“They Do Not Sit Down, These Women”: Land Rights, Freedom, and Livelihoods In Zimbabwe Under the Fast-Track Land Reform Program

by

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Abstract

This research explores how land reform in Zimbabwe, and particularly the extension of primary land rights to women, influences gender relations. I carried out research in a resettled village where women had received individual title to land during Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform Program (FTLRP) of 2000. Through in-depth interviews with single women (who were typically widowed, older and unmarried, or divorced) who had primary rights to land, as well as with married women and men in the village, I examined gender dynamics around land ownership. Land as space and place creates the contexts and outcomes where gender and other social relations are performed, contested, and (re)produced. My findings reveal that the radical socio-spatial reorganizations of land reform can destabilize gendered relations of subordination tied to the land. I use a broadened conception of land to investigate the critical social relations built around land This research shows that not only do gender relations shift in the context of changing rights to land, but gender and other subjectivities are also constituted and contested, with transformative potential. Overall, this research advances a theoretical understanding of gender relations that is crucial to addressing the challenge of agricultural reforms and land rights for women in Zimbabwe and in rural agrarian landscapes more generally.

Dedication

Dedicated to my beloved parents.

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This work would not have been successful without the people of Village 9 who opened up their homes to me and accommodated this research. The women of Village 9, especially, allowed me into their homes, into their lives and shared so much more of themselves than these pages here represent. I will always treasure the time I spent with them and value everything I learnt from them and their lives. The Vanier CGS extended a much-needed scholarship that helped me to carry out my studies and the one year of fieldwork in Zimbabwe. I appreciate that they found value in this research.

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My family, and friends that have also become family, for being there for me, for picking me up when I was down, I appreciate you.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

My family moved from our rural home in Chivhu, Zimbabwe, to Macheke more than 14 years ago. I vividly remember the circumstances of that move, and I have told the story many times to the people I am close to in my life. My family is now settled in this little place that we all call home. In a way, the circumstances of that journey for my family shaped, and continue to shape, who I am and what I do today. I was aware that, as M. T. Jackson (2013) writes, "whether planned or accidental, desired or dreaded, the passage from one place to another, one life stage to another, or one state or status to another often figures centrally in the stories we tell about our lives and who we are" (16). My personal reflections on my family's move led to my curiosity about the journeys that led other people to this little village that is the focus of my study. Specifically, I was interested in the histories of single women who received land under the Fast-Track Land Reform Program (FTLRP) in Village 9[1]. Critical questions of where they came from, their relations with men, and how these relations were intricately tied to land and livelihoods were central to my research. As I embarked on my fieldwork, I wondered about the people who had come to settle in this little village, aware that each person I would come across would have stories of the journeys they had taken to end up in Village 9.

Growing up in rural Zimbabwe, every year before the rains fell and people were preparing the fields, there were discussions in my family around the allocation of fields. These discussions were mostly my mother raising her displeasure at my paternal grandfather taking a piece of land that my mother had used the previous season. I did not pay attention, but years

[1] Village 9 is a pseudonym I have given for my study site to preserve the anonymity of my participants. Similarly, I have given pseudonyms for all the participants in the research.

later, when my academic interests directed me towards the subject of land reform, I realized that gender dynamics had been at the centre of my mother's displeasure. My grandfather was the custodian of the six hectares of land allocated to him through the local chief, designated by the colonial government before Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980. He assigned fields to each of his three surviving sons and their young families. It seemed my grandfather did not have a system for allocation, as he could arbitrarily change allocations each season. Most of this allocation was a negotiation between my grandfather and his sons. My father was not interested in farming and did not care to engage in field allocation politics. My mother felt that she was disadvantaged by my father's lack of representation and always ended up with the least desirable fields. The dynamics and politics of land I witnessed in my family resemble the broader land dynamics in the country simultaneously as they illuminate the gendered dimension of Zimbabwe's land question.

This research explores the experiences of single women, including women who never married and women who were formerly married, who received land in their own right under the FTLRP implemented in Zimbabwe in 2000 in a resettled village in Manicaland Province. Under the FTLRP, beneficiaries could receive between three and six hectares of land in former larger-scale commercial farms in villages like Village 9, where I conducted my fieldwork. The women at the centre of this study were beneficiaries to the FTLRP. The FTLRP has shaped the socioeconomic and political landscape of the country. This groundbreaking policy and program extended women's primary rights to land. Women could receive and register title to land on their own, breaking with previous traditional land tenure regimes that gave men control over both the land and its agricultural productivity. It also provided for married women to hold joint title on

land accessed through the program. In this way, the FTLRP offers a platform to examine the potential of land reforms to transform social relations.

Land reforms open up new social spaces, which can lead to new relationships, alliances, and power struggles that have gender implications. I argue that extending primary land rights to single women has impacted gender relations in Zimbabwe, where these relations traditionally constellated around land access, control, and ownership within a patrilineal social system. A few studies have highlighted the gender outcomes of the FTLRP (Chingarande et al., 2012; Chiweshe et al., 2015; Goebel, 2005; Jacobs, 2003; Scoones, 2014). My research builds upon and extends their work to understand how women's primary land rights transform gender relations.

My study departs from previous literature addressing the gendered dimensions of the spatial reorganization in resettlement areas in Zimbabwe in two critical respects. First, a narrow conceptualization of land as solely an economic resource has led to broad conclusions that highlight the low income earned from agricultural production on resettled land (Central Statistical Office, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2002; Richardson, 2005; Sachikonye, 2005; Scoones, 2008; United Nations Development Programme, 2002; Zikhali, 2008). However, scholars who attend to cultural and political dimensions along with the economic have encouraged thinking about the land beyond its economic and productive value. Besides material values, spiritual values tied to land pose an intractable challenge for women's struggles for land and related resources (Moyo, 1995), supporting the view of land as a resource around which social and political relationships are built (Boone, 2014; Mosse, 1997; Peluso, 2009). Physical resources are seen as inseparable from social identities, often based on personal and collective ties to the land.

As such, this study places land into the broader set of exchanges and social-political relationships between men and women. Such a conceptualization allowed me to investigate society's reconfigurations and social relationships that resulted from the land reform processes in Zimbabwe. This was vital to showing how land reforms open up new social spaces, which then lead to new relationships, alliances, and power struggles. My study is in line with the recommendations of scholars who have called for a critical theoretical framework that looks at the interactions of power, land and gender (Moyo, 1995).

Second, gender reviews of the FTLRP tend to conflate women as a unitary category in their discussions and ensuing conclusions (Chakona, 2011; Goebel, 2005; Hanlon et al., 2013; Mazhawidza & Manjengwa, 2011; Mutopo, 2011; Sadomba, 2008). The few studies that distinguish between categories of women according to their marital status do not go beyond simply organizing women into different categories, and they do not explore how these differences condition the women's experiences. For example, some scholars acknowledge women's diversity in their study but quickly settle on an analysis of women centred only on married women (Chiweshe et al., 2015). Scoones and colleagues (2011) recognize the different circumstances for women and the "emancipatory potentials" embedded in fast-track areas for single women (p. 11), yet do not explore these potentials.

My focus on single women in this study draws attention to the differentiation between women when considering land. Women are differentiated according to the subject positions of wives and sisters that are constructed by the intersection of land as property with sexuality and kin (Berry, 2011). By focusing on single women in this study, I was able to examine the relationship between gender and primary land rights when single women hold land in their own right. Studies based on married women's experiences lead to an incomplete picture of land

reform's gendered nature. There is no scope to tease out specific dynamics derived from focusing on single women's subjective experiences of primary land rights.

My concluding argument in this thesis is that land, specifically primary land rights for women, has the potential to unlock various levels of agency, not only by immediately confronting subordinating structural relations (e.g., manifest in the empirical evidence of women taking in husbands on their land—matrilocality versus the traditional patrilocality) but also by extending the arena for contesting gendered norms (e.g., inheritance discourse), thereby offering the potential for change. I develop the implications of these findings in my conclusion.

Objectives of the Study

My main objective was to investigate how the FTLRP has transformed or reconfigured social and cultural relationships in agrarian communities, with particular attention to gender. Three questions guided my research:

a) What power and gender dynamics have been shaped and engendered by the land reform process?

b) How are gender dynamics articulated and experienced by different players, with particular attention to women?

c) What is the potential of primary land rights to transform gender relations?

I conceptualize both gender and land as constituted through social relations. I use a sociological framing of gender as an institutionalized system of social practices that distinguishes men and women into categories around which social relations of inequality are built (Ferree et al., 1999; Lorber, 1994; Nakano Glenn, 1999; Ridgeway, 1997). Gender organizes societies at their most basic level because it affects individuals and social interactions in various ways, including production, consumption, and distribution processes. Of particular relevance to this

study, gender has historically organized access to resources in Zimbabwe, and has been coconstituted with kinship, sexuality, and land as property.

My study falls within a large body of work on the gendered analysis of development and resource reforms in general. Research in this area is characterized by tensions between approaches that emphasize the social-structural constraints on women and those that emphasize women's agency (Jackson, 1998). My work attends to agency to reveal how women in subordinate social contexts can use their agency and how land and land rights are central to the recovery and recognition of this agency. I also use the related concept of autonomy as a form of agency to understand how changing economic and social structures due to land ownership restructures gender relations and to explore the dynamics of the different contestations, negotiations, and accommodations engendered by land rights.

Over a period of ten months in 2017, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Village 9, a resettled village in Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe, looking at post-fast-track land reform livelihoods and relations of female-headed households. I carried out in-depth interviews with 34 single women during fieldwork. The core participants in my study were typically widowed, older unmarried women, or divorced women who had received primary rights to land within the FTLRP framework embedded in government policy and Zimbabwe's revised constitution (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013). While my attention was on the gender and land dynamics for single women, I also interviewed ten married women, acknowledging awareness of difference in feminist research. While single women and married women do not share the same experiences, their individual experiences illuminate gender power dynamics. I also interviewed six married men, engaging them in in-depth discussions that illustrated the gender dynamics in the research area.

Study Limitations

There are apparent challenges and limitations to research confined to a PhD study's parameters, both in time and resources. The major limitation of this study is its focus on single women. Lack of in-depth engagement with male community members means that the transformative potential captured in this research is from women's perspectives only. Gender is not solely a women's issue. However, enough studies have investigated the intrahousehold dynamics that show gendered land relations from within married households. Research into how the changes in women's subjective experiences of land are impacting men is required.

Another limitation is that I based the study's conclusions on a snapshot in what is actually a long transformation process. A longitudinal study would give extensive evidence upon which to make concrete conclusions about the transformation of gender relations. Furthermore, I did not engage government administrative platforms to ascertain the land administration structures, including registration of land, to ensure the long-term viability of the provisions of the FTLRP. These limitations mean there are gaps and areas for further inquiry, which I highlight at the end of this dissertation. I may continue my research on these issues, and I also challenge others interested in this broad field of scholarship to pursue research in what could be completely different but related settings. The ultimate goal is to foster a multidimensional perspective of the interactions of power, land, and gender.

Thesis Layout

The rest of this introductory chapter is made up of a description of the conceptual framework that guided this study and a review of the literature within which the study fits. A conceptual framework built around a broad definition of land enables me to link gender to, and to unpack the agency and autonomy that are enabled by the extension of primary land rights to

women under the FTLRP. The literature review traces the historical background of land and gender relations from precolonial, colonial, and post-independence Zimbabwe. This land and gender nexus is presented within the broader context of land and gender debates in Southern Africa. This review shows how gender, land, and sexuality were coconstituted to mediate the relations between men and women.

Chapter 2 outlines the research methodology and the research methods that I followed. I outline a feminist ethnographic approach that I employed and provide a detailed account of the procedures I followed to ensure that I got entry into the field.

In Chapter 3, I present typical trajectories of the lives of single women who gained primary rights to land through the FTLRP. I give ethnographic accounts of the women's different pathways to Village 9 to show the diversity of the group lumped together in my study as "single women" or "female household heads."

Chapter 4 provides empirical evidence of the lives and livelihoods of the single women in Village 9. It illustrates the form and nature of the change the resettlement program has engendered and the kind of choices that primary land rights have opened up for the women. I specifically bring out how land's material and symbolic value results in different livelihood outcomes for single women and married women. These diverse experiences engender subjectivities at the centre of my argument for the transformative potential of land rights, which I discuss in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 brings together the analysis of the gendered histories of marginalization and how primary land rights in Village 9 enable women to pursue lives of autonomy and agency. This chapter shows the various interactions engendered by the provision of land in Village 9, opening up space to analyze gender transformation. This chapter shows how land is an impetus

for changing social relations. It also presents space for a framework to imagine the long-term transformative potential of land rights concerning gender relations.

The concluding chapter brings together the three empirical chapters' analysis to give some theoretical and policy recommendations. It also maps a way forward for future research that builds on the conclusions of this thesis.

Conceptual Framework

This study falls within scholarship that is concerned with understanding gender issues and relations as integral dimensions of social change, development, and transformation (Goebel, 2005; Jacobs, 2012). It contributes to the work that has argued for a gendered approach to land reform as holding potential for changing livelihoods and gender relations (Agarwal, 1994; Agarwal, 1997; Tsikata & Amanor-Wilks, 2009). I have used the linkage between land and gender relations to illuminate the autonomy and agency that are enabled by giving women primary land rights under the FTLRP. It is these rights that open space for enhanced livelihood options and that also engender tensions with certain subordinating ideologies of marriage and inheritance in potentially transformative ways. In the next sections, I outline how land and gender are intricately linked to agency and autonomy in ways I employed in carrying out this study.

Land and Gender

To investigate the lives and livelihoods of the women in Village 9, I use an expanded definition of land that allows for a full analysis of how lives and livelihoods in Village 9 are gendered. Scholars have called for a broader conceptualization of land that goes beyond its economic value and ties it to a range of symbolic and identity meanings. For example, according

to Mosse (1997), physical resources are inseparable from social identities because "notions of place and person fuse" (p. 497) around land and land ownership. Furthermore, land and other resources are not only material assets, "they are effective arguments, symbolic constructs, labels, texts, and information" (Jackson, 1998, p. 317).

Narrow economism, directing analysis only to economic gains or losses, has directed pre- and post-FTLRP debate. This has led to inadequate understanding of the far-reaching consequences of land reconfiguration, which in turn accounts for the gaps in gender analysis. A broader understanding of land requires conceptualizing it as a site of struggles and networks of relations. Mosse (1997) calls for researchers to "embrace the range of symbolic interests normally rejected as economically irrational" (p. 473), acknowledging that a broad range of other social relations develop around the land. Land is thus inseparable from the social relations that converge around it. African scholarship has also linked land to broader relations, pointing out that "beyond agriculture, land has a wide array of uses in the organization of livelihoods and is also the basis of social and political power, and therefore is at the heart of gender inequalities in the control of resources" (Tsikata & Amanor-Wilks, 2009, p. 1)

As the literature review in the subsequent section will show, gender was coconstituted with kinship, sexuality, and land as property. Through the interplay of local heteropatriarchal ideologies and successive political projects of Zimbabwe's colonial and post-independence histories, women were positioned in dependent identities to men as daughters and then as wives. As Berry (2011) underlines,

> these gendered kin positions are partially produced through the distinctions of who may and may not inherit land; the multi-stranded relationships around land as property invest the gendered kin positions with meaning, and embed them in

> relations of power. Simultaneously, categories of gendered kin positions are also foundational to the social act of defining land as property. (p. 145.)

Similarly, Ferguson (1994) observes that land as property "is not a relation between people and things. It is a relation between people, concerning things" (p. 142). Berry (2011) further argues that

> by forwarding an analysis of the co-constitution of the spatial and the social realms we are able to more fully understand not only the depth of transformation called for by women's demand for land rights, but also the creativity diverse women employ as they re-vision their worlds and chart new family formations and gendered relations. (p. 151)

Such a conceptual linkage of the coconstitution of gender, kinship, sexuality, and land as property provides the lens for my analysis of how a change in one necessarily affects the others. In the context of the FTLRP, extension of primary land rights to women affects not only the material value of land as a productive asset but the symbolic value of land as well. This symbolic value of land is the space for agency within which I build my argument for the transformative potential of primary land rights.

Agency

My study falls within a large body of work interested in gendered analysis of development and linked to resource reforms in general. Research in this body of work is characterized by tensions between approaches that emphasize the structural constraints on women and those that emphasize their agency (Jackson, 1998). Structural arguments give the impression that

> women are therefore powerless in the face of patriarchy, or deluded as to the real nature of their interests. If women are conceived of as full subjects, one has to ask further questions: why do they appear to (mostly) go along with a deal that appears to offer them so little? Are they as powerless as this model suggests and is the deal as bad as the model suggests? How do they understand and represent equity in gender relations? What are the discourses that convince women of the legitimacy of their exclusion from land rights?" (Jackson, 1998, p. 317)

A central critique of structuralist discourses is that these discourses foster an excessively deterministic view of social relations that puts weight on the replication of oppressive conditions and forestalls any opportunity for social transformation (Jenkins, 2002; McNay, 1999; Mottier, 2002). Responding to these critiques requires refocusing on gender relations as more than structures of constraint.

Agency in feminist research has been guided by a concern with uncovering the marginalized experiences of women, exploring their capacity for autonomous action in the face of cultural sanctions and structural inequalities that seem overwhelming (McNay, 2000). Agency speaks to "how individuals are endowed with the capabilities for independent reflection and action such that their response when confronted with difference and paradox may involve accommodation or adaptation as much as denial" (McNay, 2000, p. 3). This, McNay (1992) argues, is a critical element "to an agenda of change in the relations of gender domination (p. 847). McNay's theorization helps me to address the question of whether or not, and how far, women in subordinate social contexts can use their agency, and how land and land rights are central for the recovery and recognition of this agency. This orientation calls attention to an analytical focus on local agency.

Autonomy as a Dimension of Agency

Beyond the notion of agency, McNay and other scholars centralize the concept of autonomy as a sign of agency. McNay (2000) points to potential for new forms of autonomy which "can no longer be understood through dichotomies of male domination and female subordination" (p. 1), while Madhok (2007) argues for a conceptualization of autonomy that is less reliant "on action as the single most exemplification of autonomy to an examination of the motives behind the execution of certain commitments and judgments to action" (p. 338). In other words, understanding why people act the way they do requires paying attention to the ideas that lie behind action (or inaction). For Friedman (2003), autonomy entails deliberation and is demonstrated when a person can consciously reflect and pursue desires, wants, concerns, needs, cares, values, and commitments that are important only to them, without being impeded by coercion, deception, or manipulation by others.

Autonomy is, however, complicated. The challenge of examining, describing, and capturing autonomy lies in the reality that autonomy is exercised both by being accommodating and by being conflictual. Sometimes autonomy may also seem inconsequential. It is crucial to find ways to think about human agency within oppressive transcultural contexts so as to avoid the typical characterization of women as passive entities who do not have any room for action (Di Stefano, 1996; Friedman 2003; Meyers, 1989; Nedelsky, 1989). As such, examining, describing, and capturing autonomy where it occurs, as well as the circumstances under which it is generated, is important in understanding agency.

I use the ideas of agency and autonomy to explore the dynamics of the contestations, negotiations, and accommodations engendered by land rights in Village 9. McNay's (1992) emphasis on the creative dimension of agency guides my investigation of the ways that women

may act autonomously despite constraining social sanctions. This gives room to examine the contestations in the everyday encounters of the women of Village 9. I capture the agency that land opened up for women even at the same time as I highlight the structures that frame their actions. McNay (1992) identifies this agency of everyday life as a critical element "to an agenda of change in the relations of gender domination" (p. 847).

Literature Review

This section provides background to Zimbabwe's land question while also contextualizing the gender question. Here, I highlight the relations in precolonial, colonial, and post-independence Zimbabwe that were built around land and how they impacted both young men and women in a patriarchal society. This section also shows how traditional authority, the state, and men were jointly implicated in a process that solidified women's subordinate positions, with such power dynamics being mediated by, and through, control over land.

Placing gender at the centre of the land question requires a broader conceptualization of land in order to illuminate how it mediates power relations. This literature review highlights the various ways land has been conceptualized and draws out instances where similar relations of power have manifested around it. This is all the more important in relation to Zimbabwe's land question, as discourse on post-independence land redistribution has been based on a narrowly economic conceptualization of land.

The literature reviewed in the following section provides historical background to women's rights to land in Zimbabwe. It traces a history of land alienation and complex social relations that influenced women's access and control over land from precolonial, colonial, to post-independence Zimbabwe. That there were women who were able to take advantage of the provisions made by the FTLRP policy is a milestone given this history of gendered land relations

in Zimbabwe. The FTLRP thus provides a platform for my empirical project of investigating how primary rights to land can influence gender relations mediated by ownership and control of land. The Zimbabwe FTLRP provides solid scope for examining both the arguments about extending land title to women and the assumptions about livelihood enhancement in rural societies of the global south, in sub-Saharan Africa, and elsewhere.

A History of Zimbabwe's Land Question

Zimbabwe attained independence from British colonial rule following a protracted armed struggle in 1980. Land was at the top of the agenda in the negotiations for independence. The newly independent Zimbabwean government inherited a skewed distribution of land that favoured the minority white Rhodesians against the majority black Zimbabweans. An estimated 15 million hectares of fertile land was owned by about 6,100 families of European descent, and 16.4 million hectares of less fertile, marginal land was occupied by fewer than 800,000 indigenous families (Deininger et al., 2002). Successive colonial land policies like the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and the Land Tenure Act of 1969 led to more than just a racially skewed distribution of land. Besides alienating native Zimbabweans from the productive land into the marginal reserves, these colonial policies also introduced a racially differentiated land tenure system where white-owned commercial farmland was held under freehold tenure and the modern-day communal areas, formerly Tribal Trust Lands, were under customary tenure.[2]

Land tenure refers to the relationship people have, as individuals or as a group, to land. It denotes mechanisms by which rights to use, control, and transfer land are granted. It also outlines

[2] There are essentially four tenure systems: freehold (private), state land, communal and leasehold (resettlement) systems**.** Each system has rules that direct women's access to and control over land, and in some cases these can be complex systems of multiple and overlapping rights.

the associated responsibilities and restraints individuals or groups have over specific areas. Other scholars conceptualize tenure as "the sum of rules recognized in law underlying land ownership, allocation of land rights, the substantive content of those rights, their protection in law, their disposal and/or extinction as well as their regulation" (Shivji et al., 1998, p. 98). This sum of rules consequently defines how rights to land are allocated within a society. Four types of rights are enshrined within specific tenure arrangements: rights of use, transfer rights, exclusion rights, and enforcement rights. However, land rights are complete only when they are legally recognizable, socially recognizable, and enforceable (Duncan & Ping, 2001). This places issues of land rights and land tenure at the centre of land reform discourse in general.

Independence was anticipated to usher in a broad land redistribution program to redress the colonial land imbalances for which a heated armed liberation struggle had been waged. However, two decades later, the land issue remained tied up in the conditions of independence set out in the agreement between the new Zimbabwean government and the British government. The Lancaster House Agreement signed in 1979 outlined that the land and the existing constitution would remain intact for ten years. During this period, only land put on the market by willing sellers could be purchased with funds promised to the new Zimbabwean government by the British government. The government's efforts and performance in the land redistribution program has been the subject of a large body of scholarship (Kinsey, 1982, 1999; Moyo, 1995, 1998, 2000). From 1980 until ten years after the expiry of the agreement, and further, until the end of the 1990s, the land issue remained largely unresolved and presented a latent force of conflict. The breakdown of the negotiations for funding with the British government in 1997 (Moyo & Matondi, 2003), the effects of the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) of

1991–1995, and the failure of post-1990 land reforms limited government's efforts to deracialize land relations.

The government failed to deliver the independence promise of redressing the land question by providing land to many land-hungry Zimbabweans who needed it both for their livelihoods and for its symbolic liberation value. Over the years following independence, landlessness among native Zimbabweans escalated due to continued subdivisions of the land that had been apportioned by the colonial government in reserves for family households. Squatting due to landlessness, poverty, lack of employment in the industrial sector (affected by structural adjustment programs), a weak social security system, and a shortage of urban housing (Matondi, 2012) were thorny issues in Zimbabwe following independence, reaching greater heights in the late 1990s. These socioeconomic and political forces escalated the pressure for land redistribution, leading to violent farm invasions in 1998.

Much debate concerns the reasons for the failure of various land reform efforts by the government in the two decades of independence. For my purpose, the important conclusion and introduction to the background of my empirical site of study is that this failure led to the massive land invasions under the leadership of former liberation war veterans, where large commercial farms were taken by force from the predominantly white owners and redistributed to landless Zimbabweans. The government supported these invasions and formalized them with FTLRP 2000 and the eventual constitutional reform leading to the new Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act 2013 (Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2013).

In terms of its redistribution objectives, the FTLRP reduced the oversized commercial farms to an average of 500 hectares from a high of 2,000 hectares through the creation of smallholder, small and medium, as well as large-scale commercial schemes (Matondi, 2012).

The A1 scheme, which created small farms of between 12 and 30 hectares, was the avenue through which government aimed to decongest the communal areas (colonial reserves) and through which it settled about 145,775 beneficiaries on 4.1 million hectares comprising about 2,288 former large-scale commercial farms. A total of 2,295 large-scale farms accommodated 16,386 beneficiaries in the A2 scheme, plots classified as small, medium, and large-scale against the nation average farm size of 2,200 hectares for commercial land (Utete Commission, 2003).

While land reform between 1980 and 2000 was aimed at addressing historical racial imbalances in land ownership, the extension of land rights to women offered potential to address the sidelined age-old discourse on gender inequality. The discourse pre-2000 was that women's access and rights to land were shaped by gender-determined power relations that existed across a range of institutions. The state, market, and tradition cooperated to protect and strengthen existing power structures that ultimately served to constrain women's secure access and rights to land (Izumi, 1999).

Debates on African women's rights to land and productive resources have centred on the absence of recognized legal ownership of land for women, even though women are responsible for most of the agricultural production in Sub-Saharan Africa (Peters & Peters, 1998). The history of land relations among the Shona[3] in Zimbabwe shows that women were economically active but did not control the means of production in agriculture and metallurgy in precolonial and colonial Zimbabwe. They instead provided the labour required in these activities. Women did not have access to land in their own right but gained access to rural land according to their relationship to male kin, either as wives, daughters, or sisters (Cheater, 1986; Mushunje, 2001).

[3] The Shona people are an ethnic group of native Zimbabweans who form the majority of the population.

This history changed with the introduction of a bifurcated land tenure system based on race that came with colonial rule, but colonial rule did not improve women's access to land, rather degrading it through the imposition of settler patriarchy on top of local forms of patriarchy (Cheater, 1986; Chigwedere, 2000; Gaidzanwa, 1994; Peters & Peters, 1998). The customary tenure system under which women's land rights were enshrined disadvantaged women, as rights to land given under customary tenure could be malleable and manipulable by individuals or groups (Mackenzie, 1990; Mackenzie, 2008). Scholars have made the case in gender debates that the policies and customary rights enacted by the colonial government served to legitimate the individual material and symbolic interests of male members in kin lines (Chingarande et al., 2012; Moore, 1993; Shumba, 2011).

Even though some post-independence reforms elevated the legal standing of women—for example, affording them legal recognition as adults—land rights for women remained largely ignored (Chiweshe et al., 2015; Kesby, 1999). Women continued to be accommodated only in their dependent position as the wives of landholders and their land rights enshrined by definitions of gender relations within marriage (Chenaux-Repond, 1993; Goebel, 1999, 2005; Jacobs, 2003).

The FTLRP of 2000 was a momentous development towards addressing women's land rights. The FTLRP ushered in changes to the constitution and a land reform policy that opened up scope for women to have land registered in their names as primary landholders. The policy articulated conditions that allowed women to access title to land. It specifically renounced "all laws, customs, traditions and cultural practices that infringe the rights of women conferred by the constitution" as "void to the extent of infringement" (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013, p. 20). It also stipulated that the state and all its agencies would "take practical measures to ensure that

women have access to resources, including land, on the basis of equality with men" (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013, p. 20).

The land reform policy itself allowed for the registration of land title to women as primary beneficiaries. This meant that women would receive title to a piece of land bearing their individual names. Married women could also have joint title to land with their husband, which meant that the title document would bear both of their names. The policy rhetoric on women and land was thus generally positive and progressive.

Nonetheless, the FTLRP has been criticized for failing to achieve the targets set for land distribution to women in post-FTLRP research concerned with showing the dismal record of land reform in addressing gender inequalities (Goodhope, 2007; Jirira & Halimana, 2008). The Utete Land Report of 2003 showed that only 18% of beneficiaries[4] in A1 plots[5] were women and 12% on the larger A2 plots for semi-commercial farming (Matondi, 2012; Shumba, 2011; Utete Commission, 2003). While the policy and the constitution both had potential to address the gendered limitations of previous land relations, this 20% beneficiary rate from the Utete Report (Utete Commission, 2003) does not reflect the need for land by women. Due to some limitations in both the policy and its implementation, some women who needed land were not able to benefit from the process.

First, only single women could access land in their own right. Married women continued to be beneficiaries appended to their husbands. Permits to couples under the FTLRP were given in husbands' names only and in some cases in the names of both husband and wife, as allowed

[4] These figures represent women who were granted "offer letters" thereby gaining land in their own right.

[5] An A1 designation represents small-scale farming (villages or self-contained plots) whereas an A2 designation consists of small and medium-scale commercial farms.

for by the policy. The implication and significance of the distinction of primary and secondary rights will be shown in this study. Second, challenges for women in accessing land during this process also included the hostile nature of the invasions that accompanied the process. There were reported clashes between farm owners and "invaders" with the farm owners being supported by their workers in these clashes, which may have made some women stay away from the invasion process, particularly old women and young mothers, who are also the more vulnerable to insecure land rights (Chikova & Madebwe, 2006). The unclear processes that entailed investment of time and resources, which women could not invest in, were also another constraint. The process also did not take into consideration that women wishing to get land might be illiterate and were therefore restricted by their inability to fill in application forms (Chikova & Madebwe, 2006). As such, the number of women beneficiaries under the program, 20% of total beneficiaries to A1 land, has been taken by some scholars to reflect a poor record. However, the fact that the government even legally and constitutionally recognized and accommodated the need for primary land rights for women is commendable given past resistance. In my study, women beneficiaries constituted 20% of the village membership.

Global and Regional Land Tenure Debates

Global and regional land tenure discourses argue that securing women's primary land rights is crucial to securing livelihoods, improving food security, empowering women, and generally as a basic human rights and equity consideration (Agarwal, 1994; Cross, 1999; Hargreaves, 1999; Moyo, 1996). Given that women are the majority of smallholder farmers in Southern Africa, scholars have long argued that they need to have access to secure rights to the means of production (Cheater, 1986). Securing women's ownership of land and other productive resources is considered to have great transformative potential.

Scholars have argued that if women own land independently or jointly, their access to and control of land-based earnings can be assured. Women will also gain decision-making power at various levels, including influencing household livelihoods through increased capacity to invest in adaptation practices to secure livelihoods and even making investments decisions for expenditures on food, education, health care, and children's clothing (Boserup, 1970; Dyson & Moore, 1983; Sen, 1990). At a social level, owning land has potential to open social access to non-market institutions, such as community-level governance structures, where women can contribute to decision making (Eduards, 1994). However, despite such supporting arguments, Namubiru-Mwaura (2014) argues that "women's rights to land have yet to become fully realized and the reality for women is still characterized strongly by entrenched patterns of exclusion (p. iii).

On the other hand, arguments against the assumption that women are likely to exercise a greater degree of autonomy through rights to land highlight the need to reflect on "the pathways by which such 'access' translates into agency and achievement" (Kabeer, 1999, p. 443). These global tenure debates direct attention to the need for understanding the pathways and linkages between land rights and empowerment empirically, wherein land as a resource has to be defined in ways that spell out the potential for human agency and valued achievements more clearly. This research thus situates the analysis within gender debates in Zimbabwe.

Gender and Land Rights Debates in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, and pertaining to women specifically, land rights debates have been concerned with issues of women's subordinate access to, use of, and control over land. When Zimbabwe gained independence after a colonial history of privilege and exclusion along racial lines, the land question was about race, capital, and postcoloniality (Goebel, 2005; Moyana,

2002; Moyo, 1986). Disparity in land allocation was the major grievance around which much support and mobilization for the liberation movement were secured. Giving land back to black peasants was an expectation tied up with this independence from colonial rule. From 1980 until the FTLRP, the government embarked on reform programs organized around addressing the racialized and classed nature of the land question, taking land from white large-scale commercial farmers and giving it to an emergent class of black commercial and semi-commercial farmers and rural peasant farmers. Land tenure debates were thus constructed around issues of class, race, and economic efficiency, leaving debates related to gender as a largely unanalyzed set of assumptions, ignored, insufficiently addressed or interrogated, and at most, unchallenged (Chiweshe et al., 2015; Kesby, 1999).

