women initiate in Kakasunanka are, therefore, those which can generate a moderate income on a daily basis, with little front-end investment, and can be intensified or suspended in response to the changing needs and responsibilities at a given moment. Maintaining flexibility and adaptability in gardening, trading and small business activities and routines is a vital coping strategy due to women's multiple and changing roles and obligations both inside and outside of the household.

⁴⁰ Food for daily meals.

Women's trading and business routines, for the most part, are characterized by a significant degree of flexibility given the competing labour demands of their gardens during peak periods, their oscillating involvement in gardening between rainy and dry seasons, and the unanticipated need for cash for household maintenance and gardening initiatives at any given time. Moreover, because of women's multiple roles as market gardeners, businesswomen, household managers, and members of multiple extra-household social networks and groups, such flexibility constitutes a crucial management strategy (see Huntington 1998:175).

During the farm season, women's trading and business activities are occasional, especially during the peak labour periods for transplanting, weeding, and harvesting. At such times, women's secondary businesses idle to some extent, as they tend to their gardens. However, in cases where unanticipated household or gardening expenses arise, women are able to initiate their trading, small business, or service activities to generate the needed income. Brazine, for example, makes and sells kenkey almost every morning and gardens in the afternoon and early evening. When unexpected cash needs arise, she suspends her gardening activities (often delegating garden tasks to her sisters and children) and intensifies her involvement in kenkey-making to increase her daily earnings. During the dry season, when most women terminate their gardening activities for a period of months and household income diminishes, they direct the bulk of their time, labour and resources towards their off-farm trading and business ventures.

Women's multiple social and reproductive responsibilities and obligations also reiterate the importance of flexibility among their gardening and supplementary business

initiatives. At the household and community level women in Kakasunanka play a significant role in family, church, and other social institutions and networks. As Sara explains, women's responsibilities to, and investments in, such institutions and relationships distract women's attention from their business ventures:

If one of your relations becomes ill, as a woman and a family member, you must go and tend to them. Recently, my brother in Ashaiman fell ill and he called on me for assistance. I remained at his home for a number of weeks, only returning home on occasion as I was needed. I prepared food and tended to his home with the help of his two daughters. My garden suffered some, but my junior sister and my children maintained the farm and the household in my absence. You see, family is the most important thing. When you are needed you must go.

Other social obligations which caused women to suspend their gardens and other business activities included attendance at, and participation in, weddings, funerals, church functions, and women's group meetings. Women's continued devotion to the maintenance of such social and community obligations is due in part to their ongoing identification of such responsibilities as the "customary" domain of women, but it must also be understood as a deliberate and strategic 'investment' in social relations as a means of establishing and maintaining potential channels of access to resources, support, and social power⁴¹.

Locating Women's Experiences: Personal and Household Circumstances

In order to understand the multiple and changing meanings garden and business incomes hold for women in Kakasunanka, the dynamic nature of women's involvement in market gardening and supplementary business activities over time, and the diverse

⁴¹ See Chapter Six.

strategies women mobilize to improve personal and household security, it is important to understand the personal and household circumstances of women in the study and the ways in which these circumstances have changed over time and in response to specific events such as marriage, migration, childbirth, spousal un/under-employment, divorce, and widowhood. In particular, it is necessary to examine the multiple, and changing, roles and responsibilities of women and men within household relations in the context of an increasingly monetized national and household economy, and how this has shaped women's (un)willingness to take risks, and the kinds of strategies they employ to diversify their channels of access to income and savings.

The Changing Meaning of Money: Personal and Household Finances

The transition of Ghana's economy towards a free market system, exacerbated by the IMF/World Bank austerity measures designed to 'adjust' the Ghanaian economy, have translated into the rising cost of household necessities such as food and supplies (clothing, kerosene, matches, soap), vital services such as education and medical care, and agricultural inputs and services such as seeds, fertilizers, hired labour and credit - what many women in the study referred to as *kalabule*⁴². Changes in economic policy have resulted in rising levels of structural unemployment and diminished real wages in Ghana's formal sector, and a dramatic increase in the proportion of farm and off-farm incomes allocated toward expenditures on food and other household necessities (Brown and Kerr 1997; Clark and Manuh 1991). These processes have translated into profound

⁴² *lit.* profiteering. *Kalabule* is a term women used to allude to selling vital goods and services above the accepted or controlled price (black market).

economic vulnerability among households in Kakasunanka. Many women reflected upon and recalled their experiences with a rising cost of living over time, and the changing meaning of money vis-à-vis household survival and personal and family well-being. As

Abena remarks:

... when I lived with my parents as a child there was little need for money. Food was very affordable, you could receive good medical attention for a small cost, and school fees were much less expensive than they are for my children today. In our gardens, the high cost of fertilizers and other necessities are slowly killing us. Although my trading brings in extra income, it too suffers from the government's dealings. You see, when I go to the Northern Region for my yams, garri and other things, I pay for transport which is very expensive. In the market, everything is costly. At one time 100 yam tubers could be purchased for 100,000 cedis but now you'll get the same 100 tubers for 250,000 to 300,000 cedis. In addition to this you suffer from road and highways taxes and other incidental expenses, and as the cost of these household and business necessities rise, women are less able to get assistance from their husbands who are suffering financially as well.

The need for cash, the extent of women's economic responsibilities vis-à-vis men, and the meaning of their garden incomes for household survival oscillates considerably over the course of women's personal and household life cycle.

Changes in Personal and Household Life-Cycle Circumstances

Changes in women's personal and household life-cycle circumstances, over time, have shaped the scope of women's interest and involvement in their gardens, their need to explore supplementary income-earning opportunities, and the extent to which households depend on their garden and business incomes for survival. Reflecting on Nana's experiences, one can see that her decision to start a chop bar while living in Takoradi was

motivated by the birth and maturation of her children, and the need to provide for their school fees and daily sustenance, and to save for their futures. The expectation of her husband's retirement and the loss of his financial contributions to the household similarly motivated Nana to initiate her gardening enterprise in Kakasunanka both to improve household food security and to diversify her income sources as she would now be independently responsible for the maintenance of the household. Another woman explains the long-term implications of her husband's illness and overall loss in productivity with age:

Years ago my husband was a tailor and brought in money, today you can see that he is ill ... [and] depends on me to make an income and put food in front of him and the children. Since he took ill I have intensified my gardening and I started selling earrings to make extra money.

The dynamic and flexible character of women's livelihood strategies reflects the changing household life-cycle circumstances to which women must adapt. Marriage, the birth of children, spousal unemployment, retirement, family illness, aging, and widowhood have translated into new economic and social responsibilities for women, and have changed both the nature and extent of their involvement in gardening and small business, and the meanings that their garden and business incomes hold with respect to household survival and well-being.

Women's economic initiatives also constitute a strategic response to growing insecurity regarding marital relations and represent a bold attempt to invest in and save for their futures and insure against divorce, spousal illness and aging, and widowhood (Oppong 1974; Hill 1978). Although personal and socio-structural circumstances have

placed them in a position where they are responsible for, and preoccupied with, the day-to-day survival and well-being of the household, they also look towards, and plan for, their future and that of their family. While enabling them to purchase food, clothing, and household necessities and pay for children's school fees and medical care, women's garden and supplementary business initiatives afford the chance to explore new livelihood options and opportunities, and provide a stronger sense of personal autonomy.

Women's gardening and business ventures reflect more than the need for cash income; these strategies are a part of their long-term goals to reduce personal and household vulnerability, to establish personal cash savings, and to invest in themselves as gardeners and businesswomen. Many women, of different age and household circumstances, reported that they allocated portions of their weekly business earnings and annual garden incomes toward personal savings or reinvestment in their businesses. By saving and investing small amounts of their diverse incomes in commercial banks and through *susu*⁴³ savings networks, women are making contributions towards medium and long-term improvements in household security and well-being. Among their multiple and diverse priorities, women reported that they were saving for their children's secondary and post-secondary education, building a new home for their family, and for the purchase of land. As one young market gardener explains:

⁴³ *Susu* networks are circular savings groups. Members of *susu* savings groups invest a standard amount of money on a monthly basis, and at the end of each month a different member receives "the pot" of money. This type of savings network is particularly attractive to women, as many experience difficulty receiving loans from commercial banks. To receive credit from a commercial bank individuals require a long-standing relationship and account with the bank and require the necessary collateral to ensure repayment. The Agricultural Development Bank of Ghana will not provide credit to women on an individual basis, nor will they give credit to small-scale farmers as their activities and likelihood of repayment are comparatively risky. Women's access to credit will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six.

I save money from my seedlings in an account with a commercial bank in Accra which I opened for myself two years ago. I invest little, little, little, so that one day I will have enough money to purchase a plot of land for my gardening ... [and] I will no longer have to rent. ... When I am too old to do the gardening, my daughter will then farm this land and provide for her family.

The increasing importance of cash for the survival of the household, and women's motivations to intensify garden production and invest in personal cash savings must also be seen in relation to a growing inability or unwillingness of men to meet their financial responsibilities as husbands and fathers. Indeed, the nature of women's involvement in market gardening and secondary businesses, the meanings that gardens and secondary businesses hold for them in terms of household survival, the new responsibilities that they are obligated to assume, and the kinds of risks they are willing and unwilling to take depend, to varying extents, on the dynamic nature of their relationships with their husbands.

Women's Budgetary Responsibilities: Marital Status and Household Headship

The intensification of women's participation in market gardening in the peri-urban area of Accra-Tema is directly related to the changing character of women's budgetary responsibilities vis-à-vis men in the household. The nature and extent of women's economic responsibilities in the household are shaped in part by the ability (and willingness) of men to meet the escalating financial demands of the household.

Among married women in Kakasunanka, the gender division of household budgetary responsibilities is embedded within processes of negotiation and conflict

between husbands and wives over the terms the conjugal contract (Whitehead 1981). At issue among many married couples is the growing tendency of men to default on many of their gendered obligations, as husbands and as fathers, to provide for the material and financial well-being of their families. Men in Kakasunanka are involved in diverse kinds of employment including vegetable cash-crop production, wage employment in Ashaiman and Accra, or service-oriented businesses (such as tailoring or carpentry) either locally or in nearby towns. However, given the rising cost of living, especially in urban and peri-urban areas, men's incomes frequently cannot meet the family's expanding financial needs. Insufficient male incomes, chronic un/under-employment among men in the formal sector, and the migration of men to urban centers in search of work, have dramatically transformed patterns of domestic budgetary responsibilities, as women are forced by circumstances to assume greater economic responsibilities vis-à-vis husbands within the household economy. Even among households in which men earn a substantial and relatively sustainable income from cash-cropping, women report that their husbands often fail to meet their respective financial obligations, rendering them almost exclusively responsible for the material and financial well-being of household and family.

While there is a tendency to generalize across classes and cultures with regard to the gender division of economic and financial responsibilities between husbands and wives in West Africa (David 1997), there is in fact considerable variability and flexibility in the division of household financial responsibilities between husbands and wives in Kakasunanka. Marriage relationships provide women and children with varying degrees of material and financial support depending upon the type of conjugal union, male or

household wealth, the age and health of the husband, the quality of the relationship between spouses, and generally the level of commitment a husband has for his wife and family. Given the widespread out-migration of males to urban centers in search of wage labour, I had assumed during the research process that residency patterns would play a key role in determining the extent of men's financial contributions towards household maintenance. Of the twenty-seven women in conjugal unions⁴⁴, eighteen resided with their husbands in Kakasunanka while nine were married to husbands who lived in Accra, Takoradi, or Kumasi. Although women who resided with their husbands in the village received, on average, greater financial support from their husbands than women married to men living outside of Kakasunanka, there is no clear connection between spousal residence patterns and the relative strength or weakness of conjugal bonds. In a number of cases, for example, women living with their husbands received comparatively less material and financial assistance from their spouses than women whose husbands lived outside the village in nearby cities and towns. Abena's situation represents a startling example of a marital arrangement in which her husband spends most of the year in Accra, yet provides substantial and regular financial contributions to Abena and the household. Meanwhile, many women in the study who reported to live together with their husbands in Kakasunanka, claimed to receive little or no material support from their spouses, many of whom earned a steady income in vegetable cash-crop production.

⁴⁴ A total of 35 women participated in the study. Twenty participated in personal interviews and the remaining fifteen are women who participated in group discussions (but not in personal interviews). Of the thirty-five women in the study, twenty-seven were married, four were divorced, and four were widowed.

Although spousal migration may play a role in shaping the gender division of financial responsibilities between husbands and wives, the ability of husbands to secure employment and income, the extent of husbands' extra-household financial obligations (e.g. to extended family), the relative financial contributions of wives to household survival (real and as perceived by husbands) and the quality of the relationship between spouses over time, play a crucial role in shaping the kinds of economic responsibilities and obligations a husband assumes regarding the maintenance and welfare of his wife (or wives) and children.

At the time of the study, many women claimed that it was they, and not their husbands, who assumed primary responsibility both for basic necessities (food and other household necessities) and major periodic expenditures, such as school fees, clothing, housing, and health care. Yet when the question of household headship was approached during interviews and group discussions, most women, unequivocally established their husbands as the "head of the household". This provides a striking example of contradiction between gender ideologies of conjugal economics and everyday practice - between social norms, ideals and expectations of males as the breadwinners and head of the family and the practical role of women as the day-to-day providers of household sustenance.

Among single-parent households, brought on by abandonment, divorce, and widowhood, the question of *de jure* female-headship is clear since none of the eight single-parent households claimed to depend regularly on the assistance of another adult male. However, when the working definition of a household head is applied - that is, one

who is generally responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the household on a daily basis and who has the power to take major decisions within it (Ardayfio-Schandorf 1994) - many women in conjugal unions may be considered *de facto* household heads⁴⁵. Women in Kakasunanka are becoming important economic actors providing income and other resources for themselves, husbands, children, and other members of extended family. In fact, over sixty percent of women in the study reported having sole responsibility for the payment of school fees and health care expenses, once the responsibility of men, while also providing for the day-to-day subsistence needs of the immediate family, the children of maternal or paternal relatives through practices of child fostering⁴⁶, and in many cases, contributing income remittances to relatives living elsewhere. As one woman explains:

You see, we have many expenses - food, school fees, hospital, and of course the costs of maintaining your gardens. If the man doesn't help, it is you the woman who is left to provide for the children and for him. So you must work very hard at your businesses so that you may fulfill your duties.

⁴⁵ According to a study of 304 households in the Eastern and Greater Accra Regions conducted in 1988, 51.6% of the households were female-headed, when the working definition of a household head is applied, as compared to a much lower national average of 31.9% given by the 1984 population census (Ardayfio-Schandorf 1994).

⁴⁶ In addition to the immediate family, many women are responsible for the children of siblings or in-laws through the practice of child fostering. In the context of Ghana, the practice of child fostering may be defined as the process of entrusting of a child to a person or persons who are not the birth parents, commonly an extended family member or household, which provide for the total or partial parental, material, and financial needs of the child for an extended period of time. In most cases, this is not considered fostering or adoption under statutory law, and must be distinguished from pawning which is a customary arrangement whereby a child acts as security for a loan who lives with and works for the creditor until the loan has been paid. Child fostering is often practiced among extremely vulnerable households (such as male or female single-parent households) as it provides children with better access to essential resources, or among more affluent households, child fostering may be done to provide a child with access to better schools and job opportunities. In both cases, the birth parent or parents may or may not arrange to provide for particular material or financial needs in conjunction with those provided by the foster parent(s). See Nukunya (1992), Addai-Sundiata (1996), Ardayfio-Schandorf and Amissah (1996).

