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Cape Verde's Empresarias: Image and Reality By Jean Ludtke

Reading him [Bourdieu] could be a disturbing experience, because the explanatory sweep of his key concept of habitus—the formation and expression of self around an internalized and usually accurate sense of social destiny—tends to make ameliorative projects seem rather silly. Although Bourdieu has been criticized as too deterministic . . . he retained, in the face of a great deal of contrary evidence, including much gathered by himself, a faith in people's capacities for transformation (Pollitt, 2002: 10).

I have seen the African underbelly of the global marketplace. It is entirely urban, composed of young to middle-aged women, newly literate and entrepreneurial in spirit. They live in the former Portuguese colony, now Republic, of Cape Verde, West Africa. This study examines their emergent entrepreneurial lives during the 1990s, their views about their work and their lives, and their rejection of traditional West African women's roles. As improbable as it may seem this lively group has transformed their public image, used it as an organizing principle for action and modified that of the nation.

This word, image, conjures up a host of meanings: as illusion, as simulation, vision, reflection, reproduction, subjective knowledge, as interpretive tool. In this study I shall rely primarily on image-as-idea, one which straddles percept and reality and which resides in a process of representation basic to human social life. To support this proposition I have summoned an assemblage of scholars¹ in fundamental agreement about the power of image to shape, interact with and transform reality.

The Search for Information

My knowledge of the entrepreneurial lives of Cape Verdean women has been acquired by various modes of data gathering. For information concerning their lives I depended on the personal interview, complemented over time by a standardized set of survey questions, and supplemented by Camcorder, tape recorder and considerable sweat equity. Social and occupational data from the Republic's *Censos 90*, *Recenseamento Empresarial 1997* and *INE Censos 2000* have helped to make the statistical case for my working premise of the Republic's radical new direction in public policy. The nature and relevance of important national events occurring in Cape Verde during 1992, 1994 and 1997, my years of *in situ* research, were always prime sources of data. I begin with the last, with cultural context, my emphasis on political and social aspects of change during the nineties.

Political Context

PAICV (*Partido Africano da Independencia de Cabo Verde*), its leadership composed of former revolutionaries in the struggle for independence from Portugal, governed for the

first sixteen years of nationhood. This socialist regime with a single party monopoly on power set forth the terms of national existence in the Republic's Constitution of 1980: the unitary nature of party and state in government, state control of productive resources, limits on presidential powers, e.g., the President's term as coterminous with that of the legislature, strong ties to syndicalist labor unions especially among transport and construction workers, and centralized authority in governance.

In 1991 MpD (*Movimento para Democracia*) came to power on the promise of sweeping policy changes. By 1992 the ANP (*Assembleia Nacional Popular*), the legislative arm of government, had approved MpD's top priority, privatization. This permitted the government to choose which public enterprises would be privatized, which would remain in the public sector, and to offer stock options for purchase by emigrants and by workers of privatized firms. Proposals were designed to reorganize and revitalize enterprises remaining in the public sector. MpD also expanded presidential powers and granted emigrants the right to vote in national elections, a measure strongly opposed by the previous regime.

MpD contended that privatization would give new direction to the economy, accelerate development, encourage private initiative and attract foreign investment to help Cape Verde become part of the global economy. Critics charged that privatization would more likely result in foreign control of the economy, that mass unemployment in public enterprises would follow, that workers' health and security would be jeopardized and that economic imperialism would replace political colonialism. A related concern was that adoption of a Western economic growth model would undercut the dedication of the cooperative movement to social progress. In the intervening decade both have been partly right, but Westernization proceeds apace.

Social Context

During the eighties and into the nineties rural residents and immigrants, most from West Africa, poured into urban centers seeking work and public services. In the capital city of Praia they clustered in *bairros*, or urban neighborhoods. These rapidly evolved from squatter villages into closely packed row houses with multiple dwelling units. Each *bairros* had access to water, a public pump house, rudimentary health care and minimal public sanitation. By 1992 almost a dozen *bairros*, contingent on varying views of boundary perception, encircled Praia. Most were contiguous and connected by a spidery network of footpaths. Cars, trucks, buses, cyclists and pedestrians bearing water cans and other heavy loads noisily filled narrow cobbled roads leading to the inner city. Sidewalks were few and often indistinguishable. Residents endured overcrowding, neglect, malnutrition and disease while policies designed to improve their lives were constantly overtaken by natural and cultural forces seemingly beyond effective human control. In the early nineties the population of greater Praia was over 80,000, urban growth at five percent annually, national population growth just under three percent.²

This sprawling metropole had no shortage of social problems. Population growth consistently outran productivity, urban habitats were stripped of what little natural cover survived a twelve-year drought, housing was grossly inadequate, there was high youth unemployment, the infirm or abandoned reduced to street begging and widespread employment discrimination against women. The gender bias which constrains women's

access to land, credit and other productive resources throughout the Third World had too often been the forgotten element in development strategies. Women's "low productivity" consequent to their economic and social marginalization was generally assumed to promote poverty.