The government did, however, address some aspects of women's rights in society as women's groups lobbied and put pressure to change colonial policies that disadvantaged women. A number of liberal feminist legal reforms were pushed for at independence, advancing women's interests with regard to equal rights, prohibiting sexual discrimination, affording wives, divorcees, and widows rights to maintenance, and promising wives and daughters equal property inheritance rights (Gaidzanwa, 1994; Ncube, 1991; Peters & Peters, 1998). However, post-independent Zimbabwean policies reflected contradictory and mixed messages and reflected a lack of a clear agenda for gendered social transformation, betraying the hesitancy on the part of government to challenge patriarchy in many areas (Ranchod-Nilsson, 2006, 2008). Customary law continued to dominate legal practice and framed women's lived realities.

In many respects, a patriarchal gender regime persisted into the independence era, leading to a hesitant and at times resistant discourse when it came to women's rights to inheritance and assembly. Women were admonished to cooperate, be patient, and move slowly "with due respect

for the ongoing privileges of men" (Sylvester, 2000, p. 87). They were encouraged to shelve their concerns so that the newly independent country could concentrate on the project of nation building, particularly confronting racial prejudice. Such attitudes towards women's interests and perceptions of women's place and rights also guided land redistribution efforts. Land in rural areas continued, post-independence, to be owned by the state and institutionally controlled by the chiefs as custodians of communal land and through patriliny in kinship and family groups at the household level. Women had to contend with both patrilineal notions of land rights and a state policy of allocating land rights to male household heads in postcolonial land reforms (Cheater & Gaidzanwa, 1996; Parpart, 1995; Peters & Peters, 1998; Ranchod-Nilsson, 2006; Schmidt, 1990). The government was not willing to confront and alienate traditional land authority, and instead used the colonial strategy of incorporating traditional leaders as the extended arm of government (Chingarande et al., 2012; Chiweshe et al., 2015; Goebel, 2005; Mamdani, 1996).

Thus, women continued to be accommodated only in their dependent position as the wives of landholders, and the early resettlement programs of the 1980s and 1990s continued to circumscribe women's land rights within definitions of gender relations in marriage (Chenaux-Repond, 1993; Goebel, 1999, 2005; Jacobs, 2003). Men as household heads were the only ones in whose name land could be legally registered (Resettlement Now, 1994, as cited in Peters & Peters, 1998). Women's land rights were perceived to be secure through their husbands. The government deemed the secondary rights women had to kin land to be sufficient. However, women's access to land became insecure when the household head passed away if the woman could not be accommodated in a replacement relationship with another male kin (Gaidzanwa, 1981; Makura-Paradza, 2010).

Reasons why a woman could not be accommodated within the family ranged from the woman herself refusing to be married off to someone else in the family (*kugarwanhaka*[6]), to a lack of willing husbands among the male kin due to witchcraft and other accusations that made the widow undesirable. Whatever the reasons, a widow's access to usufruct land rights was challenged, more so in the absence of an older son to inherit his father's lands (Gaidzanwa, 1981). Besides lack of access to land, women faced discriminatory policies and practices in such areas as the provision of credit and extension services (Shumba, 2011) as these too were tied to the subscription of a male head as husband, brother, or father. Despite many legal cases demonstrating women's precarious circumstances, the state nonetheless continued to be averse to addressing and confronting the issue of primary land rights for women.

Women's subordinate relationship to men can thus be traced to both colonial land policies and customary land tenure. Customary tenure, together with many other barriers that frame women's daily realities, complicates women's access to and ownership of land and has been at the centre of gender and land rights debates in Zimbabwe's land reforms. It is within customary tenure—at least, within the colonial codifications of "tradition" I outline in the next section—that women's rights have historically come to be enshrined in subordinate relations.

Historical Background to the Gender Question in Zimbabwe

The gender debate in Zimbabwe is directly related to the debate over land access after Zimbabwe gained independence, as outlined above. Land reform discourse following independence was directed by the pre-independence racialized nature of land inequality (Moyana, 1975). A discourse of race, class, and farm productivity permeated and directed land

[6] *Kugara nhaka* refers to the practice of marrying widows to kin.

reform policies. The gendered nature of land inequality remained isolated to the margins, as it seemed accepted throughout Zimbabwe's history that women's rights to land were sufficiently provided for within various social relations in Shona society (Goebel, 1999; Kesby, 1999). The nature and dynamics of the social relations around land are discussed in the following sections, tracing them from precolonial, to colonial and to post-independence Zimbabwe.

Precolonial Land Relations in Zimbabwe

There has been much debate over the history and nature of precolonial land relations in Zimbabwe (Cheater, 1990; Chigwedere, 2000; Mamdani, 1996; Peters & Peters, 1998; Sylvester, 2000). The dominant view is that the chiefs were the custodians of rural land in precolonial Zimbabwe and vested with personalized networks of chiefly arbitration and land access negotiations (Boone, 2014; Chenaux-Repond, 1993; Goebel, 1999; Moyana, 2002). Chiefs held the land on behalf of the kinship group and had rights of allocation to newcomers; they also ensured that the land was used in ways in line with set tradition. Land rights were vested in a corporate group, whose rights overrode individual rights.

In this system, men held land rights through their fathers and chiefs. Women had limited rights to a socially defined minimum amount of land for subsistence production and personal income (Jacobs, 2000; Pankhurst & Jacobs, 1988; Peters & Peters, 1998) in the form of *tseu,* land which was specifically allocated to crops for household needs. Women gained usufruct rights to this land only through their relationship and association in patrilineages as wives or daughters (Gaidzanwa, 1994; Shumba, 2011). Divorced daughters or unmarried older daughters gained usufruct rights to land apportioned by their fathers, though in most cases they produced on their fathers' land. All this was negotiated within family and clan relationships that assured everyone had enough land.

Patrilineage, Marriage, and Land

Family and clan relationships pervaded these land processes. Precolonial power relations in general formed around a lineage—a social, economic, political, ritual, and moral community that was formed by a cluster of agnatically related men and their families. Lineage is so important in the allocation of land rights that scholars claim that the analysis of power relations in precolonial Africa might usefully begin at the lineage level (Kesby, 1999). Amongst the Shona, family organization is based on descent groups that follow patrilineal kinship. This signifies lines of descent and authority that are traced through the father.

Adult masculine identity within kinship groups was built around marrying and establishing one's own family, whereby men also gained control over their wife's (or wives') reproductive and productive (labour) capacities and over the exchange values of their daughters as wives for whom dowry would be paid. Young men were dependent on adult heads of lineage for the material and symbolic resources that would allow them to marry and establish their own households. These resources included land, which, upon marrying, men would be given to enable them to remain in the locality of their birth. Wives moved into their husbands' families, and through bearing children, perpetuated and extended the husband's lineage.

Wives' mobility from their birth homes to the husbands' in marriage was the most important factor in the construction of female identity. According to Kesby (1999), the "institution of marriage occupied a key linking position in the configuration of powers that constructed space, identity and women's position of dependence" (p. 30). Thus, through marriage, which integrated them into existing community networks of kinship, women gained access to dependent and secondary rights to land. Unmarried daughters' and sisters' positions in the lineage, by contrast, were impermanent and transient. Women's destinies were presumed to

be tied to the lineage they joined through marriage into their husband's clan. Women were thus positioned as dependent subjects within patrilineal customs, both within their families of birth and in their marriage families.

Land, which was nominally owned by the chief, was distributed to clans, where it would be further apportioned to male heads who would in turn also ensure that their wives and daughters could have access to the clan land. Some scholars have cautioned against this idealized presentation of a peaceful precolonial Rhodesia where there were no contests over resources (Cheater, 1990). They argue that while land was indeed plentiful, the quality was always a source of dispute and there were also other axes of exclusion and inclusion that governed land relations, including those of gender, generation, kinship, and status. Nonetheless, colonial political and economic dynamics entrenched certain aspects of the traditional land tenure system to the detriment of women.

Colonial Land Relations in Zimbabwe

The advent of settler colonialism brought many changes beyond the spatial reorganization of the landscape that saw relocation of native farmers from fertile lands into marginal reserves where tenure was framed around a colonial translation and reconstruction of "traditional" African landholding systems (Gaidzanwa, 1994; Moyana, 2002; Schmidt, 1990). Most important to gender relations is that colonial rule brought about a different constellation of the powers of chiefly and lineage authority and British colonial authority, which had unforeseen and unintended emancipatory effects for women.

In the early days, the collision of colonial and indigenous powers destabilized the existing relationships built around traditional chiefly and lineage authority amongst the indigenous population. Chiefs were in danger of losing the authority they held over young men who

suddenly had new opportunities in waged labour in farms, mines, and towns. Some women also took advantage of the early colonial assault on indigenous male authority and exited patrilocalities permanently by moving from the rural areas that were under the authority of chiefs and male kinsmen into farms, mines, and towns (Schmidt, 1993). This newfound space for independence for women threatened the lineage system and led to much discomfort, first amongst traditional elders, who had lost control of the young men, as well as men who were losing effective control over the women.

In response to the discontent created by its policies, the colonial government redeployed a hybrid system of colonial and customary discourses and practices in ways designed to contain the indigenous populations. The colonial government established native reserves on which chiefs' authority would be supreme, extending chiefs' powers and thereby containing pockets of resistance. This ensured a population that was easier to manage, modernize, and control (Moyana, 2002; Peters & Peters; 1998; Schmidt, 1990). This redeployment of customary discourses and practices had far-reaching consequences for women.

New land policies and laws that restricted women's mobility were enacted (Benson & Chadya, 2003; Gaidzanwa, 1995; Schmidt, 1992; Sylvester, 2000). Women's "place" was defined and bounded, with boundaries beyond which they needed male kin to accompany them. Women needed marriage certificates to enter cities, mines, or farms. Some of the enactments pushed them into prostitution and other activities that framed them as social outcasts. Disgraced females were denied male protection and could actually be open to male predation (Benson & Chadya, 2003; Gaidzanwa, 1994). As men were pushed into waged employment, the results were overburdening of women with more responsibilities, restriction of women's mobility and potential, and heightening of women's gendered struggles.

With respect to land, Rhodesian government policies reordered the landscape in ways that disadvantaged women. Most importantly, state-enacted policies began subsuming women's land rights solely within patriarchal households (Cheater, 1990; Gaidzanwa, 1981). Land continued to be allocated patrilineally by chiefs and male elders, but the net effect of colonial expropriation was that kin land was drastically reduced in size (Peters & Peters, 1998). The land available to married women through their patriline also became restricted, and the privilege of exclusive lands they had enjoyed when land was abundant before colonization was also eroded (Gaidzanwa, 1981). Divorced and older unmarried women could no longer enjoy usufruct rights for subsistence and personal income generation as they had before colonization. By helping to solidify the subordination of women to male authority, the Rhodesian government was able to mollify chiefs, headmen, and other senior men and head off a source of opposition to its imperialist and capitalist project (Kesby, 1999; Schmidt, 1990; Sylvester, 2000).

However, the most important aspect of colonial reorganization, as far as women's access to land is concerned, was the restriction and solidification of the new relations built along land access and the entrenchment of a hierarchy of power relations on the communal landscape. These relations would continue to frame attention to women's rights to land in post-independence Zimbabwe and moderated the gender debates until the FTLRP was implemented and made provisions for primary land rights for women.

Next, in Chapter 2, I outline my study's research methodology and methods.

Chapter 2. Methodology

Land reform has been a sensitive research topic since the land invasions that started in the late 1990s and early 2000s. As I set out at the beginning of my research, I was apprehensive of the challenge inherent in delving into my research question. How does one investigate power, specifically, power that is hidden by its acceptance and naturalization and which operates through that invisibility? My curiosity lay in exploring exactly this kind of invisible power, which I found to be the most interesting, the most effective, and thus, the most important to confront and expose within gender relations. I undertook a qualitative research approach to this question, utilizing a feminist ethnographic approach for data collection and analysis.

Ethnography

Ethnography is concerned with the study of human behaviour in the natural setting in which people live. The researcher immerses themselves in the everyday activities of the community they study in order to fully understand the social context, relationships, and processes at the centre of their study. Within ethnography, attention is focused on the beliefs, values, rituals and customs that shape people's everyday behaviours and interactions. (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Research involves using different techniques in the interactions between the researcher and the participants.

Fieldwork is a central component of ethnography. Ethnographers recognize that there is always a difference between what people say they do and what they actually do. Fieldwork within which one is a participant-observer ensures that the ethnographer experiences and sees interactions and behaviours firsthand, in everyday contexts (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Focusing on a small scale, a single setting, or a group of people is aimed at providing in-depth

empirical data. A researcher getting into the "natural" research setting needs to negotiate entry into the lives of this group of people to be able to carry out the fieldwork. The ethnographic researcher needs to establish relations, build rapport, and coconstruct identities with the participants for a fruitful research endeavour (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

Engaging with the positivism and naturalism debate reveals a major critique levelled against ethnographic research. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) acknowledge the criticism that the researcher's orientations, which are shaped by their socio-historical positions, including their values and interests, may influence the research process. Reflexivity is a direct response to the researcher bias critique. Reflexivity means that the researcher must "recognize, anticipate and explore the ways in which her presence in the field affects informants' responses and behavior" (Schrock, 2013). The questions of who the researcher is, how they are accepted in the research community, and their identity as a researcher should be discussed openly. The researcher is as much a part of the project as the narratives of the participants, in the field as well as in the final text (England, 1994). In the next section I extend ethnography to the theoretical positioning of my study within feminism.

Feminist Ethnography

According to Skeggs, "ethnography is defined by its relationship to theoretical positions, hence feminist ethnography" (Skeggs, 1994, p. 76). Her starting point is that every method entails an implicit commitment to certain theoretical understanding of the social world. While there is no single accepted definition, feminist ethnography stresses core methodological imperatives that I employed in my research. These include paying attention to women's voices and ensuring that these voices are captured in interpretive texts of research agendas. Capturing

women's perspectives means identifying the ways by which women create meaning and experience life from the particular positions they hold in society.

Feminist ethnographic research also has a commitment to paying attention to marginality and power differentials; acknowledges and reflects on power relations within the research context; is interested in exploring women's experiences of oppression along with the agency that women exercise in their own lives; and produces knowledge about women's lives in specific cultural contexts, with the aim of producing scholarship in the service of the people, communities, and issues under study (Davis & Craven, 2016; Schrock, 2013).

Feminist research calls attention to diversity and difference and questions "whether all women can be conceptualized as unified subjectivities easily located in the category woman," (Olesen, 2000, p. 221). This attention to difference was important because I investigated the experiences of married and single women who did not necessarily share the same experiences and relationship to land, but whose individual experiences nonetheless illuminated broader dynamics that brought them together as a subordinate group (Olesen, 2000), as the empirical evidence in my thesis shows.

Drawing from ethnography's attention to experience, participants, definitions, meanings, and subjectivity, feminist ethnography emphasizes that "knowledge is contextual and interpersonal, based on women's experiences within the concrete realm of everyday reality and human agency" (Ghosh, 2019, p. 83). Special attention to participants' voice advocated for by feminist theorists like Patricia Hill Collins calls for "keen consideration for power and structural relations, in a way that embraces new understandings of social complexity—and the locales of power relationships" (Olesen, 2000, p. 223).

Feminist research also underlines how meaning derived from women's experiences and knowledge produced from their perceptions of experiences and life stories can also be different and insightful. My aim in this study was to explore the lived experiences of the women in the context of the FTLRP, drawing from the feminist research approach, which states that the starting point for building and fomenting social change is concrete lived experience (Hesse-Biber, 2012). Feminist ethnography appealed to my research agenda of understanding the value of land to women. The symbolic value of land can only be derived from how women speak about the centrality of land to their relationships to others and their understandings and conceptions of self through this relationship to land. Single women's relations to land have not been explored, and feminist ethnography is relevant to my agenda of gaining insights into the lives of women whose voices have only marginally been heard in regard to land ownership.

Power dynamics between researcher and subjects makes it questionable that the final text represents the voice of the subaltern since "the subaltern's voice will always already be co-opted and secondary" (Schrock, 2013, p. 50). How to navigate these fault lines brings about feminist ethnographers' orientation to reflexivity about their knowledge production and their relationships with informants and participants in the research process (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). In the spirit of early ethnographers, my work here does not make me the authority on the participants in my study; rather, it represents the partial truth I learnt about their lives as landed women, and as much as possible, I express strong sentiments using their own voices in the text.

Feminist work concerned with engaging with self-reflexivity allows subjects to speak on their own in the text and interpret women's lives and experiences through a lens of feminist analysis (Schrock, 2013). A feminist lens of analysis underlines that women's everyday lives are not completely circumscribed by gender oppression. In the context of my study, the feminist lens

ensured that I investigated different axes of subordination at the same time as I exposed the agency and resourcefulness of the women to circumvent and resist their subordination. Most importantly, this analysis highlighted how land was at the centre of this struggle. It is within this space of resistance that I find evidence for the argument of my thesis: that primary land rights have potential to contribute to gender transformation.

In the following sections I will outline how I embarked on the ethnographic journey in Village 9. Drawing from feminist ethnography, I start by situating myself as a researcher before I delve into the dynamics of entering the field and how I carried out the fieldwork using the different methods that are central to ethnographic research: unstructured interviews; participant observations; field notes; and reflexive journalling.

Gaining Access and Fieldwork

Getting access into the small group and "natural" setting for empirical research is a matter of concern for ethnographers (Feldman, 2003). Ethnographers are attentive to the protocols and the initial negotiations to enter a research setting wary that the problems and issues associated with first encounters may persist throughout the data collection process (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). In the following sections I outline my considerations and procedures in choosing and gaining access to Village 9 as my field site.

A Journey into the Field

On the 29th of December 2016, I left the city of Edmonton on a journey back home to Zimbabwe after what was the longest period of time that I had been away from my country. The excitement of going back to my country and to my family was tinged with trepidation over what was really the beginning of my journey into my research project. As soon as I shook off the jet

lag of my travel, I immediately set off to identify my study site. The criteria for my selection centred on the consideration that I would get enough single beneficiaries in the identified community. Through word-of-mouth inquiries into the resettlement areas of Manicaland Province, I identified Village 9, which reputedly had many single women as beneficiaries to the land reform program compared to the other villages. Twenty percent of the households in Village 9 were female headed. This figured was higher than the national average of 18 per cent female beneficiaries of the FTLRP (Utete Commission, 2003). The higher number of female-headed households in Village 9 could be accounted to widows who had lost their husbands after settling in the village. These widows fell into my study because the dynamics of how they negotiated security of their land rights were important.

Initially I planned to carry out research in a number of villages in the area, but the more I examined the possibilities, I realized that it would be better to carry out my research in one village that had a sufficient number of female-headed households to allow me to deeply explore and tease out complexities and nuances to answer the objectives of my study (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). In Zvimba, Murisa (2007) documented higher than national average A1 female beneficiaries of 25 percent, and a baseline study of six districts of Zimbabwe showed that 20.7 percent of the A1 beneficiaries were women, receiving land in their own right (Moyo et al. 2009). While my research shows the contextual dynamics of a single village—Village 9—the data showing women receiving land in their own right across the country justifies the need to investigate the effects of primary land rights on gender relations. I determined that focusing on Village 9 would give valuable insights that had broad theoretical and reflective application.

When I approached the village Headman (the traditional leader within a village) on the 12th of January, he was very receptive to my study project even though he was a bit apprehensive

about the likely political nature of the topic. He discussed and confirmed my worries that the land issue was a politically charged subject that needed careful consideration in how to introduce it and discuss it with people in the village. The land issue in Zimbabwe has been highly political mainly due to the nationalist narratives expounded by the ruling ZANU PF party. The issue of land was articulated as a distinguishing ideology between the ruling ZANU PF party and the main opposition MDC party. Despite the nuances of the ideological differences on the subject, ZANU PF was successful in framing MDC as being against the popular project of land redistribution and redressing racial disparities. Villagers, anxious about their title to the land they received in the program, have been naturally distrustful of strangers since the program started. Asking land questions could then be taken to mean questioning the legitimacy of both the program and Village 9 members' claim to their land and, by extension, could possibly indicate membership in the opposition party and imperialist forces, which were suspected of funding opposition interests.

Gaining Access

I relied on the Headman for direction on the procedures to follow to get clearance for my research. On his direction, we first had to visit the *sadunhu* (Area Chief), who would take us to the *Ishe* (Paramount Chief) who had jurisdiction over the whole province.[7] After a couple of trips to the Area Chief, we eventually secured an audience with the Paramount Chief through the help of another neighbouring Area Chief, Chief Dzikiti. Chief Dzikiti was enlisted to assist with

[7] For administrative purposes, Zimbabwe's rural landscape is geographically subdivided into provinces, districts, rural councils, wards, and villages. The village is the smallest administrative structure and is headed by a traditional leader, the *sabhuku* (village Headman). The *sabhuku* reports to a *sadunhu* (Area Chief), who has several village Headmen who report to him. At the highest level sits the *Ishe* (Paramount Chief), to whom several Area Chiefs report. Villages range in size from 5 to 150 households.

smoothing my path to quickly get audience with the Paramount Chief, Chief Makoni, since he regularly attended court thus was privy to the court dynamics.

My "case" was heard in the court early in the morning, with an illustrious introduction from Chief Dzikiti as "one of our daughters pursuing studies in faraway lands who was interested in knowing how the Chief conducted his court business." I ended up spending the whole day sitting in court and hearing cases, some of which lent valuable insights later on in my research. At the end of the day, the Chief gave a verbal confirmation in his court that I could carry on with the research. The Area Chiefs and locals who were seeking audience in Chief Makoni's court were noted in this confirmation as witnesses.

Besides the verbal clearance, a letter was written up for me on the Chief's official letterhead confirming that I was cleared to carry out research in Village 9. I later used this letter to seek clearance with the local police as well, whom I was directed to by the Headman for "security" purposes. He explained that in the event of any "political" questions, the central intelligence arm of the police would need to be aware of my research intentions. Strangers, suspected of belonging to the main opposition party or to be spies from Western imperial interests that opposed the land reform program, are deemed to be security threats in this context. If I did not get clearance that confirmed my academic legitimacy, my safety could be at risk. I was well aware that these safety concerns were real, not imagined. During this early phase of my research, a farmer had reportedly been found murdered in the adjoining village. Speculation in the village was that the murder was politically motivated, possibly with suspicions that the farmer was from the opposition party. I reflected that the elections scheduled for 2018 could account for the guarded mood against strangers in the resettlement areas. Having carried out the due diligence in securing clearance at all these levels, my journey into Village 9 continued.

Introducing Village 9

Village 9 is part of a large-scale farm that used to be a plantation of gum trees scientifically known as *Eucalyptus L'Héritier 1789*. The farm was known for timber production, supplying timber mills in Marondera and Mutare. I remember the large forest of gum trees that flanked both sides of the road as one drove on this major Harare to Mutare highway before the FTLRP started. I could not remember ever having seen any buildings or people through the trees on the many times that I previously travelled on this road. The transformation of the landscape from that plantation to what was now a village of scattered asbestos and grass-thatched buildings could have been shocking, but I had witnessed this spatial transformation throughout Zimbabwe's countryside. Before the land invasions and resettlement, one could never have imagined the transformation of this and other former large-scale commercial farms that stretched for long expanses with no sign of human habitation for as far as the eye could see along Zimbabwe's major highways.

Initially the farm that Village 9 now sat on had been left out of the resettlement program, according to the Headman's account. The district administrator had prevailed on the war veterans to spare the farm to allow the farm owner to keep processing the gum trees, thereby create employment for the people. However, due to a shortage of land for farmworkers who had been chased away from the other commercial farms and due to its proximity to Macheke, the farm had eventually been occupied. The Headman's recollection of the early settlement process described the composition of Village 9. As one of the last farms to be invaded, it was a target of all the landless, including former farmworkers evicted from their employers' farms, as well as other people from communal areas near and far who had been late to take up the resettlement opportunities of the invasions. Under the A1 resettlement model, a village is comprised of

approximately 150 households and each village ideally has one village head. Politically, villages are subdivided into cells under the jurisdiction of a cell leader. The village is subdivided into three cells of fifty households each.

Beneficiaries received land in Village 9 varying in size from household to household. Households that were settled earlier in the process received anything between three and five hectares. Those who came late into the village only got about one hectare. According to Headman Tsambe, the imperative of just giving people a place to stay, in line with the recognized value and need to establish a *musha* (home), explained the small pieces of land that some people ended up with. Village 9 also had a higher number of single women compared to the other communities that surrounded it due to its location close to the little town of Macheke and the major Harare to Mutare highway. These two factors enabled the broad range of livelihood pursuits that single women sustained themselves with on the small pieces of land, as Chapter 4 will show.

The village's geographical positioning at the borders of Manicaland and Mashonaland provinces, as well as the process of farm invasions explains the different backgrounds of the people who settled in Village 9. Community members had come from different regions of the country; some were former farmworkers of foreign descent and some were native Zimbabweans. In the years following Zimbabwe's independence, some white farmers abandoned their farms and some families moved onto these farms as squatters who moved around working on neighbouring farms. Ten households had moved together from one such farm to settle in Village 9, and three of the widows I interviewed were from these families. The rest of the villagers came from different areas and backgrounds, which my study participants' narratives reflect in Chapter 3.

Introductions in Village 9

My entry into the community started off with visits to village-level administrative and political leaders. Throughout this process, the Headman stressed the need to follow the correct channels, underlining the rife gossip and misinformation central to the social dynamics of life in Village 9. The Headman advised me that it would be safer if he personally walked with me in the community to introduce me to the village leaders and the potential participants. He commented that some people in the village were curious and troublesome, so he needed to address them carefully to smoothen my stay in the community. I noticed that with some people, particularly the party leaders and possibly the curious and troublesome ones, the village head would ask me to take out my letter from Chief Makoni. In all these introductions, the Headman underlined that my project had nothing to do with politics, and that I had been vetted at the different governance levels (the Chief and the police). These encounters assured me that the Headman had led me through the correct protocols to gain legitimate and safe entry into the study area, and from then on, to continue my journey into the individual households of my participants.

On sharing my field processes with a friend, they commented that it was a wrong move for me to be associating with the Headman so much. My friend cautioned that while the Headman was invaluable for me to negotiate the political and administrative levels, I needed to be wary of implicating myself in village-level relational dynamics that the Headman was a part of by being seen to be too close to him at the same time as he was also a valuable informant for my research. These misgivings from my friend manifested in one encounter with a potential participant. On the day I made a follow-up visit by myself after the initial introductions with the Headman, she smirked and commented, “You are very lucky I changed my mind to agree to meet with you; you get associated with the people you walk with. But my daughter-in-law is the

one who clarified that you are not related to the Headman." Suspicions and expectations such as this one may prove barriers to access to participants (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). As a methodological reflection, this incident speaks to the role of gatekeepers in facilitating research at the same time that close association with the gatekeepers could hinder one's outcomes. I was well aware of the potential challenge that association with the Headman posed. Although it was not ideal, I realized he was the best entry point for me. I thus tried as much possible to explain my independence in the research, distance myself from the Headman, and limit the relationship to its functionality in the eyes of the participants. This type of situation is common in ethnographic research, and other researchers have also had to negotiate the dilemma of relations with gatekeepers in political and cultural terrain that elevated the gatekeepers' role, similar to my research (Sanghera & Thapar-Bjørkert, 2008). With this awareness and caution, my journey into the field culminated into what would become the most enlightening and fruitful conversations, observations, and experiences of my time in Village 9.

Selecting Research Participants

After learning that there were only 40 female-headed households in the village, I decided I would include all of them in the study. From the onset, I agreed with the Headman that he would introduce me to each of these participants first, after which I would hold subsequent meetings on my own. Thus, beginning in February, we walked through the village and he introduced me to each participant household, explaining my research and then telling the women that I would come back to schedule private meetings with them that he would not be part of. He would say, "She will come and discuss your women issues without me." After these introductions, I would return to the household on another day and on my own to check with participants about their availability. I was able to interview 34 women with varying backgrounds

and marital histories. I never met three of the women, and scheduling interviews with the other three proved difficult, because they had activities that took them away from the homestead most of the time. I made it clear that I did not want to take them from their household and field activities and that I was free to fit into their schedule.

I framed my entry into Village 9 focusing the subject of my research on single women, which influenced how I was received in the village, as I have reflected above. However, I planned to include married women and men once I was certain that the community had accepted my presence in the village. The time I spent in the village "hanging out" opened up acceptance for me to then incorporate married women into the study in a nonthreatening way. Soon after I arrived in the village, the married women themselves started questioning my research approach. They asked me how I thought I would know about "women's lives" just by talking to single women. As I discussed my research with the women, they essentially invited themselves into my study, which made it easier for me to recruit the married women into my study. Most of the women volunteered after I indicated to their single friends that I was interested in talking to them about their own views of the land reform program and access to land for single women. Thus, interviews with married women naturally flowed from their understanding of my project, and our conversations steered towards a comparison of circumstances that looked at the advantages and disadvantages of being married, particularly in regards to land and the power dynamics between men and women in married households.

When it came to recruiting men, I was apprehensive that having been accepted as a "nonthreatening" woman working with women on women issues, reaching out to men could affect my stay in the village. I decided to recruit the men towards the end of my research so that I would not jeopardize my research and access to the single women. I interviewed six men in

leadership positions in the village and sought to interview three men who were partners to women who owned land. Only one of the partners was available for the interview. The other two men were not available for the interviews due to various reasons and circumstances of their relationships, which I discuss in subsequent chapters. Scheduling interviews in general was not without challenges, as I discuss later. All my interviews, including other methods of research that I turn to next, were carried out between February and early September 2017.

Getting Personal: A Reflexive Researcher

Fieldwork is an intensely personal endeavour, as the researcher's positionality and biography play a central role in the research process, in the field, as well as in the final text (England, 1994). Feminist ethnographers have encouraged researchers to practice reflexivity so that the researcher can understand their own biases and how they influence the research journey (Abu-Lughod, 2020; Kobayashi, 2003). Beyond helping the researcher understand their biases, reflexivity helps readers to understand the researcher's position so that they can see alternative interpretations from the ones a researcher makes. As such, this reflexive introduction is aimed at situating myself within the research topic—broadly, the field of land reform and specifically, gender relations—as well as placing me within the field site and in relation to my interaction with the people of Village 9.

My young life was spent between different worlds due to my father's career as a teacher. He was a primary school teacher, which for my family meant that we spent time between his workplace—a school in one rural area or the other—during the school term and my parents' rural home during the school holidays. For me, these school holidays were split between the rural home and my maternal grandparents' town home. This rural life experience made it easy for me to know how to conduct myself in the village, including how to dress, how to address people—

men and women—and, most importantly, how to engage in the village activities in ways that created rapport and built acceptance in the community. The experience of growing up between the two worlds of the rural and the urban proved invaluable to me as I undertook my graduate studies. Young people grow up with dreams of leaving the rural life for the city due to the challenges of rural life in Zimbabwe. Yet for me, the possible challenges of carrying out research in the rural areas was not a deterrent as I pursued my graduate studies for my master's research. It was also with this background that I embarked on my fieldwork for this research.

Being a native Zimbabwean greatly helped with my entry into the community. I understood the importance of identifying where one comes from such that I would I would give a background of where my rural home is whenever I introduced myself. Identifying one's rural origin is a natural part of introducing oneself and of people knowing who you are, because certain discussions can flow from there, creating a way of forming rapport and initiating conversation. Relationships naturally flow from introductions with the identification of areas of origin as well as one's totem. Totems[8] play a very important role among the Shonas in delineating relationships. I am of the eland totem, where the women are referred to as *Chihera*, and this totem relationship was used in two encounters.

Early on in the research, as the village head was engaging in the process of following protocol to enable me to carry out research, we had to seek authorization from the Area Chief When we got to his homestead, the Headman greeted the Area Chief's wife as *vaChihera*, which was the same totem as mine. I walked over to the garden and greeted her: *"Vatete, tisvikewo"* (Greetings, aunt, as *vatete* means my father's sister). The lady beamed and greeted me back with

[8] People of the same clan among the Shona use the same totem to indicate that they come from the same ancestors. The ancestor would then be the founder of the particular totem. In my case it means that everyone who has the eland totem was a relative because we had the same founding ancestor.

"Titambire mainini" (Welcome, niece). This exchange immediately defined how I would relate to her and her husband in all subsequent interactions. By the time we got into the house there was a level of familiarity that made the interactions more relaxed.

I cannot say with certainty whether this interaction, and the totem relationship, helped with the rapport I established with the Area Chief, my totem aunt's husband. I am, however, very sure that a white female researcher may not have had as easy an interaction as I had on that very first meeting. It would possibly have taken them repeated visits to establish the level of rapport I was able to achieve so early in this and many other meetings in the village.

The second encounter was when it came to meeting with Mbuya Muchemwa, who was to be one of my study participants. As we walked to Mbuya Muchemwa's homestead, the Headman shared with me that Mbuya Muchemwa was a stern woman. "That one, she is a no-nonsense person. But since you are of the same blood, maybe she will receive you more warmly." When we got to the homestead, the Headman greeted the young man there, who was Mbuya Muchemwa's son, with "Come greet your mother here. She is a *Chihera*." The young man then greeted me with "Welcome, *Amai*" (Mother). Mbuya Muchemwa was not home, so we did not stay. Upon leaving, the Headman instructed the son, "When your mother comes back, tell her I had brought her brother's daughter. She will come back alone, but that will be between relatives, so I will not be concerned with that."