Even in households where a husband is considered the “household head” and major “breadwinner” (given the pervasiveness of local gender ideologies), women report making significant contributions to household budgetary responsibilities. New divisions in economic roles and responsibilities between women and men in Kakasunanka has not, however, been a smooth, uncontested process. In assuming greater economic responsibility for household maintenance and family well-being, by intensifying their involvement in vegetable cash crop production in Kakasunanka, many women are seen to be producing a very public challenge to the material and symbolic bases of male authority within the household. Women’s participation in market gardening has precipitated not only a redefinition of gender roles and responsibilities but has dramatically transformed the kinds of claims that husbands and wives can make towards the shared and separate resources (such as labour and land) of each spouse in the context of the conjugal contract. As I argue in the next chapter, women’s involvement in market gardening has led to an escalation in struggles over both resources and meaning negotiated through the social relations of production within marriage.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide an introduction to women’s experiences and livelihood strategies in the peri-urban area of Accra-Tema. Women’s involvement in market gardening constitutes a series of strategies implemented in response to new economic constraints, imposed by transformations in the national political economy under the ERP/SAP and experienced within the household, and an

increasing inability or unwillingness of husbands to fulfill many of their financial obligations for family maintenance and well-being. Women experiment with a variety of strategies of diversification as a means to minimize risk, improve household food security and self-sufficiency, and expand channels of access to income and savings. While enabling them to meet the expanding financial needs of the household, women's gardens and supplementary business initiatives have afforded them the chance to explore new livelihood options and opportunities, provided them with a stronger sense of personal autonomy vis-à-vis their husbands, and enhanced their position and power within local social and political relations.

Chapter Five

Renegotiating the Conjugal Contract: Struggles Over Resources and Meaning

To comprehend better the multiple and diverse ways in which women access, control and use productive resources, manage their gardens and other entrepreneurial initiatives, and provide for the material and financial well-being of their families, it is necessary to examine the social institution of marriage and relations between husbands and wives. The diversity of women's experiences with marriage vis-à-vis access to resources and the negotiability of the conjugal contract between spouses calls into question the generalizability of what marriage means as a social institution across cultures, classes, and social circumstances. Like the concept of the "household", marriage is a loaded term within Western discourses. Recent research challenges constructions of marriage which assume that women are completely dependent upon conjugal relationships in Africa (and men more generally) for access to material resources (particularly land and labour), that carry with them connotations of intimacy and a sense of cooperation and pooling of resources between spouses, and that present marriage as an intrinsically democratic and cooperative relationship, free of conflict, coercion, and renegotiation (Dwyer and Bruce 1988; Fleming 1991; Kabeer 1991, 1998; Kandiyoti 1998; Leach 1991a; Moore 1988; Whitehead 1981).

New economic circumstances created by structural adjustment in Ghana have translated into a renegotiation of gender roles and responsibilities within the conjugal relationships in Kakasunanka. With the expansion of cash-dependent households and the

growing inability or unwillingness of husbands to meet many of their financial responsibilities related to the education and welfare of children, wives have challenged (and continue to challenge) husbands' rights to command their unremunerated labour and control the income derived from their labour on household farms. Many wives have withdrawn their labour, either in whole or in part, from household farms and established vegetable gardens independent of their husbands by mobilizing resources through extra-household social networks. In this way, women are contesting the terms of the conjugal contract and the overall meaning of marriage without completely "divorcing" themselves from their husbands who, nevertheless, bring material, political, and emotional resources into the relationship. Women's garden and supplementary business incomes enable them to assume greater budgetary responsibilities within the household, and have purchased a measure of autonomy and freedom of movement and social interaction for gardeners, but as I argue below, this autonomy has come at a price. Women's participation in market gardening has precipitated multiple struggles over resources and meaning, and have involved an escalation in gender politics centered around reworking the conjugal contract.

The first section of the chapter explores the concept of marriage; drawing on women's own words and experiences as a means to demonstrate the complexity, dynamism, and negotiability of conjugal relationships. The second section outlines the particular rights and obligations of wives and husbands in the context of the conjugal contract, and the third section examines the processes and strategies of negotiation between husbands and wives: negotiations over gender roles and responsibilities within the household and negotiations over land and labour, which are simultaneously material

and symbolic in character. Lastly, I contend that one of the outcomes of women's resistance and strategies within conjugal relations has been the intensification of women's involvement in cash-crop production and a shift in women's social priorities as they divest much of their interest in marriage and expand their investment and participation in extra-household social networks as a means of accessing and controlling material resources.

Conceptualizing Marriage

It is often assumed that, as a social institution, marriage is defined by a set of culturally-specific rules regarding the roles, rights and obligations of spouses and assume that spouses play by such rules without exception (Whitehead 1981). Marriage as lived by the women in the study is, however, a much more complex, flexible, and dynamic relationship negotiated between wives and husbands. The following three narratives reveal women's experiences related to marriage, the diverse character of marriage "as lived", and the multiple and changing ways in which marriage represents a process of negotiation between spouses with significant implications for conjugal resource relations.

Lela⁴⁷

I am sixty-one years old and I moved to Kakasunanka six years ago with my husband, Jacob. Together we have four children who are now grown and live and work in Accra. When we came here my husband and I purchased the land for building our house together ... we each contributed equal share. We were not able to get land from the chief to farm in this

⁴⁷ The account of Lela's and Jacob's experiences are a series of excerpts from multiple personal interviews, and are presented in their own words. For the purposes of anonymity their names, and the names of all other informants whose accounts I include in this chapter, have been changed.

village because land is scarce here. Each year we rent land from the soldiers at Michel Camp and we pay the rent for our land out of our individual incomes. So ... I do not get land from my husband.

At one time, my husband and I farmed together when we lived near Takoradi. My husband gave me two acres of land to farm myself, but I spent all of my time and effort on my husband's farm. He was very controlling with the income earned from the farm, and spent the money on silly things. He was irresponsible with money and often neglected certain expenses, such as the children's school fees. I had little knowledge of the amount of money the farm earned and how my husband would spend the income. I did not benefit from my work and so I began trading to earn an income of my own. With this money, I began to invest in my future by saving money so that I could one day begin a farm. When we moved to Kakasunanka, I started a farm of my own, using my own money and my own manpower.

Jacob's response to Lela's trading and gardening activities reflects a clear dissatisfaction with his wife's decision to withdraw her labour from his farm and to establish a farm of her own account:

Before leaving Takoradi my wife told me of her interest in starting a farm of her own. This confused me since she already spent much of her time on my farm and on her small trading activities, she would not have the time to start of farm of her own. Since my farm provides the food for my family and an income which I use to provide for my family's needs, my wife's first duty is to my farm. But she is willful and doesn't listen.

When we arrived in Kakasunanka I realized that she intended to spend much less of her time on my new farm so that she could tend to her own. You see, my wife has a strong will, so she did not respect my wishes. Today, my wife has a successful garden, but she earns her income at my expense. At one time she spent most of her time working on my farm, now I must hire labour when she refuses to come [to my farm], and so my income suffers. So I suffer while she enjoys her success. She thinks she is very smart and successful ... [but] she forgets what it means to be a good wife and mother. Her income sometimes makes her foolish and willful ... [and] she no longer respects me.

As Lela discusses, women's membership and participation within the local 31st December Women's Group has strengthened both the material and symbolic position and power of women vis-à-vis their husbands in on-going conjugal negotiations:

I do not rely on [my husband] for my land so he cannot control my mind. I speak my mind with him, and tell him how I think money should be spent in the household. You see, he knows that I do not need him to survive and to provide for my family. I think the men in this village are threatened by our women's group because we have a power that we didn't have before, and when I go home to talk with my husband the group is there with me, and he knows this. Do you understand what I mean?

Josephine⁴⁸

I am twenty-six years old and I am married with one child. My husband [Kwame] and I moved to Kakasunanka 3½ years ago from Accra. My husband saw this as an opportunity to lower the expenses of maintaining the household while continuing his business selling used clothes ... I saw it as an opportunity to get into farming, to produce food for the family, and to make an income which I had not been *able* to do in Accra. In Accra I was able to trade small, small, small but I did not earn much money, only enough to pay for some small items for myself and my son.

When asked what she had meant about not being 'able' to work and generate a desired income while living in Accra, Josephine responded:

My husband felt that because I was young and had a young child to care for I should spend my time in the home and not worry myself with business aspirations. In Accra I had no family to assist in household chores and childcare so I needed to take care of these responsibilities on my own, and my husband insisted that he earned sufficient income to meet our family's needs. ... A few years ago, we noticed that it was becoming very expensive to live in Accra so we moved to our present home. I began to notice that many women in our village, such as my neighbor over here, were doing well from growing vegetables and I spoke with my husband about starting a pepper farm. My husband was angry and told me that I would not do the farming. During our first year in Kakasunanka I

⁴⁸ The account of Josephine's and Kwame's experiences are a series of excerpts from two personal interviews, and are presented in their own words.

bothered him many times hoping that he would see that pepper farming would benefit us and the household. When he refused, I started a pepper farm anyway - against his wishes.

Josephine's husband, Kwame, replied that he was concerned that farming would interfere with his wife's ability to meet her roles and responsibilities as a wife, mother, and a woman:

I did not stop my wife from starting the pepper farming, she is too willful and would not listen to me anyway. I only told her that she had other responsibilities to be concerned with. Who would do the cooking, me? No. My business takes me to Accra, so she must take care of the home and our child. You see, in Africa women do these things. So, if she were to spend all of her time farming, when would she do the cooking and other duties? You see all the women in this village ... they forget themselves. They think they know better than men.

Without her husband's consent and support, Josephine describes why she became interested in farming and how she started her pepper business:

I wanted to start my own farm so that I could have my own personal income and savings that my husband could not touch. This income would allow me to care for my child's needs and to prepare for the future. With my own money I will be safe if my husband should ever divorce me. My father divorced my mother when I was young and she was not prepared. She struggled for many years to keep us fed and in clothes and to send us to school. So, you see, it is good for a woman to stand on her own two feet.

When I started my seedling business sister [Rebecca], my neighbor, gave me some of her seedlings to start with, which I planted here around my home. From the sale of my seedlings at the end of the following season, I was able to save enough cedis to rent an acre and a half of land from Michel Camp which I farmed for the first time this season. My friend here [gesturing to her neighbor] helped me to find the land I now farm and to negotiate the cost, and she has helped me to get my farm started. Already I have earned much money from selling seedlings each May and from the sale of fresh pepper during the season. I have complete control over my earnings, although I give money to my husband as he needs it. ... These loans help keep the family peace and enable me to keep doing my pepper. I have invested my earnings with a local *susu* savings network so that I

will have enough money to hire a few labourers for next year. My husband does not help with such expenses, although he is beginning to realize that my pepper is a very profitable business.

Kwame characterizes his wife's financial contributions to household maintenance and to his own personal and professional pursuits as helpful, but nevertheless secondary to his own contributions as the household breadwinner:

You see, in Africa, times are hard and a wife must earn an income and make contributions to the household. A husband cannot be expected to take care of all of the household's needs in today's economy. So she brings in little, little, little when she has money, but it is still the husband who provides for the survival of his family.

As Josephine expresses, the introduction of new family expenses brought on by her son's age and need for education and her mother's illness have created a new set of budgetary circumstances in the household which have, to some extent, provided a sense of legitimation to her new economic activities:

Now that we need to pay for school fees, uniforms and books for my son to get his education [Kwame] has become quietly accepting of my farming ... my husband is not good with his money so I need to save for my son's education. My mother is also getting old and she is frequently ill, and I want to help her... so as you can see, things change and you must change with them.

Margaret⁴⁹

I am 55 years old and I have been gardening for more than twenty years in Kakasunanka. Early in my marriage I farmed with my husband [Samuel] on his land of ten acres which he received from the chief at Gbetseli when we first settled here. Of the ten acres he gave me one acre to farm myself, but, as you know, as his wife I was responsible for working most of the week on his farm, and so my own garden suffered. I spent four days out of

⁴⁹ The account of Margaret's and Samuel's experiences are a series of excerpts from multiple personal interviews, and are presented in their own words.

five⁵⁰ on my husband's farm, and one day on my own. And what do I have to show for it? Nothing. I received no money for my labour ... [and] my husband had little interest in my opinion about how we should spend the farm income. My husband usually ran off with the income earned on the household farm. I never knew what he was doing with the farm income since he was not taking care of his own responsibilities for the children's education and for many other expenses in the household. Eventually I grew tired of his ways. After speaking with my neighbor I decided that since I received no benefit from his farm, I would no longer work on his farm.

When I was thirty-two or thirty-three, I decided to try farming on my own in spite of my husband's disapproval. I wanted to control my own money to be sure that the children's needs were taken care of. I joined the 31st December Women's Group in the village, and through my membership in the group I was able to rent three acres of land cheaply using the money I earn from selling salt. Two years later I rented a second plot of land from Michel Camp with the earnings I had saved. I now farm a total of 5 acres, and I have complete control over my income and my time.

During an interview with both Margaret and her husband Samuel, Margaret was asked if she still provides occasional labour on her husband's farm, she responded:

Yes of course, it is a wife's duty to help with her husband's farm. So, during weeding and harvesting especially, I may spend two or three days per week at his farm. Now that my husband is old, you see, he can do very little so I will help on his farm, and when I am unable to help I will hire labour to tend to his farm.

In her husband's absence, Margaret amplified her response:

If I do not work hard on my husband's farm he will call me a bad wife and mother and I will have difficulty tending to my own interests. I do not want to give him a reason to be angry. So I will work on his farm or hire labour for him in order to keep him quiet. The difference is that now I work on his farm when I want to, when I have the time. My husband cannot demand that I work his farm in the same way ... I control how I

⁵⁰ Farmers in Kakasunanka typically go out to their farms five days out of seven, taking Fridays and Sundays off from farming.

spend my time. Working on his farm when needed keeps him happy and lets me keep doing what I have been doing.⁵¹

As with Josephine, cash transfers from wife to husband purchase a measure of autonomy and control for Margaret. She describes here the meaning of such exchanges in marriage:

... when I give him money for labour or other such things we both benefit. He can take care of his interests and so can I. It keeps him happy so that I can take care of my interests. ... he doesn't always use the money for labour and I do not ask how he spends his money. He does not ask about my dealings either ... he is very smart you see.

Margaret's husband, Samuel, portrays the meaning and importance of such cash transfers somewhat differently:

As the head of my family I must take care of all household expenses such as school fees, medical expenses, clothing and chop money for my wife to go to the market. ... My wife occasionally contributes small amounts for food and clothing but it is the man who takes care of things. So sometimes she gives me money but I pay it back to her.

Although Samuel insists that he takes primary responsibility for the material and financial well-being of the family, Margaret suggests otherwise. As Margaret recalls, her gardening has become an increasingly important activity not only for her own personal sense of autonomy but for the survival and security of the household:

I am responsible for providing for the needs of my husband and children. My husband can be difficult. As I said, he is irresponsible with his money and neglects his family obligations. So it is me who takes care of such things. I am now the husband and the man, you see, he is the wife.

⁵¹ It is important to note that during this portion of the interview, Margaret's gestures and tone (giggling, speaking quietly) suggested that she perceived her actions as cunning and strategic. It was clear that these minor manipulations were significant to Margaret's sense of autonomy and success in business.

Although the “rules of marriage” in any culture or society are embedded within the social norms and ideals of local institutions and structures, they are given practical meaning within and through the day-to-day negotiations of husbands and wives. The experiences of Lela, Josephine, and Margaret reveal that the roles, rights, and responsibilities of wives and husbands are not static and unchanging, nor are the relations between them. Women experience marriage in a multiplicity of ways over the course of their lives and as spouses encounter new opportunities and obstacles (both individually and jointly). In the presence of new social and economic circumstances the rules of marriage are renegotiated and redefined between husbands and wives and the meanings of marriage change for both. Marriage holds different meaning for different women and the ways in which spouses renegotiate and redefine the conjugal contract are diverse.

