

INTSORMIL

Farming Systems Research in Southern Honduras

Report No. 3

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# Intsormil

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SOCIOECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS TO THE PRODUCTION,  
DISTRIBUTION AND CONSUMPTION OF  
SORGHUM IN SOUTHERN HONDURAS

A Farming Systems Approach

Report No. 3

THE ECONOMIC ROLE OF WOMEN IN A  
HONDURAN PEASANT COMMUNITY

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of research concerning labor and time allocation and economic roles of women in small farm households in a sorghum-producing area of Southern Honduras. It is designed to provide information on women's participation in production, consumption and marketing of agricultural products, and women's labor time. These data are important for identifying needs that can be addressed by the International Sorghum and Millet Project (INTSORMIL) and for understanding the potential impact of changes in agricultural production on women's work, status, and economic power.

Research on the roles of women and men in agrarian societies in the last few years has demonstrated that:

- (1) women's involvement in agricultural production, food processing, and distribution has been underreported and undervalued; and
- (2) agricultural technology, including new seeds and agricultural practices, is not gender neutral; that is, it affects the lives of men and women differently.

As a result, development projects have frequently ignored the needs of women farmers, failed to recognize the effects of innovation on the labor demands on women's time, or failed to extend effectively new technology to women. In those regions in which women perform little of the labor involved in agricultural production, their contribution to processing and marketing may be ignored.

The consequences of these gaps include the failure of projects to improve family well-being, even when production is improved, through the placement of inordinate demands on women's time; failure of production as a result of a lack of extension of knowledge to women farmers; a lack of adoption of new seeds and technology because the products fail to meet criteria important to women; or a deterioration in the status or economic power of women relative to men as new technology bypasses women.

In order to provide information on the roles of women in sorghum-producing areas of Southern Honduras,

field research was conducted in three communities in the highland area of Southern Honduras in which sorghum production plays an important role in the system of semi-subsistence agriculture. Ethnographic methods and a survey of adult women were used to collect information on task allocation within families and time allocation of women.

Our data show that, in the semi-subsistence agricultural sector, women were found to provide less labor for actual agricultural production than men. On the other hand, women were found to be heavily involved in the processing of agricultural products for home consumption and sale. Women participate in threshing and winnowing and carry the primary responsibility for food preparation. The major part of women's time, up to 50% of work time during the months of our research, was spent in processing agricultural products. Women and men appear to share in the making of financial decisions, including some decisions concerning crops.

In addition, the care of gardens providing supplementary foods and some income is primarily the responsibility of women. The care of animals, especially small animals such as chickens and swine, is also often a woman's responsibility. In this way, women control to a large extent not only the consumption of grains for humans but also for animals that are most likely to consume sorghum. For these reasons, their preferences concerning the desirable characteristics of sorghum may be as important, or more important, as the preferences of men (desirable characteristics for sorghum may be found in DeWalt and DeWalt 1982).

Women were found to control intra- and some inter-village trade both in raw agricultural products and processed products. The main income-generating activities of women are entrepreneurial. It is through these activities that women have a great impact on family and community economy.

Women also carry major responsibility for other tasks necessary to the maintenance of the household, including child care, washing and cleaning, and water gathering. Innovations that would require additional labor by women might interfere with some of these tasks.

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

During the period of June through August 1981 personnel from the University of Kentucky's International Sorghum and Millet (INTSORMIL) project carried out preliminary field research in Pespire, Honduras (see Map 1), designed to determine the existing system of production, distribution, and consumption of grain sorghum. One of the specific areas that we wanted to address was the role of rural women in the economic sphere in sorghum-producing areas of Honduras. This study examines the economic role of low income rural women in three communities of Pespire, Honduras. The objectives of the study were as follows:

- (1) To describe the patterns of time use and task allocation of household labor with an emphasis on women,
- (2) Analyze the economic contribution of women to the household and the wider community, and
- (3) To consider how the data from Southern Honduras relate to the theoretical approaches to women's roles in production and reproduction.

The communities described in this report represent highland communities in which semi-subsistence agriculture is followed. The conclusions of this report apply specifically to communities oriented to subsistence agriculture. Research conducted in lowland areas of Southern Honduras in which commercial agriculture is practiced was carried out in subsequent years. This later research is not fully reported here, another paper contrasts the highland and lowland areas with respect to the roles of women in production (Dewalt and Fordham 1983).

The present study represents an addition to the growing number of field studies focusing specifically on women as economic producers. The surge of interest in women as an area of social research is due in large part to the women's movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s in which, led by feminists, researchers began to question the traditional suppositions concerning the nature of women's roles and status. The movement has also made an impact on the international front, resulting in numerous research projects, seminars, and a great deal of literature devoted to the

theme of women and development. Previously, statistics collected on the agricultural work force systematically ignored women's work.