The next time I went alone to see her, Mbuya Muchemwa greeted me with *"vaChihera"* with some familiarity, as if we had known each other for the longest time:

> Welcome, *Chihera*. Greetings, my brother's daughter. You know, *maininni*, when I came back from Harare and your son told me that the Headman came with your niece, I told him, "I cannot turn away my brother's daughter. Let me hear what she wants to say." Otherwise, I really do not like to waste my time engaging with

> people who do not bring any benefit to my life. If you were anyone else, I tell you the truth, I would not have entertained you.

Mbuya Muchemwa referred to her son as my son in line with the totem relationships in the Shona culture. I later learnt that single women calculated their interactions and engagement in community activities, weighing the use of their time between working their fields and the value of each meeting. These calculations contribute to my analysis of the agency opened up by land ownership in the FTLRP. The mere knowledge of my totem enabled my relationship with Mbuya Muchemwa from that first meeting and into our subsequent interview and interactions. When she passed away on June 22, 2017, I experienced the deepest sense of pain and loss, just as if she had been my blood relative.

Throughout my stay in Village 9, my totem was used to identify me and establish relations with various people. The totem connected me to the people in the village in different ways. The Headman, who showed some apprehension relating to the party chair, who had a reputation for being corrupt and being the ZANU PF party's strong arm in the village, introduced me to this leader as "your wife" because his wife was of the same totem. I realized he had taken advantage of this implied relationship as an entry point with the leader. Some people in the village who became privy to my totem would refer to me as *Chihera*. Some would relate to me by extension of this totem as "mother" because their mothers were of the same totem. While this belonging may have helped me in some cases, I also reflected on the stereotyped connotations that being a Chihera carries among the Shona. Chiheras are stereotyped as strong but controlling women. My presence in the eyes of the villagers was seen broadly through certain cultural stereotypes that the totem symbolized. I was continuously aware and anxious of how I presented myself in light of these stereotyped characteristics. I wondered how this affected my participants'

perceptions of me, and this led me into a reflection on my position in the field as a gendered researcher.

The Gendered Researcher

While I was initially apprehensive about the political sensitivity around my research subject, I later reflected on the easy acceptance I seemed to have gained, not only among the women, but also among the political leadership and the male community members in general. I reflected early on that getting into the village by presenting myself as "just a student" seemed nonthreatening, but I noted that it invoked different reactions from men and women. Gender became centred in my reflection on my research process, leading me to important conclusions. First, gender directed how I interacted with male members of the community differently from my interactions with female members. Similarly, there was a difference in how male and female members interacted with me. Second, gender influenced how male and female members received me differently, providing some valuable gender insights.

"Doing Gender" as a Researcher

Gender is a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction, and understanding the interactional work involved in being a gendered person in society opens up an analysis of my interactions as a gendered person. In society, categorizations of male and female are the basis upon which "situated conduct, in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 169) are established, sustained, and maintained. My upfront categorization of my research participants was the basis upon which my behaviour and relationships were constructed.

I was more friendly and familiar with women, as were they, as shown in the language they used with me in our interactions. Women who referred to me as *vasikana* (girl) invited me

to identify with them as one of the girls. Calling me by my child's name, Mai Tadi, also indicated a level of familiarity and our shared categorization as women and mothers. Interactions with females also showed they had categorized and embraced me as one of them and expected that I would engage and behave as women should. To this end I engaged in chatty interactions with individual women as well as in groups. The men also accepted me into this category of women outside my role as a researcher. When husbands came while I was talking to their wives, they would often excuse themselves to allow "women to discuss women stories." This was often said in a dismissive manner, or rather I tied it up to what I had perceived in the early days of being introduced in the village as the dismissive manner with which my presence in the community was received.

At meetings, I sat with the women and engaged in "doing gender" by chatting about kids and all manner of small talk. I noticed during one meeting that the meeting chair got up and called on the women to be quiet so they could start the meeting, as if the women had been the only ones talking during the whole time. It was obvious that the men had discussed starting the meeting and had quieted down before the leader got up to admonish the women for chatting too much and cautioning, to the amusement of the men, that "if we pay attention to the women, we will be here the whole day." Under normal circumstances, I would have resisted such interpretations and characterization of the situation. I found that I often played along with many gendered perceptions that I may not have been comfortable subscribing to in normal settings. Accepting to be part of these perceptions was a manner of doing gender.

Most of the conclusions I articulate in this discussion are the result of a reflective process during the course of my fieldwork. I realized that playing part in the gendered performances at times came naturally. I did not always quickly recognize those instances when I was doing

gender. When I did recognize that I was playing along, no matter how uncomfortable I was in that gendered role, I did so aware that playing along afforded me access into women's private thoughts, especially as it pertained to husbands. With the married women, there was an unsaid expectation that I would understand and not judge their deepest misgivings, particularly about their husbands. Both married women and single women considered me a partner in a subordinate relationship with men, and my interviews with women were characterized by enthusiastic camaraderie.

I was polite and kept some respectable distance in interactions with male participants compared to the familiarity I exercised with female participants. I was aware, rather uncomfortably[9], of deferring to male participants' authority in the gendered hierarchy or relationships, as well as being guided by my knowledge of normative expectations of proper conduct of respectable women with men. Unmarried (or even married) women who are chatty and too familiar with males risk being labelled of loose character and may be accused of flirting with men by the men themselves as well as by the women. Later in my stay in the village I would hear of stories of such women. Coupled with my conduct, this risk did not pose a threat for me as my participants were a small sample of older men in leadership positions. Norms of relating to older men and males in leadership positions prohibit too much familiarity. I was, however, aware that if my male respondents had been younger, gender considerations about proper conduct between females and males would have directed my conduct even more. Playing along maintained my position with male members as a less threatening "mere woman" in the

[9] My discomfort stemmed from the awareness that I was doing gender in a manner that I would have resisted in my normal social setting, in which my agency as a gendered being would have been fully exercised. My researcher role guided and implicated me in doing gender.

community researching “mere women issues,” possibly superseding my educated-researcher role, as I discuss next.

A “Mere Woman” Researching “Mere Women Issues”

Male and female community members received and accepted my presence in Village 9 differently. The difference came from underlying gendered perceptions that manifested in various ways. In most cases when I met some of the leaders in the community, they would introduce me as “the woman who is working with the widows in the village.” My gendered lens of analysis alerted me to the perception that I possibly posed no threat in the community.

To the men, it seemed that I posed no threat being a woman working on *nyaya dzemadzimai* (mere women issues). The manner and tone with which men referenced the “women issues” betrayed the sentiments they held on the importance of these issues. The tone with which the introductions or the references to “these women” were made was more telling than I could possibly convey in the words captured here. Not only was I working with women, but I was also working with widowed women. These women confirmed their low status in the village hierarchy with statements like *“Kana wafirwa umbori munhu here?”* (If you are a widow, are you even considered a person?) The nonchalant reactions in these interactions were even more telling given that the subject of land was highly politicized. This left me with the strong conviction that who I was— “mere female”—and the issues I was interested in— “mere women issues”—were perceived to be nonthreatening, thereby assisting in the positive reception from men in the village.

Acceptance by women, on the other hand, seemed to be on the basis of my being one of them, a woman benevolently researching “women issues.” The issues I was researching were not “mere issues” but very important issues that I, as a woman, should unquestionably relate with,

too. The acceptance of me based on expectation of shared experience was used to invite me into the emancipatory project for women, as a group articulated in various forms and interactions during my stay in the village, as well as coming through in interviews.

I sensed pride and envy from the women as they identified with me as a woman who was showing off and representing womenfolk against men in that I was getting better educated than the men in the village. This was said in as many words, "Learn on our behalf, girl." I understood this encouragement to speak to the missed opportunities for many women when society did not value educating daughters. In one instance, after our interview sitting, Comrade had walked me from her house. As we walked, she was encouraging me to work hard with my schoolwork. She let me know that she too was a hard worker. Just in the coming week she would be going around the farms selling her stuff; that was why she did not look to anyone for any help. "In fact, let me actually give you money to buy a drink" she said as she handed me a $2 bill. I was embarrassed and protested that I should be the one to give her money for a drink (according to my understanding and appreciation of the culture that younger people give elders gifts), to which she replied, as she shoved the money into my hoodie pocket, "You will when you can, after you finish your studies." Comrade's attitude towards me expressed similar views to community members, which helped in closing the social status gap as I was viewed as a gendered insider.

I felt that being viewed as a poor, female student made me even more relatable to the women in the village. One woman, however, had admonished my pursuit of books at the expense of childbearing, pointing out that my biological clock was ticking and I needed to get serious with the business of having kids. I concluded from these varied interactions that my being a Zimbabwean woman contributed to my presence in the community as nonthreatening and accounted for my ready acceptance by all members of the community.

The Insider-Outsider Researcher

While the above discussion highlights how my gendered insider positioning helped my interactions with both men and women, I was also very much an outsider in ways that I could not hide. As much as I tried to dress the "proper" way, in long skirts, covered arms, and a head-wrap, it seemed I still stood out, as reflected in encounters with my participants. For example, as I was going around the village with the Headman in the early days, he introduced me to a potential participant as a student studying in Canada. This participant had remarked, "I could tell, the skin is smooth," noting my skin tone and my appearance in ways I did not imagine set me apart. While blending in is obviously a futile agenda, I was still cautious to be respectful of the norms so that I would not make the people I interacted with, and even myself, uncomfortable.

Later on, and at the end of my research, as I bid farewell to the group of women, the same woman commented, "You are going back looking like a 'real' person." Another lady asked her what she meant, to which she replied, "This child was very thin when she came. Her skin was ashen and I wondered whether she was sick. Now you really look well like a very fit person." In Zimbabwean settings, references like this insinuate perceptions that someone may have the HIV/AIDS virus. The other women laughed uncomfortably and someone admonished her for the personal remarks, to which she answered, "I am only saying this because she is a cheerful person, so she knows I am joking with her. If she was a moody person, I would never have said it."

I marvelled at the theoretical insights in this interaction later on, that the body is invested with meaning, which set me apart as an outsider. My ashen skin tone, possibly from the cold Canadian weather, set me apart from the women in the village. Over the time I was in the village lots of women would comment that my skin was smooth and compare it with their own, which

was affected by long hours of working in the sun. Most of these comments came from younger women. One encounter was a discussion point with my mother after a day in the field where one woman had commented that a friend of hers had told her about this light-toned woman the Headman had been walking in the village with. My mother and I later laughed about this story because I am the darkest in my family and would never be referred to as light skinned.

Such encounters alerted me to my embodied outsider position, but beyond this, they offer a lens into the subjectivities of the women I interacted with during the course of my research. I was aware that my presence in this setting was an intrusion into these women's lives, and that my presence might influence how they saw themselves, their lives and circumstances. Being acutely aware of this dynamic, I made an effort to avoid any negative impacts of my presence in the village.

The Paradox of Acceptance

Building relationships and establishing rapport is a key element of ethnographic research. Rapport speaks to a relationship marked by confidence and trust to enable the conversations in ethnographic fieldwork (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). With the discourse around the moral dilemmas in the field in general (Fine, 1993) and admonitions for researchers against "faking friendship" in particular (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002), I was acutely aware of my conduct in the field, and some of my interactions presented me with moments for reflection.

At times participants shared information that I was uncomfortable with. Personal information of their life histories and their health status was divulged at times with a depth that I was not prepared for. The acceptance and sharing of these stories, particularly early in the interviews, took me aback. I had imagined follow-up interviews with participants to interrogate sensitive issues. The first time such an encounter occurred it was obvious that the participant did

not necessarily expect me to do anything about what she was sharing but just needed someone to talk to. I realized in the interviews that people were comfortable talking about their life stories, and I settled with the possibility that talking to me was contributing something positive to their lives. Some of the women confirmed their appreciation of the chance to talk to someone in some of the interviews. Some of the women appeared to live such lonely and isolated lives that at times I might be the only person they encountered to talk to and discuss issues, no matter how personal the issues were. As much as they showed surprising openness in sharing their personal stories, due to this closeness, I would also be called on to share personal information that I was not comfortable sharing, both in terms of how I was personally dealing with it as well as the concern that I might influence my participants' perceptions based on my own circumstances.

I was not very forthcoming about my own marital status when I introduced myself to the women at first. This was not deliberate but rather the unclear stage I was at in my life. I was processing divorce papers, which possibly made it difficult for me to be forthcoming about my marital status in these introductions. However, I realized that this did not seem to be a central concern in how the single women sought to relate to me. At some point in the early days, the women settled on calling me *Mai Tadi* (mother of Tadi), as is normal practice among the Shona to refer to women in relation to their first-born child. However, almost none of the single women asked me about my marital status. The married women, however, were interested in my marital status and would ask this outright as they shared their own stories.

Married women would draw me into the research process, asking me if I was single or married. I realized that they did so, either to establish some resonance in experience if I was married, or for me to reflect on the advantages and what they termed privilege of being independent. In the next chapter, this independence will take centre stage in the analysis of the

women's lives and livelihoods. They would ask for my views on gender relations in ways that made me uncomfortably guarded, wary that I would affect their worldview by offering my opinions (and that my opinions could possibly stem from my own marriage experience). A reflection on this became wedged in my subconscious as I went on with the research, and I took note to check myself that I would not betray the circumstances of my personal life, either by identifying too much with the single women or by sympathizing a lot more with the married women.

For example, some married women would comment, "Men are problematic, aren't they, Mai Tadi?" One time, after seeing my hesitation, a woman who was privy to my marital situation at the time pointed out, "She knows, men are a hassle. That is why she left her own marriage!" I had to reflect and work against being too engaged in women's struggles as an insider, especially when the participants actively invited me to enter into these struggles in this manner. I was relieved that these discussions and comments were passed in a joking manner and, maybe because they noticed my discomfort, I was never pressed to answer the comments. Sometimes I would get out of the conversation by saying each relationship is different. I sensed that some participants sought my opinion and invited me to share my personal circumstances to reflect on their own. The reflection on this and other dynamics served to alert me to the various angles of the partiality of my perspectives, particularly as a woman sympathetic to the gendered struggles of Zimbabwean women.

The above discussion is a reflection on my gendered insider-outsider position and has given a short biographical account that places me at the centre of this research. Understanding my position was crucial for me during the fieldwork but also in the context of the central objective of my research in unpacking gender dynamics. My analysis of the gender landscape of

Village 9 thus starts off with this account of myself, a gendered researcher. Having presented this biographical and positional reflection, I will now describe my research strategy and how I employed the research methods to answer my research questions.

Research Methods

The choices of methods in a research project are purposefully made based on the question at hand (Lamont & Swidler, 2014). Maxwell (2013) contends that the selection of research methods depends on the research questions as well as the actual research situation and what will work most effectively in the situation to give one the data they need. For my research I used data collection methods of in-depth interviews and participant observation / field notes, which are central to ethnographic and feminist research to capture women's subjective experience as women and as people (Oakley, 1981).

In-depth Interviews as Conversations in the Field

Interviews are used in qualitative research to generate information on questions that cannot be answered simply or briefly. In-depth interviews facilitate a conversational process in which the interviewer gently guides a conversation into an extended discussion where respondents can explain their answers, give examples, or describe their experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The researcher has access to respondents' ideas, thoughts, and memories "in their own words" and interviewing helps the study move "from the general to the specifics, from examining the community as a whole to examining the individual in the community" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 50). While in-depth interviewing can be exhausting, it is nonetheless a highly stimulating experience that offers high prospects for rich data (Mbilinyi, 1992); in my case, it allowed me to deeply engage with both married and single women. In these flowing

conversations I was able to gain insights into women's ideas and thoughts, bringing out the complexity of gender relations. In addition, my conversations also facilitated engagement with men in uncomfortable discussions that revealed their role in shaping Village 9 women's experiences.

Scheduling interviews with respondents was very challenging. I did not want to take participants away from their household chores. I would ask them to indicate when they would be free to accommodate me. Sometimes I would turn up at the scheduled time and find the women either cooking or doing some other household chore. Sometimes the women's friends would visit while we were in the middle of the interview. During my interview with Muzvare Chizumbu, her close friend Mai Saru, who was married, joined us. After I indicated that I would stop the recording, Muzvare Chizumbu told me not to worry: "There is nothing my friend does not know about what happens here." The rest of the interview included insights from the friend about the dynamics of bringing a man onto one's land, as Muzvare Chizumbu had done. Such is the nature of fieldwork, and ethnographers are aware of this and find value in these dynamics (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). I ended up getting valuable insights into Muzvare Chizumbu's life as seen through her friend's eyes. Mai Saru became an accidental informant whose insights sharpened my analysis of the subjectivities both married and single women develop through the experience of primary land rights for the latter. Similar encounters throughout my stay in the field showed me that I had a mismatched concept of free time with my participants. Household chores did not necessarily stop to accommodate my research agenda. For example, Mai Mabura encouraged me to continue when I suggested stopping the interview since her grandchild was getting fussy:

> Do you think you will ever find me free to sit down? You are even lucky to find me at home. I have my things that I hoarded to sell in the farms; I decided I would go next week. That is why you saw the mother leaving. Just like you, she had to

take advantage of my being at home to also go to town and do her stuff and leave me with the kids. Let's talk!

Mai Mabura's analysis revealed how women's daily lives were structured around a lot of chores. Both the elderly and younger women in my program had childcare obligations and household chores that did not allow for free time to just sit or for total quietness. This is how I ended up participating in a lot of the chores as I talked to my participants, including shelling maize for Muzvare Chizumbu and pounding maize for another woman who had to prepare a meal, among many other activities, before the children came back from school. Many times, I had to incorporate some attention to the kids as I spoke to their grandmothers or their mothers so that they did not feel excluded. Most times the more you ignored them, the more they demanded their parents' attention.

These examples illuminate what ethnographic work means when interacting with participants in their natural setting (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). I could not possibly insist on chasing away my participant's friend, neither could I chase Mai Mabura's grandchildren away. These are some of the practical difficulties that show that use of prescribed interviewing practice is morally indefensible and that also highlight "the irreconcilable contradictions" inherent in textbook paradigms of interviews (Oakley, 1981, p. 41). I did, however, develop deep rapport with the women in both instances as I engaged in their daily activities, affording me access to more information than I would have otherwise obtained in a more formal setting.

Interviews with single women were in-depth. I sought to explore their histories of origin, where they came from before settling in Village 9, their previous lives and livelihoods, how they came to settle in the village, and the challenges and opportunities that the FTLRP had afforded them. A large part of the interviews centred on their lives since settling in the village. Most respondents had settled in the early 2000s so the discussions drew from memory. Conversations

with participants flowed easily due to the familiarity, rapport, and bond that my everyday interactions in the community facilitated, as I indicated in the interactions with Muzvare Chizumbu and Mai Mabura above. Rapport in feminist research is created through mutual sharing, minimal power hierarchies, and a feeling of genuine trust between interviewer and interviewee (Oakley, 1981).

In some cases, the interviews flowed so much in the tone of regular conversations and reciprocal exchange of ideas and stories that it was difficult to maintain a strict formal interview tone and vibe to the process as required by textbook theory recipes for conducting interviews (Oakley, 1981). However, once I let go of these considerations and relaxed into a friendly and everyday normal conversational approach, I found that I was able to elicit richer material than I would have been able to get if I had been too rigid in following the somewhat prescriptive guidelines of conducting field research (e.g., to be aware of leading questions).

As I listened to the recorded conversations, I wondered whether or not I had elicited certain responses, but I realize that reacting any other way in those research settings would have seemed unnatural and possibly affected/inhibited my participants' openness to share with me. In any case, it did not seem that their responses were guided by my questions even where I may have asked a leading question. Thus, in-depth interviews provided rich data that I could use together with my field notes, which were a product of my daily observations as I "hung out" in the village.

"Hanging Out," Participation, and Observations

Participant observation is a key methodological component of fieldwork and is critical in ethnographic research. It is lauded in feminist ethnography for its strength in allowing the researcher to get closer to women's realities, making their lives visible in much the same way as

interviewing makes their voices audible. Beyond the formal interviews with participants in the field, I also spent time "hanging out" with people in Village 9, time that afforded me opportunity to participate and observe life in Village 9.

"Hanging out" describes the practice in anthropological research whereby the researcher immerses themself in a culture, group, or social experience to learn of and from it at an informal level (Geertz, 1998). Hanging out in Village 9 afforded me great opportunity for observations and insights that served to substantiate and give some context to information that came from the in-depth interviews. I took notes in the field as unobtrusively as possible during the day, mostly by the roadside under a tree as I moved from one homestead or another in the village. However, I wrote most of my full field notes at the end of the day when I documented the informal conversations, noting insights, refining my research questions, and reflecting on areas for further inquiry or different direction for my research. This iterative process informed and directed my field strategy throughout my fieldwork such that in the final analysis, emerging field experiences informed and added to the agenda I initially set out with.

Gossip and Accidental Informants

Sources of information when one is in the field every day can go beyond the conventional of identified participants or key informants. Being in the field afforded me opportunities to get information that would direct my inquiry or that helped to explain some dynamics that may not have come through in the actual interviews with participants. This was very evident to me from as early as the first stages of seeking clearance. On the day I went to seek clearance from the Chief, I spent that day in his courts sitting in and listening to the cases he was presiding over. The Chief invited me to sit and possibly learn from how the court was run, encouraging me that I could get some insights for my research.

The way traditional courts are handled in Zimbabwe is that a case is presented to the court, everyone is free to weigh in on the case with the whole group deliberating and offering viewpoints, at the end of which the Chief gives a final ruling. A total of four cases were brought in during my presence and, time and again, the Chief's assistant would ask me to contribute my insights, inviting me to participate in the process, as is expected of all participants in the Chief's court and possibly in a gesture to assure me that I was as welcome in the court as everyone else there.

One particular case was very interesting and relevant to my research. This case involved a widow and her deceased husband's younger brother. It was presented to the court that the dispute between them was about a field boundary. The widow accused the brother-in-law of pulling down the fence that served as a boundary and protection from livestock for her field. This had led to her losing her whole crop as livestock had grazed the field with no boundary to prevent access. The brother-in-law argued that he had needed to pull down the fence because the sister-in-law had been insisting year after year on using that field when it didn't belong to her at all.

I realized during the deliberations and upon the village Headman's interjection that the issue was really not about the boundary or the field. The issue was that the woman had gone on to have an affair in the village and had even had two more children from this affair. The deliberations immediately took a different tone upon this information. Various points were raised by members of the court: that the brother-in-law may possibly have wanted his brother's wife for himself (which the widow confirmed and the brother-in-law denied vehemently), and that the widow was disrespectful, not only by having an affair while at her husband's patri-home, but to go further and have children at this home was an added insult to the family.

The new dynamics, and possibly a reflection of the improved security for women, were manifested in the Chief's ruling. He started by making a strong disclaimer that no one had a right to limit the woman's sexual needs given that she was young. He also pointed out that since the woman had had four kids with the deceased, it made sense that she should stay at the family homestead to take care of these children. However, he strongly admonished the widow for going on to have more kids with a "stranger" while living at her deceased husband's homestead. At the end, he ruled in favour of the widow and instructed the brother-in-law to pay some bags of maize for the loss of the widow's crop. He also ordered him to take care of his brother's children, pointing out that maybe if he had taken care of them, the sister-in-law would not have gone looking for someone else and may have been more receptive to his advances. Ethnographic work exposes a researcher to these kinds of encounters that make empirical research an exciting and fruitful experience. This encounter also afforded insight into the dynamics of social life that I would not have seen only through interviews.

I had another encounter that I found unsettling yet very illuminating of the process of ethnographic inquiry. Participant observation in ethnographic research privileges the researcher to life as it happens, where people go on with their daily lives. On one such day, I visited a participant for a scheduled interview. As I was invited into the kitchen, I found the participant with her daughters, her stepdaughter, and a visitor, a lady who was introduced to me as the stepdaughter's mother. The husband then called out to the visitor to come out so they could be on their way. My participant instructed her daughters and the stepdaughter to take the visitor to the buses together with the husband to give us space for the interview. While my participant saw everyone out of the kitchen, the youngest of the daughters stayed behind with me. In the ensuing silence of everyone's departure, the young girl, seemingly from nowhere, said to me:

> My father once smashed that radio onto the ground. ["Huh?" I exclaimed.] All the cords were disconnected and the radio thrown away. That's what father does when he gets drunk. He hits Mum everywhere, on the head, everywhere with fists. These days he is not as bad.

I was taken aback and at a loss as to how to interact with this child. A small ethical voice whispered to me that she was not someone I should be talking to, but even as I debated with myself, the girl just carried on with her story without any encouragement from me. I realized that her comment was possibly a reaction to a comment I had made upon getting to their homestead. The radio was playing full blast when I got to the homestead, and I had commented that the family was always having fun as I was sure to find someone dancing every time I passed by. With the music now filling the silence between us, the young girl must have felt the need to discuss the issue of the radio. I was relieved when the mother got back and, realizing that the girl had stayed behind, quickly called out to the older girls to go with her.

While this information on its own would be nothing to put much weight on, a conversation with another participant brought me back to this incident. In discussing the possible challenges that come with a man moving onto a woman's land, this participant gave the example of this little girl's parents as a reflection of those challenges. The participant reflected that the couple always fights and the woman occasionally tells the man to pack his bags and leave her alone on her land. In her own interview, the young girl's mother also shared some household dynamics that substantiated both her daughter's disclosure and the other participants' "gossip" accounts.

I realized that the mother was aware that one could not have a conversation in the presence of this young girl, who was likely to repeat everything she heard. I understood the mother would not be keen to have the interview in the girl's presence for the risk that everything

would be related back to other people. However, it was not always possible to create perfect conditions for the interviews. Similar to how I had ended up having my interview with Muzvare Chizumbu in the presence of her friend, in some instances I had to fit into the program of individual household work organization of my participants, as I did with Mai Mabura. I considered the possibilities of formalized focus group discussions but reflected that this scheduling challenge would have made it impossible to meet the women in a group. However, scheduling was the least of the challenges to this method, as I discuss next.

Informal Focus Group

Initially I wished to carry out focus group discussions with the participants, but early in the research, one of the village leaders had in a matter-of-fact way said he didn't see anything wrong with my study as long as I wasn't going to gather people around. This made me apprehensive of the focus group method, which I had thought would illuminate some issues of collective convergence or divergence among the groups. I was, however, keen to try and have at least one group interaction, which I managed through an innovative expression of a need to bid farewell to the women.

I had always intended to give the women a token gift of appreciation for their participation in the research. I thus bought them *mazambia*, cloths that women wrap around their waist in Zimbabwe. I then requested to meet with a group of women from one of the cells on a specific day. On this day, we all gathered at the meeting venue for this cell, and as we sat with refreshments, I engaged the women in a discussion, particularly around issues of inheritance and how they saw the future of the land that was in their name. This was possibly the best topic to investigate in a group setting to show the differences of views and the process of collective enlightenment that was apparent in a group setting, as this platform facilitated.

From the beginning of my research journey, I was aware that the choices one makes in initiating fieldwork and the procedures they follow from early on into the project could make all the difference between the success or failure of the project (Creswell, 2006). In the final reflection, my research strategy of immersing myself in the community helped facilitate my acceptance in the community and opened up spaces for interviews and broader interactions in the community that provided rich and holistic insights into people's views and actions for analysis post field research.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The goal of empirical research is to provide some form of explanation, understanding, or interpretation of what one finds in the research process. One normally gives full attention to this stage at the end of a fieldwork process, but it is also normal that one goes through some analysis while in the process of actively engaging in data collection. I followed this strategy during the course of my fieldwork as I condensed my notes at the end of each day. In this process, I would flag interesting themes of autonomy, freedoms, and vulnerabilities that served to point me to further areas of inquiry. I also noted these themes to match with the subsequent analysis at the end of the fieldwork. Analysis in qualitative research is an iterative and progressive process that goes on from the beginning of the research project all through the writing process.

I conducted the main analysis at the end of the fieldwork in a three-fold analytical cycle. First, all recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim in the vernacular Shona language in which the interviews had been conducted. I used a transcriber whom I briefed on the procedure to follow. After all the 50 interviews and one focus group were transcribed, I went through a process of listening to each interview and verifying the transcripts. This process allowed a level of sensitivity to emerging issues. Second, I used Nvivo software to organize my interview data,

and through a process of identifying common ideas I coded this data into categories of emerging themes. My field notes also proved a crucial source of data. I coded these notes the same way as I did the interviews. I made a conscious decision to work off the data in vernacular and to only translate vernacular quotes as and when I would employ them in the write-up. This not only saved time but helped me to concentrate only on the quotes I needed and to ensure that my translation was as true to the vernacular meaning as possible. I carried out all the translations myself to represent as much as possible what the participants had conveyed in vernacular.

Ethics of the Field

Before carrying out my fieldwork, I received ethics clearance from the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Office. All research involving human subjects is required to meet ethical standards that ensure that no harm comes to the participants through the research process or the final product. It was important that my participants give informed consent to engage with me in the research. I thus made sure that whenever I went back to talk to my participants, I personally introduced myself and explained my research so that the participants could have full understanding before they committed to talking to me. I always underlined that their participation was voluntary and that, even if they had agreed to being interviewed, they could withdraw their participation from the project or request that some information not be used in the research.

One participant asked me to switch off my recording device at one point during the interview. She indicated that I could use what she had shared but she did not want her voice on record. I also assured the participants that I would not use their names in my write-up. I had some interesting reactions to this anonymity from some participants who defiantly indicated that they did not care if anyone knew it was them who had said certain things, since nothing of what

they were sharing with me was lies. Due to high illiteracy in rural areas, I asked for oral consent from my participants. The process itself was very disjointed in that sometimes the participants were so eager to begin talking to me that they would launch into the discussion before I had finished the formal procedure of consent for the interview and for the use of the voice recorder. Accordingly, most of my transcripts begin some way into the conversation.

An ethical concern for research is always posed as one that questions the benefit of research for the researched. This concern was never far from my mind in a context marked with abject poverty and hardship of existence. I spent nine months moving through the village and witnessing the circumstances of the community's lives. While no direct benefit could come from my research, my research could, however, be beneficial for any interventions that aimed at improving the lives of women who earned their living from the land. At the end of my time in the field and at the request of the village elders and leaders, I sat down with them and highlighted some of my key findings around improving the lives of widows specifically and the women in general. I will also compile a research report that highlights the gender dynamics of the village and that also articulates the potential of my study participants' pursuits. I will share this report with community development organizations that work in the area to encourage research-based programming. An understanding of women's relationship to land and the power dynamics that frame their existence on that land could be invaluable for any government policy or program and any nongovernmental organization that should take up interventions in this area. I underlined this benefit of my work to my participants even as I was uneasily aware that other, more immediate benefits, would have been better appreciated and more meaningful.

Chapter 3. Gendered Histories

I start this chapter by referring back to one of the critiques I raised in my introduction. Research that has attempted a gender analysis of the FTLRP has conflated women as a unitary category in discussions and ensuing conclusions (Chiweshe et al., 2015; Mutopo, 2011) without teasing out specific dynamics that derive from a focus on single women's subjective experiences. This research analyzes gender within women's subject positions as wives, daughters, or sisters. My argument is that an understanding of the relationship between gender and land rights would benefit from a more in-depth analysis of women's relationship to land as primary landowners. The FTLRP presents the background to investigate this relationship in ways that have not been done before. In the following chapters, I provide in-depth empirical evidence and analysis of the value of paying attention to the differentiations that land rights bring to the realities of differentiated women's lives.

This chapter's main aim is to show the typical trajectories of the lives of single women who gained primary rights to land through the FTLRP. The representation of these trajectories is of heuristic rather than statistical value. I give an account of the variety of paths by which the women came to their single status. Some courses emerge as common to the majority, while others are distinct. These trajectories, and the types of women that arise from them, will position a better understanding of the gendered dynamics I describe in the next chapters.

I present ethnographic accounts of different women's pathways to Village 9 to show the diversity of the group lumped together in my study as "single women" or "female household head." These accounts are my reconstruction to present a more linear and chronologically conventional account that is more manageable for the reader to understand. However, in telling their stories, the women often produced discontinuous and contradictory narratives, as the reader

may discover in this chapter. I present the narratives as retold to show this strain, since I perceived them to mirror how the women have experienced their lives: as complicated and not so linear. These strains are also essential to understanding the centrality of land rights to the lives of women in Village 9.

The Context for Disrupted Relations

Women's access to land in precolonial, colonial, and postindependent Zimbabwe was negotiated within family and clan relationships. This phenomenon is characteristic of patriarchal societies that rely on the land. In his study of the Shonas, Kesby (1999) underlined that the "institution of marriage occupied a key linking position in the configuration of powers that constructed space, identity and women's status of dependence" (p. 30). Through marriage, women gained access to secondary rights to land. These rights could, however, be revoked by the husband's kin in the event of a husband's death.