Marriage and the Conjugal Contract

To better understand women’s daily lives and the diverse ways in which women access, control and use material resources towards the maintenance of the household and the fulfillment of their economic obligations and goals it is crucial to examine their multiple and changing positions within household and conjugal relations and the forms of sharing and exchange that occur between spouses. Although, as Whitehead (1981) argues, it is often assumed that marriage is characterized by a high level of economic cooperation and a pooling of resources between spouses, in Kakasunanka, as in many parts of Africa, conjugal relations are based on principles of exchange rather than pooling. Within conjugal exchange relationships husbands and wives tend to have

“separate purses”. Spouses collaborate in household productive and reproductive activities with specific expectations of labour input, rights of ownership or access to resources and share of, or individual control over, the product of one’s labour.

In Kakasunanka, the first obligation of household membership is to provide labour on household farms as a means to produce sufficient food for household needs. Household farms grow one or more staple crops (corn, cassava, beans), and the staple crop is treated differently from other crops in the sense that it ought not to be sold. Its production and distribution symbolize the common interests of household members, yet it remains under the real and symbolic control of the household head (also see Whitehead 1981). Household farms are worked primarily by household members and by hired labour. Whereas wage and exchange labour is ‘paid for’ with food and drink, or in cash or kind, family labour is unremunerated because family members are seen to be contributing to the production of food for home consumption and to overall household sustenance. For wives, and other women in the household, the provision of family labour on the household farm is also conceptually tied to their ability to access to land through their husbands. Typically, women are obligated to work as many as five days per week on the household farm and are responsible for the bulk of the planting, weeding, harvesting, and post-productive tasks, often leaving little time for their domestic labour responsibilities and women’s private farms and other enterprises.

In return for their unremunerated labour contributions, wives are granted usufruct rights to a portion of their husbands’ lands. This constitutes an exchange relationship between spouses: labour for land. Lela, for example, contributed labour toward the

maintenance of her husband's farm in return for use rights to a portion of the household lands at one time in their marriage. Although Lela maintained a small farm (2 acres) of her own, her first "duty", according to her husband, Jacob, is to the household farm as it provides for the daily sustenance and well-being of the household.

Among wives, and household dependents, the provision of unremunerated labour in farming shows an interesting difference between household farms and private farms, the crucial point of which is that the meaning and extent of a wife's obligation to work a "household farm" differs somewhat from her obligation to provide unremunerated labour on a private farm under the control of her husband. Although men can use the unremunerated labour of their wives on private farms, this obligation is more flexible and negotiable than a wife's obligation to a household farm. Between household and private farms the material and symbolic meaning of women's labour changes; a conceptual boundary is drawn here between production for subsistence and production for sale. On a household farm, men have virtually absolute control over the unremunerated labour of their wives for the purposes of subsistence production and household survival. On private farms, however, the bulk of the farms produce is typically sold and the income generated is under the control of the individual farmer. Since the relative contribution of husbands' and wives' private farms to household maintenance is perceived as equal, a wife's labour obligation to her husband's private farm is understood as less significant and enforceable as she has a responsibility to, and interest in, the success of her own garden.

Private farms are individually 'owned' by both male and female members of a household, and are primarily used for growing cash crops, such as vegetables, although

some supplementary subsistence crops are also grown on them. The rights of husbands and wives to the produce of the other's private fields or to the income derived from the sale of that produce is severely limited. Individual farmers exercise autonomous control over the income generated on private farms and over the way in which earnings are used, saved, and/or invested. As Josephine remarks, "I wanted to start my own farm so that I could have my own personal income and savings that my husband could not touch". The result of these individual enterprises is that women and men have access to separate resources and income which they do not pool or share with each other.

Although individuals have the right to spend their money how they choose, this right is tempered by each spouse's respective economic responsibilities. Using their individual income and resources, spouses take care of their own gender-specific responsibilities (both material and financial) which include, but also extend beyond, the immediate household (Abu 1983). Divided financial responsibilities between spouses, according to Fapohunda (1988:150), imply that although spouses jointly contribute to the financial well-being of the household, they do so in a relatively restricted, well-defined, and socially recognized manner - in other words they have separate allocative priorities. Maintaining separate income streams enables both spouses to meet their respective social obligations within kinship and extended family systems, and allows women to invest in other social networks, which improve their relative bargaining power within marital relationships and provide a measure of insurance in the case of marital disruption or divorce (Oppong 1974a; 1974b).

In most marriages there is a marked division of financial responsibilities between husbands and wives that are based on local gender ideology and social norms: men are typically expected to assume responsibility for major periodic expenditures such as school fees, clothing, housing, and health care, while women bear the cost of provisioning the household on a daily basis by providing food, other household necessities, additional clothing, and children's pocket money. As one married woman remarks:

I am responsible for purchasing most of the food my family requires, and for preparing this food for my husband and children. From the income I earn from my garden and trading activities I purchase most of the clothing for my children including special clothes for Christmas and other special days, and I purchase clothing and other necessities for myself. My husband is supposed to take care of the children's school fees which includes their books and uniforms, and he is responsible for the family's hospital expenses. My husband is irresponsible with his money though ... [and] he rarely meets his family responsibilities. In many cases I must use my income to take care of his responsibilities.

Many women and men in Kakasunanka have expressed opinions regarding the "ideal" roles and responsibilities of the genders. However, as the experiences of Lela, Josephine, and Margaret reflect, social norms are often at odds with daily practice; gender roles and responsibilities are flexible, dynamic, and subject to manipulation and renegotiation within the context of the conjugal contract. Husbands and wives enter into 'contracts' with specific expectations of the respective roles, rights, and obligations of each spouse. In the presence of changing economic circumstances and in situations in which one or both spouses neglect, or otherwise default on, specific responsibilities the result is the creation, or escalation, of material conflicts between wives and husbands. The remainder

of the chapter examines the gender politics of labour and resource struggles in Kakasunanka, and the symbolic contestations which constitute these struggles.

Gender Politics and the Renegotiation of the Conjugal Contract

Since the introduction of economic reforms in Ghana more than a decade ago, and the expansion of cash-dependent households which resulted, there has been a marked escalation in local gender politics centered around the renegotiation of the conjugal contract at both the household and village levels in Kakasunanka. At issue is the widespread withdrawal of women's labour from household farms and the subsequent intensification of women's involvement in market gardening on individually-acquired lands. These transformations have produced a complex set of struggles of resources (particularly land and labour) and over their meaning. Marital conflict and negotiation have, in turn, had significant and severe implications for the ways in which women access, control, and use resources in their gardens and supplementary enterprises.

The politics of labour

Many of the women of Kakasunanka and neighboring villages are known locally and by some district agricultural extension officers as the women who, in reaction to their husband's control over their agricultural labour and the proceeds of household farm production, "divorced" their husband's farms. Although women did not collectively divorce their husbands in any legal sense, the widespread withdrawal of women's agricultural labour from household farms and the subsequent intensification of women's

involvement in cash-cropping on individually-acquired lands marks a process of strategic and symbolic resistance to male authority and to the terms of the conjugal contract.

Given the rising cost of living experienced locally, the source of women's opposition is the growing tendency of men to default on many of their financial responsibilities, particularly education and medical expenditures, while simultaneously misappropriating and centralizing the proceeds of women labour on household farms. Women have drawn on public discourse regarding gender norms, such as the ideology of "male as breadwinner", as a way of challenging the ability of men to fulfill their "customary" roles as fathers and husbands. Having assumed many of her husband's economic responsibilities for household maintenance and family welfare, Margaret, for example, charges that she is the household's primary breadwinner: "I am now the husband and the man, you see, he is the wife". Wives call into question men's roles as economic "providers", as a way of legitimating the withdrawal of their labour from household farms and the intensification of their market gardening activities outside the material and symbolic control of their husbands. One woman legitimates her actions by charging that the authority (and irresponsibility) of husbands renders many wives ill-equipped to meet the growing financial needs of the household:

... my husband is very bad with money, drinking away any profits that his farm generates or spending it in secret on his own pursuits. His farm is supposed to benefit our family by producing food to eat, instead he grows more and more pepper and specialty vegetables⁵² for sale and hoards the income. Husbands are not supposed to be selfish ... [but] he rarely takes care of his responsibilities for providing for the education and welfare of his children. He does not provide for us as he should so I no longer work on my husband's farm. I just stopped!

⁵² Used here, specialty vegetables refer to those vegetables cultivated and sold to the urban elite and in some cases to international markets. Specialty or exotic vegetables include lettuce, carrots, and onions.

Many of the women in the village suggested that a wife's obligation to provide labour on her husband's farm rested on whether or not his farm benefited the family either by providing food for consumption or generating an income to be used to purchase food and other household necessities, and to pay for the education of their children. This, in turn, raises the question of what constitutes a 'household farm'. Many women insisted that their husband allocated most of their land and labour to the production of cash crops (local and exotic vegetables) leaving only a small portion of their fields to the cultivation of subsistence crops (typically corn and cassava). The income derived from the household farm remained under the exclusive control of men, and despite their considerable labour contributions wives claim that they had limited access to farm earnings and little decision-making power regarding the disposition of farm income. Wives charge that their husbands were the sole beneficiaries of the 'household farm', and should a household farm be used for a husband's exclusive personal gain, a wife has only a limited obligation to provide labour on his farm. As Margaret's recollections demonstrate, at one time in her marriage she spent most of each week on her husband's farm, but the family did not benefit from farm earnings. According to Margaret, she eventually "grew tired of his ways", and decided that since she and her family derived little benefit from her husband's farm, she would no longer provide labour on his farm.

In response to women's claims that men have failed to meet their responsibilities as husbands, and that household farms, in fact, double as men's private enterprises, men charge that their wives have unrealistic expectations of their husband's income and what

such earnings can provide, insisting that all income derived from the household farm is reinvested in the household. As one husband insists:

I farm ten acres of land, and as the head of my household I decide how the earnings from the farm are best spend. My wife complains, complains, complains. She sees that her neighbor has a new dress and accuses me of cheating her and calls me a bad husband, but she doesn't realize that the cost of things is going up, and our money is small. The household farm benefits us all, and so my wife is obligated to work on the farm, but she is influenced by the other women in the village and so she continues to oppose me, calling me a bad husband.

Many men in Kakasunanka, it seems, strategically use the language of the "household farm" as a means of commanding and utilizing the unremunerated labour of wives and other household members while retaining exclusive rights to the income generated from farm production as though it were a private farm (see Carney and Watts 1990).

As has been documented elsewhere in Africa, women who find themselves unable to negotiate control over the proceeds of their labour may opt to withdraw their labour from household/men's farms and reinvest their labour where they are able to exert control over its proceeds (Carney and Watts 1990; Mackenzie 1995). In Kenya, for example, Mackenzie illustrates that without commensurate remuneration for their labour input on household coffee farms, women withdraw their labour from their own *shamba* (household farm) and travel to nearby coffee estates where they have direct control over their wages (1995:20). Rather than enter into wage labour arrangements, women in Kakasunanka, have withdrawn their labour from household fields and intensified their individual and collective involvement in cash-cropping on individually acquired fields. As private farms, women retain exclusive control over the proceeds of their labour since the rights of men

to the produce of their wives' fields or to the income derived from the sale of produce is severely limited. The proliferation of female market gardening and women's supplementary business and trading activities, as well as women's collective initiatives are, thus, evidence of women's symbolic challenge to male authority and to conjugal labour demands without commensurate remuneration.

On an individual basis, women have withdrawn their labour from household farms and intensified their participation in cash-crop production where they have direct control over the proceeds of their labour. The intensification of female market gardening has enabled women to fulfill new budgetary responsibilities (those "neglected" by their husbands) and to provide them with a measure of economic autonomy. Since women's access to land through marriage is tied to their customary labour obligations on household farms, in many cases they have also relinquished their rights to land they receive through their husbands in favour of acquiring land through extra-household social and market channels. Forfeiting their rights to a portion of their husband's land constitutes another aspect of women's symbolic resistance to their husband's authority and to their dependence on conjugal relations for economic security and access to material resources.

Just as the withdrawal of women's labour from household fields constitutes symbolic opposition to male authority within the household, women's resistance has also been expressed collectively in Kakasunanka. As a group, women have established a communal garden on land which they acquired through the national-level 31st December Women's Movement (parent organization). The proceeds of the communal garden are

under the collective control of all participating members⁵³, with a portion of the garden income distributed equally among individual members and the remainder re-invested in the group. Women have also been able to rent individual irrigated fields at a substantially reduced seasonal rate through participation in the 31st December women's group.

Membership not only provides women with access to material resources required in market gardening, but with the political resources of the national political Movement and its close ties to the state. Although the 31st December Women's Movement is registered in Ghana as a "non-governmental" organization (NGO), it has close political connections to the Rawlings government - the national leader of the Movement is Nana Rawlings, the wife of J.J. Rawlings, the current Prime Minister of Ghana. It is these strong political ties with the state and the visibility and mainstream popularity of the Movement which have lent a strong sense of legitimacy at the state level to women's local action. Through group membership, women (both individually and collectively) have been able to draw on the legitimating symbols of the state and the national political Movement to mobilize local and state resources, to legitimate their interests, and to strengthen their relative position and bargaining power vis-à-vis their husbands within on-going conjugal negotiations. To recall Lela's powerful words:

I do not rely on [my husband] for my land so he cannot control my mind. I speak my mind with him ... You see, he knows that I do not need him to survive and to provide for my family. I think the men in this village are threatened by our women's group because we have a power that we didn't

⁵³ Not all women in the community are members of the local 31st December Women's Group. Of the women's group members, not all have opted to participate in the group farm because of competing labour obligations, namely the maintenance of their own individual farms and domestic labour obligations. As such the proceeds of the group farm are to be equally distributed among all members who contribute labour to the farm. Typically, women go out to the group farm one afternoon per week.

have before, and when I go home to talk with my husband the group is there with me, and he knows this. Do you understand what I mean?

“Bad” and “willful” wives: renegotiating roles, obligations, and meanings

Before the intensification of female market gardening in Kakasunanka, most wives claim that they were dependent, either in whole or in part, on their husband's income for their own survival and well-being. Although most women engaged in casual petty trading early in their marriages, men, for the most part, controlled what little cash flowed in and out of the household because of their dominant position in cash-crop production and in off-farm employment. Control over income and its disposition is a potentially powerful economic lever which men could, and often did, use to “discipline” their wives (Carney and Watts 1990; Schroeder 1996). Many women claimed that prior to establishing their own gardens, they were at the economic mercy of their husbands, and as such, “... would need to beg to get only half of what [they] actually needed”. Since insubordination meant “going without”, most women were reluctant, and ill-equipped in most cases, to challenge male authority in the household.

Migration to Kakasunanka, and to the peri-urban zone more generally, reduced the significance of these sources of leverage. The presence of multiple land tenure systems (customary and statutory) and categories of land, has created new options and opportunities for women to access land (and labour) outside of marriage and the control of one's husband⁵⁴. Since Ghanaian women have a long history of involvement and success in small business and trading networks (Clark 1993; Robertson 1984), those

⁵⁴ This argument is explored in greater detail in Chapter Six.

interested in gardening have been able to generate the income required to rent land and hire labour - the means of production - without the assistance and support of their husbands. In a very real sense, women have drawn on their popular roles as traders and "market women" to establish and invest in their controversial (and often unpopular) roles as market gardeners. In a number of households, women's incomes now exceed their husbands, producing discord between women and men. Recalling the words of Lela's husband, Jacob, "My wife has a successful garden, but she earns her income at my expense ... she forgets what it means to be a good wife and mother". As a result of women's increased incomes, male authority has been reduced and the extent of women's economic influence has been expanded dramatically. As Schroeder argues in reference to female market gardeners in The Gambia, the simple fact that women can now largely provide for themselves constitutes a serious challenge to the material and symbolic bases of male power (1996:74-75).