The increased attention directed at assessing the impact of new technologies on women's work and status has resulted in the realization that the effects of development efforts and the introduction of technology are not gender neutral. Because of men and women's different roles in most agrarian societies, the introduction of new crops, improved seeds, and other innovations may affect men and women very differently. In addition, because women's agricultural labor, including farm management and participation in farm decision making is often underreported, or not recognized at all, technology appropriate to women is often overlooked. Perhaps, more importantly, women have been excluded from the extension of new technology. Sometimes this is an active exclusion, but more often it is the result of a lack of awareness of the role of women in production, processing, and marketing of agricultural products. It is our goal, in part, to document the extent to which women in Southern Honduras participate in agricultural production, food processing, and distribution in order to provide baseline information that may be important in including women in the benefits potentially stemming from an improvement in sorghum production in highland regions of Southern Honduras.

Within the context of rural development -- and the development field in general -- more attention has been given to women's roles as reproducers rather than as economic producers. The result has been that development projects aimed at enhancing the production activities of rural women are hampered by an inadequate knowledge of the nature and extent of women's participation in economic activities. In addition, the increasing monetization of the rural economy has wrought changes in women's roles. Thus, the study of women's economic roles has become an area of interest as researchers seek to understand the full range and variation in the roles of women and seek to implement more effective and equitable development programs.

#### The Sexual Differentiation of Economic Roles

Every society has definite notions about what is "women's work" and what is "men's work." Indeed, the division of labor has long been recognized within the disciplines of anthropology and sociology as the fundamental form of economic specialization and exchange.

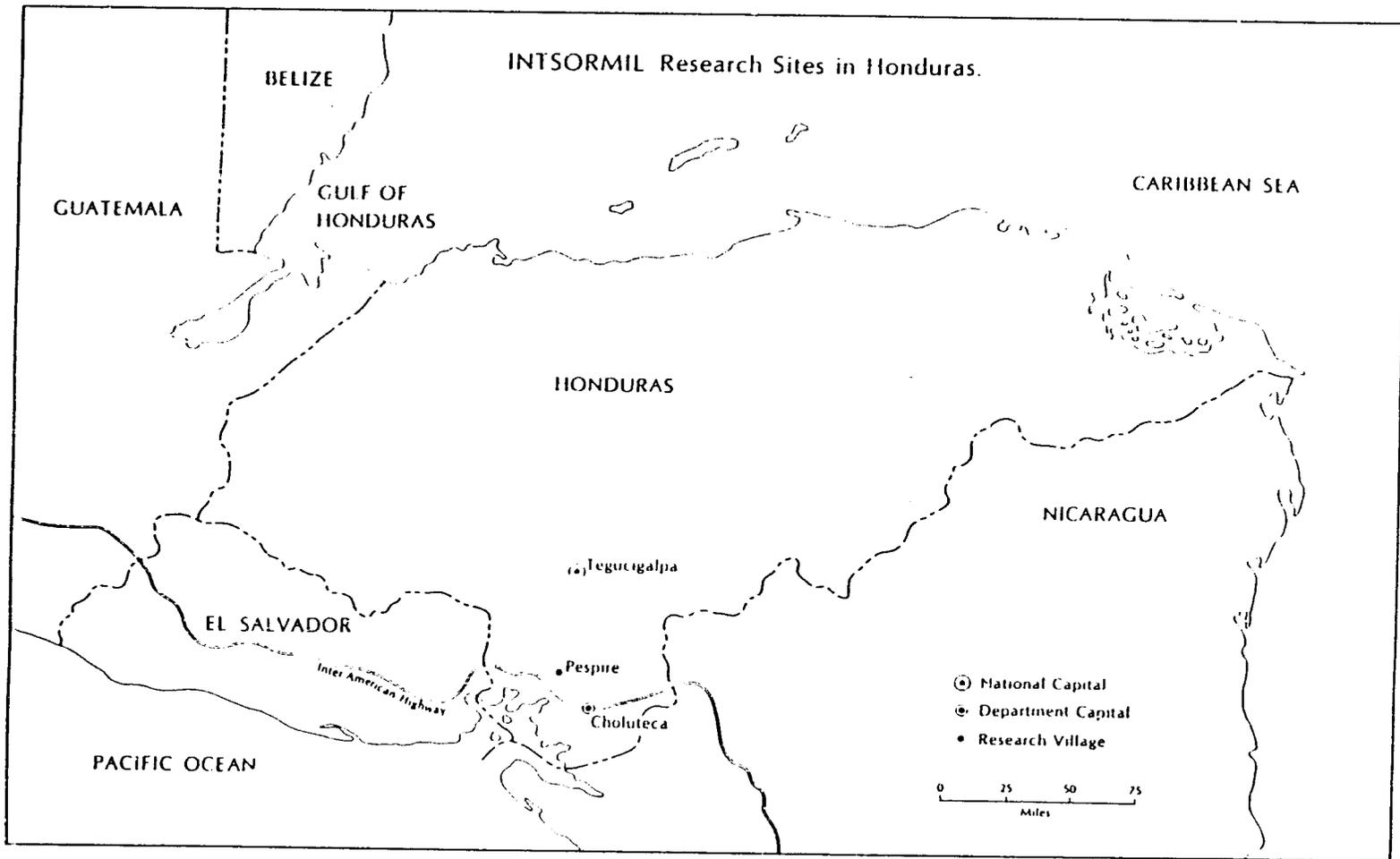


Figure 1. Map of Honduras with Research Sites.