On the other hand, unmarried daughters and sisters occupied temporary and impermanent positions within their patri-family. Their destinies were to be realized by affiliation to another patrilineage and community through marriage. This question of women's relationship to land and livelihood resources being mediated by their relationship to men, as wives, sisters, and daughters, has been well documented in Zimbabwean literature (Cheater, 1986; Gaidzanwa, 1981, 1994; Shumba, 2011). However, Zimbabwean literature has not yet fully addressed how unmediated relations to land could change women's experiences.

The context of the unmediated relationship to the land is the background to the stories of the women I met in Village 9. When these women took advantage of the provision of the FTLRP and sought primary land rights in Village 9, their actions were either a reaction to or signified disruptions of different relationships with men due to various circumstances. These disruptions

condition the framework within which primary rights to land make sense in this study. This chapter aims to place Village 9 life in the broader context of the women's gendered backgrounds.

Disrupted Marital Arrangements

Understanding women's gendered histories, tied by a common theme of the centrality of relations with men in their lives pre-FTLRP, enhances appreciation of the values, aspirations, and experiences of life in Village 9. This relationship between women, men, and through land was a central feature of Zimbabwe's history. Control over women within clans was built around their total dependence on their husbands to access land and cash income. This history finds expression in the stories of failed relationships and settling in Village 9 that the women shared with me. Reflections on their previous circumstances before settling in the village influenced their outlooks and perceptions of life since settling in Village 9 and makes these stories and the extension of primary land rights for women all the more important to this study. In the ensuing sections, I describe the different categories of single land-owning women: the deserted wife, the runaway wife, the widowed wife, and farm widows.

The Deserted Wife

Desertion has been a documented prevalent practice by men since the introduction of waged labour in towns and farms that came with colonialism (Barnes, 1992). When men were encouraged to leave their wives at their rural homes while they went to work, they would sometimes take up with prostitutes or live-in partners and, in some cases, never returned home to their wives and children. The deserted women would continue to live at their husbands' homes as a wife, even for many years without the husband ever coming back. Similarly, men featured in

women's desertion narratives and how this desertion had conditioned the women's lives and existence before coming to Village 9.

Mai Mabura was deserted by her husband long before the FTLRP started. She said, "My husband left. You know, just what some husbands do when they meet and get excited by younger women." Her statement reflected that husbands leaving wives is a common enough practice. Mai Mabura had not felt welcome at the husband's family home after he left. She packed her bags and left with her children to live at her maternal home. She never took the children back to their family, even when relatives sent word that their father had passed away. Due to the patrilineal inheritance system, she knew her children would not be secure at her maternal home once she passed away since they could only inherit on their father's side. When the FTLRP started, she was among the first to look for land.

Comrade was deserted by her husband years before she made the journey to Village 9. She recounted how she had lived in Mutare and sustained the family working as a trader and living in the police camp where her husband worked as a policeman. Comrade made her way to the farm that was now Village 9 upon hearing that it was being "occupied." I asked where her husband had been when she was looking for land.

> My friend, *baba* (father) had left. All because of this issue of only bearing girls. He said he was going to look for a son. So, he had taken a transfer position, and he moved to Marondera. Fifteen years! He left when this girl was only two months old. After fifteen years, he comes back when the child has finished form four.

That the husband had deserted her for only having female children is in line with the patrilineal norms where the absence of a son meant that there would not be anyone to carry the family name. Comrade's husband had deserted her to look for another wife who would bear him

the son he wanted. Once the relatives heard that her husband had abandoned her, she could not go to the rural home to claim the family land she used to farm with him. The husband never went back to Mutare, where he had left the family of nine daughters, but he turned up in Village 9 on his deathbed.

> The day he came, the Defender [a Land Rover police vehicle] roamed the whole village looking for me. He had just heard that I had found land on this farm. So, his work colleagues packed him into the car with a small bag. Not even a blanket. I see this car getting into the homestead, and I wonder, "Who can it be?" I get close to see it is him. He says, "I am sick." In my heart, I just said, "You come back on sick pension? What goes around comes around." But what could I do? I took him in. I gave him a place to sleep. He was sharing the room with this older grandson. And I said, "You will not come into my bed."

While Comrade felt compelled to take her husband into her home, the power she had to chase him from her bed shows the changed gender relations brought about by land ownership.[10] Comrade had struggled to raise her children on her own after the husband left. Her story signifies how women's lives were tied to men in ways that could be disrupted. Disrupted relations with men then led to disrupted livelihoods. These fragile ties are the basis on which I build arguments for primary land rights for women.

Their histories and the journeys the women took after being deserted by their husbands became central to their lives once they were in Village 9. While these stories represent the more prevalent trend of husbands abandoning their wives and children, in the next section, I present women who, to the contrary, had been the ones to desert their husbands.

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[10] This will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

The Runaway Wife

While not so common, women also deserted their husbands for a variety of reasons. In the documented history of colonial Zimbabwe, women abandoning their husbands was the ultimate sign of rebellion against physical abuse or because the husbands had married another woman in a polygamous relationship to which the wife disagreed. In other cases, the husband was either sterile, did not sufficiently provide food or clothing, refused to work for their families, or spent too much time and money on beer (Schmidt, 1990). Women would also run away to towns, mines, and farms where they faced the sanction of being labelled prostitutes. Abused women sought refuge in mission stations where they found the hard labour there preferable to the marriage circumstances they had run away from (Schmidt, 1991). Like these colonial times examples, several women in Village 9 were single women who had left their spouses. Circumstances leading to the women of Village 9 deserting their husbands, and in some cases even their children, were varied.

Mbuya Duri, a widow, had escaped an abusive early marriage in Masvingo during the colonial period and ended up seeking refuge working at a farm where her sister worked. It was at that farm that she had met her Malawian husband. Mbuya Dendere had moved from Seke after a long-standing dispute with her sons. Her husband did not stand up for her when her sons started giving her problems. She recounted how her twin sons had started stealing from her and her husband had not intervened. The situation got so bad that it got to the extent where one of the sons threatened to beat her up. When the land redistribution program started, she found her way by herself to Village 9, where she bought the piece of land where she now lived. Her husband stayed in Seke and had visited only once for a funeral, and one of the sons visited a couple of times, but she never went back to Seke.

Mbuya Dendere is known as a widow in the village. I had asked the Headman why she was known as a widow if her husband was alive and living somewhere else, and he had replied that at her age, and since she had come to the village alone, she was as good as a widow. I realized I would probably consider her a "social widow." It seemed that the fact that she was elderly and without a man, typical with expected norms of widowhood, earned her the subject positioning of a widow in the eyes of the community. When I first got to Village 9, the Headman had joked, "There are no young widows. When the husbands die, these young ones will remarry." The Headman's statement signifies community attitudes towards girls. It also shows the position of women in rights and claims to land. Girls have temporary claims to kin land, as they gain access to land at marriage through their husbands. The Headman's comment solidified my understanding of the transient social position of girls among the Shona. This theme comes through in the narratives and experiences of women in this study, which Mai Chatiza's journey will also show in the coming section.

Reflecting on the fluidity of Mbuya Dendere's identity gave more weight to women's gendered subjectivity and how it is tied to their relationship with men and is a function of age. The notion of gendered subjectivity speaks to how subjects are produced through gender-differentiated power structures that give meaning and values that guide how one positions themselves in relation to others and how in turn, the others see them (Weedon, 1987). I will explore further the question of subjectivities of the women in Village 9 in Chapter 5.

Other participants found their way to Village 9 to get out of abusive relationships with their husbands. Muzvare Reminasi suffered abuse at the hands of her husband and the instigation of her in-laws. She perceived that the in-laws did not want him to have a wife. They preferred that he remained single so that they would be the ones to benefit more from the business.

Contests over resources within patrilineal kinship go beyond land. With Muzvare Reminasi, the contestation with the in-laws was an articulation of the gendered axis of exclusion from resources of the business. She had worked very hard to help her husband start up a grocery store and a grinding mill, and problems started when the business became lucrative.

> That was when I saw my husband's family's true colours. We started fighting, and I later learnt that the relatives were fuelling him to frustrate me so that I could leave and they would have access to the business. So, when my mother passed away after she had repeatedly asked me to come home and get a portion of my land, I decided, "I have land to go to. Why must I continue suffering here? Let me leave." Then my husband said, "I will not allow you to go with my children." I said, "That is okay. They are your children." But I insisted on bringing this little one because she was still too young. Everyone asked me why I had left when I had put my energies in the business, and I said, "I will start anew. I will get the power to do new things from wherever I got the power to help this man." So now I am here with my daughter, and I live in peace.

Another woman, Muzvare Chizumbu, had also left an abusive relationship. She had been successful in bringing her children from that marriage to Village 9 with her. She had tried to stay in her marriage despite the abuse. When her mother died, leaving her elderly father with her late sister's orphaned children, she had asked her husband if they could take care of the children. After he refused, she decided to leave him. "You know, sometimes you stay because there is something worth staying for. He was constantly abusing me, and this situation arises that my father is alone and needed our help. It was an easy decision to make to come home and take care of my father and my nieces." Muzvare Chizumbu's father died a little later after she moved, and the nieces' father had taken his children. I asked her whether she had considered going back to

her husband since the reasons she had left for her father and her nieces no longer applied, and she replied with a laugh of disbelief at my question:

> Going back where? You are mad. Even if people saw me going back, they would think I am crazy. To go back to that abuse? This land became mine after my father's passing. Why would I leave *my land* when I can take care of myself without harassment from another person?

The common thread in Muzvare Reminasi and Muzvare Chizumbu's stories was how having land they had a legitimate claim to freed them from relations with their husbands. They had stayed in abusive relationships because they had nowhere else to go. Mai Murimi made the point through sharing her daughter's circumstances:

> You know, Mai Tadi, our daughters have no claim to this land of ours. Have you realized that my daughter is no longer at home? The husband followed her and begged her to come back home. She was sweet-talked, and she went back to him. But you know what, deep down in my heart, I know that she did not want to go back. It is just that she knows that she cannot stay at the home once I am gone. Those sons of mine will chase her away. I know things have been said that made it clear to her that she has no stake here. So, she did not have a choice than to go back with the husband. I just consoled myself that at least the husband followed, which means he is still interested in her. Otherwise, he could have just moved on with someone else.

The FTLRP represented "emancipatory potentials" (Scoones et al., 2010, p. 52) and space away from kin who meddled in the running of nuclear households either through a divorce for the single women or similarly through a spatial reorganization that afforded distance from kin for married women (Jacobs, 1992). I highlighted Muzvare Reminasi's and Muzvare Chizumbu's different circumstances and relationships with men and land to show the centrality of land

availability to their lives. Beyond land just being available, the security of their claim to this land also facilitated and was central to their journey to Village 9. Without brothers, and as the only surviving children, it meant that there was no contesting male claim to the land they held rights over in Village 9, unlike Mai Murimi's daughter. This evidence calls attention to the need for thinking through the challenge of securing primary rights to land for women beyond the provisions of the FTLRP to codify how daughters like Mai Murimi's can gain equal claim to the mother's land. Mai Murimi's daughter highlights the precarious rights to land women as daughters have, which is downplayed in research that does not problematize women's rights under traditional tenure systems.

The case of Mbuya Jairosi presents a different scenario, showing women deserting their husbands. Mbuya Jairosi and her husband had both come to Rhodesia as young children with their Malawian origin parents. They had lived on a white-owned farm where they both worked till the land invasions started. Mbuya Jairosi introduced herself and got land in Village 9 as a single woman, which is how she fell into my study group participants. Later on, I learned as I talked to her best friend, Mbuya Chapupu, that Mbuya Jairosi's husband had remained at the commercial farm where they had worked and lived together. Mbuya Chapupu suspected that the husband might have taken another wife, and that was why her friend had moved to Village 9. On her part, Mbuya Jairosi only shared that her husband had refused to come to Village 9, and she had decided to stay in the village so that she could raise her grandchildren.

That Mbuya Jairosi may have taken the opportunity offered by the land redistribution program to run away from an undesirable marriage is not surprising. In the early days of settler rule, the collision of the colonial and indigenous powers had destabilized the existing relationships built around traditional chiefly and lineage authority among the indigenous

population. Women took advantage of the spaces opened up by the early colonial assault on indigenous male dominance and exited patrilocalities permanently by moving from the rural areas under the authority of Chiefs and male kin into farms, mines, and towns (Schmidt, 1993). Similarly, suppose Mbuya Chapupu's suspicions were correct. In that case, Mbuya Jairosi may have taken advantage of the space opened up by the FTLRP and run away from an undesirable polygamous relationship—just as Muzvare Reminasi and Muzvare Chizumbu had left, albeit for different reasons. Secure tenure rights under the FTLRP thus created space for both deserted wives and runaway wives.

The deserted wife and the runaway wife presented here share a common thread of lives enmeshed with husbands, and for whom the opening up of land rights in the FTLRP provided an alternative from undesirable relations. However, some women's relationships with their husbands were disrupted by natural causes through death. As discussed earlier, women were integrated into community networks of kinship within lineages through marriage (Kesby, 1999). As widows, women's position within these kinship communities was often in peril due to several dynamics, including witchcraft accusations, as the following section highlights.

The Widowed Wife

Among most of the Shona of Zimbabwe, the family organization is based on descent groups that follow patrilineal kinship. Power relations built around the lineage influenced women's existence because, as Kesby (1999) notes, the "institution of marriage occupied a key linking position in the configuration of powers that constructed space, identity and women's position" (p. 30) within community networks of kinship as wives. The simplistic and idealist view of land under the Chief's custody, who distributed it into clans, where it was further apportioned to male heads, hides axes of exclusion and contestations over resources that included

land. Wives experienced the gendered axis of exclusion as widows at the death of their husbands in various ways. Pre-FTLRP gender debates highlighted women's plight at the hands of patrikin upon their husbands' death (Gaidzanwa, 1981). Widows could lose their rights and access to family land if they did not have adult sons to whom the deceased husband's land could be bequeathed. They could also lose their land if they refused the custom of *kugara nhaka* (wife inheritance) or no one in the clan accepted them under the same tradition (Gaidzanwa, 1981; Makura-Paradza, 2010). Even when they could stay on the family land, relations with the husband's family were not always amicable, often leading to discomfort and precarious existence for the widows.

Similar dynamics had pushed Mbuya Rwizi away from her deceased husband's land to Village 9 as the FTLRP began. Mbuya Rwizi moved from Rusape with her children after her husband died, and the husband's family began ostracizing and accusing her of witchcraft over the death of her nephew. According to her, her brother-in-law had lost his son soon after her husband had passed away. The son had gone "hunting" with his friends, digging for a small animal that burrows in the ground. They had dug a hole which he put his head through, and the soil had crushed him. Mbuya Rwizi had been the first to hear the news and had gone to the brother-in-law to alert him of the accident. However, the family later accused her of killing the child, leading to strained relations. Due to the disrupted relations between their mother and their father's family, her two adult sons had eventually decided to move away with her when the chance for resettlement came with the land invasions. Mbuya Rwizi received the land in Village 9 as a widow. Her sons live and work in Harare with their families, remitting resources to their mother and assisting her with labour when they can. They now maintain Village 9 as their home,

and according to Mbuya Rwizi, they too severed relations with their father's kin in the move to Village 9. No one has gone back to Rusape since they moved.

What happened to Mbuya Rwizi is typical among the Shona of Zimbabwe. Witchcraft is used to explain a variety of conditions, misfortune, declining livelihoods, socioeconomic differences, and sickness and death, among many others (Zachrisson, 2007). Blame is usually cast on individuals, especially women, and those who deviate from the village community by their behaviour: the wealthy and successful and the very poor and isolated. Accusations of witchcraft are almost always preceded by tension and conflict within the household, village, or community. Disputes over succession or misunderstandings over the distribution of family wealth are recognized among the possible sources of this tension wherein tension created in this way will then find expression in accusations of witchcraft (Gaidzanwa, 1994). While there may be different ways to address disputes and subsequent witchcraft accusations in communities, in cases where reconciliation is impossible, breaking off relations altogether by leaving the community, as Mbuya Rwizi did, is the most viable option for most widows.

The opening up of land ownership under the FTLRP presented this option for Mbuya Rwizi and her sons. When I asked if she still kept in touch with the husband's family, she declared that she would never go back there. To underline her resolve, she indicated that there had been numerous deaths in the family back in Rusape, but neither she nor her sons had gone to pay their condolences. Mbuya Rwizi scoffed and said, "I am not there, but people are still dying. Yet I was the witch. I will not go. I am okay here with my family." From my understanding as a Shona, not attending funerals was a strong statement by Mbuya Rwizi and her sons. There is a belief among the Shona that people should always come together for such calamities despite disagreements.

Other dynamics could, however, influence widowed women in different ways that highlight even more strongly the precarious existence of women as dependent subjects in general. Beyond relying on men for access to kin land, women's subject positions as dependents of men also found expression in other social relations of production, as highlighted in the journeys of farmworkers' widows that I present in the next section.

Farm Widows

Farmworkers have occupied a unique position in the history of Zimbabwe's racial land division and land redistribution debates. At independence, most commercial farms' labour force was foreign born or of foreign descent from nearby Zambia, Malawi, or Mozambique. These farmworkers were viewed as completely tied to their white farmer employers and were ignored in the postindependence and pre-FTLRP land redistribution debates and efforts even though they fell into the poor and landless category.

In the early phases of the FTLRP, farmworkers were caught up in the racialized fight between their white employers and native black Zimbabweans. Native Zimbabweans considered farmworkers of foreign descent to be sympathetic to the plight of their employers. In the end, the "politics of belonging and of exclusion" (Moyo, 2000, p. 188) guided the reform process such that fewer than 3,000 out of an estimated 300,000-plus commercial farmworkers reportedly received land through the FTLRP land transfer process. Besides the racialized politics between their white employers and the native black Zimbabweans, non-native farmworkers were excluded on the basis of their foreign descent. This was even though by the time of the FTLRP, most farmworkers were Zimbabwean by birth. However, as foreign descendants, they continued to be plagued by such politics of exclusion.

For widows of farmworkers, this history is gendered in complex ways. Like Mbuya Duri, whom I reported earlier to have run away from an abusive husband in Masvingo, native Zimbabwean women who found their way onto farms often married foreign men. Most of the women in Village 9 who were married to men of foreign descent were elderly, especially among the widows. Given how women's access to land has traditionally been tied to their men's ownership, women married to foreign men were in worse positions than those married to native Zimbabwean men. Their husbands did not have family land that the wives could lay claim to. At the same time, the wives found themselves at the mercy of the farm owner when their husbands died. Moving to Village 9 signified disrupted structural relationships with the white commercial farm system—a relationship within which their lives were gendered in ways that Mai Chatiza's narrative highlights.

I thought Mai Chatiza's narrative seemed convoluted at first, but I later realized that her life journey had been complex, which was why she could not present a neat account of her story. Her convoluted account represented the reality of her life after her husband's death. Her narrative started off with the loss of her husband, through whom her own life had been structured. She was left destitute when he passed away.

> I was then left at the farm, and the farm owner said, "Woman, your children are still too young. I would have taken one in place of the deceased father so that you can continue staying where you are. But your kids are young. There is nothing I can do to help you there. You should leave and go somewhere and come back when your children are old enough.

I asked her why she was chased away by the farmer when she had been employed and working for the same farmer.

> I also worked! But it is the man who is relied upon! You think they would count a woman? Possibly thinking that you will get married! Those days only men were counted. “So now I need my house to put another worker”, the farmer said. “I thought to myself, what do I do?” He said, “You better see what to do. I am bringing another person tomorrow. Right now, by end of day, make sure you have come up with a plan.”

The white farmer chased Mai Chatiza away from Jobherini because she had young children that could not work on the farm. As a woman she could not stay in the employment. The practice was that if she had an elder son to take up the deceased father’s place at work, then the family would have stayed on the farm. The gendered implication of the farmer’s action was based on the perception that women were unreliable employees as they were bound to remarry and possibly move with another spouse. This was an assumption based on the male-provider norm that women’s lives were expected to be predicated on which meant that a widowed woman needed to find a male- provider. Mai Chatiza’s journey took her from the farm, to her family home, to her husband’s rural home, and finally to Village 9. Her story, convoluted as it was to me, represents the precariousness of her and other women’s positions in general, within the kinship system of relations. In the narrative of her life is enshrined the perfect example of the fragility of claims to land for women, which makes for a strong case for attention to issues of tenure. Her journey of transiency situates the gendered debate to land reform.

A Journey of Transiency

Historically, women’s position among the Shona was circumscribed within family and clan relationships that placed them on the hierarchy of the family organization as wives, daughters and sisters. As daughters and sisters, they held transient positions within their families. Their mobility from their birth homes to the husbands’ in marriage was the most important and

highly significant factor in the construction of their identity (Kesby, 1999). Through marriage and as wives, they fulfilled their destinies and integrated into existing community networks of kinship, through which they gained secondary rights to the clan's land. This positioning as dependent subjects, both within their families of birth as well as in their marriage families, offered a precarious existence at risk of disruption from desertion or at the death of their husbands as the above discussion has highlighted. The dynamics of women's subject positions as wives and daughters is highlighted through the continuation of Mai Chatiza's story.

> My husband fell sick when we were at Jobhereni, till he died in 1999. Then I became homeless. My husband had left his family home in bad terms with his relatives. He also came to the farms as a young man, you know the life of orphans. Even the national identification document, he only managed to get it when he was now working at the farm. Then we married and lived well together. At Jobherini he got sick and died before my last- born son had even started school, and we cried, buried him and that was it. We buried him right there at Jobherini. Because he had told me, "when I die do not trouble yourself, my children will bury me, nothing should bother you, my children will inherit my clothes." He knew the issues he had back home with his brothers. They had fought over cattle. You know, issues of inheritance!

Mai Chatiza's life was intrinsically linked to her husband's. Through marriage, she would have received access to the use of her husband's family land. But due to the disrupted relationship with his family, it meant that his wife's access to kin land was also jeopardized.

> My mother had always argued, "Why are you living on the white farms? We know that when someone marries, they send their wife home, and the man stays at the white farm working! I don't want my daughter to stay in farms. I also want her to have a family home." But my husband always insisted, "No, that is not possible. I know the issues I have with my relatives."

When her husband passed away, Mai Chatiza had called her brother to tell him of her predicament, and the brother had said she could go back to her family home with her children. Back there, the brother had given her a good piece of land, large enough for her to farm with her children and to set up a homestead. Relations had soured due to jealousy from the other brothers' wives, as Mai Chatiza recounted: "I went through a tough time. They would be angry, going up checking in my fields and grumbling 'Farming like this!!! On our soil! Our land! This land should be for our sons. Our sons are supposed to eat from this land, not her and her husband's kids.'" Mai Chatiza possibly represents the prototype of the life circumstances of a woman in the Shona culture as far as women's lives are tied to their relationship to some man: husband, brother, or son. With no place at the farm, Mai Chatiza had gone back to her family home. Her experience at her natal home sheds light on the positioning of daughters among Shona lineages as always impermanent and transient. Even though she was accommodated, the brothers' wives questioned her sons' and her own legitimacy.

Among most of the Shona of Zimbabwe, family organization is based on descent groups that follow patrilineal kinship. This signifies lines of descent and authority that are traced through the father. This is why Mai Chatiza's sons, similar to Mai Mabura discussed earlier, could not be accommodated at their mother's family's home. Mai Chatiza's position within her patrilineal family was always impermanent because the mobility of daughters from their birth homes to their husbands in marriage was the most important and highly significant factor in the construction of female identity. This also explains Mai Murimi's daughter's position and choice to go back to a marriage she had left after her brothers declared that she had no place at her family's home.

For Mai Chatiza, similar to Mai Murimi's daughter, when it became too unbearable to live at her family's home, she decided to go and look for her husband's family. Her expectation had been that marriage relations, even in the absence of the husband, would open up space for her and her children in existing community networks of kinship with his family. Moving to her husband's family, a family that she had never met and whom her deceased husband had warned her to stay away from, illustrates the depth of her despair and the untenable circumstances at her family home. At her husband's family, two of his sisters had also come back to their family homes upon their husbands' deaths, and these sisters had been the ones to torment her. According to Mai Chatiza, the sisters were jealous of her hard work in the small field and garden she had been allocated by the husband's older brother. They frustrated her until she decided to go away to look for her own land. She recounted, "And I said to myself, 'No, I cannot be treated like this. It is not a crime to be widowed. I did not kill my husband.' I packed my things and set off with my children." The relationship between Mai Chatiza and her sisters-in-law illustrates complex intragender dynamics wherein women compete against each other for legitimate connections to men in order to access the resources under men's control as husbands and brothers.

Thus, failing to establish her legitimacy in this contest with both her family and her husband's kin, Mai Chatiza had decided to take advantage of the FTLRP to look for her own land. The husband's kin had commented:

> "What land is she going to look for? She is going away to be a prostitute." And I said, "So what? If you hear that I am prostituting then ask each other why. I am leaving." I came here with no clue where I was going. Woman, I just walked. I said, "Let me just go to Macheke" randomly. But I had heard that there is a farm

> that's being given out. And I heard there are lots of other people and I said, "That is where I am going."

This is how Mai Chatiza ended up in Village 9 and presented herself to the committee members who were responsible for giving land. Mai Chatiza came to Village 9 due to broken relations, illustrating how her life was explicitly tied to her husband, her brothers, and her husband's kin. In Village 9, the expectation of a transient existence tied to a relationship with a man framed how the leaders and the other village members also received her. Mai Chatiza recounted that when she got to Village 9, at first the leadership had not been keen on giving her land, which she only learned of sometime after her arrival.

> I heard that the leaders and everyone in this village were talking about my young family. I heard they were saying, "She will not stay long. She will find a husband and get married, because she is too young and she has all these children. There is no need to give her land. She will give up."

Subsequently, Mai Chatiza would share how her experiences and the journey she had taken were the driving force of her existence in Village 9. Life in Village 9 for Mai Chatiza and for all the women is better understood via the backstories of the journeys that led to their ending up in the village. Mai Chatiza's experience is also an important expression of women's transiency in their subject positions as wives and daughters, which highlights the need for secure primary rights to land. Her story reflects the gendered struggles of women coming out of patriarchal arrangements of subordination where the distinction between primary and secondary rights that some scholars (Cheater, 1982; Yngstrom, 1999) have minimized is shown to be critical. Even the accusations of prostitution levelled upon Mai Chatiza are in line with documented literature on women's mobility debates throughout Zimbabwe's history (Benson & Chadya, 2003; Cheater & Gaidzanwa, 1996; Gaidzanwa, 1995; Kesby, 1999).

Statutes restricted women's mobility, ensuring that they did not get away from the protection, authority, and gaze of their male kin. Ironically, the fact that Mai Chatiza could not find protection from either her natal family or from her husband's family freed her to seek her own land under the FTLRP. The reactions from her husband's kin reflect the perceptions of single women when they are not tied to a male—either as wives, sisters, or daughters—perceptions that frame the existence of single women in Village 9, as I will discuss in the next chapter. When women do not have a relationship that ties them to men in the way the narratives discussed so far have shown, it means the trajectories of their lives may also not fit into any category. Different trajectories of life condition other beneficiaries' lives, as the next section presents.

Different Trajectories

While I have tried to place the histories of the women at the centre of my study, the aim has not been to force these women into categories of former farmworkers, deserted wife, widow, or runaway wife discussed thus far. Neither are the stories and categories meant to have any quantitative significance. Instead, these stories give background to the 34 women who were at the centre of my study, with the main aim of exploring the history of women and their rights and responsibilities, as a gendered history.

Mai Tinotenda had claimed her brother's land after the brother and his wife had abandoned the land. Her brother had deserted his wife and was reportedly already remarried, with another family in another part of the country. The deserted wife had eventually decided to go back to her parents. Upon hearing that the wife was about to sell the land, Mai Tinotenda had claimed the land through the Headman. The patrilineage inheritance norms facilitated Mai

Tinotenda's claim to the land. Similarly, another single woman, Mai Tinashe, had taken ownership of her father's land upon his passing away. According to the Headman,

> She just came from nowhere for the father's funeral and then just stayed. The next thing she came to ask for a letter of support to take to the district administrator for change of ownership. So, I gave her. We knew that she was the only child of this man. There is a brother, but he is the wife's son, not Mucheki's, so we agreed to have her take ownership.

Mai Tinashe did not offer much in terms of her background before settling in Village 9, save to say she had left her husband in Rusape since the relationship was not working.

A number of women who had been lodging in Macheke town found it easier to engage in the invasion process in Village 9 due to the area's proximity to their homes in Macheke. It also seems as if they were actively coopted into the farm invasion process by the war veteran leadership, possibly to increase the numbers in order to intimidate the farm owners. Of my participants, 23 were widows. These included some of the women whose stories I have shared. Of these widows, nine had come into Village 9 with their husbands, but the husbands had died while in the village. While they did not get land in their own right, I included them into the study because their situations illuminate the gendered dynamics of land relations. None of the women had faced contestation to their ownership of the land. Mai Peter's husband had passed away after settling in Village 9 and she had remarried and stayed with the new husband on her late husband's family land, which was now in her name. This scenario presented even more interesting dynamics into the gender issues at the centre of this research, as will be discussed in detail in the next chapters.

Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the historical backgrounds of the women who are at the centre of this study. The chapter is premised on the understanding of gender as historical. In Zimbabwe, gender and land have historically been intrinsically linked in ways that have shaped women's lives. The precarious existence of women in these structured relationships, as dependents with fragile claims to land, makes a strong case for primary rights to land for women. The women's stories provided evidence of this as they narrated how their lives before the FTLRP were intertwined with land and resource access that was mediated by their relationships to men, thus placing life in Village 9 in the broad context of Zimbabwean women's gendered backgrounds, of impermanence, and of transiency.

The background presented in this chapter primes subsequent discussions and foregrounds our understanding and critical analysis of the changes in gender relations engendered by the FTLRP and the provision of primary land rights to women. Addison (2019) makes the point that given the extremely limited access to land women held prior to the FTLRP, as the histories contained in this chapter evidence, the resettlement process represents a process of change that has expanded rural women's ability to make "meaningful choices" (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437). The following chapters provide the form and nature of the change that the resettlement program has engendered and the kind of choices that primary land rights have opened up for the beneficiaries. In the next chapter I will focus on how the provision of land in Village 9 has given permanency and shaped the lives and livelihoods of the women in ways that open up space to analyze gender transformation.

Chapter 4. Land, Livelihoods, and Self in Village 9

The women of Village 9 who were given land during the FTLRP came from different gendered histories. Single women, widows, divorced and deserted women came from backgrounds where relations to men and to land were disrupted in varied ways that made settling in Village 9 a viable alternative. While they had previously relied on relations with kinsmen to access land and livelihood opportunities, in Village 9, they were given land in their own right. Given what I have highlighted about the history of land in Zimbabwe and how ownership and control of land mediated the relationships women as wives, sisters, and daughters had with their husbands, brothers, and fathers respectively, ownership of land in Village 9 by women is likely to reveal and produce gender dynamics. In this chapter, I focus on the dynamics engendered by primary land rights for women.

To investigate the lives and livelihoods of the women in Village 9, I use an expanded definition of land that allows for a full analysis of how lives and livelihoods in Village 9 are gendered. Scholars have called for a broader conceptualization of land that goes beyond its economic value and ties it to a range of symbolic and identity meanings. Narrow economism, directing analysis only to economic gains or losses, has directed pre- and post-FTLRP debate. This has led to inadequate understanding of the far-reaching consequences of land reconfiguration, which in turn accounts for the gaps in gender analysis. A broader understanding of land requires conceptualizing it as a site of struggles and networks of relations. Mosse (1997) calls for researchers to "embrace the range of symbolic interests normally rejected as economically irrational" (p. 473), acknowledging that a broad range of other social relations develop around the land. Such an outlook illustrates the "interconvertibility of economic capital and symbolic capital" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 180), explaining how material interests are inseparable

from social relationships. The land is thus inseparable from the social relations that converge around it. It is this expanded conceptualization of land as space that allows the analysis of the material and symbolic value of land for both married and single women in Village 9. It is also through this conceptualization that I investigate land as a repository of freedom and autonomy as symbolic resources.

The section starts by placing primary land rights within married women's understanding. The distinction between primary and secondary rights is one that some scholars have minimized (Cheater, 1982; Pasura, 2010; Yngstrom, 1999). Yet, starting from the reflections of married women and the subsequent livelihood narratives of both single and married women of Village 9, one can see the importance of this distinction and how crucial it is to gendered analysis of land reforms.

"Talk To Us, and You Will Have a Good Picture": The Case for Primary Rights

When I introduced my project in Village 9, I explained that I was interested in the livelihoods of single women who had gained land under the FTLRP. As I reflected on the way the people of Village 9 had readily accepted me, I concluded that it might have been that I was considered nonthreatening, both in terms of the topic and of the subject of my research. The men would introduce or refer to me as "that woman working with the single women." Even though everyone in the village knew that I was working with single women, my access to married women was neither restricted nor questioned. I forged relations with married women in the village from early on in my research and would receive queries from the married women as they asked, "How come you do not want to talk to us? What about us? Do you think we do not have challenges?" One such woman was Mai Magonhi, a village cell leader's wife. Mai Magonhi was

friends with one of the single women in my group of participants. One day I passed by the Magonhis' looking for her friend Mai Tinashe, and Mai Magonhi confronted me:

> Mai Tadiwa, tell me something. You say this research is about understanding women's livelihoods—why did you decide to talk to the single women only? Why not talk to married women as well? Do you want to know about the lives of women? Talk to us, and you will have a good picture. You assume that Mai Tinashe has challenges because she is single? You are very much mistaken. Ask me!