The response of men to the withdrawal of women's labour from household farms and the intensification of women's involvement in market gardening has been complex, and at times, contradictory. In one sense, men have responded to women's new economic roles and responsibilities, and their participation in social networks outside the household, by openly expressing their resentment and disapproval of such activities. Men refer to woman as "bad" and "willful" wives, pointing to women's shirking of their social responsibilities around the home (cooking, cleaning and childcare) and their failure to fulfill their labour obligations on household farms. Few women, in fact, neglect their domestic labour and childcare responsibilities in order to complete gardening activities.

Women organize their gardening work around their domestic chores and, where possible, call on siblings (particularly sisters) and young children to assist with daily household tasks. The source of men's' resentment was, in fact, their wives' *absence*: from the homestead and, of course, the household farm. The widespread withdrawal of women's labour from their husbands' farms spurred both public and private discord as men accused their wives of "forgetting themselves" and their place as women. Men's discursive disputes over labour were eclipsed only by their agitation over the startling success of women's gardens and the expansion of women's economic influence within the household and political influence at the village level. Reflecting on Jacob's words above, good wives do not neglect their obligations, disobey their husbands, exert their will, or tend to their own aspirations, nor are they meant to succeed financially in spite of, or at the expense of, their husbands. By calling into question the fitness and devotion of women as wives and mothers, men in Kakasunanka attempt to turn the tables on their wives in order to assume a superior moral position from which they can wield leverage in on-going marital negotiations, a point Schroeder (1996) makes with reference to The Gambia.

Although in one respect women's gardening activities have bred contempt among husbands who view women's incomes and new-found economic influence as an outright (and deliberate) challenge to male authority, men acknowledge that women's garden (and supplementary small business) incomes are important to household survival. Husbands argue that since "times are hard" economically, "a wife must earn an income and make contributions to the household". A small number of husbands go so far as to claim that

their wives earned considerable income from gardening but were irresponsible in the allocation of their earnings. Husbands employed the language of “the good of the family” to legitimate their moral position:

We are not troubled by our wives’ gardens; it is their irresponsible use of their earnings which concern us. My wife earns a steady income from her gardens but spends it outside the household.

Here, once more, men turn the tables on their wives. Men all but suggest that it was, in fact, men’s idea (and not the insatiable will of their wives) that women enter into market gardening to generate an income. Through men’s discursive means women’s financial contributions become new “obligations” which wives have neglected to fulfill. Men thus reclaim the superior moral position and women remain “bad wives”. Men also make such claims, in part, because they are not prepared to make a real or symbolic gesture that would constitute divorce, so husbands make accommodations which enable them to contest their wives actions while remaining “invested” in their marriages. Given the volatility of marital relations, wives needed to win over their husbands in order to sustain their garden activities into the long-term; they did so through the strategic deployment of their labour and garden incomes.

The price of autonomy⁵⁵: buying goodwill

For women’s participation in market-gardening and gardener’s social networks to endure, wives recognized the importance of securing their husband’s support. Although few husbands openly, or publicly, support their wives’ activities, women needed only

⁵⁵ See Schroeder (1996).

their husband's passive (or partial) acceptance to make their garden's sustainable. To that end, most female gardeners supply occasional labour on household farms, supply husbands with cash loans, and engage in diverse forms of "ego-stroking" in order to "promote harmony [within conjugal relations], to overcome [husbands'] resentment, and to encourage their husbands to relax control over their [the wives'] labour" (Schroeder 1996:76).

Although most female gardeners have withdrawn their labour from household farms in order to establish their own gardens, the withdrawal of labour is in no way absolute. Most women with gardens of their own acknowledge spending as many as two to three days per week in their husband's fields. In her husband's presence, Margaret goes so far as to insist that "yes of course, it is a wife's duty to help with her husband's farm" (contradicting much of her earlier testimony). Thus despite the withdrawal of women's labour and women's casual and overt forms of resistance, women continue to provide occasional labour on their husbands' farms and publicly humble themselves before male authority. While this appears in some respects as capitulation on the part of gardeners, it can also be read as both strategic and symbolic deference designed to purchase the freedom on movement and social interaction that gardening and marketing entail (see Schroeder 1996:70). Recalling Margaret's words:

If I do not work hard on my husband's farm he will call be a bad wife and mother and I will have difficulty tending to my own interests ... So I work on his farm ... to keep him quiet.

The provision of occasional labour and public ego-stroking enable women to avoid deliberate insults from husbands attempting to impede their gardening activities, while in

a very real sense, allowing men to “save face” as husbands in the public eye. Women’s labour contributions on household farms do not, however, interfere with women’s ability to manage their gardens and other enterprises. Whereas at one time wives were obligated to allocate the bulk of their labour time to the household farm, today women exercise greater control over how and where to allocate their labour, and contribute labour to the household farm when it is “convenient” for them. This constitutes a significant shift in the balance of power in marriage:

The difference is that now I work on his farm when I want to, when I have the time. My husband cannot demand that I work on his farm in the same way ... I control how I spend my time.

When it is inconvenient for women to divert their labour away from their gardens despite their husbands labour demands, many gardeners provide cash loans to their husbands to hire labour for the completion of critical farm tasks. Not unlike women’s provision of occasional labour on household farms, such cash loans constitute strategic actions on the part of women to appease their husbands while managing their own interests.

The majority of women in the study claimed to provide occasional, and sometimes regular, cash gifts to their husbands as a means of ensuring their continued support. The meaning of such cash gifts, however, differed from household to household. According to most husbands, the transfer of money from wife to husband constituted a “loan” and not a “gift”. As a loan, husbands insisted that they routinely repaid any money given to them by their wives, thereby conceptually transforming this transaction into a form of “exchange” rather than a gift or favour which implies a sense of obligation or “owing” by a husband toward his wife. In a small number of households, men acknowledge such cash

transfers as gifts, but in either case, men are acutely aware of what such exchanges purchase for their wives. Although it is likely that men attempt to capitalize on women's "goodwill" by overtly petitioning their wives for cash (under the threat of discord and a husband's interference if a wife refuses), it is difficult to determine the extent to which husbands in Kakasunanka actively pursue opportunities to gain access to their wives' income (see Schroeder 1996). In either case, it is clear that women's autonomy and freedom of movement and social interaction come at a price. Although the provision of occasional labour and cash gifts may appear in some respects as capitulation, they may also be seen as a series of strategic and calculated manoeuvres designed to "keep the family peace" and ensure the long-term sustainability of women's gardens and supplementary businesses.

Although one might expect that among households in which husbands are not involved in farming (but are engaged in wage employment in the formal sector) the same kinds of confrontations are likely to be absent, similar processes of negotiation and mutual accommodation exist between husbands and wives. Women have waged a discursive battle against husbands who, as a result of reduced wages, underemployment or outright negligence, have defaulted on many of their financial responsibilities as husbands and fathers. In response to new economic burdens, women have established and intensified their involvement in market gardening, and like those households in which husbands farm, women's enhanced economic influence has spurred a process of negotiation and mutual accommodation (loans = freedom) between husbands and wives over the terms of the conjugal contract.

Conclusion

The diversity of women's experiences with marriage vis-à-vis access to resources and the negotiability of the conjugal contract between wives and husbands clearly call into question the generalizability of the meaning of marriage as a social institution across cultures, classes, and social circumstances. The processes of marital conflict and renegotiation, expressed at both the household and village levels in Kakasunanka, have had significant and severe implications for the ways in which women access, control, and use resources - particularly land. In order to forge for themselves a sense of autonomy and self-sufficiency, women have withdrawn much of their labour from household farms, and in so doing, have forfeited their rights to land through marriage. However, as I argue in greater detail in the next chapter, the plurality of legal structures and institutions in the peri-urban zone has created new options and opportunities for women to access land outside of marriage and the control of one's husband. To secure access to the means of production outside marriage women invest in extra-household social relationships, further calling into question conceptualizations of households as autonomous units, where marriage is the defining relationship between the genders and conjugal relations are privileged over other types of relations and strategies.

Chapter Six
Investing in People:
Social Networks and Women's Access to Resources

A woman's ability to initiate and expand market gardening enterprises outside the immediate control of her husband has depended significantly on her ability to gain access to the means of production - land, labour and credit - through extra-household channels. Although women have a socially-sanctioned right to hold and use land through marriage, these rights come with obligations to provide unremunerated labour on household farms under the terms of the conjugal contract. Dissatisfied with the control husbands exercise over the proceeds of their labour, many women in Kakasunanka have withdrawn a portion of their labour from household farms, thereby forfeiting the majority of their rights to household lands. Women are able, and willing, to forfeit their rights to land through marriage because they have opportunities to access land, labour, and credit outside the household. Women in Kakasunanka maintain and invest in special friendships, savings and trading networks, exchange labour groups, church groups, and the local 31st December Women's Group within the village, and also maintain relationships with extended family and friends living in Accra and elsewhere. Such options and opportunities empower those frustrated by inequitable resource relations in the household, to withdraw their labour (and rights to land) and seek a better deal elsewhere.

The plurality of legal structures in the peri-urban area of Accra has created new opportunities for women and men to negotiate rights to land through participation in a variety of social institutions (marriage, kinship, formal women's groups) and informal networks and through market-based transactions. The plurality of legal structures and

institutions, each characterized by its own set of rules, principles, and accepted procedures, overlap locally, to produce a complex web of options and opportunities for women to negotiate rights to land. Through the re-interpretation and re-invention of customary law, women have been able to create new spaces within which to manoeuvre and stake claims to land. Through careful manipulation of rights and meaning, women, individually and collectively, have been able to effect some control over land outside of marriage and kinship relations. Others have gained rights to land, recognized and legitimized under statutory law, through the modern medium of local collective organization, registered women's groups, and drawing on the material and political resources of the national 31st December Women's Movement. Under statutory law, women in a position to mobilize the necessary capital have also gained access to land and labour through market transactions (rental and other land tenancy arrangements, hiring wage labour).

As with land, women invest in social relations as a way of diversifying their opportunities and channels of access to different kinds of labour resources and formal and informal credit opportunities. With diverse options, women invest in those relationships which offer them the best possible deal given their particular social and material interests, and as new circumstances present themselves, women re-evaluate their position and, again, invest their social and economic resources where they yield the greatest benefit.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the iterative nature of women's participation and "investment" in social relationships and institutions through which they attempt to negotiate rights to resources. In order to go beyond structuralist analyses of

social institutions as fixed sets of rules, principles, and structures, the chapter draws on women's own words and experiences to reveal the flexibility and negotiability of the social rules and relations which constitute and transform such institutions. By investing in people, it is argued, women individually and collectively are in a stronger position to exert influence in local social and political relations and to mobilize both state and local resources, making it possible, in both material and ideological terms, for them to invest in their gardens outside of the material and symbolic control of their husbands.

“Wealth in People”: Investing in Relationships

The ability of women to withdraw the majority of their labour from household farms and relinquish their “customary” rights to land through marriage has depended not only on their material wealth and ability to mobilize income, but on their participation in a variety of social institutions and relationships through which they can negotiate rights to resources. Women in Kakasunanka diversify their income-earning strategies which enable them to generate and mobilize considerable financial resources with which to rent land and labour. Women also invest in social relationships which create opportunities for women to engage in negotiation and struggle over rights to resources (Berry 1997).

Patterns of resource allocation and management are conditioned by, and mediated through, local institutions. In this context, ‘institutions’ refer not only to fixed, consensual “norms” about who gets to participate in making claims to land and labour but also to the processes whereby such norms are themselves contested and redefined (Berry 1997). Through local social relations women pursue their own interests, challenge what is

accepted in the eyes of the community, and renegotiate rules and boundaries which they find inadequate or unacceptable in new circumstances. The following narratives demonstrate the flexible and iterative nature of women's investments in social relationships and institutions and the changing meaning of different relationships vis-à-vis access to material resources and social power.

Jane⁵⁶

I am forty-three years old and I have been the organizer of the local 31st December Women's Group for the past seven years. The purpose of our group is to support women's initiatives, to enhance women's income-earning capacities, and to improve women's access to resources such as land, labour, and credit. Our group has made our village visible to those outside and brought development opportunities to the community. Our group has given women a powerful voice and has improved our ability to represent ourselves and our interests in our marriages, in the village, with the government's Agricultural Department⁵⁷, and with the Agricultural Development Bank.

As Jane describes, women's membership in the 31st December Women's Group has enabled women to represent themselves and negotiate their interests both within and outside of the village and, in turn, to secure access to productive resources:

Through the district 31st December Women's Group we have been able to acquire over sixty acres of irrigated land which has been leased from Michel Camp. Individually, woman could not do such things. Of the sixty acres, most is rented by individual group members for their private gardens at four thousand cedis per acre. To rent irrigated land outside the group would cost a woman in Kakasunanka ten, sometimes fifteen, thousand cedis because the soldiers would take advantage of you as a woman, thinking you are stupid. As a group we are stronger and better

⁵⁶ The account of Jane's experiences are a series of excerpts from multiple personal interviews, and are presented here in her own words. For the purposes of anonymity her name, and the names of all other informants whose accounts I include in this chapter, have been changed.

⁵⁷ Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), Crop Services Department.

able to negotiate such things. So we receive irrigated land at a cheaper rent through the group and our use of specific fields is guaranteed from year to year.

The remainder of the land has been used by the group to establish a communal onion garden. Participating members contribute their labour to the communal garden each Tuesday, although not all group members currently participate because of their other responsibilities around the home and on their individual gardens. We started our onion garden in 1994 after we received onion seeds from the Agricultural Department. That year, we had a poor harvest because we received the seeds late in the season and missed the rains. After this, as you can imagine, we had a debt to pay back. To pay the debt each woman in the group contributed some of their earnings, and the following year, that is 1995, we received another bag of seeds from the Agricultural Department. Again the crop failed because the hot weather caused the nurseries to burn. We paid back our debt the following season, and this year we received onion seeds which are doing very well. With our combined manpower women can farm larger fields and earn greater incomes than they would on their own. Women can only receive a loan if they are organized as a group, so group membership helps women to receive credit, inputs, and extension advice from the government. You are not recognized if you are not organized. As a group we are also better able to pay back our debts because the amounts are less severe and we encourage each other to contribute.

In addition to accessing land, their organization as a collective has made women visible to government institutions, conferred on them considerable power and prestige as a collective, and enabled them to access credit:

We are also in the process of receiving a loan from the Agricultural Development Bank. Banks do not lend to individual women, but as a group women can be recognized by banks and given loans. Before we can receive the loan, each member must contribute one thousand cedis per week for nine weeks as collateral for the bank. The group must provide a total collateral of 270,000 cedis to receive a loan of 1.8 million cedis. Each participating member must continue to contribute the one thousand cedis per week until the loan is paid off to the bank. The loan is technically being given to traders, since farmers are considered too risky. But since most of us are both gardeners and traders we can apply for the loan as "traders" and use the loan money on our gardens or as we see fit. We use our daily trading incomes to pay the one thousand cedis per week for the loan and when we receive the loan we will invest it into our

gardens. As long we pay back our loan to the bank no one should be concerned with how we use the money.