Although Cape Verde's two political parties disputed the merits of political and economic policy they agreed on health and education issues, not only in support of constitutional guaranties, but also with regard to financial priority. In a poor country with severely limited resources any government must weigh resource allocation toward the majority of citizens who live on the survival threshold. This means that public sanitation, immunization and adequate nutrition come before high tech medicine and hospital care, that educational focus is on creating a trained labor pool and a literate citizenry from today's youth³ to assure a democratic future. Programs for women assigned priority to combating discrimination and expanding educational and business opportunities.

By 1992 information about public services was being widely disseminated by radio, newspapers, posters, school and church. AIDS was of national concern early on, its existence made visible in widespread public poster displays. In remote rural areas social workers verbally informed those in need, word of mouth being the most effective mode of communication in a society where illiteracy lingers.

Nonetheless, beyond impending social disintegration, the major fact of life for Cape Verde, then and today, remains environmental. This is a land of relentless drought, rocky terrain, searing heat and numerous archipelagic difficulties with respect to transport and communication. Despite programs such as reforestation, reservoir and dam construction, water conservation, terraced hillsides for erosion control and irrigated acreage for cash cropping, desertification is a constant threat and sustainable agricultural production chimerical. By the mid-nineties the Republic was no closer to feeding itself than in 1975.

By 1994 the city of Mindelo, Cape Verde's main port and commercial center, was exhibiting active growth in terms of market activity, housing construction and development of an embryonic industrial zone financed by foreign capital. Mindelo remains today a busy, productive place even without the economic stimulus of its several annual summer festivals which attract international followings. The city's 47,000+ inhabitants represent over ninety percent of all people living on arid Sao Vicente, its home island. The city's desalinization plant supplies municipal water needs but settlement elsewhere is hardly possible: a few isolated farmsteads with small natural aquifers, a beach village, fishing shacks, the airport.

For purposes of governance the city and island constitute a single Concelho, or administrative region. Presidente Dr. Onesimo Silveira was the first to be elected by popular vote. Cape Verde's nineteenth independence day, July 5th, 1994, marked the unveiling of several projects inaugurated by this progressive "mayor" and former UN representative. The centerpiece was a new municipal market rebuilt from the ruins of the city's former marketplace. This architectural showpiece provides well-designed and functional spaces for the display and handling of a variety of foods and services. Located just north of the City Hall it soon became a magnet for commerce. At the new marketplace women vendors paid a daily fee (US\$1.50) for display space. The floor above is divided into individual small shops, monthly rental about US\$12. Tiers of windows, balconies

outside of each shop, an elevated clerestory roof and broad open stairwells create an airy atmosphere of outdoors brought inside.

On that same July day a shelter for the homeless and the first twenty-five units of a precedent-setting public housing project had opened for occupancy, each unit with electric, water and sewer connections. A monthly fee (US\$12), defined as mortgage payment, results in ownership within fifteen years.

To finance such urban projects Silveira credited the national push toward privatization and the creation of infrastructure needed to attract foreign investment. A surge in local housing construction based on cheap local labor had been largely financed by emigrant investment. "Industrialization is just getting started here," he says, "for now it's only clothes and shoe factories, and pretty soon a plant to process anchovies; it will take at least ten years to build an industrial base." Cape Verde is almost completely dependent on imports, 90 percent of them from Portugal, much of it contraband. Silveira did not deny the charge, "Very difficult to control in an island nation," he said "and punishment has never been strictly enforced. When you have a lot of activity you have some people taking advantage of the situation."

Dr. Silveira strongly supports young Mindelo women who, by 1994, had opened about a dozen small businesses in the marketplace and elsewhere in the commercial district as a way of integrating them into the life of the community. He believes that "women are better managers and much more responsible than men". He encourages older women with little hope for a future, many of them abandoned or left as sole support for children; two days a week are set aside for these women to come in to talk with him about their problems.

Interviewing Urban Women

In 1992, as a means of defining, and refining, research objectives I engaged in a series of interviews in the city of Praia and in some of its *bairros*. I viewed this approach, undertaken the year following a pivotal election, as experimental, as a means of finding questions and situations likely to elicit valued information from women. My method was to go out to their neighborhoods and ask them. Over a Three-week period during summer, 1992, I interviewed 30 women in seven of Praia's *bairros*. Using Crioulo, the Cape Verdean folk language, I asked each woman a standard set of questions. Questions pertained to women's work, their civil status, family situation and what if any impact the policies of the new government might have on their future plans.

Each morning my practice was to leave the central city by city bus for outlying *bairros*. I walked around one or more *bairros* during the day, visiting many neighborhoods more than once. Of the women interviewed thirteen were under thirty, the oldest was fifty-two, the youngest eighteen. All were engaged in traditional female work roles. I found them at sidewalk vending stands, in outdoor markets, inside water pump houses waiting their turn at the spigot, in small public parks, in hotel corridors, in a restaurant kitchen, sitting on doorsteps, waiting on table or trading door-to-door. Occasionally, I was invited into homes to meet the family. I asked women who were literate to look over my written (in Crioulo) questions before an interview, otherwise I presented the question verbally. To record responses as accurately as possible I asked and usually got, consent to tape. Interviews averaged about fifteen minutes.