I replied that I was indeed going to ask married women for their perceptions of the issue, and Mai Magonhi was eager to schedule a meeting with me. Other married women whom I talked to following my initial conversation with Mai Magonhi also shared the same sentiments. In challenging my methodological approach, Mai Magonhi and the other married women showed an understanding of their subject positioning within the topic of land and gender relations that came out even more in the subsequent conversations I had with the married women.

Through a snowball of interactions, I eventually recruited several married women who offered valuable insights to the discussion of land rights. First, and of the most importance, the value of having land in one's name was not lost on the married women. Even though the women were aware that the government had made provision under the FTLRP for married women to have joint title with their husbands, most of the women acknowledged that the land was in their husbands' names. They did not consider the joint titling of any significance since even those whose names were on titles did not see any benefit from having their names registered. Mai Chigumba stressed the point that for married women,

> even if they say the permit is in both our names, *baba* (the head of the house) can arbitrarily declare, "This is what I want to do here." Sometimes as women, we

> end up with not even a small piece of land to put our preferred crop. We then just concentrate on what he has declared for the family. What the father says goes.

They considered that having land given to the couple, even jointly registered, still gave men the powers of *hubaba* (household head). Though the land was deemed to belong to both the husband and the wife, women's access to their own piece of land on which they could decide what to grow and what to do with the yield from that land was limited to the husbands' benevolence. Mai Mutete, a married woman, shared that their relationships with their husbands influenced the women's access to their "own" piece of land. Besides this negotiated access, men considered the land theirs despite joint registration. Mai Mutete pointed out that often when people argued in their household, one could be threatened by the husband that "the land is mine, you can pack and go anytime."

Studies that have minimized the need for formal allocation of land for women have built much of their critique on the protection of women's claims and access to the *tseu* system whereby wives had legitimate claim to specific kin land on which to produce "women crops" (Pasura, 2010). This system has been shown to be fragile, however, as it rests on the benevolence of husbands. Women's claims have also proven to be secondary and tenuous in periods of land scarcity or rises in sale value, or when rights are formalized through titles or registration (Kevane & Gray, 2011). In Village 9, land shortage is not the reason why the wives of Village 9 do not get access to such land. Married women's narratives illustrate that their access to certain rights requires the negotiation of various spaces with their husbands. Mai Rutenga impressed on me the importance of getting a piece of land allocated to her:

> When it comes to that, young sister, I do not want to lie to you. You cannot be imagining that he would give me land where I can plant groundnuts and sell and

have money in my pocket? For me to have my own money! That is an impossible consideration, young sister. My husband could never stand it.

I tried to ascertain whether she had suggested that arrangement and she replied with conviction that she could never raise the issue and neither would her husband. “Just because you are my wife! You are under my power, and you cannot have land and be in control of personal yields.” This is what *hubaba* meant, and Mai Rutenga’s insight pointed beyond access to land. Women in other resettlement areas have gained autonomy through *tseu* allocations. High yields from *tseu* land does not only represent an important source of income in women’s control but also improves women’s autonomy in ways that men in Village 9 are resistant to. Access to and for the married women in Village 9 is tied to control of land and control over the output from wives’ labour.

The wives were aware of this dynamic. Mai Rutenga shared that it did not happen in the village for wives to be allocated independent pieces of land. In her case, she knew that her husband would not be receptive to the idea—not because there was a shortage of land. There was an unwillingness to give her land that she would have control over, and from which she could reap and realize sale value of her produce. In the off chance that the husband agreed for the wife to plant what she wanted, she shared that when it came to selling the crops, the wife would not see the money, because the husband would control that too.

The women’s insights about joint title to land feeds into the discourse about ownership and control of land wherein registration of land in women’s names has been seen as a way towards giving them control over land and incentive to increase agricultural productivity. Others have argued, however, that joint registration is not sufficient, because it only gives title without changing attitudes and practices, or household power structures that are determined by the sexual division of labour (Chimedza, 1988). Evidence from Village 9 women’s experiences above

reflects and confirms Hahn's (1983) assertion that "attitudinal barriers, cultural stereotypes and long-established opinions about women's place and responsibilities" (p. 9) may limit the extent to which women can benefit from joint title.

Women's subordination can be linked to their access to and control over land within the context of communal areas. Lack of control over land also means lack of control over returns to labour (Chimedza, 1988, p. 43). Similarly, married women in Village 9 shared insights that reflect the dynamics of land ownership and control within their households in ways that make clear the distinction between primary and secondary land rights. This distinction, particularly as articulated by the women themselves, is very important in debates on women's land rights, as scholars have made theoretical arguments that downplay the importance of primary rights for women, both in terms of enhancing livelihoods and for addressing their subordination (Cheater, 1982; Pasura, 2010; Yngstrom, 1999). Lacking still in the arguments about this distinction is an in-depth investigation of what primary land rights mean to the women in circumstances where they have them, like in the case of the single women in Village 9. In the following sections, both single and married women of Village 9 share livelihood narratives that place primary land rights at the centre of their lived experiences. I argue that the experiences of land rights encompassed in these narratives reflect crucial distinctions between primary and secondary rights that should not be minimized.

"*Pangu Panoti Ini!*" My Own Land, With My Own Name

One important question that has not been sufficiently addressed in the primary versus secondary rights debate is, "What does land mean in the hands of single women?" Feminist theorists encourage understanding women's realities from their lived experience, arguing that "concrete lived experience is a key place from which to build and foment social change" (Hesse-

Biber, 2012, p. 2). Jackson (1998) makes a case for subjectivities of women and embodied livelihoods arguing that "understanding, and unsettling, processes of power and exclusion that disadvantage women require attention to struggles over meaning as much as struggles over resources", (Jackson, 1998; 317). Such an understanding directs the empirical presentation and analysis of the narratives both married and single women shared, giving us insight into what it means to own land and how this ownership or lack thereof is experienced and articulated in practice in Village 9.

Land ownership in Village 9 is formalized at different levels. Similar to how the FTLRP was implemented, A1 plots are formalized through offer letters from the district administrator's office (DA). The next step from the offer letters is registration of a permit in the name of the single woman, jointly for husband and wives, or in the name of the household head only, that is, the husband. The experience in land registration has revealed dynamics that tend to disadvantage women. Lack of finances to pay for the permits and illiteracy of the single women beneficiaries are problematic areas that could jeopardize women's claims if formalized rights are upheld (Chigbu et al., 2019). User permits are issued by the district administrators at the recommendation of the village head or local councillors. Others have problematized the male-headed structures through which the user permits are issued as potentially prejudicial to women's claims (Gaidzanwa, 2011).

In Village 9, a number of the single women confessed that they had not yet processed the registration of their permits at the DA due to the fees required. However, they maintained that they felt secure enough with the letter of allocation in their possession. They also use other social networks that legitimatize women's claims to land in the village even in the absence of formalized title. For example, the knowledge of the history of claims on land in the community's

memory is used to make claims on land. Mbuya Ruzvidzo related, “We walked behind the war vets as they were chasing away the farm owner, and after he was gone the leaders said, “Here, *ambuya*, this is your piece” in front of everyone. So no, there would not be any argument that the land belongs to me. The whole village bears witness.” Some women also indicated they were sure they could get support from the other members of the community who had settled with them and with whom they had built relations if there was ever any contestation over their right to land. However, these claims could be eroded by loss of memory over time. Most importantly, with the hindsight of gendered awareness, inheritance patterns and reversion to customary ownership of land for men could result in women losing the ownership in successive generations.

Despite my misgivings on the fragility of their claims in the long run, and to position the forthcoming discussion, it suffices to say that the women were secure enough in the ownership of the land to engage in discussion of what it meant to have land in their own names, which this chapter examines. The rest of this chapter is organized to follow a line of inquiry that first exposes land’s material value and the dynamics that influence how this value is realized and expressed by single women and how, in contrast, the same is limited for married women. The different circumstances of single and married women will bring out the value of primary land rights and how they are linked to the gendered livelihoods they each pursue to realize both the material and symbolic value of land. The second stage of my analysis unpacks the symbolic value of land that women realize through the primary land rights. This will be done using the concept of autonomy as the analytical lens.

The Material Value of Land

It is essential to determine what it means to own land in Village 9 in order to understand the different land-related dynamics that condition women’s lives. The issue of joint ownership

reflected above by married women directs our attention to these dynamics. Through my conversations with single women, I draw out aspects of land ownership that expressed land's material value as a resource, distinct from the symbolic value that I discuss in subsequent sections.

A Place to Call Home

Land centres in this discussion as a material resource whose meaning to single women is influenced by the women's gendered histories, as illustrated in Chapter 3. Land's material value as a place to call home comes in the background of landlessness for some of the women. Having been divorced or ostracized by their families and having immigrant backgrounds characterized by exclusion from land ownership elevates the value of primary rights to land in Village 9 for the women. The materiality of land as a place to call home is also shaped by Zimbabwe's colonial history that established a dual economy wherein families maintained a place to lodge in towns for working husbands and a *musha* (home) in the rural areas for wives and children. The concept of a *musha* was entrenched at the centre of native household organization, and it may explain the elevated demand for land among farmworkers during the FTLRP as families searched for this place they could also call home.

For former farmworkers, the need for a home was the driving force for their move to Village 9. At the very minimum, a parcel of land big enough to build a home and set up a garden would have been enough to serve their purpose of just having a home. Mai Chatiza shared that she and her husband had been looking for a home well before the program started so that she could stay with the children. Her husband had become estranged from his family when they met and married at the farm where they both worked.

> My parents had argued, "why are you living in the farms? We know that when someone marries, they send their wife home and the husband stays at the farm working!" My mother insisted, "I do not want my daughter to stay in farms. I also want her to go home to farm." So, my husband said, in that case, we should look for a home.

Her mother's insistence that her husband look for a home is in line with the expectation and understanding of the value of a rural home that I presented at the beginning of this section. While Mai Chatiza's husband was a native Zimbabwean who could have gone back to his family home were it not for his estrangement from family, farmworkers of foreign descent who had lived for more than three generations on farms did not have such alternatives. For them, land in Village 9 was a home with even more significant symbolic meaning and material value.

Land in Village 9 also represented a chance to break generations of lives tied to farm and farm work. Women indicated that their children, the younger generation, would not experience the life they themselves had been born and raised into on farms as farmworkers. Mbuya Jairosi came to Village 9 to look for a home outside of the farm life. She had lived on a white-owned farm where she worked with her husband till the land invasions started. She decided to go and look for land after her daughter lost her husband in an accident. Mbuya Jairosi made up her mind that she would not take her daughter's children and raise them on the farm as she had raised her children. That was her primary motivation to look for land. Similarly, Mai Cosmas decided to "look for a home" so that she could give her children options other than being farmworkers. She also wanted to give them a chance at life that she had not had. Her parents had seen her pathway at the farm following theirs: living and working at the farm for generations to come.

> I could not bear it to raise my children the same way I was raised on the farms working for the white man! On these farms, children would only go up to primary

> school grade seven, and after that, you go to the boss and you get a job. It is a pity that my daughter was not as bright, but my son did well, and he went all the way to form four. It is just that the country is not doing well economically. He would be employed right now. Nonetheless, I do not regret taking them out of the farms.

Mai Cosmas's account is in line with literature that has shown farm life in Zimbabwe directed by the needs of farm owners to keep an indebted workforce that had no other place to go, thereby ensuring a supply of cheap and reliable labour (Sachikonye, 2003). My participants in Village 9 all told me of their huge dependence on their employers and growing up thinking the farm way of life was the only life, and without realizing the importance of living on one's land, as Mai Mabura confessed:

> We grew up with our parents working on the farm, so we grew up thinking that is how life is supposed to be. Like some of us *vabvakure* (immigrants/aliens), we used to think farm life was great. Not knowing that to have a place of your own was essential. We used to live a farm life, just working on the farms. Here people are now farming because we have seen that it is a better way of life. We are now accepting that this is right.

These stories show that land's most immediate value was as space to build dwellings with more profound significance as a home given the backgrounds of the beneficiaries. Most of these former farmworkers were from Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique, and they had stayed from generation to generation as a secure source of cheap labour on large-scale commercial farms. Even though some had bought land in communal areas and established "homes," most remained on these farms with limited opportunities to move out of the large-scale commercial farming sector. Post-fast-track analysis has presented farmworkers as victims of the FTLRP due to loss of wages, among other factors. History may look favourably on this one aspect and long-term impact of the resettlement program in that, for those who secured land in the process, the

program has given new livelihood opportunities and a sense of belonging to the beneficiaries of the land redistribution program, especially their children. My participants were acutely aware of this benefit despite the difficult livelihoods they were pursuing, as Mai Cosmas and Mai Mabura's experiences show.

Beyond space for establishing dwellings and a home, resettling opened avenues for new livelihood opportunities for other beneficiaries as well. Some who had previously lodged in towns were happy that having land in Village 9 meant that they did not have to worry about buying food. They could now farm for themselves and even sell to the people in Macheke whom they had lived with before coming to Village 9. Engaging in land-based agricultural livelihoods brought out the material value of land.

Land for Subsistence

As noted earlier, analysis of Zimbabwe's land reform phases has focused on the issue of surplus production on resettlement land. Such analysis and livelihood studies thus oriented have looked at resettled farmers' income streams by gathering data on the primary sources of income for families (Kinsey, 2002). Quantitative indicators of yields or ranking of livelihoods, among other tools, are used in research that reviews the outcomes of land reforms in a narrowly economistic viewpoint. Empirical evidence thus drawn is used to argue for or against land reforms (Richardson, 2004). Surplus production evident in enhanced incomes from sales is given as evidence of success, and decreased yields, as reflected in post-FTLRP analysis, are used as evidence of the program's failure.

Livelihoods on resettlement land need to be evaluated in the context of Zimbabwe's broader economic and political crisis since 1997, right at the same time as the FTLRP was implemented. Agricultural production fell by 22 percent in 2002 compared to an average annual

growth of rate of 4.7 percent between 1990 and 2000 (Richardson, 2004). Droughts in the years after the FTLRP was implemented also lowered crop production, leading to poverty. The FTLRP may have been the cause of the crisis that manifested in high inflation and uncertain markets for the country's key agricultural exports, such as tobacco, cotton, and horticultural products. The increased fiscal deficit and the loss of investor confidence arising from uncertainty about domestic policies has persisted since then, up until the time of my research. My investigation of how land rights are centred in the livelihoods in Village 9 is framed against this background.

Beneficiaries received land in Village 9 varying in size from household to household. According to Sabuku Tsambe, the imperative of just giving people a place to stay, in line with the recognized value and need to establish a home, explained the small pieces of land that some people ended up with. Mbuya Neshangwe, for example, has a small piece of land on which her homestead is sited, leaving her the space around it to grow crops. She considers the land too small but still sufficient for her needs since she is too old to work a big piece: "How do I work the land anyway? At least I have a home." Mbuya Dakarayi has one and a half hectares, which she reported to be enough to cover her food needs. Some of those who got big pieces of land are not able to use all the land due to their old age, like Mbuya Neshangwe, or lack of resources to work the land. They instead lease out the land to Macheke residents or to other farmers in the village, particularly those who engage in tobacco production. Some, like Mbuya Murimi and Mbuya Jairosi, have started subdividing the land to their sons. For example, Mbuya Jairosi reported that even though her land is not that big, she had no choice but to give it to her sons because they came after she had settled in the village and also needed land.

The dynamics of land use, as reflected here, have caused critics to challenge the viability of giving land rights to women in the first place, arguing that labour and cash or other resources

for labour mobilization, not lack of primary land rights, account for women's poverty in sub-Saharan Africa (Whitehead & Kabeer, 2001). However, I argue that the fact that the women cannot use the land does not point to or give credence to arguments against land reform and land rights for women specifically. Instead, it gives further evidence of the need for a complete agrarian reform that assists resettled farmers to make maximum use of the land by increasing their access to and control over other resources such as agricultural inputs, credit, knowledge and labour (Cousins, 2007; Duncan & Brants, 2004; Ghose, 1983; Mandizadza, 2010). Kepe and Cousins (2002) contend that "although necessary, land reform will only be effective if embedded within a broader programme to restructure the agrarian economy" (p. 2), and studies have shown that early land reform successes in Zimbabwe were built around land redistribution accompanied by an extensive program of support for the resettled farmers (Kinsey, 1982).

The single women of Village 9, like the rest of the other households in the village, engage in rain-fed cultivation of maize and other small crops with varying levels of success. Tobacco production is labour intensive, which limits single women's ability to engage in its production. Only Mai Tinashe, Muzvare Chizumbu, and Mai Chatiza are reported to grow tobacco among the single women. Mai Mugomo highlighted the challenge of labour for tobacco production:

> We used to farm when my husband was alive. Even that barn you see there, he is the one who built it. We grew tobacco and maize much better than I am managing now that I am alone. Tobacco needs a man. Without a man, one needs firewood and labour in the field, so I realized that I would not manage it on my own.

Nowadays Mai Mugomo works in other people's fields providing this much-needed labour for tobacco production. Tobacco production requires a division of labour that single women with small children cannot sustain. The women who grow tobacco use labour exchange negotiations with men in the village. This could entail working in the men's fields in exchange

for the "manly" labour that the women cannot perform. However, these exchanges can be problematic. I will discuss the social challenges women face in pursuing successful livelihoods in Chapter 5. However, for now it is important to highlight that attitudes and perceptions that single women are promiscuous cast the purity of these exchanges into doubt. Wives accuse some of the women of paying for their husbands' services "in kind" through sexual favours. At the same time, women who are successful in agricultural production also face the risk of social sanctioning by the community in ways that I discuss in Chapter 5, including exclusion from government assistance with inputs.

Added to the labour challenge, and following from the last point, single women's crop production is also limited by access to fertilizers and pesticides. I had wondered, as I talked to Mai Chigumba, if these challenges were peculiar to widows. She said:

> Sure, the challenge of cattle to plough the land is a challenge for everyone, but widows also have the challenge of inputs. In a household with a man, you know the man will find means and ways. But the single woman, she just cannot find means. Except only when they have adult children who work who then bring her one bag, but it really doesn't go far. These fields of ours are sandy, they require that as you are sowing you also apply "D" fertilizer. The portion that she puts the fertilizer you can see that it yields much better.

While all households faced challenges, Mai Chigumba also reflected in comparison that married women were in better positions because their husbands could "run around" sourcing the things their households needed in their farming. How much this portrayal of a division of labour was a reality was questionable, as married women would bemoan the burden of work they had, saying their men were "useless." Pankhurst (1991) reported a "public denial that couples do anything but work and decide together" (p. 621), possibly betraying societal expectations of

gender roles rather than the reality. Nonetheless, I discovered that the gendered dynamics in Village 9 made it easier for men to source implements and other resources while making it difficult for single women to do the same. Similar to the labour exchange challenges I discussed early on, single women who "do not sit down" in the same manner that men "run around" looking for resources, are labelled "wayward" and are socially sanctioned, as I discuss in Chapter 5. Such gendered dynamics influence how single women experience the material value of land in Village 9.

Due to these gendered dynamics, single women rely on piecework, a payment system that pays according to accomplished task, to get resources for farming their land. One widow, Mai Cosmas, shared the trajectory of her life since coming to Village 9. She had relied on piecework in the early days of settling in the village to buy her first bag of fertilizer.

> I worked for one bag of fertilizer and grew maize. That is when I can say I had a harvest from my field. All the years back I did not harvest because I was not putting any fertilizer. The 2004/2005 season is when I started growing tobacco. I applied one bucket of fertilizer and I made $250. Then I bought more fertilizer after realizing that with tobacco you can earn more to buy inputs for the land. The second year I made $500. So, you see, there is improvement!

Mai Cosmas and the other single women were managing subsistence lives out of the land they were given. Mbuya Dakarayi narrated with pride her success in farming on her one-and-a-half-acre plot. She considered the land sufficient for her needs:

> The land is more than enough. I tell you I am currently eating from last year's maize yield. So, would you consider it not sufficient for me? *ndigere* (I am living large). I am still eating from last year's stock, but do you see? My shed is full already, yet I have not finished harvesting everything from the field. If you were

> to come back at the end of the harvest, you would see packed bags of the full harvest. No, I cannot complain. Everything is going well for me.

The subsistence-level livelihoods narrated by Mbuya Dakarayi and Mai Cosmas have been used as evidence to challenge the FTLRP for affecting large-scale commercial production of export crops (Richardson, 2004). However, subsistence production, which tends to be understated within productivity debates of land reform, is a huge contributor to national welfare when families are fed and resources reinvested into family welfare (Chimedza, 1988.) The livelihood narratives by the women nonetheless highlight the material value of land in Village 9, particularly for food production. These livelihood narratives are also evidence of the autonomy single women gained from their primary land rights compared to married women's secondary rights, as I will discuss later.

Reviews of the benefits of the land reform program as far as agricultural output and household food security needs have shown improvements in resettled areas compared to communal areas (Mandizadza, 2010; Zikhali, 2008). Similarly, there have been positive changes in livelihoods since settling in the area, as Mai Cosmas described. This is despite the adverse socioeconomic and political environment of the country as a whole. Participants reported difficult beginnings, especially for those who had settled in the area with young children. They could not convert their land to its full potential for productivity in the early days due to several reasons. The land they settled on used to be a plantation, which meant that there was a need for labour power to destump and clear the land for tilling. Shortage of labour limited the amount of their allocated land they could convert for farming. Additionally, most of the women were poor and had limited resources that include farm inputs, seeds, and fertilizers. They inevitably resorted to working in other people's fields first to earn inputs or cash or in exchange for draught power to till their fields. Findings of post-settlement livelihoods research have pointed to the fact that

many of the more impoverished settlers who lacked livestock also tended to be the people who lacked adequate land in the communal areas (Chaumba et al., 2003). Furthermore, beneficiaries in Village 9 who were former farmworkers had had no reason to own livestock and farming implements in the commercial farms from where they originated. It was also not possible to do so even if they had wanted to, since they did not have land to farm except small pieces of land they could get if their employer was willing to allocate them.

At the time of my research, most families in Village 9 still lacked livestock for draught animal power, as they had not progressed enough financially to buy any livestock. Some had, however, managed to build a sizeable herd, which they used to form relationships of exchange to assist with their farming. Their children had also grown up, providing much-needed labour input. Studies of postindependence resettlement areas similarly show progression/temporal changes in livelihood activities and accumulation patterns as resettled households moved through the household cycle and their asset base became more secure (Kinsey, 2000).

The pace of accumulation and direction of diversification of livelihoods for the beneficiaries of the FTLRP in Village 9 is arguably much slower, and the livelihoods more precarious. This is due to the realities of a harsher broader socioeconomic environment than the postindependence resettlement reform successes of the early to late 1980s showed. Thus, none of the households in Village 9 reported selling any surplus, and some of the families in the village could be struggling to meet their food needs, an aspect of life in resettlement areas and contemporary Zimbabwe as a whole. This limited surplus production has been the main reason cited by critics of the land reform program. However, this precariousness of livelihoods should not be used as evidence against the pursuit of primary land rights. Instead, the achievements under the constricting social, political, economic, and ecological environment of Zimbabwe

should be seen as evidence of the need for an agrarian reform project that goes beyond land redistribution to unlock the full potential of the value of land in the hands of beneficiaries (Cousins, 2007; Duncan & Brants, 2004; Ghose,1983; Kepe & Cousins, 2002; Mandizadza, 2010).

This section has reflected single women's accounts of their livelihood successes measured by the material value they derive from their land. However, the successes that people in Village 9 spoke of are to be taken cautiously, especially by those who are focused on productivity and align with economically determinist arguments. The subsistence of those who succeed is marginal and at risk from the vagaries of rain-fed production.

Single women's livelihood narratives reflect the crafting of a life of meaning and self-respect in the context of challenges of farming as a single woman. Such accomplishments are at the centre of the reconstituted subjectivities that enable single women to negotiate and confront heteronormative ideologies that I focus on in Chapter 5. How Mai Cosmas speaks about her achievement links land rights, achievements, and autonomy in ways that are important to understanding the value of land for women and the gendered implications. The material value of land extends in the pursuit of livelihoods that unlock its symbolic value. The limited potential for surplus production that I have outlined above makes the diversification of livelihoods for single women more critical as a source of cash income and to enhance household food security (Mutopo et al., 2014). It is through the diversification of livelihoods that the symbolic value of land finds expression, as I discuss next.

The Symbolic Value of Land

I argued at the beginning of this chapter for an expanded conception of land that captures its symbolic value. Symbolic value signifies the immaterial value given to land as a resource

thereby communicating symbolic meaning beyond its material aspects. A narrow concept of land that focuses on its materiality would view the challenges smallholder farmers encounter in producing surplus value on resettled land as evidence of the failure of land redistribution programs. It also limits the extent and appreciation of the value of primary land rights for women. An expanded conception of land allows, instead, an analysis that reveals the symbolic values of land for women, even as there is no coherency with the material representation that manifests in surplus yields that most reviewers of land reform projects look for as evidence of success. I now turn to a discussion of elements of Village 9 women's lives that express this symbolic value of land as represented in their livelihood narratives. I use an understanding advanced by the concept of autonomy to unpack the symbolic value of land as experienced by single women at the same time that married women may feel its absence.

Autonomy

Like many sociological concepts, autonomy is a contested concept. While considered a foundational principle of liberal and democratic theory, what it means and how it should be interpreted and applied in specific contexts remains highly problematic (Mackenzie, 2014). For some, autonomy speaks to deliberate action and reflects when a person "firstly consciously reflects on the desires, wants, concerns, needs, cares, values, commitments . . . [and] secondly adopts choices or actions in accordance with those wants and values, without being impeded by conditions of coercion, deception or manipulation by others" (Friedman, 2003, p. 11). While this is a simple definition, it emphasizes different aspects of its articulation ranging from critical self-reflection, to emphasis on "agential competencies, values, or self-regarding attitudes" (Veltman & Piper, 2014, p. 1), and to total control over one's circumstances to pursue options for the

advancement of one's desires free from "severe constraint, coercion, or subordination" (Veltman & Piper, p. 1).

Without a commitment to a single definition of autonomy, the assessment of autonomy in the social context provided by the FTLRP employs a conception of autonomy as a multidimensional rather than a unitary concept, with three distinct but causally interdependent dimensions or axes: self-determination, self-governance, and self-authorization (Mackenzie, 2014). Primary rights to land opened up space for discovery and exercise of autonomy, as revealed through conversations with married women in the background of and in contrast to landed women's narratives.

From conversations with both married women and single women, two crucial aspects of autonomy that derive from primary land rights seemed to be crucial in determining the women's livelihoods: decision making and freedom. I first discuss the aspect of decision making in the lives of both married and single women: the restrictions for the former and the independence of the latter. I then discuss the related concept of freedom as it was expressed in the livelihood narratives of the single women and the contrary lived realities of married women. Decision making and freedom are concepts whose practice and expression are tied to primary land rights and through which land's symbolic value is realized. Later in this chapter I will link my analysis of freedom to autonomy to expose the full breath of the symbolic value of land that engenders constitution of single women in new and visible autonomous subject positions of independent household heads.

Land Rights and Decision Making

Decision making is a process through which three axes of autonomy—self-determination, self-governance, and self-authorization—find practical expression (Mackenzie, 2014). It is a

process that links desires and choices in the course of action. Women's participation and the dynamics of intra-household decision making have been central in gender studies, particularly those concerned with empowerment (Bjornlunda et al., 2019; O'Laughlin, 1998; Seymour & Peterman, 2018). The challenge has been in analyzing and distinguishing between joint and sole decision making within the households and establishing how empowering having a say in decision making is for women (Seymour & Peterman, 2018). The conclusion has been that intra-household decision making is fraught with subtle differences that make broad generalizations of wives' subordination in decision making misleading.

Research findings have drawn out dynamics that show variations in women's engagement and preferences with the decision-making processes and outcomes. Women who value freedom prefer sole decision making without any consultation; others who value cohesion within the household prefer joint decision making, while others prefer not to be involved at all (Seymour & Peterman, 2018). Instances of women privately making decisions that would be passed in public as husbands' decisions in acquiescence to gender norms of the husband as the natural decision maker are also common (O'Laughlin, 1998). What all this signifies is the centrality of decision making within households. In Village 9, decision making is linked to ownership and control over land in ways that condition the lives of married and single women differently.

Deciding What to Grow

In Village 9, decision-making dynamics influenced the lives and livelihoods of married couples. According to married women, lack of decision-making power could be over the smallest or the biggest of decisions, though farming decisions seemed to be the biggest issue of contention. Mai Magonhi explained that a widow's land could be more productive than a married

couple's as she alone could decide to grow things that would give her higher yields. In the case of married women, if one suggested anything, the husband would refuse, even if the wife's idea was better and could bring better yields to the family. Mai Magonhi compared her circumstances with Mai Tinashe, her single friend, to highlight this aspect of decision making and the benefit that land ownership brought to her friend:

> I may have a very good idea. But if my husband does not agree, there is nothing I can do because it will seem like I am going over his head. If I think this year we should grow tobacco, if the man does not want, I cannot go ahead and do it. I could even have found someone who could give me the seed for tobacco. Like last season, I had gotten the seed, but my partner just said "no." So, you see! Imagine that time my friend Mai Tinashe was away in Mozambique when I got this seed. She came back and planted her seed. By the time she came, mine would have already grown if my husband had agreed. But she came late and planted, now she is cashing her money. Since my partner did not agree with me, I am just looking at her enjoying now. So do not think it is an advantage to have a partner is a disadvantage. If I could get my own land, I would grow what I want.

Mai Rugare also narrated her challenge of influencing her husband to grow beans on their land. After he refused her request, she ended up squeezing in her bean crop at the edge of the field. The sale of the beans had sustained her personal and family needs during the autumn season and everyone in the family had benefitted, including the husband. If she had had access to a larger piece of land, then the family would have realized even better yields. She indicated that sometimes her husband would insist on things that would fail, then she would bite her tongue to keep from saying "I told you so." These experiences made married women envious of the single women's ownership of land, which gave them control and decision-making power that the married women did not have.

Other studies have linked the lack of ownership and control over land to the low production of supplementary nutritious crops, such as groundnuts, round nuts, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, beans, cucumbers, and green leafy vegetables in households (Chimedza, 1988). Men as owners of land possess the decision-making power for land use and prefer cash crop production at the expense of food crop production. Household resources, including land and labour, are thus invested in cash crop production while the men who control the income from the yields, in most cases, do not cover the additional household nutritional requirements. Resource allocation decision-making power is thus closely linked to land ownership and, most importantly, to land control. The dynamics of primary rights to decision making are highlighted in the context of the different ownership parameters of the single women and married women in Village 9.

Deciding What To Do With the Money

The powers men as household heads have to jointly titled land include the power to dictate the allocation of the proceeds of their joint labour. Control over the output from their labour and other resources was a challenge when the married women compared themselves with single women. While a single woman could decide to allocate her money to different priorities, this was not the same for married women, as Mai Muteve shared:

> You can actually see that we worked and we got enough money. However, when it comes to deciding what to do with the money, you have no say because he will be saying, "I am the father, do what I say." You see? That is how single women in this village have built up their homesteads. She builds up one room, then the other.

Mai Rutenga underlined that in her household, while they worked together as husband and wife, when it came to the money then the money belonged to *baba* (father, household head). "When we work as husband and wife, they claim everything is "ours." However, when the

product is sold, *baba* is in front of the money." In the worst cases, husbands reportedly misused the money. The cell leader Magonhi shared that his "brother" Rutenga's family was not doing well even compared to single women in the village, particularly Mai Tinashe, who was a neighbour to both. According to Magonhi, the family was in this situation due to the husband's weak planning and decision making. He also suspected that it was due to not working jointly with his wife, a suspicion that was confirmed by the wife when we talked. Mai Rutenga shared that the current season they did not have much in the field because she had been protesting the misuse of funds by her husband. They had taken a loan from the government with the plan to irrigate their garden and produce horticultural products at a large scale.