Attempts to explain the allocation of labor by sex have focused on two basic factors. There are those scholars who focus on the biological differences between the sexes and those who stress the priority of socio-cultural factors. A brief review of these is in order.

Some authors focus on biological factors such as physical strength and the burdens of childbearing and childrearing as a principal explanation for the differences between male roles and female roles. D'Andrade (1966), for example, found that cross-culturally, male subsistence activities are typically those that are physically strenuous, cooperative, and mobile. Female subsistence activities, on the other hand, are generally physically easier, more solitary and require less mobility. These differences are attributed to biologically based male-female differences (D'Andrade 1966:176).

The anthropologist George P. Murdock has also focused on physical strength and the responsibilities of child care. He reported that:

Man, with his superior physical strength, can better undertake the more strenuous tasks, such as lumbering, mining, quarrying, land clearance, and house building. Not handicapped, as woman, by the physiological burdens of pregnancy and nursing, he can range farther afield to hunt, to fish, to herd, and to trade (Murdock 1949:7).

Brown (1970), critical of explanations such as that of Murdock, has argued that it is the demands of child care rather than women's inability to perform heavy physical labor that determines the degree of women's participation in subsistence activities. She based her assumption on the fact that universally, childrearing is not the primary responsibility of men and in very few societies are women excused from participation in subsistence activities. Thus, in order for the economic role of women to be maximized, either the responsibility of child care must be reduced or the economic activities assumed must be compatible with the constraints of child care (Brown 1970:1,075). The former pattern is one common in industrial and industrializing societies. For those societies without the benefit of the intercession of schools, childcare centers, or child nurses, the latter alternative is utilized. In these societies, then, women are most likely to make a substantial contribution to subsistence when activities have the following characteristics:

they do not require rapt concentration and are relatively dull and repetitive; they are easily interruptible and easily resumed once interrupted; they do not place the child in potential danger; and they do not require the participant to range very far from home (Brown 1970:1075-76).

In a reexamination of the subject, coded 50 different technological tasks for relative male and female contributions in 185 societies. The authors found that in the case of nine activities classified as quasi-feminine -- activities assigned predominantly or exclusively to women -- a "feminine advantage" is offered as the explanatory factor. Further, Murdock and Provost (1973) found that, despite a "noticeable feminist bias," Brown (1970) accurately captured this "feminine advantage." They argued, however, that another feature of these tasks is that they require the kind of daily attention that would conflict with male work schedules and male mobility (Murdock and Provost 1973: 3,211).

Murdock and Provost also identified a set of strictly "masculine activities" such as hunting, smelting, metalworking, lumbering, woodworking, and making musical instruments. The authors concluded that the advantage of males in the performance of these activities is their greater physical strength and the ability to mobilize it in brief bursts, together with their lesser involvement in reproduction. This "masculine advantage" was considered the most salient factor in the cross-cultural regularities observed.

Friedl (1975) also considered the question of child care and its relation to women's work. Friedl suggested that Brown may have overstated the constraints that child care puts on women's mobility. She argued that "the spacing of children and the patterns of childrearing are everywhere adjusted to whatever kind of work women customarily do" (Friedl 1975:8) and stated that it is more useful to examine the ways in which child care is accommodated to women's customary work. For example, Brown's formulation does not take into account the large number of societies in which female gatherers, cultivators, and traders travel long distances on a daily or seasonal basis.

Another factor in the relation between child care and women's contribution to subsistence was explored by Sarah Nerlove. Nerlove hypothesized that early supplementary feeding of infants is more likely to be a strategy employed by women who are required to

participate heavily in the subsistence activities of their society (Nerlove 1974:208). In a cross-cultural study of 83 societies, Nerlove did indeed find a significant correlation between a high degree of female contributions to subsistence and the practice of starting infants on supplementary foods by the age of one month.

One other adjustment to the demands of child care is the delegation of child care to alternates. Weisner and Gallimore (1977) suggested that involving other individuals in child-caretaking is more common in societies where women have a high workload: the work is of a nature that it requires mobility and/or is not easily resumed once interrupted. Factors such as residence, birth order, and family size facilitate the use of alternative caretakers (Weisner and Gallimore 1977:174).

In summary, the demands of child care are suggested as a general cross-cultural constraint on the extent and nature of women's participation in economic activities. The introduction of early supplemental feeding, the delegation of child care to alternates, and the spacing of children are all offered as specific ways in which women's role in childbearing and child-rearing is adjusted to maximize their economic participation.

Thus far, the works presented have focused, either explicitly or implicitly, on factors arising from basic anatomical differences between the sexes. These formulations are generally adequate for explaining cross-cultural similarities in men's and women's work roles but fail to explain the observed differences. A second approach attempts instead to examine the diversity in work roles that have been observed and concerns itself with economic, ecological, and environmental factors. The view taken is that male and female work roles are best explained as a function of the sociocultural system.