Regardless of age, marital status or income most women were engaged in a service activity, primarily the distribution of food, water or fuel. All described themselves as “pobre”. They claimed that their work is not valued, that they expect to remain poor, that “the more work we do the poorer we will be” and “that in life there’s no choice but more work”. Older women would like a “better life” but had little or no hope for any change in their lives, least of all for any improvement. Younger women were able to rank their hopes for the future as follows: most important was getting a good job, “good” meaning salaried positions other than traditional ‘women’s work’. Other choices, in order, were emigration (to Europe or USA), more education for self and children, a house, to be rich. Several voiced the explicit wish for no, or no more, children.

Finally, each was asked to comment on the new government’s recent impact, if any, on her life—with regard to work, education, family, health care or future prospects. Has your life changed for better or worse since the *Movimento Para Democracia* came to power? In what ways? Most responses were overwhelmingly negative, often a group chorus of “nada, nada, nada! nothing has changed,” “I can only count on my mother for help,” “only my husband helps me.” Mixed in were a few more positive comments. “It’s too soon to tell--now it’s a little easier to get health care--I hope my children can stay in school--I’m not happy but others have it worse.”

Evaluating the Survey Approach

My 1992 survey in Praia’s *bairros* suggested that women’s attitudes concerning the future would be a productive theme on which to base follow-up research. The personal interviews had generated potentially useful data and had also revealed some issues of particular importance to younger women. Because I had come to their places and talked their language, I had been able to overcome some expectable resistance to invasive questioning on their territory. I planned to continue this approach.

The survey is, of course, a blunt instrument. Short phrases and yes/no responses, even when measured in aggregate, are at best guidelines. I could not claim a randomly selected population but did choose locations visited by most *bairro* women on a regular basis. My sample found a generational spread in terms of shifting attitudes attributable to government intervention in public health, education and job training. Most of the younger women were literate, goal-oriented with regard to marketable skills and seemed eager to discuss their future. I was encouraged that a similar approach would work on a much more targeted population. I had now discovered, and attached faces to, an emerging group of new entrepreneurs. I would call them “urban daughters”.

“Urban Daughter” Entrepreneurs

For interviewing in Mindelo in 1994 and in Praia in 1997 I could assume that my prospective informants would be well educated and literate in Portuguese, Cape Verde’s official language for international affairs, for schools, and in urban commerce. My procedure for gathering information was to stop by a given establishment for a short, introductory visit, explain briefly what I wanted, offer the ‘targeted’ woman, the owner or manager of a small business establishment, a list of questions; I would review them with her, as might be desired. If the owner or manager was not there, I left a question sheet for her, promising to return within a few days to receive her responses or comments. This usually necessitated two or three return visits.

On a first visit I also presented my credentials in Portuguese. At that time these included a journalistic assignment from a Cape Verdean-American newspaper and a statement of my purpose for seeking information. The English version follows:

My name is Jean. I am (north) American, from USA. I am a writer interested in the lives of Cape Verdean women. My country is rich, comfortable and powerful but does not understand very well the lives of less privileged people. All over the world women are "less"-- they have less power, less control of their bodies, less money, less access to productive resources. Therefore I would like to discover how women are trying to improve their lives in a poor country, and to write an article about businesses owned or managed by women. I have seven questions for you to study. I would like your responses, either now or in a few days, in writing or by tape recorder. You may remain anonymous. Thank you

At each stop, with consent of the shopkeeper, I distributed a copy of my credentials statement and a sheet printed with a set of seven questions in Portuguese (English version is in the Appendix). Five of the questions required choice among pre-selected responses, with the option of an alternative choice. Two questions required ranking, on a lowest to highest (1-5) scale, of various facets and levels of occupational satisfaction. All women were asked for personal background information: their position in the business, age upon entering business, level of education and/or business-related skills, period of time business had been in operation and her name (optional). The 'duration in business' information, not included on the survey sheet, was asked in person.

My 1994 search for information began in the city of Mindelo,⁴ in and around its commercial area which stretched along *Avenida Libertadores d'Africa*, and on side streets close to the municipal market and city hall. My focus was on the entrepreneurial lives of literate women, in their twenties and thirties, the ones who had grown to maturity during the last decade and might be assumed to be future-oriented. I made early contact with Mindelo's organization for entrepreneurial women, a support group for businesswomen formed after the 1991 election. They identified for me several businesses owned or managed by women. From early interviews in those locations I was able to add names and places of other such enterprises.

By 1997, in Praia, businesswomen were no longer a novelty. My hotel manager easily pointed to a number of small shops, run by and for women, recently opened in the immediate area. My own short tour of central Praia, a distance of less than a kilometer, revealed a large variety of such enterprises: pharmacies, restaurants, supermarkets, travel agencies, copy centers, studio-workshops or *ateliers*, bakeries, hair salons, sewing workshops. The last three types of enterprise were not of recent origin and typically had long been under female management.