> *Munin'ina* (younger sister), I worked! I hand dug the whole garden alone. I insisted on going with him to Harare to buy the seeds and the irrigation pump that we had agreed on. We bought the seeds, but when it came to the pump, he argued that it was too expensive in Harare, and insisted that he knew where we could get it cheaper in Marondera. *Munin'ina*, the pump was never bought. At the meantime, I had already bought the seeds. I worked, *munin'ina*. Carrying water by head to water the whole garden. What could I do when I had already put the seeds in the ground? When the crop was about to ripen, I fell sick. I was so sick that my daughter had to come and pick me up. I stayed with my daughter for two months. In that time, the crop was harvested but I never saw a cent from it. On top of that, he did not repay any part of the loan. Now I am sick from overworking with nothing to show for it. This year I decided I am not working. If we are to die of hunger, so be it.
>
> I asked her how her husband was reacting to her strike and she laughed.
>
> He is going along with just the children. I declared, *munin'ina*, "Do it, let me see what you are capable of achieving without me." I want to see how far they can go, because I have worked for nothing. Right now, I am in pain: headaches, my arm,

chest, legs; everything aches. This is all because of overworking. Imagine molding bricks is not easy. Then I have nothing to show for it![11]

The insights shared here by both Mai Muteve and Mai Rutenga into their intra-household dynamics are typical of married households in which women do not have control over the output of their labour. This evidence from Village 9 gives a different picture to what other studies have found out about the impact of resettlement to household gender dynamics. The availability of more land in resettlement areas has been seen to expand women's access to land and natural resources in resettlement areas (Chingarande et al., 2012; Mutopo et al., 2014). Moving to resettlement areas has also been seen to encourage diversification of livelihoods and trading enterprises that the women leverage in relationships with their husbands (Mutopo et al., 2014; Scoones et al., 2010) thereby improving the decision-making dynamics in the households. The household dynamics shared by the women in Village 9 show an apparent lack of equal engagement in the decision-making processes. This is despite the negative outcomes that come out of the decisions made by their spouses, the brunt of which wives suffer through poverty and overworking leading to ill health, as Mai Rutenga's example above shows.

Some cautionary reflection is appropriate in reading the household dynamics reflected in this study. It would seem that the household dynamics reflected here represented what was happening in the whole village because the married women I interviewed made reference to "what happens in this village" to indicate that the experience of their households was representative of the whole village. This would, however, be misleading, as studies in household

[11] At the time, I could not imagine how laborious the process of molding bricks was. I would have sympathized even more if I had known as I did at the end of the agricultural season when I witnessed the process as men in the village began this work to earn cash income.

dynamics have reflected relationships of negotiation, and bargains that have different outcomes in different households (Mutopo, 2017).

In contrast, single women have the autonomy to make decisions whose outcomes they can bear and accommodate in long-term planning, as Mai Cosmas's livelihood narrative highlighted earlier. Single women's narratives reflect the self-determination, self-governance, and self-authorization that Mackenzie uses to define autonomy (2014). One can see the conscious reflection on desire, wants, and values and the consequent choices and actions that Mai Cosmas engages in "without being impeded by conditions of coercion, deception or manipulation by others" (Friedman, 2003, p. 11) as autonomy in practice. The importance of this autonomy is reflected in married women's perceptions of their own circumstances.

Living close to and seeing single women's achievements made married women more aware of the limitations of their circumstances. Mai Magonhi gave testimony to the ease in decision making for single women as reflected by Mai Cosmas's planning narrative above and accounting for their success.

> You see, a *musinguru* (single woman) will decide that she wants to build two rooms, and she will build and roof. In no time she has a roof over her head for her kids. I will give you an example of that woman up the road, Mai Tinashe. Her original house burnt down. She came back and organized herself, and in no time her house was up. However, for some of us, ten to fifteen years, we are stuck on the foundation level.

Mai Mutevhe's friend shared similar sentiments that single women's autonomy made it easy for them to make improvements in their lives. She pointed to the dynamics in her household:

> We will sit down and agree, once we harvest, we will do this and that. However, when we have the money, he has different plans. That is when you consider that maybe the widow is in a better position. She plans her life and makes decisions. Even if she gets $10, she can use it in ways that make sense. For us, we can even have $20 and still have much less to show for it. You do not even see where the money went.

Households have been framed as political spaces where men and women are positioned as superordinates and subordinates, respectively, in decision making and in the allocation of productive resources, including land, and with unequal entitlements and capabilities (Sen, 1999). The conjugal contract in marriage relation gives husbands power over their wives. Men, as household heads, are providers and owners of the production system, which includes the labour of their wives and children. Due to their positions and roles within households, they exercise decision making over production and distribution of resources even when they personally do not engage in the production processes (Chimedza, 1988). Similarly, married women's narratives show that they perceived their lives to be conditioned by their position in households as subordinates to their husbands.

Muzvare Reminasi, a single woman who had run away from her husband, understood very well the household dynamics that conditioned married women's lives. She had left her husband after receiving land in Village 9. She felt she had a reference for the experience of being married compared to her single life in Village 9. She said she would prefer her current circumstances any day because she could make decisions for herself. She laughed off my query about the chances of her husband coming to convince her of reconciliation.

> When are you going back to Canada? After you finish this research you said you are going back? When will you come back? I understand Canada is very far, but let me tell you, even if you take another five years before coming back to this

> village, you will find me here. You will see the developments I will have done on this land. The problem, my sister, is that most men *vanodzvinyirira* (subjugate) their women. After the woman has worked, they take all the money. He will say, "Give it to me, I paid *lobola*[12] (bride price or dowry) for you." Yes, he will take the money. I am talking from experience. My ex-husband would say "please lend me some money" and it seems like you are lending him, but you will never get it back. So, one cannot make any progress. You see! Then some men do not even want to work. He will be sitting there. You are the one who has to do all the work: school fees, food, clothing—everything. At the same time, you are not allowed to go anywhere. You now take care of the kids and the father too. How do you progress like that?

Muzvare Reminasi's account shows the control her ex-husband had over her labour and the output from that labour. Owning land had opened up avenues for progress for her without her husband's hindrance. As her narrative shows, she could control her labour and the proceeds and map out achievements over a period. She could pursue options for the advancement of her desires free from "severe constraint, coercion, or subordination" in the manner autonomy is often defined (Veltman & Piper, 2014, p. 1). Married women, on the other hand, had limited decision-making powers. Their husbands have available to them tools of patriarchy that include law and even socially condoned levels of violence, while married women's decisions to act are within the context of inherent material insecurity within marriage (Pankhurst, 1991). This means that, as noted previously, the husbands could always change decisions made jointly. Most times the decisions they made did not benefit the whole family.

The married women of Village 9 thus presented limited rights and capabilities compared to the single women. Their livelihood narratives show how their interests and rights are

[12] *Lobola* (bride price) is the signal of formal marriage under customary practice.

subsumed under those of their husbands, who are the heads of household. Furthermore, wives always considered their children's interests as they align to their mothering and caring role. Rare cases of protest manifest in actions meant to teach the husband a lesson through the withdrawal of labour, for example, Mai Teve, or Mai Rugare planting her crop of choice at the edges of the husband's field after he refused to allocate her a full field to grow beans. Analysis of whether having joint title on the land made any difference reflected no influence on decision making.

Even though the land given under the FTLRP had provisions for joint partnership, the married women were aware that this ownership was on paper only. What this joint ownership means in practice is still defined by gender relations that position the husband as the household head and ultimately influence men's and women's positions and rights differentially, including decision making and control over resources. Married women felt that for this reason they will not insist on their contributions to the decision-making process, wary of going against the norms by "going above the husband," as Mai Magonhi shared above.

Reflection on these decision-making dynamics necessitates some cautionary considerations. It seems that from my analysis, women, both single and married, did not value men's input into the decision-making process. However, this was not necessarily so. Mai Cosmas, a single woman who had started producing tobacco in the season before my research, reflected the support of kin in decision making. On the day of our interview, her brother called her, and I heard her end of the conversation: "So, what were you suggesting we do? Are you convinced that this man will not give us a bad deal?" At the end of the call, she filled me in with the details. She had put her tobacco crop together with her brother to fill up the truck they had hired to take the produce to the tobacco floors. The brother was now calling to give her an update on the arrangements and to ask for her contribution on a deal he had made with the transporter.

What this insight from Mai Cosmas confirms is that single women may indeed have other sources of assistance in making decisions and welcome "another head to bounce ideas off with," as Mai Cosmas did with her brother.

Some of the single women felt that not having a partner to discuss ideas with was a disadvantage. Even married women and men pointed to this challenge for single women in Village 9, more so for those who did not have kin ties from which to draw like Mai Cosmas. Chimedza (1988) similarly found in her studies of female-headed households that they relied heavily on decision-making assistance from male kin. The sentiment from village members was that single women were disadvantaged in not having someone to make decisions with, despite married women paradoxically envying them their autonomy for decision making. However, the view that couples discuss ideas together does not go along with the reported household decision-making dynamics reflected above. This shows how views about decision making reflect the influence of gender norms and attempts to conform to perceived expectations (Addison, 2019). Married women's language about husbands having *hubaba* powers, and their wariness about "going over their heads" speaks to these gendered expectations. The idea of putting heads together and bouncing ideas seems to be an expectation rather than a reality of Village 9 households.

The critical insight from all this is that single women have the flexibility of choice to either take advice from other people or to ignore it, unlike the married women in my study. The fact that at one point the women love the flexibility of making their own decisions and at another point feel the gap of not having spouses to bounce off ideas with does not mean that they would rather have decisions made for them. In Mai Cosmas's example, the interaction with her brother

shows balanced dynamics where her contribution to the decision making was accepted. I take it to reflect more on the paradoxes and contradictions of women's lived realities.

In this section, evidence from both married and single women supports existing literature that ties land ownership by women to increased autonomy and decision-making influence (Bjornlunda et al., 2019; Doss & Meinzen-Dick, 2015). While the household decision-making dynamics have been documented in the literature I have cited here, the value in my research lies in highlighting the married women's heightened perceptions of their circumstances as they compare to single women. These married women juxtapose their lives to single women and account the differences to the peculiar and different circumstances of land ownership. Thus, land and primary rights to this land become a central difference between married and single women.

Debates over whether explicitly extending primary rights of land to women makes any difference would benefit from the evidence of the lived experiences of the single women of Village 9. They would also gain much from the insights of married women who realize that while they have access to jointly owned land, they do not have control and decision-making power, which makes a lot of difference. Tied to this, married women's insights also point to restrictions over pursuing a range of alternative livelihood options outside of farming, bringing out the practical expression of the related concept of freedom. In the next section, I discuss a range of freedoms that are crucial expressions of the autonomy gained by single women through primary rights to land.

Land Rights and "Freedoms"

Autonomy, like many concepts central to contentious social, moral, or political debate, is contested. Its interpretation and application in particular contexts is equally contested, due mainly to the conflicting value commitments in pluralist societies (Mackenzie, 1990; Mackenzie,

2008). Its use, however, is broadly directed at capturing the general sense of self-rule or self-government (Christman, 2013). It is in this way that autonomy links to the concept of freedom as one's ability to rule oneself and to act competently based on one's desires, free from external manipulations. I use this general understanding of autonomy and its link to freedom in the next section to investigate the range of freedoms gained by single women through primary rights to land. The next sections present evidence of the different freedoms that accompany primary rights to land, drawing from the narratives of both single and married women and showing how they experience and express freedom in different ways.

"Freedom To Do What I Want"

Free action is a crucial component of autonomy. The freedom to act that comes with land ownership for single women could not have been more apparent than it was through the eyes of the married women. Mai Magonhi reflected her envy of Mai Tinashe's freedom in this regard:

> You wake up and the girl is already in Mozambique. She sells her lemons, apples, and bottles of peanut butter. While there, she will get ideas of other things she could bring back again that are in short supply. On the way back she brings shoes and sneakers, and she gives teachers at the school on credit, and when she gets paid, she buys new clothes. She dresses well all the time. Carrying her purse!

Within this narrative is enshrined a range of freedoms that married women do not have. A married woman would not be able to make all these decisions on her own without consulting the husband. In the first instance, she would never be able to pursue the cross-border trading that Mai Tinashe was undertaking in Mozambique due to the restrictions on married women's mobility, as I discuss in subsequent sections of this chapter. For Mai Magonhi to not have known of Mai Tinashe's travel plans implies no prior plan to go on this trip by Mai Tinashe since, as close friends, Mai Tinashe would have shared if the trip had been planned before the end of the

previous day. That Mai Tinashe decided overnight to go to Mozambique, in addition to everything she did on this trip, as reflected in Mai Magonhi's account, including what she bought and the seemingly mundane action of dressing well and carrying a purse, heavily implies freedom for unimpeded individual choice and effort and suggests a measure of freedom and spontaneity that Mai Magonhi and other married women did not have. It can be seen in how married women relate their challenges that their wishes, aspirations, and freedoms are tied to land access and their husbands' power and control.

The link between land ownership and the freedom available to single women is shown in the single women's experience as shown by Mai Tinashe's story above. Married women are also acutely aware of the differences in their circumstances, and they account these differences to single women's ownership of their own land which frees them from the control of men. On one of my daily visits to the village, I passed by Mai Magonhi and found her chatting with Mai Rutenga. They called out to Mai Tinashe to make a point that they had advised her that she should not give up her "stand," meaning her land. It turned out that Mai Tinashe, Mai Magonhi's single friend and neighbour, had recently started dating a man from Harare. They felt that this man would not agree to move to the village onto Mai Tinashe's land because he would be coming under Mai Tinashe's authority and that would strip him of his *hubaba* power. "We told her that if he does not want to come here, then she is better off letting him go! You cannot leave your land where you have the power and the freedom to do what you want and go to his home to be under his government," Mai Magonhi recounted.

This *hubaba* power is what the husbands used to constrain their wives' freedom and autonomy. The conversations with these three women align with the common thread in this chapter on autonomy concerning gender relations and intra-household dynamics that are tied to

land ownership. The freedom people enjoy depends in no small way on the existence or character of their relationship with other people or their social situation. In this case, single women have freedom due to their landed social situation. Married women's freedom, on the other hand, is predicated on their relationship to their husbands and their access to primary land rights. The discussion also shows how married women are acutely aware that their relationship with their husband influences their recourse to free action. They also understand that the social situation predicated around primary land rights opens up choices and possibilities for action for single women. Single women are, in the vein conceptualized in free action, "able to bring pertinent evaluations of open courses of action into play" (Benson, 1990, p. 58) in their decisions. This is the reason why Mai Tinashe could decide on her trip to Mozambique in the manner Mai Magonhi described at the beginning of this section. Neatly tied to this "freedom to do what you want" that Mai Magonhi envied in Mai Tinashe and other single women is freedom of movement, a key to livelihood pursuits that are foreclosed to married women.

Freedom of Movement

Trading has been documented as an off-farm livelihood activity in the diversification portfolio of beneficiaries of rural livelihoods in general and of the land reform program in particular (Mandizadza, 2010; Mutopo, 2011). This is due to the reality that even where sufficient land has been provided for households, as through the FTLRP, other constraints limit how much rural farmers can rely on crop production. Evaluation of post-FTLRP has argued that massive macro-economic decline and a range of accompanying factors such as declining public services, including those to agriculture, and worsening access to markets, credit, and inputs have affected the agricultural sector, including what had been the growing sectors of old resettlement areas and communal areas (Cliffe et al., 2011; Moyo, 2011). Diversification and supplementing

of land-based livelihoods thus became even more crucial due to the constraining broader socioeconomic and ecological environments within which livelihoods have been pursued since the program was implemented, which has affected agricultural productivity (Mutopo et al., 2014). Similarly, some single women in Village 9 have diversified their livelihoods through trading activities.

Comrade and Mai Tinashe are most known in the village for trading at a grander scale. Comrade described her life of "hustling" and shared her approach to trading to supplement her household food needs.

> I work hard. This is what I do—if I get a bit of cash income, I send it to someone who can acquire some goods on my behalf. When I get my goods, I start walking around the villages reselling. I do not select—if someone has maize and someone one has chickens, I get. I particularly like getting these in-kind payments. Getting cash is secondary. It is only today that I did not go anywhere. [I confirm that when I visited earlier, I was told she had gone to sell stuff]. Yes, I had skirts that came from Durban. I got a *bhero* (bale) of second-hand clothes from Durban. I send money first to my contact in Durban to get stuff—clothes—for me. I go into all these villages. I can even go all the way to Gokwe where there are mines. There is no mine that I don't know in Gokwe. At any one trip I could come back with this huge cage full of turkeys, chickens, and pigeons. I can never run out of salt while I have all this stock.

Comrade went on to indicate that she would never run out of food for her family because she could always barter the supply she got from her trading venture. She could also pay people to plough her fields and some to weed for her and pay them *maricho* (casual labour in which one can be paid in kind or in cash) depending on their preferences. Her freedom to go anywhere and anytime, while crucial to unlocking the diversification of her livelihood options, is also the source of gendered scrutiny that single women face. Early on as I got into the village, the

Headman would reflect grudgingly on our plans to go around doing the introductions "I do not know if we will find the women. They do not sit down these women. *Haagare pasi madzimai iwaya* (a metaphor for not staying in one place, which I perceived to be judgmental scrutiny of women's movements)."

The freedom of movement that single women have is possible at their household level. They own the land, which shields them from community sanctioning of behaviour that could be deemed undesirable for respectable women. Studies of gender and space underline that mobility represents going outside of the immediate family domain where the immediate or extended family does not have visible control over women's timing, movements, sexuality, and behaviour (Ganesh, 2017). Statements like "What can they do to me? I am on my own land and I am working to feed my family"—as articulated by Mai Tinashe in response to adultery accusations—were reflected in other women's analysis of the attitudes of the community. I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 5, showing how the single women do not necessarily manage to completely evade the community's gaze in Village 9 even though they could pursue their trading.

Single women also traded in second-hand clothes that were acquired from Mozambique or, in Comrade's case, from Durban, South Africa. Traders to Mozambique relied on heavy trucks that travelled the Harare to Mozambique route for trade. They would be away for at least three days to make the trip to and back with their products. Mai Tinashe sold her goods locally, mostly to teachers at neighbouring schools. Comrade, on the other hand, sold in neighbouring villages or even as far afield as Gokwe. This meant that she was away from her homestead most of the time, especially during the summer when it was not cropping season. Some, like Mai Ruvimbo, traded in farms near and far, both enterprises that require one to be away from the

house for long periods of time. This type of trading is possible for single women in Village 9 because they do not have husbands or male kin to restrict their mobility.

Freedom of movement for younger single women was mediated by having small children who could not be left for long periods. As such their mobility was restricted by the major Harare to Mutare highway to horticultural trading within the parameters of the village for daily commute. While some sold produce from their own gardens, the majority purchased produce either from Harare or Mutoko. For produce from Harare, this entailed going to Mbare market very early in the morning; for Mutoko produce, sleeping at the roadside market to wait for deliveries. This explains why married women would not be able to engage in this trading as no husband would accept these schedules. Perceptions of waywardness and promiscuity that I discuss in Chapter 5 are built around single women's freedom of mobility in these livelihood pursuits. Due to such perceptions, trading as an alternative livelihood option is closed off to married women, and single women are able to engage in trading freely because they have no restrictions from husbands.

At this point, livelihood narratives captured here serve to underline the freedoms single women have in Village 9. These freedoms are linked to ownership of land. The extent of the freedom these women have within the provisions of land rights will be discussed further on. Suffice it to say, the freedom that the single women demonstrate here, and from which they draw their agency, comes from land ownership. Such freedom is also seen and appreciated through the eyes of the married women, who envy single women's freedom and autonomy.

The outline of trading as a livelihood option shows how it is suited to single women, who have more freedom to engage fully in the activity without the restrictions that Mai Magonhi shared. For married women, freedom of movement and interaction outside the home is guided by

societal norms and perceptions. Men are not comfortable having their wives engage in cross-border trading, which entails buying and selling in South Africa or Mozambique. Mai Magonhi shared that she was capable of going to Mozambique to trade like her friend Mai Tinashe does.

> But when you have a partner who thinks that women who do cross-border trading are prostitutes, you cannot do it. He will say, "You want to go and bring diseases into our bed? You will use haulage trucks for transport! What will you be discussing with the drivers?" You see, so I cannot go anywhere. I will stay a housewife.

When I talked to Mr. Magonhi, he indicated that women like Mai Tinashe and Comrade were successful in taking care of their families because they work hard— "Those women do not take a chance to sit down." While this comment indicates he appreciated the women's hard work, his wife's narrative showed that he did not appreciate the same opportunities for his wife. This illuminates the gender relations within households. It would seem that being away from home for long periods of time and the necessity of travel in cross-border trading was the main reason for the husbands' restrictions on their wives' movement. Mai Magonhi acknowledged that her husband was less restrictive these days:

> He used to be so bad, Mai Tadi, that he would follow even when we went to fetch firewood or get water with other women in the village. Some of my friends started saying, "We will not go anywhere with you because your husband is too possessive." He would come back home and the first thing he would do was to ask the kids where mum is even when I was bathing. So how do you think I can do any business that gives me any money?

Mai Magonhi explained the restricted mobility for married women in a more illustrative manner that I found amusing. She referred to herself as a member of the "ZRP," saying, "Some

of us are maZRP." ZRP is an abbreviation for the law enforcement agency in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Republic Police. I was puzzled how she could be a member of the police force, to which she replied *"Zuva Rese Pamba"*—which in Shona means "the whole day at home." This meant for her and many others that their husbands expected them to be at home the whole day except when they were doing household chores like fetching water or collecting firewood.

Mai Magonhi further underlined the privilege of movement single women had, telling me, "If *musinguru* (single woman) just wakes up and decides 'I am going to take a bath and go to Macheke,' off she goes." I could not help asking, "Are you saying bathing to go to Macheke is an issue for you?" to which she replied, "You don't just go to Macheke. Macheke is no place for you to just decide to go. You think one can just leave the home like roaming livestock? When you have a husband? That is not possible." My incredulous response showed how little I understood of the "government system"[13] they perceived their households to be. The married women I talked to tried to express what this government system was like throughout my stay in Village 9. Mai Magonhi's expression ZRP and her comparison of single women's decision-making autonomy in the seemingly mundane task of bathing and going to Macheke reflects "the profound and exhaustive ways in which women are tied to their homes through time and space" (Ganesh, 2017, p. 147). Macheke town is a 30-minute walk from the village. It seemed a mundane decision to me to just bathe and go. This is obviously not how the married women experienced Macheke and the village and decisions to move between the two.

The stories shared by both married and single women in this section link land and livelihoods in interesting ways. The power bestowed on men as household heads and the primary

[13] Use of the term "government" can be understood in the political context of Zimbabwe's prevailing political system—a repressive state system that the women were using as an analogy to indicate the depth of repression in their households.

owners of land restricts and constrains the livelihood options open to their wives. Materially this power determines the actual land and resources available to the women, as discussed before. Such power also extends to symbolic constraints that manifest in men's control over women's livelihood boundaries through restrictions on how far the women can go outside of the household to pursue alternative livelihoods. Conversely, land ownership in the hands of single women extends as well as eliminates boundaries.

Gendered boundaries restrict where women (wives) can go and where they should be at certain times. The nature of travel for cross-border trading to Mozambique or to Durban outlined above, such as the circumstances of acquiring vegetables for resale at the road market that entail going to Harare very early or sleeping at the market, naturally preclude married women's engagement in these alternative livelihood activities open to single women. Village 9 represents a site of containment and a site of the reality of married women's lives. Being a married woman means being a ZRP; it means being home bound as compared to a single woman. To single women, Village 9 is a site of spatial autonomy as they are free to move as they wish. Being single means freedom of movement as allowed by one's individual household.

The way the married women spoke of single women's freedom shows the seriousness with which they considered their circumstances. According to Mai Mutevhe, "sometimes you realize widows are free because she can plan that tomorrow at 4:00 am I am leaving for Marondera and she will do exactly that. She will set her alarm so that at 3:30 a.m. she is up and gets ready to leave precisely at 4:00 a.m." A married woman wishing to do the same thing would likely face a challenge from a husband who could raise issues such that one might end up not making it for their planned trip.

As indicated earlier, most of my conversations with married women started off with them laughing at what they perceived to be a flawed premise of my research: that single women settled on land were more likely than married women to face livelihood challenges. Mai Magonhi laughed the day she introduced me to Mai Rutenga, whom I was to interview later among my married participants: "If you look at her, she has a young sister who stays in the location; she has her own stand. She is this big" (gesturing that the sister was big in stature). She explained that she also had a twin sister, who, if I were to meet, I would mistake to be a much younger sister to her. I later met the sister, who came back from South Africa, and I could not help but agree with her sentiments. I could not believe that they were sisters, let alone twins. Mai Magonhi and Mai Rutenga's sisters' appearance was testimony to the better lives the sisters had. According to them, their sisters were single, thus were able to make decisions that enhanced their livelihood options, in order to feed and clothe themselves better. Mai Magonhi and Mai Rutenga accounted the differences between them and their respective sisters to what they spoke of as "men's government," which restricted their livelihood options.

The freedom and independence to do what one wants is tied up with rebellion and a sense of individuality that has been documented in studies of women resettled in other areas. In Fair Range Chiredzi, women reportedly felt free to engage in prostitution because they were on their own land and they did not care how they were perceived in the new settlement area (Chaumba et al., 2003). This possibly contributes to the perception that single women enjoy too much freedom. Single women seem to have been unmoored by their ownership of land; it increases the range of options for livelihoods and gives them decision-making power in all areas of their lives, from crop production, to allocation of resources, to control over the output of their labour, their time, their bodies, and their movement.

The stories discussed in Village 9 show that evidence of single women's achievements and freedoms does not need to be in big developments. The freedom to move around, as well as old women affording to buy soft drinks and answering smartphones at meetings while married women are only allowed *tumbudzi* (basic phones), as I show in Chapter 5, all reflect achievements for single women. The purse, soft drink, and smartphone are symbols of the freedom that has opened up for single women through primary rights to land. The analysis in this section has demonstrated the diverse and yet related manifestations of autonomy and freedom flowing from land rights. These are reflected through the experiences of both the single women, who have primary rights, and the married women, who do not. The broader implications of these freedoms and autonomy are important for the discussion of the prospects for gender transformation, as I will show in bringing together the analysis in Chapter 5.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates the value of land received under the FTLRP, particularly the gendered dynamics of land rights. The evidence presented herein shows that primary rights to land have given single women decision-making power about how to use their land productively and maximize the material value of their land. They have control over allocation of resources, which reveals the concrete and material value of land in the form of the crops they produce on the land and the fulfillment of household food needs. Married women, on the other hand, do not have primary land rights and their access and control to land's material value is heavily influenced by their relationships with their husbands. Furthermore, they do not have control over the output of their labour. The differences in their circumstances and, most importantly, the value of primary land rights have been illuminated by the married women's analysis of their livelihood experiences, as well as by the single women's livelihood narratives.

Beyond its material value, land for the single women in Village 9 has also extended symbolic value manifested in different freedoms and decision-making autonomy, as the narratives discussed here show. Based on my research, having land, access to which does not rely on male kin, gives women freedom and autonomy. Land in Village 9 has converted into space for single women to exercise a range of freedoms, including freedom of movement, freedom to make decisions, and freedom from the policing of their bodies. This enables them to apply themselves in the pursuit of productive livelihood options in ways that are not possible for married women.

The discussion in this chapter has presented an individualistic look at the experience of single women as beneficiaries of the land reform program. Women's exercise of newfound autonomy is primarily visible in their relations to household members, as the household-level discussions have shown in this chapter. However, the constraints on their autonomy are most obvious in their relations with social and political institutions, which may not have been transformed as profoundly as households by women's newfound land-based power. I will turn to that analysis in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Land Rights and Gender Relations in Village 9

> "You see my child, I have my land here, I wake up, with this son of mine, disabled as he is, we work, we get our harvest, we eat and we do not let anyone bother us. I am on my land, what could anyone do to me?" (Interview with Mbuya Dakarayi)

Confidence and the feeling of being protected by owning one's land were common threads with all the women I interviewed. Mbuya Dakarayi expressed the above in a conversation at the end of my time in Village 9. The primary land rights possessed by the single women brought some freedoms and opened up livelihood alternatives for most beneficiaries. However, the freedom and autonomy that single women gained as heads of their own households operates within constraints of gender relations at the community level. In this chapter, I show how women's agency intersects with village-level constraints, and how community views and attitudes towards the single women, their lives and livelihoods, and their behaviours are tied to land ownership.

As I described in my literature review, Zimbabwe's history is one of gendered relations built around land access and control among the Shona people. Colonial codification of rights that privileged landholding to males also weakened women's rights to land by circumscribing these rights according to their relations, in particular, to males within clans. Through the construction of land as property, men and women were placed within heteropatriarchal kin hierarchies where women occupied marginalized and dependent positions. Their access to land was assured through marriage, through which their identities were also (re)constituted. In this way, gender was coconstituted with kinship, sexuality, and land as property.

I use this coconstitution of land and gender as an analytical strategy to pursue the key objective of my research, which is to question whether primary rights to land for women offer great potential for transforming gender relations, and if so, how this transformation might manifest itself. In Chapter 4, I outlined the unfolding self of single women who have been empowered by access to secure land. However, remaining on the level of individual self-awareness and self-knowledge is not sufficient to understand the dynamics of land tenure, because "an individualized self comes into being through social networks and grows through the continual exercise of choices within social and cultural contexts" (Shaw, 2015, p. 4). At the village level, both single women and married women occupy subordinate positions as a group, even as single women own land on the same terms as the men in the village. The freedom and autonomy that single women gained as heads of their own households operates within constraints of gender relations at the community level.

In this chapter, I examine the community-level dynamics within which women exercise their rights to land. An understanding of this gendered landscape is necessary for my analysis of identity and agency and the room for transformation that lies in the extension of primary land rights to women. My argument is that if gender has been coconstituted with kinship, sexuality, and land, a land reform that changes women's relationship to land will invoke dynamics whose transformative potential has yet to be fully investigated.

Single Women and Respectability Discourse

Early colonial assault on indigenous male authority initially enabled women to exit patrilocalities by moving away from the rural areas that were under the authority of Chiefs and male kinsmen into farms, mines, and towns (Schmidt, 1993). Women's mobility and newfound agency through economic independence in the towns and mines posed a challenge to the order of

the lineage system and led to much discomfort among traditional elders. To appease and forestall discontent from traditional authorities and men, the colonial government enacted new land policies and laws that restricted women's mobility in order to contain them under male control (Benson & Chadya, 2003; Gaidzanwa, 1995; Schmidt, 1992; Sylvester, 2000). After independence, the debate about women in towns was characterized by the absence of "established social rules about ways to live, ways to be" (Jeater, 1993, p. 2). Women were seen to be too free, having escaped the confines within which their mobility, conduct, and sexuality could be moderated in their kin families.

Similarly, single women receiving land in their own right in Village 9 have escaped the norms within which their subject positions as daughters and wives were previously built. This has opened them up to scrutiny and a respectability discourse framed around their movements in the village as they pursue the various livelihood activities enabled by their land ownership. They also face scrutiny of their sexuality, including suspicions and accusations of adultery. The intimate relationships single women engage in are surveilled because they upend existing gender norms. In this chapter I show how sanctions are applied to these women, as well as how land rights enable the women to negotiate the constraints of the surveillance and respectability politics.

In the early days of my research, as I walked in the village with the Headman, he would comment with disapproving tones whenever we got to a homestead: "I do not know if we will find her. That woman does not sit down." The Headman used the phrase "not sitting down" in this manner as a metaphor for mobility and morality. It negatively implied that a woman who moved around too much, who was not fixed in one place, was a bad or wayward woman. This criticism contrasts with the ways women themselves talk about "not sitting down." In Village 9,

women attributed their success to the freedom of movement that land ownership afforded them. These freedoms allowed them to "not sit down," as illustrated by their livelihood stories. As shown in Chapter 4, married women appreciatively and positively used the same metaphor for mobility as a sign of the industriousness that was crucial to their livelihoods. Married women envied the freedom and autonomy that single women had to engage in these activities. Both single and married women use this term in a positive light as a euphemism for industriousness. However, men were suspicious of activities that took women outside the family domain and used the term as a euphemism for waywardness.

Waywardness denoted any behaviour that was perceived as out of expected social norms. This included rampant mobility, which was defined and expressed in gendered terms as *Munhukadzi rudzii asingagare pasi? Kushaya hunhu kwakadaro kwekuti munhu anongoswerotingura!* That is, "What type of respectable woman does not stay put? does not sit down?" It shows lack of dignity that a woman will be roaming around all the time. Women who always left their homesteads, going to places near and far for trading, fell into the wayward category. When single women looked for resources to sustain their families, they were labelled wayward and were also accused of engaging in untoward interactions with the men. Some have highlighted the denigration of women as prostitutes lacking *hunhu* (dignity) as a form of cultural violence intended to police women and eject them from specific spaces altogether (Berry, 2017; Jaji, 2020).

The gendered nature of behavioural boundaries in Village 9 is manifest in that, when men do not sit down, they are perceived to be legitimately performing one of their provider roles—that of sourcing resources to enable farming activities for their families. People in the village, including the single women themselves, acknowledge the lack of resources for single women and

the gap in their households due to the absence of men to fill this role. Married women thought that their situations were better in some ways since they had husbands who could "run around" sourcing the things their households needed in their farming. Sourcing is seen as legitimate when done by men, but is shrouded in suspicion when done by women, even when both men and women are seeking the same resources for farming, such as fertilizer or ploughing implements.