Outside of the formal women's group, women also organize themselves into networks for the purposes of providing exchange labour on women's gardens and establishing investment and savings groups. Such networks provide women with relatively stable channels of access to resources which they are not able to secure through marriage :

... women also organize themselves outside the 31st December Women's Group. Since women cannot depend on their husbands, it is important that they depend on each other. The women in our church group often help in each other's gardens. Whenever I need to, I invite my church members to assist me in my garden and I prepare food and drinks for them in exchange. I can usually call on them each Saturday after church when they are all gathered together. This kind of exchange is very important for women with limited income because we do not need to hire labour and pay a daily wage. To hire four labourers to work on my farm for one full day of harvesting I would pay twenty thousand cedis per acre. Not everyone has this kind of money. When the group comes to my garden I cook for them and provide them with drinks ... I do not pay the group with money. This allows us to spend our money on our children and on our other businesses or to save more for the future. So I call on them when I need help, and when they call on me I come.

I can also depend on my friends and neighbors for small loans when money is short and to invest our money together in small *susu* savings groups. Sometimes they may not be able to help you because they are also having difficulties, however you can usually trust that someone will assist you. You can use this money to hire labour when your friends are not available or to purchase fertilizers when they are needed. These friends are very important to me because they help in my garden and with money from time to time ... I would suffer without them.

Brazine relies considerably on her friendships with women locally for access to resources such as land and garden inputs. These alliances are not based on principles of female altruism or "sisterhood" but are, in fact, relationships based on reciprocity or exchange:

I have many friendships throughout the village ... [and] as women we help each other whenever we are able. Through your friends you may be able to get land or inputs such as fertilizers and seeds. I have acquired four acres of land which I rent through our women's group. As a group member, I have been able to get irrigated land which I could not do as one woman. For each acre of irrigated land I pay only 4000 cedis. Irrigated land is best for our gardens, but irrigated land is short in the village and it can be very expensive. The district 31st December Group has represented us well, as a group we have been able to rent irrigated land for our gardens and we can hold onto these gardens from year to year.

I also received three acres of land from an elderly woman in the village. The woman has lived in the village for many years and her husband received twenty acres of land from the chief when they first settled here. Now that her husband is dead and she is too old to farm such large fields she has given me three acres to plant. She knows of my situation and was kind enough to help me. Each season I give her some of my pepper in return for this land, so she also benefits. With the land that my friend gave me and the land I rent through the group, I now maintain many gardens and earn much income. You see, I do not have the money to rent seven acres, so this gift of land was very important to my ability to provide for my family.

My husband has trouble getting contracts as a mason and so he cannot help me to purchase necessities for the family or for my gardens. Some times I have difficulty purchasing seeds and fertilizers during the farming season. If you go the Agricultural Department at the Ministry for fertilizers or seeds you must purchase a large bag which is usually very expensive, and if you go to only buy, say, a can of seeds, it is not worth the trip because you have to pay to travel to and from Accra. So my neighbor buys a large bag of seeds when she goes to Accra, and I buy seeds from her by the can for only a small cost. This is very helpful since I usually do not have the money required to purchase a bag of seeds or to pay for the transport to and from Accra. And since she is my friend I pay only a small amount for

⁵⁸ The account of Brazine's experiences are a series of excerpts from two personal interviews and a personal narrative, and are presented here in her own words.

the seeds. I do the same for fertilizers. When I hear that someone I know has purchased fertilizer, I go and ask her if I can buy a small amount. If you do not have the money at the time, most friends will let you pay when you get the money from your trading. Women are more flexible than the Agric. people [sic].

Women's relationships are neither fixed nor stable as women are continuously reevaluating their needs and interests and cultivating new relationships and networks to satisfy their changing needs:

In addition to my gardens I also make and sell *kenkey* and fried fish as I mentioned to you before. I am interested in expanding my business with some women from the group so that we may increase our earnings while lowering our individual costs such as buying the fish. These additional earnings will be very helpful since my husband has not been able to pay for the children's school fees ... now I can take care of these expenses. By joining our *kenkey* businesses we can also lower the amount of labour time required to keep our businesses going, which is very important. When we work together we also give each other motivation and support which, as you know, is very important for women who are struggling.

Ena⁵⁹

Women's interest and investment in social relationships and networks as a means of securing access to resources and support are particularly significant, in both material and symbolic terms, among women from especially vulnerable households. Ena, a single parent and head of household, describes the meaning of membership and participation in the local women's group:

Since my divorce I have been responsible for most household expenses myself. I have to pay for many things - my children's school fees, hospital expenses, food, clothing, and other necessities - and the cost of these items continues to rise. I cannot keep up ... to rent land is also very expensive here. I rent two acres of land from a soldier at Michel Camp, I pay 10,000 cedis per acre each season. Renting land from the soldiers at Michel Camp

⁵⁹ The account of Ena's experiences are a series of excerpts from two personal interviews, and are presented here in her own words.

can be difficult because the soldiers take advantage of you and charge you extraordinary rents. But rented land can be good. You do not need a husband to rent land; you do not need a husband to speak on your behalf. If you have money from your trading activities you can rent land.

I also got four acres of land from an elderly woman [Gifty] in Kakasunanka who took pity on me. This friend gave me the farm so that her land does not lay idle. In return for the land I give her some of my pepper and beans once they are harvested. With this land and the land from the 31st group I can grow what my family needs to eat and I can grow pepper to sell at the market, and I do not need to depend only on Michel Camp for land. I keep both lands because when you are struggling it is important to have options.

It is also difficult for women who are alone to get credit. As a single woman without a husband and without collateral of any kind the banks would laugh at me if I were to apply for a loan. I joined the 31st group so that I could get a loan. As a group women are powerful and get what they want. Banks lend to women who are organized, so I joined the group to get credit to expand my gardening.

In addition to women's social networks outside the household, women also rely on immediate and extended family relations for access to resources, labour, and other forms of support:

Soon after my divorce I called upon my sisters to come and live with me and assist me around the home, and in the garden. My sisters take care of most of our domestic chores such as cooking and cleaning, and they care for the children so that I can spend as much time as possible in my garden. Because I can spend much of my time in the garden, I do not need to hire labour often, and this saves me money. In return for all of their help and support, I provide my sisters with a roof over their head and with food in their bowls. So, we help each other.

The narratives of Jane, Brazine, and Ena suggest that women invest in diverse social relationships not to reproduce stable, consistent relationships or to guarantee specific outcomes, but to create spaces within which to manoeuvre and negotiate rights to

material resources such as land, labour, and credit required in market gardening and to strengthen their position and power within local social and political relations. Each relationship affords women different opportunities to access specific resources, and each is based on specific sets of rules and obligations to be fulfilled. As women assess and re-evaluate their needs and interests, in response to changing circumstances, they manoeuvre strategically within and across multiple social boundaries drawing on those relationships which offer the material and political resources desired on the terms that women are able or willing to fulfill. As the individual and collective material interests of women shift so too do the function and meaning of women's social networks and other alliances.

Rights to Land: Legal Pluralism in the Peri-Urban Zone

In Kakasunanka, customary and statutory legal systems coexist to create a plurality of legal structures. Rights to the means of production are, therefore, defined and renegotiated within multiple arenas of struggle, in terms of both 'customary' rights and statutory law (See Mackenzie 1990). The plurality of legal institutions, each characterized by its own set of rules, principles, and accepted procedures, overlap locally, to produce a complex web of options and opportunities for women to negotiate rights to land through participation in a variety of social institutions (marriage, formal women's groups) and informal networks and through market-based transactions. In order to understand how women have been able to gain access to land through customary and statutory legal

structures, it is necessary to examine the local history of politics over land and property rights in the peri-urban area of Accra.

The politics of land rights in Kakasunanka: 1948-1997

The land in and around Kakasunanka belongs to the customary landholding group of the Kpone stool⁶⁰. Prior to the late 1940s, the area on which the village now thrives, was undeveloped forest and scrub land. In 1948, according to local testimonies of village elders and local chiefs of Kakasunanka⁶¹ and Gbetseli (See Map II), a small group of families from Ada petitioned the Kpone chief for access to local stool lands. As “strangers”, those who are not members of the customary landholding group, they could not occupy a land-owning community’s land as a ‘right’, and required an express grant from the head of the community. Early settlers were granted long-term rights of ‘stranger usufruct’ to land, but could occupy only the land they had been allocated and were permitted to use the land for agricultural production. After receiving land from the stool, the head of household has the right to allocate a portion of this land to his wife and adult children who live in the family home but, as a “stranger”, he could not transfer or rent land to another stranger without the prior approval of the community authority. Within customary law, rights of stranger usufruct could devolve upon the heirs of the household

⁶⁰ *lit.* chieftaincy. The concept of the “stool” can refer both to a customary landholding group for a particular area, and to the land held by the customary communities and its authorities.

⁶¹ In Kakasunanka there is an elder who identifies himself as a “chief” and one of the earliest residents who migrated from Ada to establish the village at Kakasunanka, however his position is contested by the local chief at Gbetseli (a member of the Kpone customary landholding group) who insists that he cannot be considered a chief as he is not a member of the Kpone people and does not have the right to allocate lands. Oral accounts of the settlement of Kakasunanka were taken from both the chief of Gbetseli and the chief of Kakasunanka in the presence of other village elders.

head who could continue exercising such rights so long as they recognize the sovereignty of the landholding group (Bentsi-Enchill 1964; Maxwell et al. 1998). Regarding payment for land use among initial settlers, most farmers whom I interviewed indicated that they paid for land in kind on an annual basis, although a small number reported that they had not been required to pay anything for land. The level of payment depended largely on the status and standing of the individual settler, and on one's ability to negotiate a mutually advantageous agreement.

In 1952, shortly after this initial settlement, the colonial Government of Ghana, in collaboration with the Tema Development Corporation (TDC), acquired a large area of land in the peri-urban zone of Accra and Tema to accommodate processes of urban expansion. The acquisition amounted to roughly 110km² of the Tema, Nungua, and Kpone stool lands⁶², with boundaries of the state-acquired lands negotiated between the TDC and the village authorities at Gbetseli - the only village of Kpone customary landowners in the area. Kakasunanka was located within the boundaries of the state-owned lands⁶³, while the land belonging to the customary landowners at Gbetseli is located outside of the land acquired by the state. Nonetheless, the acquisition of land by the state created a situation of increasing land scarcity in the area, which had implications for customary landowners, established settlers, and incoming migrants alike.

⁶² Information on the government's acquisition of portions of the Tema, Nungua, and Kpone stool lands was obtained in an interview with the Managing Director of the Tema Development Corporation, 15 November 1998.

⁶³ The residents of Kakasunanka contest the right of the village authorities at Gbetseli to hand over the land at Kakasunanka over to the TDC. Residents claim that since they were the first to occupy and clear the land at Kakasunanka it is they, and not the local authorities at Gbetseli, who have the right to make decisions about land. This has been a constant source of dispute between the migrants at Kakasunanka and the customary landowners at Gbetseli, which is currently in the process of being addressed by the courts in Ghana.

Although the Kpone stool has lost much of their land to the state, the customary landowners at Gbetseli did not lose their customary rights to stool land since Gbetseli was not within the boundaries of the state-acquired lands. The rights of the migrant community at Kakasunanka are considerably less secure. As much of the land held by the TDC currently remains under-utilized, the initial settler community has been able to retain their usufructory rights until such time as the TDC chooses to put such land to an alternate use⁶⁴. Migrants arriving in Kakasunanka after the acquisition, however, have experienced considerable difficulty negotiating stranger usufruct rights to land in or near the village. This has created a process of marked social differentiation, on the basis of wealth⁶⁵, between well-established residents who benefit from secure access to large landholdings (ten to twenty-five acres), and the more recent settlers who have migrated to Kakasunanka from cities and towns in the Greater Accra Region and who have access to very small fields (one half to two acres) which they rent annually from the local military base located adjacent to the village. The military base occupies state-owned land, and resident soldiers are granted usufruct rights to portions of land by the state. Most soldiers

⁶⁴ At the time of the study, the state-acquired lands were under-utilized, however, the Michel Camp military base is in the process of expansion and the TDC is considering the possibility of relocating the village at Kakasunanka. The Michel Camp expansion will require that a portion (or perhaps all) of the land allocated to households at Kakasunanka be handed over to the TDC, and will translate into a loss of land rights for many residents. Should the village be relocated it is possible that residents will lose all rights to stool land.

⁶⁵ Although there are many potential indicators of wealth among village members, access to land is a significant axis of difference related to wealth. Families whose residence in Kakasunanka pre-dates the acquisition of land by the TDC were able to access large landholdings often in excess of 25 to 30 acres. Recent migrants have not been able to negotiate the same kind of access to land through the local stool, and have been forced to seek and secure access to smaller portions of land through various channels, such as renting fields of one to two acres on an annual basis from the military base adjacent to the village. Well-established residents with long-term usufruct rights, therefore, have been better able to produce more substantial incomes, investment, and savings through farming than more recent settlers who struggle financially because of insufficient and insecure access to land.

granted land typically enter into sharecropping and other tenancy arrangements with residents of Kakasunanka (and other local villages) who pay for land in cash or kind.

Whereas a woman's access to land in the rural areas of Ghana is mediated strictly by her ability to negotiate use rights through their relationships with men within marriage and kinship relations under customary law (Benneh et al. 1996; Hill 1963; Okali 1983b; Oppong 1974), the plurality of legal structures in the peri-urban area of Accra has created new options and opportunities for women (and men) to access and use land, dramatically transforming their relationship to the means of production. Women and men in Kakasunanka and neighboring villages may attempt to secure rights to stool lands by petitioning the local stool for stranger usufruct rights to customary lands or by claiming that as the first people to clear and occupy the land they (and not the Kpone) are, in fact, the legitimate "owners" of land under customary law. Women and men may also enter into tenancy agreements - renting, leasing, or sharecropping - with soldiers at Michel Camp, or they may purchase land outright⁶⁶ from the stool. The plurality of legal structures, thus, has significant implications for the ways in which women think about, and relate to, land. Some women have been able to create new spaces within which to manoeuvre and to stake claims to land in ways not typically available to women (or 'strangers') under customary law, while the proliferation of new categories of land under statutory law has enabled others to take advantage to new options to secure access to land outside of customary legal structures. Since access to each category of land is mediated

⁶⁶ A small number of women and men Kakasunanka indicated that they purchased land outright from the Kpone stool and from the chief at Kakasunanka, although their rights to purchased land are unclear since the neither the stool or the chief at Kakasunanka are within their right to sell of land which is now legally owned by the state.

by a different set of social relations, women participate and invest in diverse social institutions and networks in order to secure access to the means of production.

Reinventing custom: renegotiating land rights under customary law

The ways in which individuals relate to land are mediated in part by their position and status under customary law. In Kakasunanka, men and women make claims to stool land by mobilizing, or calling on, particular social identities. Residents negotiate rights to land as “strangers” under customary law, and as “customary landowners” by calling on the legal principle which stipulates that rights of control over land are conferred on an individual or household that clears and occupies a piece of land. Here “customary law” is not used to refer to a fixed set of rules and legal structures, but as an arena of struggle (Mackenzie 1990), characterized by multiple and overlapping ways of making claims to land. As Mackenzie argues,

‘customary’ rights to land, malleable and manipulable by individuals and groups, thus subject to continual construction and reconstruction in the resolution of conflict, are part of the process of legitimation of individual material interests and social differentiation (1990:609).

Customary law, as it relates to land tenure in Kakasunanka, is an extremely complex, flexible and negotiable system of rules and practices. The ethnic diversity of village residents and their status as “strangers” under customary law, the physical absence of the customary land-owning group at the village level (and the levers of power and influence which accompany stool authorities), and the plurality of legal structures in the peri-urban area as a whole, have together created new ways of thinking about land and property rights and ever new interpretations of what is ‘customary’ in the eyes of the community.