The most numerous single new enterprise in both cities was the boutique. Boutiques offer commodities for personal and household use, gifts, modish clothing, cosmetics, locally made crafts, sewing notions, fabrics, painting, glassware, tapestries, decorative figurines. The boutique caters to a primarily female clientele and is often small both in physical size and as a business operation.

In view of its posh, marginally frivolous image, the casual observer may consider the boutique less than entrepreneurial in the sense of demanding skilled management or risky innovation. On closer examination the boutique-as-microenterprise is one where success can be real even if modestly defined. In a business sense this enterprise enlarges women's access to economic justice by merging hope with opportunity within a female dominated economic sector. To achieve the "right" combination of saleable goods demands initiative, a flair for style, the flexibility to cope with short-term trends as well as long-term risk. To own or manage a boutique attracts those with enthusiasm for an enterprise unburdened by large up-front costs, and one which can continue, over time, to make it financially as a small business operation.

From fifteen interviews in Mindelo in 1994 I obtained usable data from ten business women, five of them ranged in age from twenty-eight to thirty-five, five were boutique owners. My 1997 research in Praia yielded similar results: thirteen interviews, six between ages twenty-four to thirty-eight, ten usable data sets, six from boutique owners. All choices could be anonymous. As small as the total number (20) of respondents may be in terms of a statistically significant analysis, this is a plausible number relative to all female-owned and managed microenterprise in the two cities in those years. It offers limited evidence for the vanguard status of female proprietorship and management among Cape Verde's commercial enterprises at that time.

Responses; A Summing Up

For each of the seven questions, taken in order, I summarize the aggregate number of responses from both cities, the highest and the lowest number of responses among the choices offered, followed by a short discussion to set the responses in context.

Question 1, job preparation There were 26 total responses to Question 1. Responses were the most evenly distributed of any of the questions. The highest number chose 'school' (8); however, 'family' (6) and employer' training (5) were also popular choices. Three chose 'other experience'.

This response pattern suggests that, for a first venture into entrepreneurial unknowns, women are likely to build on the social networks they have already experienced as reliable and non-discriminatory. 'Training by employer' may be an increasingly attractive option as market awareness has grown during the nineties. In conjunction with the 'other experience' response the choice also suggests that new entrepreneurs anywhere find previous work experience valuable before taking a leadership role. Although public policy has encouraged their entry into commercial enterprise few women would expect easy acceptance into managerial status; they certainly would not have any such expectation without the education and vocational training afforded them in their formative years.

Older (forties and fifties) women in the survey were much less sanguine about taking on an entrepreneurial challenge. As practitioners of household survival tasks they had transferred their skills to the workplace during the eighties as a means of meeting family responsibilities. Thus "family" was again credited for job preparation, but in a different sense than used by younger women.

Question 2, type of support for entering business. There were twenty total responses. The highest number (11) selected 'family', the lowest (2) selected a financial organization

and one selected government policy. Seventeen women sought support from family and/or friends. It is reasonable to interpret 'support' as including financial support, e.g., loans or co-signing by mothers, fathers, husbands, friends as well as help with financial records and/or shop keeping. I personally observed husbands and mothers helping out. Childcare was not of major concern, to be discussed under Question 4. With regard to institutional financial support these findings supplement responses to Questions 4 and 7 and offer additional evidence of women's difficulties in obtaining bank loans. Two respondents (one in each city) had received commercial loans, one a professional pharmacist in her early fifties, trained overseas; the other, age 54, had entered business with "some knowledge of commerce" but has consistently had trouble with finances and plans to quit.

Question 3, importance of (family) support. There were sixteen total responses, eleven chose of highest importance (#5), one chose unimportant (#1), four chose mid-range (#3). This reinforces and tends to confirm responses to Question 5. I believe that this may be typical for a female response pattern and--a guess only--that a similarly situated male group might be more likely to credit their own efforts. This enthusiastic positive response may implicitly confirm that more respondents have met with "success", its definition enhanced by a touch of euphoria at managing their own business.

Question 4, barriers encountered There were fifteen total responses. Highest number (10) selected financing as a barrier; lowest (3) chose absence of any barrier. Financial barriers to achievement were the overwhelming choice of those who responded. Of two other responses, one was a restaurant proprietor who had problems with societal values (gender discrimination), one a travel agency manager had a problem with childcare. Although I didn't ask I suspect that most of the young (twenties) shop owners were childless.

A fosterage tradition remains strong among Cape Verdeans. Once past infancy, children needing care are readily absorbed into an extended family situation, cared for by grandparents, older siblings, aunts or by godparents as a temporary adoption into another family. The responsibility, or moral obligation, goes to the person most able to care for the child, in many instances a godparent. To my personal knowledge only one child care operation for very young children, one with which westerners might be familiar, existed (in Praia). I had wanted to interview the caregivers but they were so overwhelmed with their large and noisy flock that they waved me on.