Ester Boserup's (1970) now classic study, Woman's Role in Economic Development, has been extremely influential in the development arena. Among other things, the work examined women's economic activities in light of the subsistence production system. Rejecting the generalization of "man as food provider," Boserup distinguished two types of subsistence agriculture: "one in which food production is taken care of by women, with little help from men, and one where food is produced by men with relatively little help from women"

(Boserup 1970:16). Boserup denoted these as the male and female farming systems that correspond to the Asian system of plow cultivation and the African system of shifting cultivation, respectively. The crucial role of women in African agriculture is contrasted with their lesser role in Asia and Latin America. (Although generally true that women have a greater role in African agriculture, studies done after Boserup's work document a greater role in agriculture for Asian and Latin American women than was acknowledged by Boserup.)

Boserup argued that in Africa, with its low population density, easy access to land, and low level of class differentiation, the result is a division of labor in which men clear the land for cultivation, while women are responsible for the actual cultivation of subsistence crops. In Asia, a high population density and the "technical nature" of plow cultivation led to a situation that discouraged women from participating in agriculture and facilitated segregation of the sexes, with the extreme of complete seclusion of women in some areas. Boserup's analysis points to a correlation between women's work and such factors as population density and land holdings. Boserup further projected her analysis of the different sexual divisions of labor encountered in farming systems onto patterns of women's participation in nonagricultural activities. Beneria and Sen (1981), in a critical review of Boserup's work, maintained that although the data are rich in insights into patterns and variations in women's work across Asia and Africa, most of her analysis is essentially descriptive.

Another very important theoretical perspective that influences either directly or indirectly, much of the recent discussion of women's roles is that of the Marxist analysts. Marxist theory argues for the priority of material conditions in determining social relations. Engels' The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State (1972) forms the basis of much of the analysis regarding women's roles<sup>1</sup>.

Engels's central thesis was that the position of women relative to men deteriorated with the advent of class society. According to Engels, the situation prevailing in preclass societies was one in which all resources were held communally by the tribe or clan<sup>2</sup>. Goods were directly produced and consumed; a surplus of goods was not accumulated for the purposes of exchange. The division of labor was reciprocal: both men and women were equally responsible for providing the necessary goods for subsistence. The family as an

economic unit did not exist, as it had not yet separated from the communal household. Importantly, men and women enjoyed equal status as both were responsible for transforming communally owned resources into socially useful goods and services. Moreover, Engels argued that the practice of matrilineal descent also acted to augment women's status and resource base.

With the advent of class relations, however, the position of women relative to men declined. Property was no longer held communally and increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few. The family gained in importance and was now the principal economic and decision-making unit. The new property owners were now concerned with protecting their newfound wealth and insuring its continuance within their circumscribed unit. The monogamous family provided a mechanism for the new property owners to insure parentage, and thus, the continuity of their wealth within the family unit. According to Engels, the monogamous marriage also meant the subjugation of one sex by the other. The change from a matrilineal to patrilineal descent system was, perhaps, the crucial blow and underlined the new intra-familial power structure (Engels 1972:120).

As production for exchange became more important than production for use, the significance of women's work deteriorated. In the era of group marriage and the communistic household, the task of managing the household (which Engels assigns to women) was as much a public socially necessary industry as the procurement of food (which Engels assigns to men). Within the new patriarchal and monogamous family, however, household management became instead a private service with the wife excluded from social production (Engels 1972:137). And with the fuller elaboration of capitalism, the separation of the two spheres became even more acute. The sexual division of labor within the monogamous family was now analogous to that pertaining between a public context of production and a private context of consumption and reproduction (Sacks 1974).

The division between the market/public and the household/private sphere formulated by Engels has been elaborated by some feminist theorists and forms the basis for much of their analysis. According to Beneria and Sen (1981), the feminist perspective places emphasis on the role of reproduction as the determinant of women's work, the sexual division of labor, and the subordinate/dominant relationships between men and women. Reproduction, as used in this context, refers not only to biological reproduction and daily

maintenance, but also to social reproduction or the perpetuation of social systems (Beneria and Sen 1981). Proponents of this approach maintain that analysis must focus on the two areas of production and reproduction and the interaction between them in order to understand fully such issues as the nature of sex discrimination, women's wages, and women's participation in the development process and their implications for political action.

### The Methodological Problem: Measuring Women's Work

With the increase in the number of studies focusing on women as economic producers, a very important issue that continues to emerge concerns the definition and measurement of women's work. The case studies indicate that women's involvement in economic activities is high; however, official statistics fail to capture accurately the degree of their involvement. Moreover, women's work generally tends to be undervalued and considered secondary and subordinate to that of men. The result is that most labor force and national accounting statistics underestimate women's economic participation. Furthermore, these are the statistics and quantitative measures used by development planners and administrators (Rogers 1980). Consequently, the problem is more than one of academic interest: it also has a direct impact on policy. In the discussion that follows, some of the concepts behind the labor force statistics in use are reviewed, and the reasons leading to the underestimation of women's work, especially in predominantly agricultural areas, are explored. This section draws largely on the work of Lourdes Beneria and Barbara Rogers who provide an excellent discussion of this topic.