As strangers under customary law, residents of Kakasunanka cannot occupy stool lands as a 'right', but can petition the Kpone stool authorities for rights of stranger usufruct to customary stool lands. Since rights of customary usufruct are granted by the stool to the head of a household, usually a male, women in most cases rely on their relationship with their husbands to gain access to stool lands. However, a small number of women in the study, including Brazine and Ena, have developed special friendships through which a portion of land is transferred from wealthy more-securely tenured women to more economically vulnerable, less-securely tenured women in the village. These social relationships are mutually advantageous in that such land transfers enable elderly women to retain rights to household stool lands after their husbands' death while providing less-securely tenured women new channels of access to stool lands in Kakasunanka. Although such relationships are not sanctioned under customary law, the flexibility of rules and social norms related to land in Kakasunanka provides the conceptual space within which women have able to legitimate such "woman to woman" land transfers through the reinterpretation of what is considered acceptable in the eyes of the community under customary law.

Only a small number of women in Kakasunanka have relatively secure rights to stool land. Typically, these are elderly women who have resided in Kakasunanka since its establishment in the late 1940s, and whose husbands were able to negotiate long-term usufruct rights to stool land. While their husbands were alive, many of these women were granted use rights to a portion of their husbands' land in exchange for women's agricultural labour contributions to the maintenance of the household farm. Of the four

widowed women in the study, three retained exclusive rights to the household lands upon the death of their husbands⁶⁷. The three women managed to retain control over household lands by claiming they are acting as a “caretaker” of land on behalf of their husbands, managing land that will one day be used or inherited by their (typically male) children.

As one widowed gardener remarks:

When my husband died, I became the caretaker of the land in his name. I gave seven acres to my son, who is now grown, and kept the remaining eighteen acres for myself to manage. Since my son lives and works in Accra, I manage his farm. He is a businessman and is not interested in farming.

The children of all three women, in fact, live and work in Accra because of the economic opportunities that urban centres offer. All of the children completed secondary school, and the majority received a degree from the University of Ghana at Legon, or universities overseas. Making reasonable incomes in formal sector employment, these young adults are uninterested in farming and rural (or peri-urban) lifestyles. Despite the fact that their children are not likely to return to farming in Kakasunanka, these women are able to legitimate their position and retain exclusive control over household lands by claiming they are the custodian of household land.

Since women's rights to stool lands, both as women and as “strangers”, are relatively insecure given the increasing shortage of land in the peri-urban zone and the rising tensions between local “strangers” and the Kpone stool, these women engage in strategies to protect and retain their rights to household stool lands. For women to maintain their rights over household lands in the long-term, the land must remain under

⁶⁷ Of the four widowed women only three were engaged in farming, while the other was a “market woman” involved in full-time trading.

seasonal cultivation. Such women are required to keep their lands under continuous use to ensure that the stool authorities at Gbetseli do not attempt to reclaim the land:

Everybody wants land to farm here. I was fortunate that I have been able to keep my husband's lands after he died. If the chief [at Gbetseli] sees that you and your children are not using the whole twenty acres he has given you, he will take it from you.

The three widowed women in the study each manage between fifteen and twenty-five acres. Without the participation of their children, each struggled as they aged to keep their gardens under cultivation. Although they were unable to cultivate the lands themselves, each woman was unwilling to give up her lands in case her children would one day return to Kakasunanka to farm and because the size of land-holdings is a measure of wealth, prestige, and social power in the eyes of the community. To retain their control over household lands, each widow has given a portion of her land to another woman in the village to farm and maintain. Although the terms of these exchanges vary, women transfer a portion of household stool lands to other women on a long-term (but not permanent) basis in return for a small portion of the harvest. To recall, Ena received four acres of land from Gifty, an elderly widow in the village, in exchange for a small portion of her bean and pepper harvest each season. Ena's words reflect the importance and meaning of this friendship: "With this land ... I can grow what my family needs to eat and I can grow pepper for to sell at the market, and I do not need to depend only on Michel Camp for land". According to Ena, Gifty benefits from their friendship because, in giving Ena land, she ensures that "her land does not lay idle". Gifty describes her motivation for transferring this piece of land to Ena:

I gave her the four acres because she is young and without a husband. It is very sad. Now that land is short, she could not get land from the chief at Gbetseli so I gave her some of my lands. I am getting old and cannot farm the eighteen acres of land my husband received from the chief ... [and] my children do not do the farming. So sister [Ena] works the land, and the chiefs see that the land is being used. My land is safe and sister [Ena] ... can do the vegetables. In return for the land, she gives me some few baskets of pepper.

These relationships constitute what one gardener described as "special friendships" that enable widows to retain control over their lands and provide the means for women, who have been unable to secure rights to stool land either through marriage or through direct petition to stool authorities, to gain access to land for market gardening. Such special friendships also provide opportunities for women who wish to withdraw, in whole or in part, from household farm production where they have limited control of the proceeds of their labour. Sophie describes the importance of her friendship with an elderly widow in the village in the context of on-going conflicts she has experienced with her husband over the allocation of the proceeds of her labour:

My husband farms ten acres. At one time I farmed with my husband, but he is bad with money and our household has suffered. He would not listen to my thoughts, so I looked into renting land from the soldiers at Michel Camp. An old woman in the village told me that she had some land that she could give me to start a pepper farm. This let me save some money since I did not have to rent. My friendship with the old woman is very important. I no longer have to rely on the man.

Although such transfers of stool land between "strangers" are not recognized under customary law, some women have been able to legitimate their right to transfer land through a manipulation of customary law. To recall, Brazine received three acres of land from Anne, an elderly woman in the village, who had retained rights to stool land

after her husband's death. Anne legitimates her right to transfer a portion of her land to

Brazine in the following way:

I traveled here with my husband from Osuwe over forty years ago. We settled and built a home in Kakasunanka when there were just a few cottages on the land. I have been here even before I gave birth to my first child. These few families were the first to ever occupy this land. When we came, we cleared the land, built our homes and started farming. The Kpone were never here. Once it may have been their land, but we put the land to use and so we own it you see. When my husband died I gave three acres of my land to a friend in the village. As a migrant she experienced difficulties getting land. So I gave her a portion of my land to start the gardening.

Here, Anne uses, or manipulates, custom strategically to legitimate her right to hold and transfer land. The process of clearing land not physically occupied by another group has long been recognized as a claim of ownership under customary law (Maxwell et al. 1998). In Kakasunanka, the majority of village residents, including the local chief and village elders, insist that as the "clearers of land" they are not "strangers" but are the legitimate "owners" of land⁶⁸. The local chief at Kakasunanka articulates the community's claim to land in this way:

You see this land around you? It was once covered in trees and scrub. It was undeveloped. When we came here, there was nothing. So we cleared the land and have built a community. Today we thrive here ... we have built families and livelihoods in this place. The Kpone were never here ... We own the land.

⁶⁸ In an interview with the local chief of Kakasunanka and village elders, the distinction between "strangers" and customary land "owners" was the subject of a lengthy discussion. The chief and village elders claimed that the concept of "strangers" is typically used to describe an individual or household who has migrated to a village comprised mostly of customary landowners who have cleared and developed the land over time. In such a case, the stranger would petition the village chief for land. In Kakasunanka, the elders claim, the situation is very different. The land on which the village has been established had never been cleared or physically occupied by the Kpone people. When the first settlers came and cleared the land, established a village, and began to put the land to productive use the settlers, it is claimed, became land "owners". This is a very pervasive and powerful argument among local residents, especially since the escalation of land disputes between the TDC, the Kpone, and the residents at Kakasunanka.

Calling on this local discourse, Anne draws on the custom whereby rights of ownership are conferred upon an individual or group who clears and settles land which is physically unoccupied, to legitimate her claims of ownership and her right to transfer land as a customary landholder and not a stranger. As such, customary law can be a resource that women draw on to secure access to land and to transfer rights to land to less securely-tenured women in Kakasunanka.

While customary law provides a social and conceptual space within which women are able to retain and negotiate new rights to stool land outside of the social institutions of marriage and kinship by investing in, and drawing on, strategic relationships with other women in the village, most women attempt to secure rights to land through multiple channels. Women in the study have sought to gain use rights to state-owned land through tenancy agreements with the Michel Camp military base. Although the renting, leasing, or outright purchase of land can be an economic strain for many women, such arrangements are attractive because they are not imbued with the kinds of social rules and inequities associated with marriage and kinship relations. Provided that women are in a position to mobilize the necessary capital (and institutional support), any woman can rent, lease or purchase land in Kakasunanka.

Legal pluralism: new categories of land under statutory law

The proliferation of multiple categories of land in the Accra peri-urban area has diversified the ways in which individuals can acquire land for the purposes of agricultural production. In the peri-urban area of Accra-Tema, the expansion of the commercial land

market and the state appropriation of stool lands has created a complex and flexible set of tenure arrangements and, more generally, new ways of thinking about land and property rights. Private property and state-owned tenure systems operate on different principles and involve different categories of ownership and usage than do customary land tenure systems. In private property systems, for example, once land has been purchased and title conferred on the land owner, the title holder has the right to use the land as s/he wishes⁶⁹ (for agriculture, building a settlement, starting a business) or to rent or sell the land, retaining the income derived any such transaction. Although private property tenure systems are assuming greater importance in peri-urban zones throughout Ghana with the expansion of the land market for residential and commercial purposes, the state's acquisition of land has played a dramatic role in redefining land and property rights for women and men in the Accra-Tema peri-urban area.

Following the acquisition of land by the state, use rights to land to the military at Michel Camp, with individual soldiers receiving rights to farm specified plots of land. With this land, many soldiers have opted to enter into sharecropping and other tenancy arrangements with local market gardeners in Kakasunanka and neighboring villages. Soldiers individually rent out part or all of their lands in exchange for a percentage of the harvest⁷⁰ or in return for payment in cash or kind (subject to periodic renegotiation from one season to the next). Tenants of sharecropping and rental arrangements receive use rights which are restricted to agricultural land uses (i.e. tenants cannot build on rented

⁶⁹ Unless there are by-laws prohibiting particular land uses in a specified area.

⁷⁰ In some cases, sharecropping arrangements between soldiers and local residents resemble customary *abusa* tenancy arrangements, in which landlords are entitled to one-third of the harvest in return for a tenant's use of the land (Berry 1993; Hill 1963; Okali 1983a; Mikell 1989; Vellenga 1986).

land). Rights to rented land are short term as they are typically renegotiated on a seasonal basis. As a result, access to rented lands is comparatively insecure and competitive land markets leave tenants at a disadvantage in negotiations for access to land. Nevertheless, tenancy arrangements on state-owned lands provide women and men who have been unable to secure access to stool lands with an alternative means of gaining rights to land in Kakasunanka. More importantly, the existence of market-based channels of access to land has meant that (again, provided the necessary capital) women are able to negotiate rights to land outside of marriage and customary land tenure systems (see Benneh et al. 1996).

Although women Africa-wide often encounter significant obstacles entering market systems because they typically own little or no property, and have limited cash income and political power (Lastarria-Cornhiel 1997), new categories of land and property rights in the peri-urban area of Accra have created new opportunities for women to access and control land outside of marriage and legitimated under statutory law. Ena's words reflect the advantages of new categories of land and property rights for women in the peri-urban zone:

You do not need a husband to rent land; you do not need a husband to speak on your behalf. If you have money from your trading activities you can rent land.

In order to take advantage of new opportunities to access land via market channels and to establish market gardens independent of their husbands and households, most women in the study engage in trading and other supplementary business activities as a means to generate sufficient income to rent land while investing in strategic social

relationships and networks which assist in income generation and provide the social and institutional support many find useful in on-going negotiations over rights to land. As discussed in Chapter Four, women engage in multiple income-earning activities such as petty trading, food preparation and sale, and other small business initiatives to supplement their garden income and to enable them to rent land and hire labour through market channels. Although most women are able to mobilize the income necessary to rent land, many women in the study have sought institutional support to enable them to "negotiate a good deal".

Women are typically at a disadvantage in monetary negotiations with the soldiers at Michel Camp; as one woman said "soldiers would take advantage of you as a woman, thinking you are stupid". However, membership in the local 31st December Women's Group has strengthened women's position in negotiations over land. To rent irrigated land on an individual basis, according to Jane, a woman will pay anywhere between ten to fifteen thousand cedis per acre per season. Ena, for example, rents two acres of irrigated land from Michel Camp and pays ten thousand cedis per acre each season. Although many women experience difficulty negotiating a reasonable price for rented land on an individual basis, they can expect to pay a fixed and fair price by renting land through the collective. Brazine, for example, rents four acres of land through the local group at a cost of four thousand cedis per acre per season. The leasing of over sixty acres of irrigated land by the district-level 31st December Women's Group in the name of the local group in Kakasunanka has strengthened the position of women, socially and structurally, within local market relations and granted all women members the right to individually cultivate

specific fields. As Jane remarks, “as a group we are stronger and better able to negotiate such things”. Unlike lands rented directly through Michel Camp, rights to rented land through the women’s group are guaranteed from one season to the next. As Brazine comments “as a group we have been able to rent irrigated land for our gardens and we can hold onto these gardens from year to year”.

Members also have the option to participate in a communal onion garden established by members and group organizers. Provided that women regularly contribute labour to the communal garden, each has a right to a portion of the garden’s proceeds. One gardener describes the importance of participation in the group’s communal garden:

I have the money to rent two acres of land each year through the 31st women’s group. From my private garden I do not earn an adequate income, so when the group decided to try a communal onion farm I thought I would participate. Through the group farm I do not need to rent land, and in return for my labour I receive a percentage of the garden earnings. This is a great deal for me and many others.

The communal garden provides women who are unable to mobilize sufficient income to rent (sufficient) land to earn a garden income in exchange for their labour. Although many members participate in the communal garden, many do not because their rights to a portion of the garden income depend upon the provision of a full day’s labour each week. Given women’s extensive labour obligations with regard to domestic chores, the provision of agricultural labour on household farms, and the management of women’s private gardens, many women claim that the potential returns from their participation in the group’s communal garden are insufficient to justify the added burdens of new labour obligations.

Although membership provides women with a comparatively stable and secure channel of access to land not all women have joined or remained in the women's group. Women who do not participate in the women's group are those who are comparatively wealthy (either independently or through marriage), have relatively secure rights to land (through marriage or alternate channels), have a strong relationship with their husbands, operate successful trading and small-scale enterprises in addition to their gardens, and/or maintain strong social networks within and outside of the village (such as women's trading networks). Nana⁷¹, for example, manages a number of successful small-scale enterprises (restaurant, poultry farm) which generate substantial income and has secure rights to stool land which she received, through marriage, from the Kpone stool authorities. According to Nana, she has not joined the women's group because it does not offer any right or privilege which she does not already enjoy:

I can understand why many women in this village have joined the group ... they cannot get what they need from their husbands. I have plenty of land for myself and for my children if they wish to start a farm and I have enough income from my many businesses to keep us in food and clothing. So why should I join? What can they offer me? ... I have many friends in the village and in Dzode where I was born. When I need, I can call on them [*sic*].

Women opt to join or withdraw their membership (or avoid membership altogether) to the women's group, and to participate in particular initiatives (such as the communal garden) based on the perceived benefits and costs of participation. Most of the group members are relatively economically vulnerable women who have withdrawn their labour from household farms and forfeited their rights to a portion of their husband's

⁷¹ See Chapter Four.

land, or women whose husbands work in wage employment in Accra and do not have lands to give to their wives, and have invested in the group as a means of gaining rights to land and other critical resources (labour, inputs, extension services). Group membership also serves as a symbolic gesture by women who, by joining the group, are lodging a very public challenge to male authority and the meaning of marriage vis-à-vis access to land. However, as a social institution with its own set of rules and practices, membership has its rights and privileges, but it also comes with obligations to be fulfilled. If there comes a time when group membership no longer serves a woman's material and social interests, or if it is perceived that the social obligations which accompany membership outweigh any possible benefits membership may provide, a woman might opt to rescind her membership in favour of alternative social networks which offer the desired rewards. Just as some do not join the women's group because they perceive no benefit in membership, others have chosen to not join because they perceive the obligations which accompany membership to be an unnecessary burden. Many have opted instead, for example, to rent land directly from Michel Camp; although women may pay a higher rent in tenancy arrangements with the soldiers at Michel Camp, such contracts can be attractive as are based on monetary exchange and do not involve social obligation.