Sourcing entails going outside of the family domain where immediate or extended family does not have visible control over women's timing, movements, sexuality, and behaviour (Ganesh, 2017). Waywardness framed around mobility is thus a socio-spatial control tool since single women who "move around" are suspected of engaging in affairs with truck drivers, which is why husbands do not allow their respectable wives to engage in trading. Accusations of waywardness come from both men and married women and reflect "the localised understandings of sexualised time and sexualised space . . . in the construction of a woman's reputation" (Ganesh, 2017, p. 147). The freedom and autonomy gained through their single status as well as land ownership are the same freedoms that invite the community's gaze and prime the negative perceptions of the community.

Land Rights and Sexuality

While single women landowners in the village are free to do what they want and go where they want because they are on their own land, they cannot escape the accusations of adultery that their movements invite. The view in the community was that women in Village 9 who had left their husbands or were single as a result of never having been married had escaped the norms of female sexuality. Strong disapproval and social vilification were the penalties for not being in a married relationship as the women were seen to be too free and too independent, similar to the "wayward, troublesome, and avaricious" women in Cornwall's (2002) study (p.

965). Single women who were not formally confined to a single male partner through marriage were at risk of accusations of adultery with men in the village.

These single women are at risk of being accused of illicit affairs coming from suspicions that have no basis beyond the perception that land rights gave them too much freedom to engage in unmediated intimacy and to disregard gender norms (Mutopo, 2014). One married woman, Mai Magonhi, believed that suspicions of illicit affairs rose out of the perceived and actual freedoms single women had, which in some cases led to them being disrespected or seen as not respectable. She observed that "a single woman's homestead is not respected as even married men may just exercise the habit of randomly passing by." To Mai Magonhi, single women could receive much uninvited attention from predatory philanderers through no fault of their own. She related how her husband, serving as Mai Tinashe's protector, had chased away men who would be loitering around Mai Tinashe's house. Mai Magonhi stressed that the attitude in the village from both men and women was that a single woman is always receptive to every man's attention. Wives who were having marital problems always suspected their husbands of being accommodated by single women.

I repeatedly heard comments in informal conversations with married women and older widows about *chihure cheparoad* (roadside prostitution) accusations that the younger single women denied. The perception by the men in the village, according to Mr. Rutsito, one of the village leaders, was that the lifestyle of trading bred the necessary conditions for promiscuous behaviour. Due to such perceptions, trading as an alternative livelihood option was closed off to married women. Whether the behaviour was real or imagined, engaging in roadside trading was reason enough to cast doubt on someone, particularly single women's moral standing. Some of

the single women reported unwanted advances from married men in the village based on these perceptions.

Conversations with married women about single women were peppered with snide remarks, which were left unexplained. In one interaction, a married woman commented on a single woman whom I mentioned I was coming back from visiting: “That one! *Havabvire paroad apo nechihure*” (she has a reputation of prostitution by the roadside market). Efforts to understand what exactly the statement meant ended with another snide remark about “these women of yours.” The implications in these statements were that the single women I was researching had questionable characters and that some of the spaces they used to pursue their livelihoods, like the roadside market, provided spaces for single women to engage in questionable behaviours. “Prostitutes” is part of the vocabulary of cultural violence that is also part of a discourse that represents women who act on their own will as “un-African, sinners, prostitutes, or loose women” (Shaw, 2015, p. 3). The gender discourse in circulation in the village casts women who are free to pursue public-space livelihoods as indecent and sexually available to either the truck drivers who transport them in their cross-border ventures or the men at the markets where they trade. This gender discourse also framed the rumours that circulated in the village of the single women “changing men like clothes.”

At the time of my research, most of the people in Village 9 had been there for at least 15 years. According to the gossip, a number of the women in the village, in Mbuya Save’s words, “changed men like they are changing clothes.” The women included Mai Berita, Mai Peter, and Mai Cosmas. The man Mai Berita was living with at the time of my research had been married to another woman who had since left the village. Mai Peter came into the village with her husband, who died a couple of years after settling in Village 9. A year after the husband died, an “uncle”

was seen, introduced as a visitor until he stayed in the village with Mai Peter permanently, to the surprise of people in the village. The late husband's family chased the man away and told Mai Peter to leave the family home if she wanted to "remarry." Mai Peter left, but by the time of my fieldwork she was back in the village living with another man on the deceased husband's land.

Another woman, Mai Cosmas, had come to the village as a single woman with her two children. She had a questionable relationship with a man whom I heard being referred to as Baba Cosmas by one of her friends. This same friend later shared conspiratorially that she only called him Baba Cosmas out of respect, but he was not the father of any of the children. "Well, he is Baba Cosmas in name only. He is not the father of any of the two children. The two children have different fathers. Rumour has it that Baba Cosmas is actually married and his family lives in Harare. That is why he is absent from the village for long stretches of time." Even though Baba Cosmas was the one exhibiting "wayward" behaviour by cheating on his marriage, in this case, the woman was the one who was chastised for entertaining a married man.

The three cases of Mai Berita, Mai Cosmas, and Mai Peter could hardly be sufficient to warrant the accusations of waywardness and "changing men like clothes." Mai Berita had only had one partner and Mai Peter two over the course of 15 years, which would not seem to justify the label of "changing men like changing clothes." The symbolic significance of extramarital relationships is not derived from the number of these relationships or the rapidity of turnover, but from the fact that these nonmarital relationships existed at all. The main issue coming out of the conduct of the women was that they did not establish long-lasting relationships with men as marriage required. The reason why these women were able to enter into different relationships was because they were empowered by living on their own land. Unlike marriage relationships that followed patrilocal practice, when relations with the men failed, the men were the ones to

leave. The women used their land rights to negotiate the nature of the intimate relationships they formed with men, as well as in making decisions on marrying or not, without regard to community expectations. Accusations of waywardness and the discourse of respectability were thus employed to stigmatize women whose sexual agency was linked to their agency in pursuing livelihoods. Berry (2017) argues that verbal assaults and accusations of sexual immorality are a form of "backlash against women's gains" (p. 845). In the next section, I turn to the gains that primary land rights have given to single women, which may be understood in the vein of Berry's postulation of a backlash.

New Intimate Arrangements: Bringing Men onto Their Land

After settling in Village 9, three of my participants had met their husbands or partners[14], with whom they were living during the time of my study. Mai Peter came to Village 9 with her husband and their two very young sons. After her first husband passed away, and by the time I came to Village 9 for my research, Mai Peter had a new husband and together they had a son. The other two women were much younger than Mai Peter. Mai Berita inherited her land from her maternal grandmother, and Muzvare Chizumbu inherited the land from her father. Both women had taken in partners with whom they had gone on to have more children.

Single women who owned land preferred to stay on that property even if they met partners living elsewhere who were interested in marrying them. A discussion between one married woman and her single friend was particularly revealing. The two women talked about the possibilities of marriage to a man the single friend had met in Harare. They agreed that Mai Tinashe should never leave her homestead to go and live with her new boyfriend either in Harare

[14] In Shona, and possibly due to the changes in *lobola* mentioned by Jeater (1993), *murume wake* means her husband or her partner. I will use these words interchangeably.

or anywhere else. If he wanted to be with Mai Tinashe, he would have to move in with her. Similarly, Mai Berita and Muzvare Chizumbu dictated that their partners should move onto their land, where their control and claim to land is secure, if they were truly interested in them. In another case, a deserted woman had welcomed back her estranged husband after he returned to her in ill health. She reported that she had told him "you will not come into my bed," indicating the power she derived from the land being her own and not the husband's. These examples illustrate that the rights to land extend women's scope for bargaining and negotiating the conditions of their intimate relationships, including shunning marriage despite community expectations.

Mai Chatiza recounted how she had almost been sidelined from land allocation because she was a widow with young children. She had later learnt about discussions that had gone on in the village. "I heard they were saying, 'This woman will get married. She will not stay. How will she survive with all these kids and without a man! She does not even have a cow. It is a waste to give her land.'" Some of her neighbours told her that men in the village had bet on her finding a man and then leaving with him. Expectations for Mai Chatiza to remarry and relocate were in line with the impermanent and transient position of women, who moved from their birth locality to that of their husband upon marriage (Kesby, 1999). Headman Tsambe rationalized the expectation for women to remarry, pointing out that the women were being widowed very young. His rationalization, however, hid the patriarchal expectation for women to be reincorporated into lineages through wifely inheritance or moving into a new lineage where they could then receive their land rights.

Shunning Marriage

In Village 9, community perceptions are vested in the continuation of the ties of land to marriage and gender relations built around virilocality, patrilocal residence, which ensures that a woman relocates to her husband's family upon marriage and devotes her labour to her children, who belong to her late husband's lineage. Primary land rights for single women served to unsettle the practice of virilocality as single women reimagined arrangements that brought men onto the land they had received in Village 9. Divorced women like Mai Beritta, Mai Tinashe, and Muzvare Chizumbu could bring their partners onto their land. Widows like Mai Tinashe could also bring a partner onto her deceased husband's land. Married, widowed, and single women's experiences indicate a rethinking of the arrangements around marriage, made possible through land reform. These new ideas reflect the agency that has opened up with primary land rights for the women of Village 9. For example, Mbuya Muchati declared that remarrying was a bad idea because it was "inviting trouble and headaches for oneself when you could just live on your land and work for yourself." She expressed the view that once a single woman got some land, she should be content to live by herself.

> Once you get your land, do not bring a man there. He will just frustrate you. If you were widowed, stay alone on your land because you will bring someone who will give you headaches. If you desire a friend, go to Marondera and be friends there in Marondera and never show him the way to your house. If you were divorced or widowed and you have your children, be content with that. At least you were left with children. Now you have your land. What else do you want?

Mai Chatiza shared her reaction to the talk in the community that she would remarry in the early days of settling in Village 9.

> I laughed to myself and said, "Where would I go? After all the trouble I had been through, then I find land and I say I want to get married? What for?" They showed me my allocated land and I said, "High time, too." I worked with my children. Now we are here. And you tell me about getting married!"

Married women also shared similar sentiments. Mai Mutevhe, a married woman, succinctly declared, "If you are a widow, especially those that are still young, do not go looking for a man. Your brain should be your husband. The soil is your husband." Her assertion reveals new ideas and appreciation of the relationship between women and land, and it challenges the conventional discourse of men as essential providers.

The FTLRP has ruptured the construct of the dependent woman, which Berry (2011) asserts was constituted "not only at the intersections of gender, kinship and heterosexuality, but also spatially, through denial of rights to land" (p. 136), and was framed around land and women's dependence on husbands for access to land. Land rights also enable single women to reimagine and rework their intimate partnerships.

The new and different intimate relationships and the idea of shunning marriage are directly linked to the land rights single women have in Village 9. The different intimate arrangements single women pursue suggests that the discourse of respectability and the stigmatization were not entirely successful in constraining the women's agency. Most importantly, women's exercise of their agency in this manner demonstrates that secure rights to land enable women to confront the traditional patriarchal ideologies that previously regulated and conditioned their subject positions. While circumstance that condition women's navigation of this gendered discourse are contextual, in Village 9 and through the FTLRP, single women draw from the security of their land rights to shrug off adverse reactions to their agency, like the wayward labelling, from the community. This analysis shows how the gender discourse

influences younger women's exercise of their land rights at the village level. Older widows are, however, also affected differently by the gender discourse of respectability.

The Respectability of Widows

Under customary law, the relationship between land and gender disadvantages women when their husbands die. Zimbabwean arguments for land rights for women, pre-FTLRP, frequently invoked stories in which kin chased widows from their deceased husbands' land if they did not have sons or if they refused to abide by the custom of *kugara nhaka* (wife inheritance). While the FTLRP gave primary rights to single women, it also made provisions that protected widows' claims to resettled land in ways that challenge some of these entrenched ideologies in Village 9. How widows use their land rights to navigate these entrenched ideologies is critical to analyzing women's primary land rights.

While some women came to Village 9 alone as widows, at least five were widowed after moving to the village. Of the five widows, three were elderly, and two (Mai Mupupuri and Mai Peter) were younger and of childbearing age. The choices the five widows made after their husbands died and the community's engagement with their decisions offer essential insights for understanding gender relations in the context of secured claims to land as provided for by the FTLRP.

The three elderly widows whose husbands died after settling in Village 9 had not remarried at the time of my research. Mbuya Ruzvidzo and Mbuya Muchisi reported amicable interactions with their deceased husbands' kin concerning the land after their husbands died. The relatives had shown no interest in inheriting the land, mostly, according to the widows' understanding, due to awareness of the protections given to widows on resettled land. Mbuya

Save, however, had a different experience with her late husband's older brother. She recounted confrontations with her brother-in-law around the customary practice of wife inheritance.

> We buried my husband, and people went back to their homes. He [the brother-in-law] stayed behind one week, two weeks, a month. I was just giving him food, water to bathe, and waiting every day that he would say "tomorrow, I am leaving." But no, he did not. He started doing all the homestead chores. If I said I am going to the garden, he would follow. And I was just looking. I knew what he was after, but I said I would wait. Then one day, when the rains were almost coming down to start the new farming season, about six months after burying my husband, we were weeding the garden, and he said to me, "*Mainini,* I have decided that I will farm here with you this year." And I said, "There is no problem. Let us just call my sister-in-law and tell her that this is the plan now."

According to Mbuya Save, she knew that he wanted to inherit her and the land, but he would not have wanted to bring his first wife to Village 9. She said her reply was an adult way of refusing to be inherited. When I asked what she would have done if he had insisted, she assured me that he would not have been able to sway her, because she knew that the rules were different in the new settlements.

> Even himself, he knew, but he was just trying his luck. That was why we had the conversation that same day. He came and said, "*Mainini* (sister-in-law), tomorrow I leave you to go back home." In my heart, I just laughed while I thanked him for coming.

Mbuya Save was confident in her engagement with her brother-in-law, knowing that the law covered her interests. She said if he had fought her, she would have taken the case to the DA.

The two younger widows, Mai Peter and Mai Mupupuri, made different choices. Both were of childbearing age when they were widowed. Mbuya Mupupuri remained single, and Mai

Peter had refused the traditional practice of wife inheritance. The story told in the village was that Mai Peter had brought a man to the homestead a year after the husband passed away, but her sister-in-law had chased her and the man away. However, two years later, she had come back to the village with a different man, who was the partner she was with during my research. They had a son together. Mai Peter told me she had returned to the village after hearing reports that the sister-in-law who had chased her away was selling her land. She understood that she and her partner were only tolerated in the village because the government protected her land rights. Sentiments in the village were that she had lost respectability by bringing a stranger onto kin land. The land belonged to her deceased husband and his sons. Bringing another man from a different clan as she had done was perceived as bringing *kufumuka* (dishonour) on herself and her homestead. Headman Sinyoro's wife, who sat in as I interviewed her husband, interjected to raise her emphatic objections and disdain for Mai Peter's behaviour:

> What Mai Peter did is very wrong. How can you leave your home and go away for years, then come back with another man to live on the land where your husband died? How can you bring another man onto the land where you lived with your late husband?

Mbuya Muchati expressed the connection between remarrying and losing respect, using the example of Mai Mupupuri:

> You see, Mai Mupupuri, she was widowed, and she stayed on her land with her children. Not to go and bring some man—some are alcoholic, what for? Inviting problems for yourself! And making yourself the laughing stock of the community!

Village members monitored movements at the widows' homesteads to see if unrelated men visited and engaged in sexual relationships with the women. According to Mbuya Muchati:

> You see them passing through, peeping over, checking to see if no men are sleeping over. The Headman told me, "Mbuya Muchati, we do not want to hear any stories that men are passing through leaving soap here. You are on your land. You are old. Stay and preserve the land for your family." So that is why I, and others like Mbuya Mupupuri, stay like this.

The respectability of widows rests on a steadfast commitment to staying single on their husbands' land and working for their children. Mbuya Mupupuri laughed away my question about remarrying: "Leave me be. *Nyika igotii?*" (What will the world say?) Her reaction showed her concern with how the community would view her conduct. The "world" of Village 9 would not accept her remarrying even if she struggled with farming alone since her husband's passing. I read into the women's actions an investment in maintaining their "respectable" positions as being shaped by community expectations. After one has refused inheritance, to remain single and to stay on the land and take care of a husband's children and the land is to be a proper and dignified widow who earns the community's respect. While the community infuses respectability into the discussions of widows' choice, my analysis points to the coconstitution of kinship, gender, and sexuality with land rights.

Headman Tsambe raised the point that there were challenges posed by women remarrying and bringing men on to the land in the village.

> You see, the government came with this program that these women get land, and even at council, they have their names written, so we do not have any power to say they have to go away because she is on her land. But the problem is these men they bring; we do not know where they got them. We do not know their relatives, and imagine, like Mai Peter, that's when she brings this man to stay on that land that we know belongs to Mashanje (her late husband). Even when she came, I was just puzzled when the other Headman told me. It is not clear how that can be. Back in the communal areas, she would never have done this.

Mai Peter's actions confronted two customary practices that the community was struggling to engage with. By refusing to obey the tradition of wife inheritance common in Zimbabwe among the Shona people and by bringing another man onto her deceased husband's land, she had rejected the practice of wife inheritance, which would have ensured that all resources, including her agricultural labour and land, remained in the husband's family. Objections in the community about Mai Peter's remarrying are not necessarily about remarrying but rather about bringing "strangers" onto kin land. In a follow-up discussion, Headman Tsambe highlighted what he perceived as unprecedented dilemmas for the leadership. He referenced with resigned despair "these women who are bringing *vatorwa* (strangers) onto their land." In the long term, he could foresee challenges that everyone in the community would be looking to him as the traditional leader to solve. Specifically, if one of these men died in the village, there would be complications:

> In our tradition, the deceased would need to lay vigil in the *kuchikuva* (kitchen hut). Certain rites of dedication into the other world of his ancestors will need to be performed. Now tell me! At Mai Peter's for instance, her late husband's ancestors are the ones that are raised on that land. How then can we perform those rites for her new husband if he dies?"

Women's ownership of land under the FTLRP and the marriage dynamics engendered by the women's agency confronts and challenges traditional observances. Rites of passage for the dead, such as patrilineal ancestor appeasement and *kurova guva* (bringing home the dead), as described by Headman Tsambe, presume a territory controlled by the men of the patrilineage (Goebel, 2005, p. 153). These practices are tied to land and lineage and are mediated through traditional power structures that marginalize women (Rutherford, 2017). Thus, material values

and spiritual values linked to the land that pose an intractable challenge to women's struggles for land and related resources on communal land are challenged under the FTLRP.

It is essential to highlight that remarrying as a practice was not contested in the village. The community expected younger widows to remarry out of benevolent acknowledgement of their sexuality as young people. The Headman had highlighted that "these days the women are being widowed young. They have sexual needs, so they must, by all means, remarry. It would not be fair to expect them to stay single into old age." Like in Mai Chatiza's case, the community expected that she did not need land because she would remarry and move. Age, sexuality, and potential for bearing children all intersect in community review of widows' choices.

Mai Peter's remarrying provoked a discourse on inheritance that highlights the coconstitution of gender, kinship, sexuality, and land. Having a man on the land who is not kin to the late husband, and having a child with her new partner, could create conflicts between the new man and the children from the marriage. Mbuya Muchati expressed this view:

> If one has their child and they bring a man, chances are the child will fight with this man. You cannot register this land jointly with your new husband because you will be risking the security of your child's rights to that land. The child will say "it is my land" and your new man will say "it is my land." Would one, as a mother, say it is my land and chase your son away? How do you forsake your child over a man?

The Headman had posed the question to me:

> Tell me, if Mai Peter's husband dies, will those sons not fight for the land? It would be better if he were to die first. What if Mai Peter died and left that man there? Do you not see this situation getting complicated tomorrow?

Both Mbuya Muchati's and the Headman's comments acknowledge the view that remarrying would always cause a challenge to the traditional practice of patrilineal inheritance. The Headman explained that no one could dictate what the women should do, "because the government dictated that they should get the land because they are also people. If it were back in the reserves, this would not be tolerated." The FTLRP had taken away the power of kin to chase away widows who transgress gendered behavioural boundaries. Historically, women who refused to be inherited by kin faced the sanction of having either immovable property in towns and cities or land in rural areas confiscated by relatives (Gaidzanwa, 1994). Though Mbuya Save and Mai Peter handled the inheritance expectations differently, the critical conclusion in both cases is that they could hold on to their land without abiding by the traditional norms. Similarly, Addison (2019) found that widows could more easily hold on to their deceased spouses' land in resettlement areas than they could in the communal areas.

Some scholars have emphasized the social embeddedness and security of women's claims within customary tenure to argue against women's need for primary land rights (Cheater 1982; Pasura, 2010; Yngstrom, 1999). However, their arguments do not acknowledge how genders have very differentiated positions within kinship systems that are the primary organizing order for land access. Mbuya Save's and Mai Peter's cases provide evidence for my argument for land rights that guard against customary tenure systems' malleability and give single women security. The two cases show how men seek to reassert control over land despite the claims that women have on the land and how the government provisions under the FTLRP have safeguarded widows' claims to land. Traditional and customary power structures the Headmen represent espouse ideologies associated with land access, control, and use-values patterns. The inheritance cases of Mbuya Save and Mai Peter show how primary land rights in Village 9 have enabled

both women to confront and challenge the limitations of patriarchal structures and traditions that would have taken away their claim to the land.

The perception in Village 9 is similar to what studies in other resettled areas have found: that the FTLRP is considered to have given women leeway for self-emancipation, leading to disregard for traditional authorities and gender norms (Mutopo, 2014). While Mbuya Save's and Mai Peter's cases showcase the space created by primary rights to land for women to exercise their agency, Mutopo (2014) reported instances of widows refusing to be inherited by threatening to use codified law and using the courts to adjudicate traditional matters. She found that people in the resettled areas had a better understanding of the government than people in communal areas. People in the resettlement areas also had more freedom to discuss and challenge traditional laws. However, women with land titles in their names are not constrained by the expectation that remarriage means moving to another patrilineage territory. They can remain single or bring new partners onto the land, albeit at the risk of becoming the subject of gossip about their "waywardness" and having to endure the moral backlash expressed in the "prostitute" label. Women in Village 9 and other resettled areas lean on the codified laws to confront traditional norms, and herein lies the value of primary land rights provided by the policy.

This transformation in the agency of widows and single women in Village 9 and the discourses of respectability and waywardness circulating in the village reveal the dynamic nature of gender relations. In the framework of changed land rights, we see how individuals navigate and negotiate gender, kinship, and sexuality in daily interactions, reconstituting the categories and their meanings (Berry, 2011, p. 145). Not only do gender relations shift in the context of changing rights to land, but gender and other subjectivities are also constituted and contested.

Land rights have given single women the space to live outside of marriage. In Village 9, the discursive power of the wayward label on single women derives from these women's positions as successful heads of household in their own right, which they attain through their land rights under the FTLRP, as shown in Chapter 4. The most overt expression of the label's discursive power is how it mediates the single women's relations in the village as they face penalties of exclusion, censure, and praise.

Exclusion, Censure, and Praise

Women's success stories were infused into the discourse of praise and censorship in Village 9. In a study that explored the dynamics of gender and resource control in Rwanda, Jefremovas (1991) found that censure and praise were phrased in terms of "virtuous wives and virginal daughters or as loose women" (p. 379) as explanation for the problems and attainments of women in her study. Similarly, single women's achievements are reframed and redeployed by male leaders in the distribution of government assistance in the village. Government assistance accompanies major land redistribution programs and, in Zimbabwe, the practice of distributing assistance to rural areas has been used as a means by which the ruling party ensures support from rural voters. This assistance is typically in the form of agricultural inputs that include maize, bean, and groundnut seeds and fertilizers, as well as food-grains, cooking oil, and sometimes cash.

Most of the single women in Village 9 were dissatisfied with the allocation of the government assistance. The process seemed to sideline even some who were the most in need, even though some single women were successfully pursuing subsistence-level livelihoods (see Chapter 4). Mbuya Muchisi bemoaned one much-older woman, Mbuya Ruzvidzo, as someone who needed this assistance.

> There is an old woman down that side of the village. She is old and very sickly that I consider myself even better. But she does not get anything. How do you make sense of that? She does not have a plough, or any cattle. When it starts raining, she will be in tears, at a loss as to what to do. Yet when assistance comes, they give it to people like Mai Cosmas.

In another case, Murefu, a single woman, recounted confronting the leaders to ask them how they could not give assistance to someone like Mbuya Saire, a disabled widow: "I told them, 'Surely you are witches. Do you know that woman who lives there? The way she is, do you know she does not get any assistance?'" Mbuya Saire's physical handicap would have made her an obvious beneficiary, as she herself had pointed out to me, showing me her deformed stature. "You see how I am, my child? Why would someone think I do not need assistance? But they do not give me." In addition, another widow, Mai Chatiza took care of her grandchildren who were orphans, which would have made her an obvious beneficiary of the program. The general conclusion among single women was that the mechanisms of distribution marginalized single women, old and young. This dynamic of government assistance, where even the old and infirm are excluded, shows gendered dynamics of exclusion that go beyond the land rights that the FTLRP addressed.

Village leaders argued that even though the assistance came earmarked for widows and orphans, the situation in the village was that the widows were doing much better than "full" (married) households. Rutsito pointed out that they had left Mbuya Chimombe out of the program because,

> even if she is a widow, she is doing very well. There are times that she has sold surplus even to the grain marketing board. This means she is able to look after herself, so we cannot put her on welfare when there are people who are suffering

more than she is. We now give to these couples, because if we do not do that, the family will die.

Further to this, Magonhi gave the example of Mbuya Sinyoro, pointing out,

If you get to her farm, you will find her working. There is no husband at her homestead. But she strives to farm pushing her grandkids so they have something to eat. You see! Yet maybe some of us who are a "full pair" with Mai and Baba Magonhi, we struggle.

The leaders' justification for sidelining single women was that these women were achieving better livelihoods than married households. This was despite observations of need by other village members like Murefu, noted above. My analysis, however, points to how the discourse of respectability that I discussed above is used to evaluate single women in allocation of government assistance. Single women's success was indirectly attributed to adultery and the receiving of support from many men, including husbands in the village. Mai Mutevhe pointed out that sometimes people would direct comments to single women like "What do you lack? All men are yours. You are supported by many"—giving the impression that single women had relations with lots of men who would provide for them. These insinuations coexisted with married women's praise for the farming achievements of single women.

Mai Mutevhe reflected that if a single woman was suspected in the village for having affairs with married men, the wives would always come to confront her whenever they had issues at their houses. "She will not have peace at her home because I will be coming every day accusing her of being the trouble causer at my house. I will say that everything you are achieving here is because of my husband." While at times the suspicions might be unfounded, Mai Mutevhe observed that they could be true. As the Shona saying goes, *nhunzi haimhari pasina ronda*—a fly will not land where there is no wound.

Single women were careful not to enlist assistance from married men in the village without talking to the wives first to avoid accusations of affairs with the men. However, some reported that even when they went through the wives, there was no guarantee that the wives would approve of the husbands assisting them. Some single women who did not care about the wives' attitudes would go straight to the husbands, causing problems in their interaction in the village. One married woman, Mai Jowero, admitted that she thought Mai Cosmas's relationship with her husband was suspicious. On several occasions Mai Cosmas had hired their scotch cart to carry her firewood but did not pay her husband. Mai Cosmas had refused to give Mai Jowero the payment, leading Mai Jowero to suspect that there were other "in-kind" payment arrangements between Mai Cosmas and her husband.

These assumptions about the resources flowing to single women from married men also underlie community objections to single women being given government assistance. "Loose women" who "benefit from all men" cannot be given government assistance. Single women who "do not sit down" are labeled wayward and socially sanctioned through marginalization from government assistance. The wayward label and the exclusion from government resources are forms of symbolic and material violence toward single women who are positioned by both married women and men in Village 9 as living outside the conjugal norm (Berry, 2008). According to Mai Mabura, single women were disadvantaged and excluded from receiving government assistance because they did not have husbands to protect and represent their interests. Husbands are powerful; they embody power in their deep voices. Mai Mabura articulated this manifestation of the power of the husband figure when she insisted that the single women were excluded because they did not have powerful husbands:

> It is not just my perception. I see it happening here. Those families with husbands are the first ones to be called out when they are giving out the assistance. But the families with widows are always at the end. They are looked down upon because she is just a widow. There is no man to threaten with a hoarse voice.

Together, the discourse of immorality and the lack of husbands to safeguard the single women's interests explain their exclusion from resources. Discourses of waywardness serve to degrade single women's achievements as successful farmers by attributing that success to immorality and antisocial behaviour. In this way, the language of public morality is deployed and engaged to interpret, manipulate, validate, or negate control over labour, resources, and surplus (Jefremovas, 1991). The language of public morality is also in circulation to moderate wives in ways that reflect on the distinction of primary and secondary land rights.

The Respectability of Wives

In Zimbabwe's history, women's subject position as wives, sisters, and daughters was tied to land, and in all three cases, the women would be under male kin surrogacy (Riphenburg, 1997). My analysis up to this point illustrates the new subject positions of sisters and daughters that have come with land rights. The single women of Village 9 have crafted new identities that are rooted in positive conceptions of self that are tied to land ownership. Single women are household heads and breadwinners through their ownership of land, even if that is constrained because their sex excludes them from the predominant hegemonic masculinity and they must constantly be put in their place by gender policing, whether through women's gossip or men's surveillance as extra-legal regimes to keep sex-gender regimes in place. In what follows, I discuss how the subject positions of wives play out in the field of changing gender relations engendered by land rights for single women.

In Village 9, being married protects women from the stigma and suspicion of being "wayward." Married women escape scrutiny because they gain respectability through their marriages as virtuous wives. By merely being called Mrs. So and So, a woman automatically gains honour and respectability. Husbands give women respectability by marrying them and giving them their family name. In this way, marriage is a "good bargain" for it comes with social benefits of dignity and community respect (Goebel, 2011).

Husband, or head of household, is a position that carries with it the connotation of being in charge and in control (Cornwall, 2002, p. 976). It is through the position of husbands and custodians of their wives' images that men dictate how their wives present themselves. For their part, wives govern themselves according to the understanding of what "a proper wife" should do or not do. These dynamics are articulated in varying and interlinked ways, as two examples from Village 9 interactions show.

According to the women, husbands' control aimed at moderating their wives' behaviours included seemingly mundane restrictions. One woman shared a story about another woman whose husband did not allow her to wear a bra. I could not hide my incredulous reaction at this as I wondered aloud why there would be any issue with a woman wearing a bra. "Bra? You are already married, why do you need a bra anymore? *Unoda kuti amirirei?* (Who do you want your breasts to shape up for?)" The husband's perception was that a bra had the effect on a woman's presentability that would invite male attention. As a married woman who already had a man, she did not need to encourage other men's attention. By extension, the idea was that single women who wore bras were intent on inviting men's attention, hence the accusations of adultery.

Married women were aware of the perceptions that circulated in the village, so they moderated their behaviour along those expectations. Their husbands also underlined these perceptions in discussions in their individual households. One married woman told me:

> You can hear one saying, as if just in passing, "like this kind of dressing, I do not like it." You know that means forthwith I cannot dress like that too. Or he will say, "Some of the hairstyles people get! I don't like this, I like this" or "I do not like people who just roam around leaving the homestead." You then just know that this is a rule I am being given.

One married participant explained to me that some women were not allowed to maintain their hair, were not allowed to dress in short skirts, and some were expected to always cover their heads. On another day, as I met her with a group of other women in the village (married and single), she shared my reaction to this with these women. They all laughed at my ignorance and shared similar sentiments that *masinguru atori bho* (the single women are better off). Dramatically, the woman had asked all the women in the group to take out their cellphones. A handful of the women took out their phones, at which point she asked how many had phones that "were on app" for Facebook and WhatsApp applications. She was the only one of the married women and three single women who had such a phone with social media.

> You see, Mai Tadiwa, married women in this village have no phones, let alone phones that can go on app. App to do what with? To go on Facebook so you become clever? To go on WhatsApp and learn what other women are doing? Married women can only have *tumbudzi*[15].

[15] Derogatory Shona slang name given to the most basic of cellphones in Zimbabwe.

All the women had laughed in agreement, some among the married proclaiming they did not care for advanced phones as long as they had means of communication. Mai Jowero declared that she would also want a phone with WhatsApp, it was just a matter of limited resources, to which Mai Magonhi responded, chiding her:

> You are lying. If baba Jowero really wanted, you think he would not afford to buy you a phone with WhatsApp? He doesn't want that is why he has not bought. All the women in this village could have phones but the men don't buy. Imagine! Young women do not have phones yet old ladies the likes of Mbuya Save have. You see them at meetings, ring ring ring and they take phones out of their bras!

I remembered the story about Mai Jowero that I had heard previously. Mai Magonhi and the other ladies had discussed how Mai Jowero had been beaten up by her husband for modelling at the agricultural show that had been held in the village in the middle of my field research. The agricultural extension officer had enlisted Mai Magonhi, Mai Rutenga, and Mai Jowero to model for prizes as a form of entertainment at the show. They had all modelled, only to later hear that Mai Jowero had been beaten up for having taken part in the event. I asked Mai Magonhi how exactly they had modelled that had caused Mai Jowero's husband to not approve when he heard about it. He had been at the beer hall and had not witnessed the event. Mai Magonhi said:

> We did not do anything outrageous. Both Mr. Magonhi and Mr. Rutenga, his friends, had been at the function. We just bathed and dressed up and went. We just walked around posing, is that not what modelling is all about? Just that! The next thing we hear our friend was beaten for that.