Beneria (1982a) maintains that the available labor force statistics are questionable measurements at best, particularly as regards women. An official definition of "labor force" was initially formulated in 1938 and updated in 1966. The key points in these definitions reflect: (1) a concern with unemployment, the potential labor supply, and underemployment; and, (2) a link between the concepts of labor force and national product. Active labor is defined as "that which contributes to the national product plus the unemployed" (Beneria 1982a:122). This emphasis, however, leads to a dubious measure of the labor force as the underlying definition of national product includes only those goods and services exchanged in the market. Thus, estimation of the labor force, becomes

particularly problematic when confronted with those areas of the economy where the market has not penetrated. In the case of industrialized countries, the only major exception is domestic production; however, the problem becomes more significant in less developed regions where nonmarket production is more prevalent. Moreover, it is these areas of nonmarket production where women are concentrated. Efforts have been made to include this nonmarket sector in GNP and labor force estimates; however, there is still a tendency to underestimate the active population, especially among women.

Examining the significance of the concepts as regards the measurement of the female labor force, the 1938 definition specified that "housework done by members of a family in their own homes is not included in that description of the gainfully occupied, but work done by members of a family in helping the head of a family in his occupation is so included, even though only indirectly remunerated" (Beneria 1982a:122). Following this definition, then, when household members are assumed to help the head of the family, for example as agricultural workers, they are placed in the category of unpaid family worker. However, when these same individuals perform domestic activities such as carrying water or food processing, they are not classified as being workers. The rationale is that the "unpaid family laborer" is assumed to be engaged in an income-generating activity, while the latter are not (Beneria 1982a; Rogers 1980). These concepts have remained essentially the same since their initial formulation. Subsequent work has concentrated primarily on techniques of data collection.

Analysis of the concept of active labor reveals the ideological dimension of the underestimation of women's work. The basic question centers around the need to define who is engaged in the production of goods and services during a given reference period. Ultimately, it boils down to defining what constitutes "economic activity" and understanding the conceptual and functional boundaries between it and other activities (Beneria 1982a).

Beneria (1982a) argues for a conceptualization of economic activity that includes use-value as well as exchange value production and for a definition of active labor in relation to its contribution to the production of goods and services for the satisfaction of human needs. Her argument does not imply that there is no difference between commodity and noncommodity

production, only that the latter is also part of the realm of economics and, accordingly, must be considered.

To summarize, this discussion has focused on some of the factors determining women's economic roles and some of the conceptual and empirical problems involved in measuring women's economic participation. Two main streams of thought concerning the factors determining role/labor allocation emerge: those that focus on the biological differences between the sexes and those that stress the priority of sociocultural factors. On the whole, the biological formulations are facile arguments and deal with universals but fail to explain the diversity in women's economic roles across cultures. Those that stress the priority of sociocultural factors focus on such things as the subsistence production system, ecological adaptation, and economic factors. Feminist theory has contributed its unique viewpoint as well and has forced a reconceptualization of some traditional suppositions and concepts concerning women as economic producers.

#### Family Life and Labor in Honduras: The Role of Women

The aim of this study is to examine the economic role of women in three subsistence-oriented rural communities in Southern Honduras. Anyone interested in studying the family in Honduras will confront a paucity of preexisting studies. Kendall (n.d.) attributes this inattention to a lack of interest in mestizo family life in Central America in general and Honduras in particular. Those studies that do exist consist of a number of pamphlets and theses that mention the family or that focus on some particular group such as the Garifuna, Bay Islanders, or the Miskito Indians.

This section provides a description of rural family life and domestic organization, particularly as regards women, in Honduras. The following description is culled from some of the more complete and relevant ethnographic materials existing on the subject, primarily the work of Boyer (n.d.) and Zuniga (1978) who conducted studies in the southern region.

Traditionally, in Southern Honduras the extended family system in which several generations and/or the families of siblings live together as a unit was the norm. Recent census figures indicate, however, that the nuclear family (mother, father, and offspring) now predominates. It may be misleading, however, to characterize families as being either/or for there are

typically elements of both present. Rather, Boyer (n.d.) asserts peasant social structure in southern Honduras is marked by a dual orientation between nuclear residence and extended kin ties.

Couples express a preference for neolocal residence and usually locate close to parents and/or older siblings. If a couple is financially unable to establish their own household, they will reside with either set of parents, although more typically the male's parents. Boyer (n.d.) maintains that extended families are more usually found in instances where two or three generations remained on or near lands settled by ancestors. These families will more likely than not share labor and material goods. Multiple family residence will most likely be found where a family has little access to land. This arrangement represents either a forced "doubling" up of generations on a small amount of land or an intentional strategy to combine scarce resources. The majority of households in our sample are nuclear, accounting for 69% of the households, while extended households represent 20% of the sample.