Most women negotiate rights to land through multiple channels and cultivate more than one field. In response to economic vulnerability and the difficulties they experience securing rights to land, women are not interested or inclined to "burn bridges". Instead women invest in friendships, formal women's groups, social networks, and in some cases marriage and extended family, to maintain as many options and opportunities

to negotiate rights to land as possible. As Ena's words suggest, "when you are struggling it is important to have options".

Investing in Labour: Relations of Reciprocity and Exchange

An important determinant of women's success in establishing or intensifying their involvement in market gardening on private farms in Kakasunanka, has been their ability to mobilize labour through various channels. In most households in Kakasunanka, household heads (usually men) are able to mobilize unremunerated male and female labour to work on both household and private farms. Under the best of circumstances women are able to draw on the occasional labour of children, although children's first responsibility is to the household farm. The withdrawal of their labour from household fields and the forfeiting of their rights to a portion of their husband's land has made it increasingly difficult for women - who now manage gardens independent of the household - to mobilize family labour. Husbands do not prevent their children from accompanying a wife to her farm, but neither do they encourage the practice. Since women cannot rely on unremunerated family labour to maintain their gardens, they draw on reciprocal exchange labour, hire occasional labour through market channels, and in some cases call on the labour of extended family members living in nearby villages and towns. Utilizing these categories of labour, they are able to maintain their gardens and ensure the timely completion of critical farm tasks such as planting, weeding, and harvesting. The kinds of labour relationships that women call on depend considerably on their access to and participation in social networks outside the household and the types of

exchanges they are interested in maintaining: reciprocal 'labour for labour' exchanges, or monetary exchanges in which labour is remunerated in cash or kind. Again, every relationship and network operates on a different set of rules and practices, and depending on their changing social and material interests, women may call on different relationships over time, and may utilize a number of labour categories at any given time.

While it is often the case that women's access to labour is mediated through their husbands and that they lack the social power to mobilize extra-household labour in other areas of Ghana (see Whitehead 1981), women in Kakasunanka have been able to mobilize labour through existing social relations, investing in strategic social relationships and networks within and outside the community. Although kinship ties tend to be weaker among households in the peri-urban area with members of extended family remaining in natal villages, or residing in Accra and elsewhere, many women are able to call on the labour of extended family to assist with garden production. Especially among households headed by women, gardeners are able to call on the labour of extended family members living nearby, most weekends and holidays, by appealing to their sense of obligation and reciprocity within kinship relations. During harvest periods, in particular, family members living in nearby towns often take time off work to labour on a sister's farm in return for a special meal (plenty of meat and drink) and a basket of the fresh pepper just harvested.

While such labour relationships are extremely valuable during critical periods in the garden cycle, many women are prevented from taking advantage of extended family labour. A common practice for women requiring assistance in their gardens and around

the home is to send for their junior sisters who are unmarried and living in their home village. Junior sisters assist with childrearing and domestic chores (allowing gardeners to spend more time in their fields) and provide regular labour in women's gardens. After her divorce, Ena sent for her two sisters who came to live with her and assist with household chores (cooking and cleaning), the care of Ena's children, and with gardening tasks. In return for their assistance and support, Ena provides her sisters "with a roof over their head and with food in their bowls". Such extended family relationships are critical resources for unmarried women.

Among married women, however, to send for one's sisters requires that a woman receives permission from her husband. When a woman's sisters come to live in her husband's home, they become the 'dependents' of the household head in both material and symbolic terms. As such, few husbands permit their wives to call on family to assist women in their gardens since, according to most husbands, their wives' gardens are for their personal gain and do not contribute in any measurable sense to the well-being of the household. While it is true that husbands are reluctant to assume responsibility for additional dependents, a husband's refusal to welcome his wife's sisters also constitutes powerful symbolic gesture against women's gardens. Josephine⁷², for example, wished to send for her junior sister when she began her gardening enterprise but her husband refused:

To send for your sister, your husband must first approve and welcome her into the home. Welcoming her in means that he is taking responsibility for her welfare. Since he was against my gardening, he would not welcome her.

⁷² See Chapter Five.

As a result, it is typically only women who are unmarried or widowed, or whose husbands live and work outside the village, who can send for junior sisters. For women heads of household, the labour of junior sisters provides them with a consistent source of domestic and agricultural labour and social support. Women who cannot call on kinship relations as a means to access labour often invest in exchange labour through existing social networks and hire wage labour through market transactions.

Whitehead's research among the Kusasi in northern Ghana suggests that women lack the social power to mobilize exchange labour parties without the support and mediation of their husbands (Whitehead 1981). Although few women could call on male exchange labour parties in Kakasunanka, female exchange labour is a resource many women utilize. Indeed, for many women, the mobilization of small exchange working parties (of four or five women) is the mainstay of garden production. Small exchange labour parties are typically organized through the local 31st December Women's Group and through community church groups. Jane, for example, participates in exchange labour groups organized through the community church in a neighboring village. When she requires assistance in her gardens, Jane invites four or five church members to her garden for whom she prepares food and drinks in exchange for their labour. Exchange labour is an attractive option for many women because labour is not 'paid for', although exchange labour parties are remunerated in the sense that women provide food and drink, and contribute labour when a labour party is called by another member of the group. As Jane's experiences suggest, exchange labour is an important resource, particularly for women with limited income, because it minimizes one's dependence on hired labour

especially during peak labour periods (times of planting and harvesting) when the daily wage of a hired labourer can become too difficult for many women to manage. Women will opt to hire labour when daily wages are manageable during the season or when they are unable to organize a small exchange labour party or call on the labour of extended family living in nearby villages and towns. This allows women to reallocate scarce financial resources towards the fulfillment of their multiple budgetary responsibilities within the household and to re-invest in their other businesses.

While exchange labour is an attractive option for some women, others prefer to seek labour outside of their immediate social networks, often recruiting wage labour for the bulk of garden production. Many women claim that participation in exchange labour groups involves considerable social obligations, and on that basis, prefer to hire labour and pay a daily wage:

You see, if I were to call on my neighbors or the women from the group to come and work in my garden I would have to provide food and drinks for them. For gardening you require very heavy food to sustain you through the day. So I might have to start cooking early in the morning, or even the night before, to make *kenkey* or *fufu*, enough to feed say five women for a full day of gardening. I would have to prepare or buy some fried fish too, to keep the women strong. And I would have to bring drinks for them. This takes a lot of time and effort ... and then one day when you are very busy they would come to call on you to go to their garden. There are a lot of expectations on you if you participate in such work groups. When I hire labour, it is a simple contract with labourers. They work for a full day and I pay them whatever price I am able to negotiate ... that is all.

Clearly exchange labour and wage labour operate on very different set of rules and contracts. Women able to mobilize sufficient income to rely on wage labour as the mainstay of garden production might opt out of participating in exchange labour groups

because of the significant social obligations involved, namely the preparation of meals and the obligation of provide labour on the gardens of other group members. Many women, for example, intensify their trading activities on a short-term basis when labour is required in their gardens. Since women can earn a small to moderate income on a daily (rather than seasonal) basis through petty trading, they may be able to generate sufficient income over the period of five or six days to hire two labourers for a day's work in their garden. Peri-urban women diversify their occupations and income-earning strategies not only to take advantage of new opportunities, but also to expand their options to access labour outside of existing social relations. Thus, women draw on, and invest in, different labour relationships through existing social networks and market transactions depending on the options available at a given time and women's specific labour needs.

Access to Credit: Formal and Informal Networks

The diversification of women's income-earning strategies enables them to generate some of the income necessary to finance their investments in seed, fertilizers, and labour required in market gardening. However, most women I spoke with in Kakasunanka stressed the need for credit to ensure the maintenance and success of their gardens. With little financial backing from their husbands and extended family, women have sought out and, invested in, social networks which provide either the social or institutional support needed to secure access to credit. The Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) - part of a nationwide network of agricultural banks which are governed by a board of directors representing the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, the

Ministry of Food and Agriculture, and the Bank of Ghana - provides few loans to small-scale farmers⁷³. The impact of reforms to the banking sector under structural adjustment programs in Ghana in the early 1980s has been to worsen small-scale farmers' access to credit (Brown and Kerr 1997). To secure a loan through the ADB today, borrowers must belong to well-organized group with an established banking record in savings and must have collateral in the form of property or savings in a formal banking institution - women rarely have either. Without the necessary collateral, women are encouraged to form a group, register as a cooperative with the Department of Cooperatives, and secure support and representation by a non-governmental organization (NGO) before applying for a loan with the ADB. Women are required to open individual bank accounts, and they must maintain an account under the group's name. Before a group can receive a loan they must have ten to twenty percent of the loan amount invested in the group's savings account (as collateral on the loan), and all loans must be repaid within one year of their disbursement. As a group, farmers are "locatable"⁷⁴, making the monitoring of loan repayment by the ADB, and repayment itself, more secure.

Although there is a system in place for the disbursement of loans to small-scale farmers by the ADB, it remains the case that few loans are made to this group, even if they are organized into cooperatives. Under pressure from international donor agencies to increase the number of loans granted to women in Ghana, the ADB provides bank loans

⁷³ The Agricultural Development Bank defines "small-scale farmers" as farmers who cultivate five acres or less. Medium-scale farmers are those who cultivate between five and fifty acres of land, while large-scale commercial farmers are defined as those who cultivate fifty acres or more.

⁷⁴ The Agricultural Development Bank insists that it currently lends only to small-scale producers who are organized and registered as a cooperative, because a group is registered it is "locatable", that is the ADB can track down loan recipients who default on repayment.

primarily to women engaged in petty trading or food marketing and processing enterprises. The position of the ADB is that, unlike farming, trading and food marketing are not vulnerable to climatic variation, and both generate a daily (rather than seasonal) income making loan-repayment more secured.

According, to most women in the local 31st December Women's Group, the most significant quality of group membership is that, as a group, women are visible to banking and other government institutions. In Jane's words, " [b]anks do not lend to individual women, but as a group women can be recognized by banks and given loans". As a group, women have been able to draw on the legitimating symbol of the national 31st December Women's Movement and its close links with the state in order to improve their access to credit. Through membership in the local women's group and with the political backing of the national 31st December Women's Movement, women have been able to negotiate a loan of 1.8 million cedis from the Agricultural Development Bank. The loan is intended for members involved in trading and food marketing activities because it was thought that only traders could afford the collateral on the loan (one thousand cedis per week for nine weeks) and as traders, women were considered more likely to repay the loan. The women, however, have found a strategic way of manipulating the loan process. The women of the group are market gardeners, first and foremost, although many of them are also involved in trading and food processing activities on an occasional basis. Aware of the rules and procedures of the loan process, women applied for the loan as "traders", although each loan recipient intends to invest their portion of the loan towards their gardens. Thus, although the rules and regulations of banking institutions are fixed and

non-negotiable, women have been able to create a space within which to manipulate categories in the loan process, and secure access to credit. As women's narratives demonstrate, women legitimate this action by insisting that "... since most of us are both gardeners and traders we can apply as 'traders' and use the loan money on our gardens ... [a]s long as we pay back our loan to the bank no should be concerned with how we use the money".

Outside of formal banking institutions, women also invest in rotating *susu* savings networks with women in the village. In groups of four or five, women invest a fixed amount of money weekly, and at the end of each month one woman takes "the pot" and invests the savings into their gardens. One gardener describes the significance of *susu* savings networks:

I invest one thousand cedis per week with a *susu* savings group. We are a group of five women, all friends. At the end of this month it will be my turn to receive the group's savings amounting to twenty thousand cedis, next month [Judith] will get the pot of money. With this money, I plan to hire two labourers to assist me with my pepper harvest. Next time, I will spend it on something else, whatever I need at the time. My husband does not help me with money, and the banks don't make loans to women. I hear that the women's group is going to receive a loan from the Agricultural Bank, but I do not want to deal with these big banks. If you receive a loan through the women's group, your husband will know about it, and he might pursue some of the money. If you do not want your husband to know you are investing in *susu*, he will not know. The other problem with dealing with a bank is that maybe the bank will take too long in processing the loan and you get your money too late into the season. Now the money has less power and at the end of the season you owe the bank with interest. If you fail to pay, they come after you, and you look bad in the eyes of your neighbors. The *susu* group works differently. You contribute money each week, and you get the pot when it is your turn. There is no "owing", you see. The only difficulty with *susu* is that sometimes one of the women might run off with the money, but this is not likely as long as you are careful about who you invest with.

Susu savings networks provide women with alternative sources of credit outside of formal banking institutions. Although loans through formal banking institutions are available to women organized into collectives, many women reported they were skeptical, even afraid, of dealing with formal banks. Many women claim to have “heard stories” of farmers who had negotiated monetary loans from banks (or loans from the Ministry of Food and Agricultural in the form of seeds and inputs) but received the loan too late into the farming season⁷⁵. Once the loan has been disbursed, regardless of the timing of the loan or success of the harvest, a gardener “owes” the bank. The concept of “owing” a formal banking institution concerns many gardeners, not only because of the high interest rates the ADB charges on its loans and the implications of loan repayment on their ability to maintain their gardens and other businesses, but because of the social stigma associated with being “indebted” to an institution or person. For women gardeners, financial indebtedness implies not only failure - failure to repay the loan and the potential failure of their gardens - but also (and perhaps more importantly) a lack of autonomy and independence which women gardeners value more than anything else.

Instead of investing with formal banking institutions, many women opt to invest in *susu* networks because *susu* investments are seen to be less risky and they do not regulate how disbursements are allocated. *Susu* networks offer women considerable flexibility, allowing them to invest in their gardens or in supplementary businesses, to pay

⁷⁵ According to women interviewed, the best time to receive a loan (either monetary or commodity) is before the farming season begins. If a monetary loan has been disbursed before the beginning of the season, a producer can rent larger lands (perhaps irrigated lands), purchase the inputs required, and hire the labour necessary. If a loan is disbursed after the season's planting, it can be put to only limited use. If seeds or fertilizers are disbursed after the season's planting the impact is obvious, and farmers take a loss.

children's school fees, or to purchase holiday clothing for themselves and their children. The organization of *susu* networks as rotating loans is also preferred by many women because, instead of large lump-sum loan disbursements (characteristic of formal banks), *susu* provides women with small to moderate monetary disbursements on a regular basis (e.g. every four months for a *susu* group of four members). Rotating loans are often more accommodating to, and reflective of, the nature of women's financial needs, and provide women with an on-going source of finance for as long as they remain in the network.

Perhaps the most strategic benefit of *susu* savings networks is that a gardener can participate and invest in a *susu* network without her husband's knowledge. The bank loan the local women's group have negotiated with the ADB is "public knowledge" within the village, and although many women may be able to protect their loan, others may have difficulty retaining control over their individual disbursements should their husbands attempt to pursue a portion of their wives' loans. Women's involvement in *susu* savings groups are less visible to the public, and as such women may be able to exert greater control over the proceeds of their investments. Moreover, because individual *susu* disbursements are of a lower monetary value than loans through formal banking institutions, a husband is less likely to notice his wife's additional income and expenditure, and should he see that his wife has added income, he is less likely to "pursue it" because of its comparatively small monetary value.