I understood Mai Magonhi's admonishment of her friend over the issue of the phone in the context of this modelling incident, which she was using to highlight that if a husband could beat his wife for modelling in public, where other husbands were present as witnesses that there

had been no wrongdoing, this husband would not allow his wife to have an advanced phone. The beating of the wife by the husband is testimony that husbands control their wives. Returning to my earlier examples involving the implications of women's spatial mobility, married women recounted their husbands' misgivings about single women's mobility, particularly in engaging with cross-border trading. One married woman recounted:

> At one point I mentioned that I wanted to join the other women who were going to Mozambique for trading. I was told, "You want to join those women who prostitute themselves to truck drivers for the ride to the border? What do you talk about with the driver on such a long trip?" That is when I realized that these men's brains do not work well. I had my fare to pay for the transport. Why would I need to sleep with the driver? But that is how people in this village think.

The above examples given by the married women, and their accounts of the household dynamics in Chapter 4, underline their subject positions as dependent and virtuous wives. These stories of policing wives' bodies and restricting women's mobility align with literature of Zimbabwe's early colonial history. Omer (2017), for example, suggests that the fixation with women's sexuality as a measure of morality and propriety has its foundations in colonial rule, and is subsequently upheld to preserve an order of gendered hierarchy tied to land in Zimbabwe.

Colonial rule in some parts of southern Africa came with ideas about native women's wantonness that was addressed by measures aimed at giving men more control over women's sexuality (Chanock, 1985). Morality was invested within a patriarchal structure giving traditional leaders and young men control over women's sexuality. According to Pankhurst (1991), "men have available to them various tools of patriarchy, including law and socially condoned levels of violence, and women's decisions to act are within the context of inherent material insecurity

within marriage" (p. 620). It is within this background that a reaction to the extension of primary land rights for single women can be analyzed and made sense of in Village 9.

Married men in Village 9 have a vested interest in maintaining the compliance of their wives. The perceived danger is that married women will see the lives of single women and envy their independence. Some hints of the attraction of being single are evident in married women's support of the position that a woman need not remarry if she has her own land. The discourse of waywardness and scorn for single women's mobility is deployed to moderate married, "good" women so that they do not dress, move around, or talk like "those women."

This does not necessarily mean that married women do not have agency within their households. Much research has concentrated on showing the household as a terrain of women's struggles within which they contest, bargain, and negotiate in fruitful ways (Mutopo, 2011). Women use strategies that allow them some gains without necessarily engaging in outright contestation and overt resistance to relations of domination, which would result in intense scrutiny and social sanctioning. While the social identity of wives remains a powerful force in women's lives, as reflected in the scorn for single women, the discourse around the respectability of certain men in the village indicated that single women's subject positions as independent women have provoked tension.

The Respectability of Men

Within gender relations, men are not unmarked individuals. Despite the salience of women's land rights in the context of the FTLRP, there is little research on how masculinities have been implicated. Men inhabit male gender identities and a variety of masculinities, some of which are hegemonic. Within these, male identities of lineage ideologies, provider roles, and struggles between groups of men for land as both a material and a political and cultural asset

have served to situate men's resistance to women's land rights (C. Jackson, 2003). New configurations of gender relations are evident in Village 9 and are similarly framed around expectations of masculine respectability, albeit reflected in contradictory ways.

Loss of *Hubaba*: The Case of Men on Women's Land

The Shona practice of marriage is built around the woman's relocation from her natal home to the husband's family. This movement was a crucial aspect of establishing gender relations, such that the move from a woman's birth home to the husband's home in marriage is the most important and highly significant factor in the construction of female identity (Jeater, 1993; Kesby, 1999). All three men in Village 9 who were living on their partners' land had not paid the traditional *lobola*, which is the signal of formal marriage. The land status, coupled with the absence of *lobola* payment, influenced the relational dynamics, not only between the couples, but also between the couples and their respective families and between the couples and the community at large. Community views on the men who came onto the women's land also draw from a discourse of respectability.

These three men were vilified in the village. The view was that these men were not "man enough" and not respectable, since murume *chaiye* (a real man) would take their wife to their family home after marrying, as the practice of virilocality prescribes. Mai Chatiza mentioned in Chapter 3 how her mother had bemoaned the farm life that her husband was subjecting her daughter to and scorned his failure to take his wife to his family home, as real men would do.

One married woman chastised Mai Peter at the same time as she questioned her partner's masculinity: "If you decide you want to be together, a real man will take his woman to his family. You do not come and live on another man's land." Mai Peter's partner was less of a man for not abiding by the pride of ownership that is built around owning land and taking your wife

onto your land when you marry. For the three men who had settled on women's land this meant, in the community's eyes, that they lost respectability as household heads. The loss of respectability was based on gender relations that were traditionally framed around the spatial relocation of women as wives to their husbands' kin land. That the three men had instead relocated onto women's land cast a shadow over their masculinity.

A commonly held perception is that land gave women power as the primary landholder, putting her in a superior position to the man. According to Mai Chigumba, a married woman, when a man came to live on a woman's land, they could end up *akurarama huranda* (living like a slave) because he came where someone already had her family. A man on his land works for the prosperity of his family. A man working on a woman's land might as well be *muranda* (a slave), since, according to the perceptions in the village, *haana chake* (he has nothing to claim). A woman working on her husband's land, however, is not necessarily considered to be slaving. The loss of respectability towards the men by the community in general came from the perception that sometimes the women ended up not respecting the men whom they had taken onto the land. Stories of the women telling the men to leave after some disagreements reflect the changing power dynamics in these households. A man who came onto the woman's land lost *hubaba* status and other people in the village showed disrespect in interacting with the men.

During one of my introductory visits, on our way to Muzvare Chizumbu's homestead with the Headman, we met the husband, and the Headman asked him if his wife was home. From my knowledge of the Shona culture, if we had any business, as we had with his wife, we should have talked to the husband first, informally seeking his permission to talk to his wife or, at the very least, to let him know what business we had with his wife. In this instance, when the husband eventually came to the house and joined us, the Headman was just finishing the

introductions and he noted that the wife would share with her husband the purpose of our meeting.

I am not sure whether the Headman was aware he was being less respectful to the husband than he would have been toward a man who was the head of a household in the village. He had not given him the courtesy of *samusha* whereby, even if the husband had come in at this point, he would have had to tell the husband what he had been discussing with his wife. Furthermore, when meetings are called for in the village, the women who are the landowners are the ones who are requested to attend. Even though the women's conduct at the meetings is still guided by cultural norms of public conduct and limited by gender norms, as discussed before, the act of seeking their participation instead of their husbands' reflects the power relations around land ownership in the village. Ownership of land by women changes their gender positions in the community to some extent, while at the same time unsettling intrahousehold dynamics.

In considering the dynamics of the household if she were to bring a partner onto her land, Mai Tinashe was emphatic that the partner would not have any power over her: "I am the head on my land. What power will he have here? What can he enforce when he is on my land?" Mai Tinashe's friend agreed that if a partner were to move in with her, there was no way he would go to the market to sell tomatoes and to the tobacco floors without Mai Tinashe, as was typical in the village within married households. Even if he went, at least he would not behave the way some husbands in the village did: "They go to the market and come back home with a newspaper. A newspaper, Mai Tadi! Where would he be coming back to holding a newspaper after finishing all the money from the sales?"

This conversation reflects a confidence by both women that land title gave them power within the marriage relationship. It indicated the expectation that the man would have to be

accountable to the woman since she owned the land. Men who owned land, even with joint title with the wives, were not accountable to their spouses. The men who lived on women's land lost control in their households as such, and were not respectable as men in the village.

The men who came onto the women's land were not oblivious to the dynamics of their partnerships as mediated by the women's land ownership. The challenges of a man moving onto a woman's land were reflected in the personal narratives of Mai Berita's and Muzvare Chizumbu's living experiences with their partners. Muzvare Chizumbu confirmed the challenges she had with her partner when it came to making developments and investments on the farm. Muzvare Chizumbu had two children from her previous marriage and was pregnant with the first child with the partner who had moved onto her land. Her partner refused to assist her in registering the permit for the land in her name.

> He argues that this is not his land. He will not gain anything from it, so he will not put his money into sorting the permit out for "your children." So, I work alone because it is my land. Last time he just left and said he is going to work in South Africa. He came back after six months and I had bought two cattle. He was so angry, saying, "Because you are on your land you consider yourself *unozviita murume pachake* (a man in your own right). Those days there was no peace because even the relatives were inciting him that "you must bring your wife to the family home" in Murehwa.

The account of the household dynamics shared by Muzvare Chizumbu illustrates the relationship between land and gender perceptions that guided community attitudes to the men who settled on women's land. Some community members also shared what they witnessed in such households. Mai Chigumba gave the example of Mai Beritta and her husband: Whenever they fought, the man would tear down the barns he built. "He will say, 'I am tearing down my barn. You own the land but the barn is mine.'" In her view, Mai Chigumba felt that these couples

would never make any progress, because they would always have conflicts caused by the fact that the land belonged to the woman.

Mai Mutete told me that, generally, the community despised these partnerships where the man came to live with the woman. People in the village may not say it to the faces of the parties involved, but they will refer to the man in a disparaging manner as *akaroorwa nemukadzi uyo* (that one who was married by a woman). In the Shona language, typically men "marry" and women "are married" to men. As such, these men were not respected and interactions with them were guided by the men's secondary relationships to land in the village.

The norm of the household, or rather the image of a normal household—the perception of what constitutes an ideal household—is reflected clearly in the discussions I had with everyone in Village 9. Comparisons of single households with married households betrayed the underlying normative image that conditioned the conduct of both married and single women, as well as the relations with men. Single women's households were considered unusual, out of the norm and *misha isina kukwana* (incomplete households). The vernacular description of the single women's households showed the depth and positions these households were given in the minds of people and the community as a whole.

"Complete" households were considered ideal due to the perception that they provided for a gendered division of labour that generated maximum profits for the household. As one leader, Mr. Magonhi, explained to me the challenges facing single women in Village 9, he presented the normative image of a household division of labour, giving the example of how in his household, "I do some work and my wife does some other duties, and together we sustain our family." Similarly, single women bemoaned the absence of men for such responsibilities as lifting heavy loads around the homestead.

In an ideal household unit, the man is expected to be the provider. According to Magonhi, this is how it works, I as the father go out to work. Is it not so that you have been here numerous times and my wife told you I was at work? I go and work here by the GMB[16] and I come back and give Mai Magonhi the money and she makes sure the house runs smoothly. You see? Then everything balances!"

A man is thus responsible for providing for his family, while the wife also has responsibilities to ensure that the family unit is "balanced." In support of this ideal, Mai Witness, one of the married participants, gave an account of how she settled in Village 9 in the early days and her husband remained in the old farm working for the white farm owner. He would occasionally come to Village 9 to bring her farming inputs, mostly seeds and fertilizer. After harvesting, she would pack some food for him to take back to his workplace. In another example, Mbuya Matemba bemoaned the death of her husband, saying that when he was there she could at least leave certain things to him. "He would look in the house and see that we are running out of this, and he would come back with a bar of soap. If we are running out of salt, you would see, he goes out and comes back with a packet." The ideal household thus had a father who provided, and carried the heavy load of the division of labour. It also had a mother who was responsible for running the affairs of the home smoothly, as exemplified by the images of the Mahwindo, Witness, and Matemba (when the husband was alive) households.

Many husbands, however, did not meet these expectations, according to my discussions with married women. Mai Gari had made repeated requests for her husband to build a chicken run, with the expectation that, as the man, he would take up this large project. She told me,

[16] Grain Marketing Board, the parastatal that markets and trades grain to farmers.

> You see that chicken run? I had to get up and build it myself. This was after repeatedly asking my husband to work on it. But I saw that nothing was happening. So sometimes you may pass by and think things are like that because there is a man of the house. Yet I am doing most of the heavy lifting here.

Mai Gari shared that her friend, Mbuya Save, passed by one day while she was building her bathing shed. Mbuya Save laughed at her that there was no difference between them, she with a husband and herself a widow. Mai Gari had agreed. "Yes, there is no difference, my friend. I need to bath in a shed, what can I do?" Mai Magonhi and Mai Rutenga, who were both responsible for the structures at their homes, gave further evidence that the division of labour that supposedly lightened the heavy load for married women was a misperception. The two women had molded bricks for the construction of their homes, according to Mai Rutenga:

> As you see these structures built here, we worked with my sister, Mai Magonhi, just the two of us with our children's help. There was a huge anthill that we dug up and molded bricks. We sold some of the bricks to raise money to buy the other material to build with after setting aside the bricks for our own use. We did not use any cash to build here; it was all from the bricks we molded.

Brick molding is a physically demanding activity that other men in the village engage in to earn cash income. While there may be a normative division of labour, it appears that in practice, many married women carry extra burdens in the family, including the work that is "supposed" to be done by men. Married women, just like single women, were responsible for activities around the household despite the expectations of society that some work required a man's attention.

Normative images, rather than reality, thus directed the ideals held in Village 9. Some married women shared the view that it was like being alone in their homes even though they had

husbands. Mai Mutevhe declared, “Some of us are counted amongst those with husbands yet we are widows, because from a matchstick to everything that is needed in the house, you are the one who provides.” She shared her burden of paying school fees for her children:

> I work like this so that my children can at least have food and go to school. So for now I am just praying that God blesses me so I am able to raise enough funds for my children to sit for their form four exams. As for the school fees, I will just see after they have written the exams even though I know he will not get the results before they finish paying up the school fees.

According to her, her husband was not bothered. She worked on their land for household food provision while the husband worked piece (menial) jobs on other people’s land and earned money, which he used for his personal needs. The husband did not fulfill the provider role bestowed on him by society. Mai Mutevhe underlined that if there was no food in the house, “I as the mother have to see what I can do to provide for my children so they do not die of hunger.” I wondered how the husband would then come home and eat what the wife had produced, to which she replied that there was no way she could just cook for herself and the kids and not give him food. Not only was the husband not filling his provider role, he was an added burden to his wife.

Due to intrahousehold dynamics like this, Mai Mutevhe strongly felt that those who were single were better off using their brains to find ways of providing for and sustaining their families, rather than bemoaning the lack of a husband. “If you are a widow, especially those who are still young, do not go looking for a man. *Murume wako ngaave njere dzako* (your brain should be your husband). Mai Mutevhe’s account dismantles the normative image of the household that frames a male provider and a division of labour that leads to a smooth household. The Mutevhe household was not the only one in which the concept of the viable household was

challenged. The village leaders' justification for diverting resources earmarked for widows and orphans to married households also gave evidence to the paradoxical contradiction between societal expectations of a household running smoothly with a man in charge and the reality in the village.

Even as Magonhi, the cell leader, felt that lack of partners was a limitation for single women, at some point during our discussion, he contradicted himself as he gave evidence of the successes of single women, which he accounted to men's lack of responsibility and failure to take care of their wives and families. Both village leaders whom I interviewed, Rutsito and Magonhi, underscored the fact that a number of single women in the village were earning better livelihoods than *vakakwana* (complete sets). Magonhi gave the example of the Mutevhe family:

> We decided to include that family in the social welfare program because we had seen that they were failing even though they were husband and wife. They even have children who are married. But they are failing. The husband can earn some money but it is not clear how the money is used, too many statements (excuses) are given. So, what do we do when we see that the family is in trouble? We have to help them out from the provisions for widows since the widows are doing well.

Ironically, even with evidence of the success of single women planning and providing for their families, the perception that women need a man as a provider and that a household is only complete with both wife and husband persisted in most narratives. Much of what the married women shared of their own realities flew in the face of the normative image of married households that supposedly had the advantage of a masculine provider who brought money to the wife, who then planned how to use the money. From the justification of the allocation process the leaders used, married households are failing to meet normative expectations. Yet the narrative of the male household head as a provider persists. Goebel (2002) contends that gender

ideology grants male entitlement above and beyond male contribution. My research and analysis link the discourse of women's respectability to the silence over the (dis)respectability of men who do not provide for their families. In these circumstances where the male role of provider is the central masculine ideal and chronic poverty makes it difficult to live up to the ideal, reconciling women's independent subject positions with entrenched ideas of masculinity becomes difficult and leaves the foundation of male authority less certain (Wyrod, 2008).

In Village 9, sidelining single women from government assistance and attributing their success to waywardness or support from other women's husbands serves to discredit the single women at the same time it reclaims men's masculinity by restoring their provider role, albeit in "wayward" women's homes rather than their own conjugal units. The contradiction of this allocation process shows that the image of a household as the structure within which viability is achieved persists despite men not fulfilling these images. Men as a group in Village 9 are invested with powers or endowed with images framed around the family/household structure that do not correspond to current realities. These images then elevate and preserve their hierarchy in the village, regardless of whether or not they measure up to the images.

What is most important in this analysis, however, is that endowments, perceptions, and images of men within the heteronormative household influence how women view themselves in relation to the men as well as to married women. These perceptions of self mediate the relations single women have with both men and married women at the community level. Married women also form new ideas and perceptions about land rights and marriage as they review the livelihoods of single women against their own.

Conclusion

While historically marriage was always the most important site of women's claims to land and livelihoods among the Shona, land ownership and, most importantly, primary rights to land have opened up possibilities for women beyond marriage. The challenge of primary land rights to gendered relations is embedded in everyday interactions between men and women and women and women in the village, as shown in this chapter. As such, land is an impetus for changing social relations. It also creates space for a framework with which to imagine the long-term transformative potential of land rights with respect to gender relations.

Following Berry's (2011) argument that "in patriarchal societies gender, kinship, sexuality and property are co-constituted, and thus changes in any one of these arenas necessarily affect the others" (p. 148), this chapter has shown that the changes in rights to land represent transformative disruptions that have potential to dislocate the images of normative settings and encourage alternative interpretations and responses. Other researchers have similarly documented changes in gender relations at the confluence of state-imposed laws and practice and rural patriarchies in Zimbabwe (Barnes, 1999; Goebel, 2007; Jacobs, 1984; Jeater, 1993; Schmidt, 1992). These studies focused on understanding the circumstances under which gender transformation can occur. The analysis in this chapter contributes to this discourse by putting primary land rights at the centre of emerging gender dynamics in Village 9.

The most important contribution to the discourse on land rights and gender that the changing landscape of FTLRP presents is linked to the transformation of gendered relationships. In bringing men onto their land, women are changing the relationship between land and marriage. My observations about women's changing ideas regarding marrying and marriage and community perceptions of the men who come onto women's land reveal the tensions engendered

by women's land rights to patriarchal ideologies around marriage, land, and inheritance. The arrangements that landed women in Village 9 established with men as partners pose challenges to the social conventions and norms of land ownership and marriage, and consequently unsettle conceptions of masculinity and tradition.

This brings us back to the conceptualization of land as space that I extend in this thesis to argue that the subjectivities that land rights engender facilitate space for social transformation. Land as space and place is important in defining what it means to be a woman or a man, creating the contexts and outcomes where gender and other social relations are performed, contested, and (re)produced. Single women's subject positions derive from their ownership of land and the outputs from other domains of association and not from conjugal connections that bequeath the traditional subject positions of respectable wives, virtuous widows, or virgin daughters. They acquire their subject positions from the land, their engagement in trading, and their prowess in other economic pursuits that offer them independent and autonomous livelihoods. This shows that not only do gender relations shift in the context of changing rights to land, but that gender and other subjectivities are also constituted and contested with transformative potential.

These findings address the concern of my study in exposing the possibility that lies in the FTLRP and contributing to fuller understanding and support for "strategic areas for positive change" in gender relations in rural Zimbabwe (Goebel, 1999). Other studies have found that the FTLRP may represent transformative potential due to these land rights, while cautioning that this potential could be fragile (Addison, 2019). The caution over the fragility of spaces of change comes from an acknowledgement that these strategic areas exist and play out within patriarchal domination. This may just result in women repositioning themselves within patriarchy, leading to the reinscribing of patriarchy in altered social forms (Kesby, 1999). However, I argue that single

women have scope for long-lasting and durable gains, based on my evidence of the dynamics playing out in Village 9. I have presented concrete evidence of tensions and transformative potential brought about by primary land rights, upon which I build my argument for more committed attention to gender in tenure debates in the next and concluding chapter.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

This dissertation makes a case for the importance of primary land rights for women. It explores how the land reform process in Zimbabwe has shaped power and gender dynamics and how gender dynamics are articulated and experienced by different groups of women. I investigated the potential for land reform to transform gender relations by looking at the lives of single women who secured primary land rights through the FTLRP. To do this, I used participant observations and in-depth interviews to gather the single women's livelihood stories and experiences. Rich narratives of lives and livelihoods in Village 9 provide a tapestry woven from land, freedom, autonomy, and discoveries of self, on which my argument for the transformative potential of primary land rights is premised. In this concluding section, I present the key findings of this dissertation, reflect on their policy and theoretical implications, and then point to areas for further research and questions that gender transformation and land reform scholars might pose in the future.

Summary of Key Findings

I started in Chapter 3 by tracing the lives of the women of Village 9 before they settled in the village. The narratives they presented showed insecure and precarious lives when relationships with spouses ended by natural causes through death or when their spouses deserted them. In some cases, women reported staying in insufferable marriages due to a lack of options. The FTLRP opened up opportunities for women to secure land in their own right outside of the traditional structures that had previously tied women's choices within kin relations. Single women who had been marginalized and ostracized in their previous homes found many opportunities opening up in Village 9.

Traditional Tenure Does Not Safeguard Women's Interests

The narratives presented in Chapter 3 show women's vulnerabilities within a heteropatriarchal system that ties women's land rights to their subject positions as wives and daughters. Tenure discourse has tended to argue that traditional tenure systems can ensure secure access and use for women, downplaying the strength of power inequalities and institutional biases that constrain women to make effective family land claims. Yet all the single women at the centre of this research had backgrounds of precarious relations to land mediated by their relationships to men. All the women's narratives show that heteropatriarchal structures did not sufficiently protect their land interests in their previous homes. This finding is the basis of my argument for primary and independent land rights that the FTLRP extended legally and constitutionally.

Gendering the land question remains critical, and, while not essentially reducible to an argument for women's land rights, primary land rights for women should not be ignored or marginalized. Arguments that inadequate command of labour and capital and inaccessible markets are far more debilitating for women as smallholder farmers minimize the effect of unequal access and rights to land within patriarchal tenure systems for women and household livelihood outcomes (Whitehead, 2001). My study makes a case for land rights and broader agrarian reform that enhances women's access to productive resources. Single women in Village 9 have a better command of the available labour and capital within their households compared to married women. Primary rights to land have extended this autonomy and agency. The livelihoods and experiences of women in Village 9 offer prospects for nuanced and conceptualized analysis of situations where inadequate access to land constitutes a constraint on

women's agricultural and broad livelihood pursuits that other scholars have urged for (Razavi, 2003).

Primary Land Rights Provide Land for Material Production

This research has shown what land means to women, something which research that feeds into tenurial discourse has not sufficiently done. I argue that securing land rights for women holds transformative potential because of both the material and symbolic benefits of the land. First, women who could not claim kin land and had histories of landlessness valued their land in Village 9 for its material properties. Women married to non-Zimbabwean men, or women married to Zimbabwean men with antagonistic relationships to their kin, like Mai Chatiza, could also have difficulty securing land. Widows found protection from their late husbands' kin through the provisions of the program. The FTLRP provided landless women with the opportunity to establish secure homes.

The land also provided a material resource for agricultural production and food security. While productivity varies from family to family, evidence from the women's livelihood narratives shows that these women would produce more and sustain their families better with support. Support systems that help women maximize productivity include increasing women's access to and control of other resources such as credit, agricultural inputs, knowledge, and labour. Broader agrarian reforms that should accompany all land reforms can increase production and enhance livelihoods for resettled female-headed households.

Primary Land Rights Have Symbolic Benefits

I used an expanded conception of land to engage with the symbolic value of land expressed by the women in Village 9. A narrow concept of land that focuses on its materiality limits the extent and appreciation of primary land rights. An expanded conception of land

enables analysis of the symbolic values of land for women, even if there is no coherency with the material representation that manifests in surplus yields that most reviewers of land reform projects look for as evidence of land redistribution success. Single women's livelihood narratives show lives of meaning and self-respect, leading to reconstituted subjectivities that enable them to negotiate and confront heteronormative ideologies.

The possibilities of autonomous decision making and freedom created by primary land rights for single women and married women's accounts of the decision-making dynamics in their households underscores the difference that land rights can make in women's lives. Married women in Village 9 spoke about unequal decision making about production and resource use as a central feature of their marital dynamics. By contrast, single women with land rights were able to control the outputs of their labour. Beyond the strictly utilitarian view of land, the ability to own land was central to both single and married women's subjectivities. Married women felt that primary land rights gave single women not just resources but also autonomy and freedom.

The land has value beyond its materiality as a space for earning a living. It is also a space for selfhood, self-expression, and carving new subject positions for women as independent landholders and not as wives, sisters-in-law, daughters, or daughters-in-law. The broader implications of these freedoms and autonomy are essential for discussing the prospects for gender transformation, which is another key finding of this study.

Primary Land Rights Have the Potential for Gender Transformation

Land reform as a socio-political practice can change cultural practices that contribute to the subordination of women. The evidence from Village 9 shows how women use the land to reimagine and live a different identity of free, autonomous individuals. Their sense of agency has a symbolic outcome of land rights. According to McNay (2000), "a creative dimension to action

is the condition of possibility of certain types of autonomous agency understood as the ability to act in an unexpected fashion or to institute new and unanticipated modes of behaviour" (p. 22). My research has shown that primary land rights have resulted in self-awareness, self-sufficiency, independence, and autonomy for some women, particularly the younger women.

The right to own land has resulted in new ways of thinking, new livelihoods, and new living arrangements. Consequently, it has opened up ways of confronting underlying structural gendered inequalities, possibly in ways whose consequences may not be evident in the short term. What is socially passed off as natural and indisputable today, including women's roles and modes of behaviour, could be the outcome of past ideological struggles (Agarwal, 1997). By examining the changes brought about by the new land rights, we see how individuals navigate and negotiate gender, kinship, and sexuality in daily interaction, reconstituting categories and their meanings (Berry, 2011, p. 145). Not only do gender relations shift in the context of changing rights to land, but gender and other subjectivities are also constituted and contested. While historically marriage was always the most critical site of women's claims to land and livelihoods amongst the Shona, land ownership and, most importantly, primary rights to land, have opened up possibilities for women beyond marriage.

My research highlights new engagements with traditional marriage structures that show that land, specifically primary land rights for women, unlocks new possibilities for marital arrangements. The experiences of women in Village 9 reveals the malleability of certain norms, particularly marriage. I do not claim that this evidence shows that land rights are the only emancipatory tool for women. However, while the path for change is not straightforward and emancipatory, this research presents a micro and contextual analysis that suggests a basis for an argument for primary land rights in certain situations. The interface between gender and land is

contextually specific, meaning that the tenure arrangements that can secure women's interests should be reviewed against the context in which they are being made (Razavi, 2002). Some women may prefer joint rights in household land in some areas, while others may prefer independent rights to land as individuals. However, individual primary land rights have not been given sufficient weight in land reforms. The case of Village 9 has demonstrated that relations and land-based livelihoods have been reconfigured by the FTLRP. This reconfiguration transforms the lives of people in the village in gendered ways. Thus, there is room to build on the limited gains shown here and within other specific land reform projects.

Implications

Policy Implications

Tenure reform in most Southern African countries has languished due to socio-legal complexities and political sensitivities that are a legacy of the dual racially based system of land rights introduced by colonial regimes. Among these include resolving the distinctions between statutory and customary law and formal and informal tenure systems. Gender adds to this complexity. Until the FTLRP, the Zimbabwean government had ignored the gender aspects of land reform, hesitant to confront and alienate traditional land authority (Chingarande et al., 2012; Chiweshe et al., 2015; Goebel, 2005; Mamdani, 1996). The complexity in addressing tenure is framed around three key questions: whether implementation and other difficulties have rendered statutory law pointless; whether legislation serves any purpose; and, if there is, what can be legislated by the state, what cannot be, and why (Tsikata, 2003). While changing land tenure may be challenging, abandoning tenurial reform because of these challenges is not a progressive approach, particularly given the transformative potential my research has shown.

Even though legislation intersects with traditional ideological and institutional structures, women in Village 9 lean on legislation to negotiate traditional ideological and institutional structures. Women depend on their land rights as secured by legislation to alter social practices or challenge the basis of certain ideologies by such actions as bringing a partner onto the deceased husband's land. The long-term consequences of the transformative potential in land reform may not yet be so easily or readily appreciated.

Evidence from Village 9 answers the first part of Tsikata's (2003) framing of the tenurial questions. Indeed, legislation is crucial; however, there is a need for increased attention by the state to a wide range of issues, including a commitment to strengthening the policy's provisions, administrative streamlining of policy provisions, and education on policy provisions.[17] Weaknesses in the FTLRP in attending to gender have been documented (Chikova & Madebwe, 2006; Chingarande et al., 2012; Goebel, 2005; Scoones, 2014). However, the policy has been crucial where the women are aware of its provisions to negotiate the household and community-level gender dynamics that previously mediated their land rights.

This evidence supports the need for the state to improve the efficacy and quality of the laws that purport to address women's land rights. Strong legal institutions that guarantee women's rights to own property and inherit post-divorce and widowhood need to be developed and secured. Ensuring that women are also aware of their rights (which Village 9 women are) is also crucial. Land registration processes need to be strengthened to ensure that the legal basis of security is solidified.

[17] This has not been a limitation in Village 9. Single women and men and women in the village showed awareness of the provisions of the FTLRP.

Theoretical Implications

As shown in the women's livelihood experiences in Village 9, the primary strength of women's land rights is the potential it has for unlocking women's agency. There is conceptual tension in gender transformation built around the agency and empowerment of women, especially in situations where women's agency may not always be contentious. Sometimes autonomy may seem inconsequential, yet it is crucial to think about human agency within oppressive transcultural contexts in ways that reveal the potential that would be ignored by a rigid conception of agency based on overt confrontation. The single women of Village 9 who go about their lives without heeding the community's sanctions may provoke long-term changes that could be missed by focusing on confrontational agency. I argue from this that a conception of agency that is less reliant on aggressive action and more on the possibility for incremental change is more progressive. Village 9 women's actions that challenge traditional marriage may lead to the possibility of change at a deep and meaningful level. Scholars and practitioners need to be attuned to the manifestations of agency in ways that capture seemingly inconsequential autonomy and the circumstances under which it is generated, including under changed land rights.

Future Research

While the inheritance discussion was at the margin of my research and was limited to conceptual debate with the women, a few issues came out in this research. Married women appreciate the potential for independent land rights to boost household well-being and their daughters' life chances, as well as women's life chances in general. They are also interested in ensuring the continuity and integrity of the patriarchal household system. However, the threat to the family land when a daughter married was a matter of concern for the women, even though

there was no objection to the principle of equality in ensuring that boys inherited equally with the girls. The government has supported women's access in this first generation of beneficiaries and has also included daughters for formal registration of land rights. What happens to the land in successive generations and whether inheritance patterns change to normalize daughters inheriting is an exciting and worthwhile research agenda. A longitudinal study or follow-up research in this and other settings where women received land rights through the FTLRP that looks at future inheritance patterns on single women's land is critical to the tenure debate. Such research would offer a more reliable conclusion.

Conclusion

My research argues that the Zimbabwe FTLRP provides solid scope for examining both the arguments about provision of land title to women and the assumptions about livelihood enhancement in rural societies of the global south in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere. The discourse that argues that women's rights to land are secure within customary tenure systems does so without engaging with the meaning of land to the women themselves. Arguments supporting customary tenure ignore or minimize the history of insecurity that has faced women within some traditional land ownership structures. Evidence from Village 9 contributes to the broad discussion of land reforms and how to address gender inequality in access to and control of the land. While tenure issues continue to plague the discourse, this research argues that gender should be a central component to this debate.

Policy-level interventions similar to the FTLRP are crucial to extend opportunities for women to improve their lives. However, they do not address patriarchal structures of informal institutions that exert a heavy influence on gender structures within villages and households. Land rights have the potential to change women's subject positions in patriarchal societies

substantially. This research has shown the link between primary land rights, improved livelihoods, and enhanced subjectivities leading to the agency that encourages women to confront some heteropatriarchal ideologies that have been sustained over time. Primary land rights for women can unlock various levels of agency, extending the arena for contestation of gendered norms. A key question remains, however, of how far women can maintain inheritance rights to land. While the government has supported women's access in this first generation, there is no evidence of a solid structure to support generational inheritance changes that favour women. A gendered land reform program that supports land rights and secure tenure has great potential for enhancing livelihoods.

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