Among the Latin American countries, there has been an increasing incidence of female-headed households. Honduras is no exception; as of 1974, 13% of the total rural households with children to maintain were headed by women. Migration and abandonment in marriage are cited as the primary causes giving rise to such households. Usually, these households are extended and Kendall (n.d.) finds that they are relatively successful even though women are proscribed from engaging in certain economic activities. One strategy that is commonly followed is the incorporation of adult children in the household. Elderly widows represent another group of female-headed households. Female-headed households may also be formed when, in the absence of a male head, the eldest daughter has to provide for an elderly mother or young brothers not yet old enough to work (Zuniga 1978). In contrast to the large number of female-headed households there is an almost total absence of solitary male households. Honduran men cannot maintain their own households because it is frequently asserted that "men can't cook" (Kendall n.d.).

Honduran law recognizes two types of marriage: formal marriage and common law or free union (union libre) as it is referred to in Honduras. The practice of common law marriage was well established during Adams's cultural survey (1958), and it continues today,

accounting for 50% of all unions. This high percentage is due to several factors. They include a lack of personnel in the form of a government official or a priest to perform the ceremony, the expense involved in formal marriage, and personal choice (Blutstein et al. 1971). The majority of unions in the rural areas are common law, although there has been a decrease reported in some areas due to an ecclesiastical movement led by French Canadian priests in the late 1950s (Boyer n.d.; Zuniga 1978). Twenty-five percent of the female respondents in our sample of three communities in southern Honduras indicated that theirs was a free union.

When such relationships are initiated, the couple will usually live with the male's parents or if able to do so, establish their own household. Apparently, free unions are not always initiated with the approval of the girl's parents. However, as the couple continue to live with the boys' parents, and when it appears that the relationship will be stable, the girl's parents will usually come to accept the relationship. While there appears to be no moral censure concerning free unions, formal marriage remains the ideal goal, particularly for women (Zuniga 1978). On the whole, free unions are stable but less so than formal marriages. Generally, however, there is quite a bit of desertion in both types of unions, particularly in the early years of marriage. By mid-life most relationships have stabilized (Kendall n.d.).

Children born to a free union have the same legal rights as those of formal unions. Zuniga (1978) reports that in the event that the union fails and the woman initiates a new relationship with another man, the maternal or paternal grandmother will claim any children of the previous union and raise them as her own.

It is acceptable for men to have extramarital affairs, one of the manifestations of machismo. The terms hijos and hijos naturales are used to identify legitimate and illegitimate children. No social stigma is attached to these terms; rather, they are used to designate the legal status of the children in relation to their father (Eoff 1977). It is left to the discretion of the father as to whether they wish to take responsibility for the child, although the parentage is usually a well-known fact in the village. Sometimes children of such unions are taken into the father's household and raised as a member of the household (Blutstein et al. 1971). There was one instance of

this happening among the households in our sample. The husband had several children, all girls, with his wife and fathered two children, a girl and a boy, by another woman. The little boy and girl were subsequently taken into the father's household. Blutstein et al. reported that, while hijos naturales may be incorporated in the father's household, they may not be included as a member of the family (Blutstein et al. 1971).

On the other hand, if the father chooses not to take responsibility, hijos naturales have very few legal rights as regards their father. For instance, they may not take the father's last name; they may not make any legal claims on any land or property belonging to the father, either while he is living or when he is dead (Eoff 1977). In such cases children inherit through their mother.

The division of family labor is by sex and age. It is the responsibility of men to work the land and provide food, clothing, and shelter for the family. Working the land entails performing all the clearing, planting, and harvesting. Men also care for the animals the household might own.

Women are charged with the care of the house and the children. This means providing all meals, washing the clothes, and cleaning the house. Women are also responsible for gathering the water and firewood, although men and boys may assist with these tasks. The care of the smaller farm animals also appears to be the responsibility of women. They may also bring in supplemental income by selling domestically produced items or reselling produced items. It appears to be an individual household decision as to who manages the finances, with some males maintaining absolute control over all income including that earned by a wife (Eoff 1977; Blutstein et al. 1971), or in other cases, the husband turns over his earnings to his spouse to manage (Boyer n.d.).

Child care is primarily the responsibility of women but beyond a certain age male and female children are socialized differently. Male children come under the direction of their father while female children remain under the direction of their mother. Children are highly desired both as an economic asset and a sign of prestige. Infancy and early childhood are marked by a great deal of affection and pampering. In answer to queries about childrearing practices, Eoff (1977) reports that parents expressed the belief that children under the age of five do not have reasoning abilities;

therefore, small children should never be left alone, physically punished, or frustrated in any demand. This rather carefree period comes to an end, and children are pointed to the world of work in order to prepare them for a life in the labor process (Boyer n.d.).

Fosterage is a childrearing strategy that many children will most likely experience at some point in their upbringing (Kendall n.d.). Fosterage is a solution to problems in childrearing that may be engendered by general economic conditions, the need for cash income, opportunities to travel, marital problems, and personal problems within a small rural community (Kendall n.d.). If such problems do arise, children will be sent to live with other family members. Typically, small children will be sent to older family members who live in rural areas in which the cost of childrearing is relatively cheap, and children can contribute to the household by performing such tasks as collecting firewood, bringing water, and running errands. The demand for fosterage, however, arises not among these older family members but within the household of origin (Kendall n.d.) Elderly family members are a likely choice because there exists within the extended family a certain responsibility towards grandchildren (Zuniga 1978). Ties, both economic and emotional, are maintained between nonresident parents and their children.