Question 5, job satisfaction There were fifteen total responses. There was no highest count for any one ranking: six women chose #5, six chose #3, two chose the lowest ranking (#1). Rankings can speak for themselves, fourteen of the total of fifteen were at least mildly positive. However, if viewed as self-perception of satisfactory job performance a given numerical rating may be less than objective.

Question 6, use of earnings. There were twenty-seven total responses. Highest number (16) chose to reinvest, lowest (1) was for community service; another significant choice was (6) for family needs. The lopsided choice for reinvestment suggests a resolve to stay in business, and may be considered as an indicator of growing business acumen. However none had reached a sufficient level of confidence, nor had either the legal help or the financial reserves to engage in pro bono activity.

Question 7, entrepreneurial assets. There were eighteen total responses. Highest number (7) was for paying loans on time; lowest (2) for risk assumption. Leadership skills (4) and self-evaluation (5) also seem important. Women correctly understood that, of all the questions, this was the most comprehensive and predictive of business survival. The question addresses all components of successful entrepreneurship: choice of operational mode, behavioral traits such as competence and reliability, and informed decision-making. The evenly divided responses suggest that any choice may be turned into a potential asset, or grow into synergism with other assets. These variegated responses further suggest a common, possibly gender-specific flexibility and versatility so characteristic of traditional African women's work. These responses speak, once again, to successful financing as the wellspring of success. More significantly they speak to women's staying power and growing self-confidence in their ability to enter and succeed in the world of commerce.

These survey results suggest that African business women, when denied access in the formal sector, rely on family and friends for support (Basgall 1998: 25-6). The fact that few women admitted to financial difficulties further suggests that, although responsible financial management is a priority, so is self-esteem. Their preponderant choice for use of earnings belies reputed priorities of African women to choose family needs over profit.

Cape Verdean entrepreneurship should be judged more by cultural context than by Western standards. The Western ideal of growth in size and complexity as an indicator of success often invites male domination in terms of managerial and technical skills, with a relatively greater chance of failure for women. Other paradigms are more relevant to Cape Verdean conditions: "raising start-up capital from community resources, self-training apprenticeships and diversified marketing strategies", and that entrepreneurship must, in concept, "be expansive and inclusive enough to account for [its] multitude of dimensions" (Spring and McDade, 1998: 7, 28). Horn identifies "Ten Tenets of African Entrepreneurship"⁵ (1998: 139-143) several of them congruent with what's already been said. As long as women remain economically and politically subordinate their dependence on those they know and/or one another seems likely to continue.

Tracking An *Empresarial* Transformation

National census figures for 1990 showed that one quarter of all women continued to work in the primary economic sector, in types of activities with little prestige or pay. A majority of women worked for others, in rural areas in agriculture, in urban for public service agencies. Twenty-nine percent worked as "independents", mainly as domestics, a precarious and poorly remunerated occupation. Over 21 percent worked in badly defined activities which tended to skew the data. The report suggests that the next census might reconsider using this questionable category. (*A Mulher Caboverdeana*, 1995: 14-16)

The 1990 census also indicated that the largest occupational category for women, "*Donas de Casa*", included 42 percent of all women. Although of fundamental importance for the procreation and socialization of the future labor force, and for food production and distribution, housewives were not formally considered part of any branch of economic or professional activity, were not remunerated and did not "work". For census purposes they were aggregated into two categories: those who never work and those temporarily unemployed. By this definition they represented 51.07 percent (urban: 49.4 percent; rural 52.3 percent) of all women.

Another 1995 census report based on 1990 findings (*Alfabetizacao, Instrucao e Escolarizacao*, 1995: 6-25) analyzes literacy and schooling in terms of instructional levels,

age, sex and place of residence, for the Republic and for each of the nine islands. In 1990 Cape Verde's population was 64 percent literate (urban, 72 percent; rural, 57 percent). Men, of all ages and residential groups, were more literate than women. For both sexes literacy levels decreased with age, dramatically so after age 50. Urban literacy was uniformly higher than that of rural areas.

The business (*Empresarial*) census of 1997 documents a radical transformation of the Cape Verdean economy. The enormity of this transformation can best be gauged by introducing a personal experience which occurred soon after my 1986 arrival in Cape Verde's international airport on the island of Sal. After checking through Customs I headed for *Casa de Cambio* to change my money. To fly to any other island one had to pay in local currency, not available in the USA, so I had no choice but to join a rapidly gathering crowd at the *Cambio*. The *Cambio* was behind a wall grating in a small cubicle with cramped counter space and one mechanical adding machine. Inside was a young woman figuring with pencil on paper, besieged by the anxious and expanding group of new arrivals. It took forty minutes of serious jostling to reach the grating, then another ten minutes for the necessary calculations to exchange my dollars for *escudos*; at that time the rate was about 175*esc*/US\$1.