In conjunction with such credit opportunities, many women also rely on credit borrowed from friends, relatives, and wealthy community members. Women heads-of-household in the study, in particular, often receive small periodic loans from brothers or

brothers-in-law to assist with family expenses or to invest in their gardens. Friends and family are usually flexible about the scheduling of repayment, but defaulting on such loans is known to produce considerable conflict and animosity between the parties involved. For this reason, a small number of women do not enter into lending relationships with friends or family. For the remainder of women, such lending relationships are critical to women's ability to meet periodic household and garden expenses. As Jane remarks, "I can depend on my friends and neighbors for small loans when money is short ... you can usually trust that someone will assist you ... I would suffer without them". Among married women, few actually borrow from friends, relatives or wealthy community members, although many threaten to seek loans in the presence of their husbands. Since most husbands are reluctant to have their wives seek loans from friends and family - because such action, in the public eye, symbolizes a husband's inability to "provide" for his wife and family - such threats constitute strategic manoeuvring on the part of wives to access a portion of their husbands' earnings. As one gardener comments:

When I want financial support, or a loan, from my husband, I can tell him that I will go to see my brother in Ashaiman for a loan. He will give me some money so that he does not look like a bad husband.

So, although many married women do not seek loans from relatives, friends or other community members, the threat of loan-seeking is a powerful lever in their relationships with their husbands.

The intensification of female market gardening in the peri-urban area of Accra has depended upon women's ability to diversify their income-earning strategies and channels of access to cash, and their participation and membership in a variety of social relationships, networks and institutions through which to negotiate rights to the means of production. In response to new economic conditions and constraints in the household, women in Kakasunanka have begun to question established practices and social norms, experiment with new ideas, and contest and renegotiate rules and boundaries they find inadequate or unacceptable. Through careful manipulation of what is deemed 'acceptable' in the eyes of the community, women have been able to negotiate rights to land under customary law which would otherwise be unavailable to them, and invested in social relationships and networks as a way of diversifying their options and opportunities to negotiate access land, labour, and credit. Investing in social relationships has not only improved women's access to both local and state resources, but strengthened their position, individually and collectively, within local social and political relations.

Chapter Seven

Rethinking Resource Relations: New Opportunities and Spaces for Women

During the time spent with many women in Kakasunanka, I was consistently surprised by women's words, their life experiences, their relationships and strategies. Women are not passive or powerless; they are not, as is often assumed, victims of patriarchal social relations, institutions, and structures which limit and narrowly define their rights and opportunities to access resources, to generate an income and livelihood, to shape local social and political relations, and to be recognized and legitimated by the State. This is not meant to suggest, however, that women do not encounter significant social obstacles and economic constraints in their daily lives, or that women across classes (and other social hierarchies) have equal means, opportunity, and/or motivation to effect change. What the words and experiences of women in Kakasunanka reveal are the multiple and diverse ways in which women strategize, create opportunities and spaces to manoeuvre, negotiate, and legitimate their individual and collective interests within local and state institutions, and invest in a diversity of social relationships and networks as a means to gain access to resources, social support, and ultimately power.

The case study findings presented in the preceding chapters demonstrate that, in the context of daily life, women are social actors capable of penetrating, challenging, and transforming gender relations of power across multiple social boundaries in Kakasunanka. As I have argued throughout the thesis, a number of social, economic, and political factors have shaped women's experiences and opportunities, and enabled them,

on both an individual and collective basis, to question established practices, norms and meanings, to experiment with new ideas, to renegotiate rules and boundaries, and to create, and take advantage of, new opportunities. First, the plurality of legal structures in the peri-urban area of Accra-Tema, and the negotiability of the rules and boundaries of local social institutions, have created opportunities, or spaces, within which women in Kakasunanka have been able to negotiate access to resources, in terms of both customary 'rights' and statutory law, and to transform the balance of power within local gender relations. Second, the long and well-established history of women's trading activities in Ghana (and West Africa more generally), and women's socially-sanctioned role as traders or "market women", has made it possible for women to accumulate and control cash earnings which they use to secure access to new categories of land and labour through market channels. Third, women's ability to establish and invest in social relationships, networks, and formal women's groups such as the 31st December Women's Movement, have provided them with new channels of access to productive and political resources. As a conclusion to the thesis, this chapter briefly revisits these themes as a means to challenge conventional assumptions about gender and resource relations, and since field research tends to raise more questions than it answers, I identify possible avenues for future research.

Legal Plurality in the Peri-Urban Zone

While extensive research has been done on women's access to the means of production through marriage and kinship relations in rural societies, comparatively little

academic attention has been directed towards the characteristics of, and women's rights within, local social institutions in peri-urban communities. The peri-urban zone is characterized by a plurality of legal structures and institutions, each with its own set of rules, principles, and accepted procedures which overlap locally to produce new categories of land and usage, multiple channels of access (outside of marriage and inheritance systems), and in turn, new ways of thinking about land and property rights. Social and legal pluralism have greatly enhanced the flexibility and negotiability of rights to land, to create a complex web of options and opportunities for women to negotiate rights to land through participation in local social institutions, informal social relationships and networks, and through market-based transactions.

Locally, many women have been able to take advantage of new spaces within which to manoeuvre and to stake claims to land through the re-interpretation of rights under customary law. To recall, some women in Kakasunanka have developed special friendships through which a portion of land is transferred from wealthy more-securely tenured women to more economically vulnerable, less-securely tenured women in the village. These social relationships are mutually advantageous in that such land transfers enable elderly widowed women to retain rights to household stool lands after their husbands' death, while providing less-securely tenured women new channels of access to stool lands outside of marriage and kinship structures. Although such relationships are not sanctioned under customary law, the flexibility of rules and social norms related to land in Kakasunanka provides the conceptual space within which women have been able

to legitimate such “woman to woman” land transfers through the reinterpretation of what is considered acceptable in the eyes of the community under customary law.

Other women have gained rights to land recognized and legitimated under statutory law, through the modern medium of local collective organization by drawing on the material and political resources of the 31st December Women’s Movement and the legitimating symbol of the state. Under statutory law, women who are in a position to mobilize the necessary capital have also gained access to land through market transactions such as rental and other tenancy arrangements which, in the peri-urban zone, are available and legitimate channels of access to land. With diverse options, women invest in those social relationships or institutions which yield the resources sought, under the terms which they are willing or able to fulfill. In the case of Kakasunanka, for example, many women have been able to withdraw the majority of their labour from household farm production, where they have little control over the proceeds of their labour, and establish market gardens on lands acquired through extra-household social networks and through market transactions.

Further research is needed to determine the extent to which changing land tenure structures and institutions in peri-urban societies create new options for women to access and control resources outside of marriage and kinship relations, and women’s relationships with men. Specifically, research is required to understand how new and overlapping legal structures in the peri-urban zone transform the way in which people think about land and property rights, what such transformations imply for women (when land is no longer tied to marriage and kinship structures), and the ways in which the

flexibility of social institutions in the peri-urban zone creates opportunities, or spaces, for women to negotiate rights to resources previously unavailable to women under customary law.

Survival and Accumulation: Market Women and Access to Cash

As market-based transactions play an increasingly significant role in shaping access to resources such as land and labour, the ability to control and mobilize income becomes of crucial concern. Ghanaian women have a long and well-established history of involvement in market trading of petty commodities such as cloth, beads, crafts, prepared foods, and so on (Clark 1994; Robertson 1984). Women's economic roles as traders, or "market women", are socially-accepted throughout much of Ghana, as is women's control over the income generated from their trading activities. Women in Kakasunanka rely substantially on their trading activities to generate and mobilize the income necessary to rent land and hire labour to sustain their garden enterprises. Women's petty trading enables them to generate a moderate income on a daily or weekly basis, and because market trading requires little or no capital outlay and does not divert resources away from women's gardens in any measurable way, they may opt to intensify or suspend their trading activities as their cash needs change.

Women's ability to command and mobilize cash resources through market trading provides them with a powerful source of economic leverage insofar as they do not depend on their husbands or other male relatives for access to cash and the productive resources which cash can purchase. As I have argued throughout the thesis, in conjunction with

their social networks, women's trading activities have made it possible for them to earn the cash required to withdraw, in whole or in part, from household farm production in order to take advantage of new opportunities to access land and labour outside of marriage and establish and intensify market gardens of their own account.

Recognizing the increasing importance of cash for household survival, family welfare, and agricultural production, most of the governmental and non-governmental organizations currently working on issues of women's "empowerment" in Ghana, have directed much of their support toward strengthening the income-earning capacity of women. Although most of the initiatives under PAMSCAD, as well as the national 31st December Women's Movement, are aimed less at improving women's capacity in agricultural production than at enhancing income-generating opportunities for women in petty trading, food processing, and marketing, such development initiatives have potentially significant implications for women's roles in cash-crop production. Research related to patterns of income-generation, investment, and resource flows between women's market trading and agricultural enterprises, would serve to strengthen current development initiatives designed to improve women's income-earning capacity and economic autonomy across multiple social and economic boundaries of production and exchange. As many of these initiatives are also directed towards women's "empowerment", future research might explore the diverse ways in which development assistance to women's market trading enterprises and networks transform gender relations of power at both the household and community levels, in both rural and peri-urban environments. Specifically, research might examine how improving the income-earning

capacity of market traders enhances women's access to agricultural land and labour through market channels, women's bargaining power in household negotiations over resources rights, and women's position and power within local social and political relations.

Challenging Male-Female Dyads: Women's Social Networks and Access to Resources

The most interesting, and theoretically challenging, aspects of the research with female market gardeners in the Accra peri-urban area, are those related to women's social relationships and networks which provide them with potential channels of access to both productive and political resources, while strengthening their position, power, and voice within local and state-level institutions. By far the most pervasive assumption within studies of gendered resource relations in the African context, is that women gain access to the means of production through men because of the predominance and privileging of marriage and kinship norms and practices in rural societies (Moore 1988). Although in many African societies, and no doubt in many parts of Ghana, women may depend almost exclusively on their relationships with husbands and male kin to gain rights to land and other property (Mikell 1986, 1989; Okali 1983a, 1983b; Vellenga, 1986) and to mobilize family and exchange labour (Whitehead 1981), the plurality of legal structures and categories of resources in the peri-urban area of Accra has made it possible, and advantageous, for women to invest in social relationships and networks with women outside of marriage and kinship structures.

The research findings presented in this thesis build upon Berry's (1989) observations that people invest in social relations as a means diversifying potential channels of access to resources in many parts of Africa. Berry's analysis focuses primarily on the ways in which men invest in kinship relations as a means of elevating social status and their control over productive and political resources. The research findings presented here go a step further, exploring the ways in which "investments" in social relations are mediated by gender and class. Women in Kakasunanka maintain and invest in a variety of social relationships including special friendships, savings and trading networks, exchange labour groups, church groups, and the local 31st December Women's Group within the village, and also maintain relationships with extended family and friends living in Accra and elsewhere. These relationships and networks constitute vital, and meaningful, social spaces that provide many women with different kinds of options and opportunities to negotiate rights to resources both within and outside of dominant institutions and meanings.

Women's social relationships and networks provide women with direct channels of access to different kinds of land and labour resources, as well as informal investment and savings opportunities. Such relationships are extremely flexible, they are based on various terms of reciprocity and exchange, and vary in form, function, and meaning as women's resource needs shift over time in response to changing social and economic circumstances. Moreover, it is clear that all women do not invest in the same kinds of relationships. Women of different class and socio-economic positions in Kakasunanka cultivate different kinds of social relationships, and have different motivations for

participating in social networks and formal groups. In order to better understand women's diverse motivations for investing in particular relationships over time, future research needs to consider how class and other axes of difference shape the relationships and networks available to particular women, the kinds of relationships women invest in, their motivations for "investing", and the resources and other forms of support that specific relationships and social networks yield.

Although women participate in a variety of social relationships within and across village boundaries, membership in the local 31st December Women's Group has created a unique set of opportunities for women in Kakasunanka. Membership not only provides them with access to the material resources required in market gardening, but with the political resources of the Movement and its ties to the state. Within development and academic circles in Ghana, the national 31st December Women's Movement is widely criticized as a "non-governmental" organization because of its close political ties to the Rawlings government. Many have argued that the Movement is bound, politically, by the discourse of state bureaucracies, and cannot, therefore, challenge existing structures which limit opportunities to facilitate and promote women's "empowerment". However, as I argue in the thesis, it is these political ties with the state and the visibility and mainstream popularity of the Movement that have enhanced the power and prestige of women locally. Women draw on the legitimating symbol of the state and the national political Movement to mobilize local and state resources, to legitimate their interests, and to strengthen their claims to resources within local social and political relations.

The power, prestige, and legitimacy that the local women's group offers needs to be examined in greater depth with other local 31st December Women's Groups throughout Ghana. If, as is the case in Kakasunanka, membership in the Movement provides women not only with material resources and institutional support, but with new levels of symbolic capital vis-à-vis men at the household and village levels, such social and political initiatives should be supported and integrated into community development schemes, programs aimed at women's "empowerment", and policy planning.

What these research findings suggest is that while considerable academic attention has been given to gendered resource relations within marriage and kinship institutions and structures in rural societies in Africa, women's extra-household social relationships, networks, and formal organizations, as potential channels of access to resources, have not been sufficiently explored. Clearly, there is a need to rethink many of the assumptions which suggest that women gain access to resources only through their relationships with men within marriage and kinship institutions. Women invest in social and market relations outside dominant institutions as a means of diversifying their options and opportunities to mobilize material and political resources which, in turn, shape strategies of agricultural production and investment, and affect the way market gardeners allocate and use resources.

Appendix A Gender-disaggregated Labour Profile: Production and Post-production Activities (Sample)

CROP TYPE	PEPPER							ONION							TOMATO							MAIZE						
	Family			Hired			Wage/ day	Family			Hired			Wage/ day	Family			Hired			Wage/ day	Family			Hired			Wage/ day
	M	F	C	M	F	C		M	F	C	M	F	C		M	F	C	M	F	C		M	F	C	M	F	C	
Crop activities																												
Labour type																												
Seed selection	x							x										x										
Land preparation				x				x										x										
Nursing		x	x					x	x									x										
Transplanting	x	x						x	x									x										
Broadcasting																												
Weeding	x	x						x										x	x									
Fertilization	x							x																				
Spraying																												
Harvesting	x	x						x	x									x	x									
Threshing																												
Hauling	x	x						x	x									x	x									
Gleaning																												
Seed selection and preservation	x																											
Other post-harvest	x							x																				
Marketing				x																								
Buying fertilizers and chemicals	x	x						x	x																			
Hiring labour, making arrangements	x							x																				
Selling products and other by-products	x																											

Appendix B Seasonal Activity Calendar (Sample)

Climate Pattern Month Activity	[WARM/WET][HOT/DRY][WARM/WET][COOL/DRY]											
	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB
VEGETABLES												
Pepper	N	LP/TP	W/F	W	H	CH	CMK	D				
Onion						N	LP/R/TP	W/S	H-CH/CMK			
Tomato	N	LP/TP	W	W	H/MK							
Okra								P	W		H	
Eggplant	N	LP/TP	W	W	W	H						
Edible Leaves								N	TP	W	H	
FOOD CROPS												
Maize	LP/P			H/D								
Cassava	W	W	W	H					P	W	W	
Beans						LP/P	W	W	H			
OTHER												
Trading												
Small business												

Legend

—	Continuous activity	F	Fertilizing	D	Drying/ Storing
- - -	Intermittent activity	W	Weeding		
N	Nursery maintenance	S	Stirring soil		
LP	Land preparation	H	Harvesting		
R	Ridging	CH	Continuous Harvesting		
TP	Transplanting	MK	Marketing		
P	Planting	CMK	Continuous Marketing		

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