By the age of 12 or 13 children are well socialized in the roles they are expected to fulfill. Children of ages four or five can be seen scurrying about running errands or carrying messages. It is at this age that boys begin to learn the mechanics of working the land by following their father or older brother to the fields and learning to swing a machete or plant with a digging stick. An eight or nine year old boy can perform these tasks efficiently, and a 10 or 12 year old can usually perform as well as an adult. By 12 or 13 a young boy is proficient enough to draw a full wage (Boyer n.d.). Very often the eldest male child is regarded as his father's replacement and given preferential treatment during his childhood and greater influence in decision-making during early adulthood (Boyer n.d.).

Under the supervision of their mothers, girls learn the responsibilities of the domestic world of work. By seven or eight a young girl can usually be found caring for younger siblings, helping to keep house, feeding the animals, and developing skills at grinding the corn for tortillas and also preparing

them. A 10 or 12 year old girl then can manage a household and like her brother can readily fulfill the adult work roles.

If there is the opportunity and the financial means available, children enter school at age seven. Household tasks are then performed before and after school, and if an extra hand is needed, parents are not loath to keep their children at home to help with milpa preparation, weeding or to assist a sick mother (Boyer n.d.). Most families do manage to provide their children with at least a primary education, but very few have the resources for further schooling. In such cases, the boys will help their father with the farming full time or perhaps hire themselves out. The girls will help their mothers with the domestic chores until such time as they marry and start their own family. This may be a short period, for girls are of marriageable age at 15; boys usually marry at a later age.

The separation drawn between men's and women's work also extends to other aspects of their roles. First and foremost, women are considered to be subordinate to men, and their world is circumscribed to home and hearth. Unselfishness, self-sacrifice, and patience are often mentioned as ideal virtues for a woman (Blutstein et al. 1971). Upon marriage a young woman should be a virgin and women are taught to be submissive and obedient to parents, even more so than males, because "la mujer tiene mas peligro" (the woman is more vulnerable) (Zuniga 1978:52). In the event that a young girl does become pregnant, the parents will usually come to her aid and that of the child. Zuniga (1978) reports that many parents expressed the belief that it is better that the young girl and child remain with the parents to protect her from possible abuse from a resentful husband rather than rushing into a "marriage of convenience." In the event that both the young girl and boy are minors, or the girl is a minor, opinion was divided as to whether the pair should marry. All agreed, however, that the final decision always rests with the parents. The tolerant attitude towards pregnancy outside marriage, in contrast to our own North American attitude, is probably due to the high value placed on children and the absence of any social stigma associated with children born outside marriage.

To mark the initiation of, and perhaps commitment to, a new relationship, the first thing that a new husband or companero (companion, the free union term) is expected to buy his new bride or companera is a hand

mill with which to grind the corn for the many tortillas she will make in the time to come. There are also some noticeable behavioral changes among women. For example, in general, rural women are bashful and modest about their bodies; however, once one takes on the status of wife or companera, bathing and washing semi-nude in public is permissible (Zuniga 1978).

Once married, a woman's role is to care for the home and children. The maternal role is idealized and stressed as a primary source of female adult status. Boyer (n.d.) describes the mother-child relationship in quite glowing terms as "unquestionably the most emotionally important and symbolically emphasized dyadic relationship in Honduran society" (Boyer n.d.:3-18).

Although more women than men migrate to the cities, women do not have a great deal of mobility. Moreover, women are expected to be attentive to religious matters, more so than men, and their social life to be limited to church-sponsored activities and visits with female friends. Under the law, women have the right to vote, own property in their own name, and enter into contracts without their husband's consent (Blutstein et al. 1971).

Regardless of the legal aspect, informally men enjoy many rights that women do not. Whereas pre-marital sex is frowned upon for women and chasteness stressed, the opposite is true for men. Men are expected to prove their virility; one proof of this is to father many children. As a further expression of virility, it is acceptable for men to have many women at the same time. Other acceptable behavior includes the right to come and go at will with little or no restrictions placed on men's movements past adolescence, the right to engage in card playing, to drink, and to get drunk without a great deal of censure.

### Summary

We have provided a general discussion of some of the theoretical positions being used to study women and women's roles and a brief description of existing literature on family life in Honduras. With this background, we are now in a position to describe the research communities and the methodology used to examine the main topics of this research. The specific objectives of the study are to describe the patterns of

time use and task allocation with an emphasis on women; to analyze the economic contribution of women to the household and wider community; and finally, to consider how the data from Southern Honduras relate to the theoretical approaches to women's roles in production and reproduction.