Fast forward to 2001. What prompted this recollection was the sight of pages of color graphics, pie charts, tables of numerical data and *em portugues* analyses all scrolling by on my monitor. I had requested this material from the Statistical Directorate in Praia not too long before and now it was appearing electronically, literally at my fingertips. Just as monetary exchange in Cape Verde is now handled quickly by electronic transfer at a bank's foreign desk so has this formerly remote archipelago, within less than a decade, experienced a remarkable economic, and human transformation.

The six pages summarized principal results of the 1997 business census; also included were several pages of occupational and literacy data from the Republic's 2000 census. The latter listed 159 types of economic activities none of which was housewifery, although #158 listed domestic "employees". The literacy data for the year 2000 contained a significant anomaly relative to the 1990 data. The four age groups between ages five and twenty-four all listed more literate females than males. Although there are five percent more women than men in the total population, and this gender disparity increases with age, no age group outside of these four had more literate women than men.

By 1997 Cape Verde's economy was solidly in the tertiary sector. By many measures--number and type of enterprises, personnel, occupational diversity, costs and losses, profits and gains, investments, taxes levied and paid--the tertiary sector dominated Cape Verdean entrepreneurial activity and represented 75 percent of business volume. By the same measures secondary sector activities were relatively minor and, in a telling comment, "*O sector primario nao teve expressao relevante*" (The primary sector no longer has relevance) (*Recenseamento Empresarial, 1997: 6*).

The report also shows a clear dichotomy between small and large enterprises. Although large businesses--large meaning employing over twenty-one workers--represented barely six percent of total enterprises, in business volume their market share was 81 percent. Retail commerce (43 percent), lodging and restaurants (21 percent) and food industries (10 percent) together represented 64 percent of active firms in 1997 and employed over 28,000 (40 percent of all) workers. Large firms are responsible for 91 percent of investments, 66 percent of business volume. Not surprisingly Santiago, home island of Praia, leads in

volume of business (52 percent) and investments (60 percent), Sao Vicente, home island of Mindelo, second at 35 and 34 percent respectively. As measured by level of taxation food industries and wholesale and retail commerce rank high in the present economy, as do tobacco and chemical industries, electricity and communications, transport and construction and postal services. These are the core of the tertiary sector.

By 2000 men's activities were widely dispersed throughout all types of occupations, most exclusively so in manufacturing and extractive industries and in the professions. Men dominate security, civil engineering and construction, transport, auto repair and some manufacturing (furniture) industries. Fishing is entirely a male occupation; women meet the boats onshore and do the marketing and distribution. In public administration and in all branches of agriculture men and women are employed in almost equal numbers.

Women's activities tend to be more concentrated in a given sector, for example of all domestic employees 97 percent are women. Almost 20,000 people work in retail commerce, of these over 15,000 (77 percent) are women. Women also dominate markets selling food products, drink and tobacco, and represent 88 percent of the work force in activities carried on outside of (retail) establishments, e.g., peddling in public street markets. In specialized outlets selling new products (e.g., the boutique) 68 percent of workers are women. For all Cape Verdeans the tertiary sector has opened a large variety of employment opportunities.

Conclusion

Sometimes the time appears to be ripe and there is no harvester. Sometimes there is a harvester but no harvest. . . . Sometimes it is not the single individual but rather the chance combination of individuals which produces the striking effect (Boulding, 1956: 76)

In Cape Verde, as in much of the world, the nineties have been a decade of radical change; its prime instigator has been the global marketplace. I have described some socioeconomic and political developments occurring in the wake of public policies enacted at this time, and their combined impact on the development of occupational diversity. In the context of accelerating social change I have examined the entrepreneurial lives of the "urban daughters", a small group of women who seem to have experienced a particularly striking transformation in terms of educational background, business acumen and level of participation in national affairs.

Without question the events of the nineties have brought rapid change to the economy, to societal institutions and, one could speculate, to personal aspirations. It is safe to say that 'the time was ripe' for many Cape Verdeans, regardless of gender, age or life prospects, to contribute to and benefit from the national harvest. Did a chance combination of entrepreneurial women in the role of innovative peer group help to create Boulding's "striking effect" as an '*empresarial*' transformation? Were these urban daughters a 'chance combination of individuals' or one united by interest and motivation? Were they active harvesters of change for their own lives, or did they become passive beneficiaries of the national harvest? Was theirs a conscious refutation of traditional images?

Given the limitations of anthropological inquiry, and the probabilistic nature of statistical data definitive answers to such questions may be elusive. I have proposed that the idea of the public image and its continuing modification by information flows may be a

powerful means for analyzing change. Image, in this meaning, is a tool for thinking about the consequences of potential change within given cultural parameters. Transformation, viewed as permanency of change, can also be and often is the product of interaction between cognitive and social forces.

Image. Transformation. These are mighty words. I have summoned them in the course of viewing the dynamics of change in one very small human society, and in an even smaller subculture within that society. More generally I explore the role of public image in any human activity. Beyond the word, image, and its shifting formulations, lies its potential, as subjective knowledge, to constrain and to motivate, and its power, as previously defined, “to shape, transform and interact with reality.”

Images, as anticipatory representations of future states of the world, enter naturally into the economy of behaviors by which people act on reality and transform it. . . . the flexibility of this form of representation . . . can be subjected to a range of transformational processes . . . [and] guide creative forms of human action . . . (Denis, 1991: 187)

For now we can take Denis at his word, that it is a “natural” function of images to transform reality, indeed that “this form of representation” is both flexible and multifunctional in terms of modifying human activities. Denis goes on to explore the place of imagery in human comprehension, identifying imagery’s major feature as its structural dimorphism with perception. In the following citation he expresses the central role of cognition in image formation.

. . . images act as *internal models* (emphasis *his*) of objects in . . . cognitive systems, and can be used for purposes of simulation in the absence of objects or when it is impossible to act upon them physically. (Denis, 1991: 9)

Rather than further pursuing the internal workings of the mind, which will take us far afield from cultural analysis, I continue my exploration of what an image is and does. An image may be transitory or long term, may quickly vanish or alter consciousness forever. In response to information flows it may remain unaffected, may gradually reorganize or modify itself, and at times may undergo immediate and radical change. My discussions have contained an example of the last, a life-transforming journey undertaken by urban women I have termed “urban daughters”.

For the women undertaking this journey it meant more than change in locale, more than change of role from sidewalk peddler to store manager, from street sweeper to chic model, from subservience to personhood. Activating the transforming process meant for them a salaried job and much more--more than loans, taxable earnings and the other paraphernalia of commerce, more than a modish dress code, more than proprietary status, more than elevated gender awareness, more than improved self-image--all of these were messages along the way.

By transcending women's traditional public image held fixed in tradition the "urban daughters" altered "the transcript, a record in more or less permanent form handed down from generation to generation" (Boulding, 1956: 64). By the same token they achieved considerable social power, which is not only ". . . perceived authority as manipulated by clothing . . ." (Bushman, 1984, as cited in Johnson, Kim and Sharron Lennon, eds. , 1999: 7) but is also the power to encourage emulation, to gain political competence, to earn economic independence and community respect, to manage one's own affairs, to find a place at the table. In the process of establishing their new public image they also reaffirmed that this is "the basic bond of any society, culture, subculture or organization . . ." (Boulding, 1956: 64)

There are other critical elements, and questions, in the power of image to transform. Do changed images replace old images, or merge with them and thereby transform basic structures underlying human societies? When and where in the transformational process does incentive enter? Is any of this predictable? Is there theory to guide us? For the last anthropologist Goody suggests a partial answer simply by adding a hyphen to the word, representation, as re-presentation. He uses re-presentation in the sense of

. . . presenting something in a different way . . . a presenting again, a presenting of something not present which may take linguistic as well as visual form . . . figurative representation entails a degree of mimesis, although it is frequently more than that word often implies; it refers back to the original but does not copy it (Goody, 1997: 31, 33).

The ". . . does not copy it" implies change, as well as the constancy of change. Neither visual nor verbal images spawn replicas. Moreover, Goody's focus is cross-cultural. He studies the physical re-presentation of objects or acts which are present or absent in non-Western cultures, mainly African, and why this may be so. Actual re-presentation of concepts and ideas is marginal to his theme (Goody, 1997: 10). Even from this limited perspective he finds the process of re-presentation basic to human social life.

As an economist, not to mention a profoundly eclectic thinker, Kenneth Boulding describes the process of change as a breaking of traditional sanctions against novelty and "fearful plunge into the unknown" which "won't be undertaken unless there is great dissatisfaction with existing routine" (Boulding, 1956: 93-95). Who or what provides the incentive for such a plunge?

It is in the "nonconformist" subcultures that images are most likely to be sensitive and subject to change. The fact that the subculture itself puts a high value on revolt against the orthodoxy of the society also leaves it open to revolt against the orthodoxy of the present . This proposition can be well documented . . . (Boulding, 1956: 94)

Women of nonconformist tendencies would find incentive for change when the time was ripe. During the course of my fieldwork I met few women entirely, even largely, content with their lot in life, one of drudge labor in its many permutations, of miniscule

compensation for repetitive and demeaning tasks, of irresponsible paternity, women faced with the daily task of filling small and hungry mouths, of disease-prone children with little chance for schooling. Add onto the mix separated families, isolation, chronic malnutrition and hovel habitation, Boulding's just preceding citation appears oracular. We have seen that, in the Cape Verde of the nineties the time was ripe for those willing to revolt, in constructive ways, against social orthodoxy. Boulding has more:

To a very large extent change in the image comes about through the impact on society of unusually creative, charismatic, or prophetic individuals . . . [who] represent . . . mutations in the image. They do not follow in the footsteps of their parents. They question the sanctity of the transcript and they defy the sanctions of both their superiors and their peers. . . . Often the names and records of these individuals are lost. We know them only by their work (Boulding, 1956: 75).

Charismatic? Creative? Prophetic? Mutations? None of these labels appears on the survey, nor did I ask any woman about such attributes. Had I done so I suspect she would have been bewildered. We know them only by their work.

Bourdieu

I came late upon Bourdieu, French sociologist, scholar, iconoclast. It was, however, early enough to welcome Katha Pollitt's tribute to him (The Nation, Vol. 274 (6): 10) as my Foreword. Bourdieu's "Outline of a Theory of Practice", not an easy read, has since absorbed me, and "absorbed" accurately characterizes the nature of my reading experience. "Experience" is truly the *mot du jour* when it comes to Bourdieu's key concept of "habitus". In the words of its French creator, an unabashed empiricist in his life as well as in scholarly pursuits, habitus 'arises out of common experiences' by virtue of the 'the continuing reception and assimilation of the messages of the culture', and is, 'at every moment . . . generative . . . from restructuring to restructuring'. . . 'the habitus makes coherence and necessity out of accident and contingency' (Bourdieu, 1977: 86-89). Pollitt's definition of habitus, "the formation and expression of self around an internalized sense of social destiny" helps us with Bourdieu's denser version, e.g., 'the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations' (Bourdieu, 1977: 77).

Viewed more simply as "enduring assumptions" the habitus acts internally as the organizing principle (*modus operandi*) of actions, to be revealed in a finished product (*opus operatum*), a situation which renders problematic anthropology's efforts at objective (scientific, rule-abiding) interpretation of the cultural "other". Of this proposition Bourdieu, citing Max Weber, says:

. . . the juridical or customary rule is never more than a *secondary principle* of the determination of practices, intervening when the primary principle, interest, fails (Bourdieu, 1977: 76).

It is for the reader to judge to what degree I may have tapped into the interest levels of my objects of study, the urban daughters, whether I prioritized experience in my questions, whether a public image can be an organizing principle for action, whether these

empresarias had an accurate sense of social destiny which had been internalized and modified over time.

Notes

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1. To use the interpretive power of ‘the image’ major dependence has been on the works of three scholars whose disparate disciplinary affiliations, the economist, Boulding (1956), anthropologist, Goody (1997) and psychologist, Denis (1991) lend credence to their fundamental agreement about the power of image to shape, interact with and transform reality, as well as the critical role of message transmission in image change. Spring and McDade’s comparative studies of African entrepreneurship (1998) whose capacity “to transform the ingenuity and resourcefulness of individuals into powerful agents of progress for the whole of their societies” has lent added significance to my own findings.

2. *Censos 90* puts the rough fertility rate at 39.7 births per thousand; overall rate declines with education and urban residence. IMF calculates percent of annual change in Cape Verde as 2.7; for the Praia area in the early 1990s about 4.7; for West Africa, source of many of Praia’s immigrants, as high as 6.5.

3. With 75 percent of Cape Verde’s population under thirty emphasis since the mid-eighties has been on preparing youth of secondary/vocational school age for integration into the work force, readied to participate in the radical economic transformation of the nineties.

4. I chose to begin interviewing in the city of Mindelo as more cosmopolitan and more responsive to Cape Verde’s change to privatization and business entrepreneurship. As the nation’s historic crossroads of Atlantic commerce and current trading entrepot this city is also the center for artisan industry and site of an annual international music festival.

5. The “Ten Tenets”: entrepreneurship as a gendered activity; take risks; diversify income earning activities; create microenterprise niches; assume no access to formal capital; market savvy about wholesalers, clients; apprentice to experienced vendors; adapt trading techniques to available locales; strategize for profit, devote time to business. Constraints imposed by childcare and domestic chores may also be prime motivators for entrepreneurial activity.

APPENDIX

SURVEY OF BUSINESS ENTERPRISE/PERSONNEL

DATE:

PLACE:

NAME AND TYPE OF WORK

employee

manager
owner

1] DESCRIBE HOW YOU PREPARED FOR THIS JOB (school, family, training by employer, other experience)

2] EXPLAIN THE TYPE OF SUPPORT YOU HAD FOR YOUR DECISION TO

ENTER BUSINESS (family, friends, peer group, government policy, financial or commercial organization, other)

3] HOW IMPORTANT HAS THIS SUPPORT BEEN FOR YOUR SUCCESS?
(1-2-3-4-5 (highest))

4] WHAT BARRIERS HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED IN YOUR WORK? DO YOU EXPECT MORE BARRIERS? (work/gender roles/harassment, financing, health, childcare, societal values, family disapproval)

5] HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR JOB SATISFACTION? (1-2-3-4-5)

6] AS OWNER/ENTREPRENEUR HOW HAVE YOU USED BUSINESS EARNINGS? (re-invest (expansion, replacement), community service, employee bonuses, for: home, family, school, other)

7] WHICH DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR GREATEST ASSET AS AN ENTREPRENEUR? (ability to take risks, self-evaluation, leadership, paying loans on time, other)

AGE UPON ENTERING BUSINESS

LEVEL OF EDUCATION/SKILL_

NAME (optional): _____

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