### Footnotes

- (1) In addition to Engels' original work, this discussion also draws heavily on critical analyses by Eleanor Leacock (1972) and Karen Sacks (1974).
- (2) Engels' Private Property is a reinterpretation of Lewis H. Morgan's Ancient Society from which Engels gathered his ethnographic materials.
- (3) Engels's ethnographic materials were less than perfect; we now know that women are responsible for procuring food in many parts of the world. It is interesting to note, as Swanson (1980) points out, that in Engels' analysis men's roles changed while women's did not.
- (4) Rogers (1980) points out that this rationale also includes children who may, and often do, contribute significantly to subsistence.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SETTING, AN ETHNOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

The general setting for this research has been described in DeWalt and DeWalt (1982) and so will not be repeated here. We will, however, provide a general description of the Pespire region with a particular emphasis on ethnographic data on family life and household organization, especially as they concern women.

#### The Field Site: Pespire

Pespire is one of the 16 municipios (roughly equivalent to a U.S. county) that comprise the department of Choluteca. The municipio lies in the foothills at the point where the flat Pacific coastal plain becomes a series of sharply sloped mountains and narrow valleys. The cabecera (head town or county seat) of the municipio carries the same name as the municipio. The town of Pespire is located on the major paved highway that runs south from Tegucigalpa to the Pan American highway. This highway along with the Pan American highway allows Pespire and the whole southern region excellent access to the rest of Honduras and Central America. Amenities such as electricity, a sewage system, a post office, telegraph office, medical clinic, numerous small stores, and a number of well-kept modern houses give Pespire a very prosperous appearance. The 1974 census reports a total of 1,895 inhabitants living in the town (D.G.E.C. 1978).

The municipio is comprised of nine aldeas (villages), each centered around a principal town. Each village is in turn further divided into numerous caserios or hamlets. These outlying communities, in contrast with the municipal center, have few of the conveniences of modern life, and the inhabitants are much poorer. Limited bus service to some of the villages is available, but for the most part these outlying communities are difficult to reach because they are connected with the town of Pespire only by dirt roads and paths. During the rainy season, travel is even more arduous. As of 1974, there were 16,366 people in these outlying communities (D.G.E.C. 1978).

Agriculture is the way of life for most of the people of the municipio. In 1974 there were a total of

1,714 farming units in Pespire. The majority of those who own land in Pespire are small farmers. Those individuals with less than 10 hectares constitute more than 79% of all those controlling some land, yet they hold only 20% of the total land area. Sixty-one landowners, representing 3.5% of the total landowners, control close to half of the land in the municipio (DeWalt 1982). If the landless agricultural laborers were also included, the pattern of land concentration would be even more skewed. The other primary parameters for agricultural production relate to the steeply sloping topography of much of the land and the variable rainfall.

Four kilometers, a 20-minute drive or one hour's brisk walk, south of the town of Pespire lies the village of Cacautare. According to informants, seven hamlets comprise the village. Research was carried out in three of these: Cacautare, El Corinto, and El Naranjito.

Cacautare, the principal community in the village, is the largest of the three communities with 82 houses. The village has a very pleasant and spacious appearance. The road leading into Cacautare terminates at the village center, which is marked by the presence of the primary school and several other public buildings. Foot paths lead to clusters of houses spread about the confines of the village.

The majority of houses are one- or two-room structures constructed of bajareque (wattle and daub) in which a pebble and mud mixture is used for caulking between two widely spaced wattles. The roofs are usually of tile. Floors are usually of dirt but some are concrete. A few houses are made of adobe, while others use a mixture of construction types. There are also a few houses of brick, including one under construction. A very few of the dwellings are constructed only of wood stakes closely arranged with no caulking for insulation. This type of construction style is known as estacon. Other structures in the community include a primary school, a Seventh Day Adventist church, the partial shell of a Catholic Church that was never completed, and a building used as a meeting place for local groups.

The village has few services. There is no electricity, although one of the wealthier farmers has built a private generator. A water system was

installed in 1977, and most houses have a spigot and pipes readily visible. In the wet season water is available during most of the day. Wells are used in the dry season. There are quite a few conspicuously new metal latrines in evidence. They have been installed as part of a rural sanitation project sponsored by one of the government agencies. Except for a few midwives and injectionists (those specialized in giving injections), no health care is available in the village. Villagers have to go to the health center in Pespire, clinics in the nearby towns, or Tegucigalpa. The primary school has three teachers, serves 168 students, and offers grades one through six. Students have to commute to Pespire for secondary school if their families so desire and can afford the school fees. There are approximately four shops, known as pulperias, that offer goods such as sugar, coffee, rice, beans, corn, medicines, and an assortment of other products. There are also smaller shops known as truchas that offer a more limited assortment of goods. Shopping for weekly provisions is done in the larger shops in Pespire.

With the help of the local Save the Children Federation, the farmers have organized themselves and formed a grain storage cooperative. The other major local voluntary organization is the Club Amas de Casa (Homemakers' Club). As the name might suggest, the membership consists of female heads of households. The clubs are nationwide and are an extension service of the Department of Social Welfare. The agency provides instruction and assistance in animal husbandry, agriculture, and health and nutrition. The Cacutare chapter is making its presence felt through the establishment of a feeding center for children identified in the community as being malnourished. The Club had also raised the funds to buy a pig and to plant a field in corn.

Two other organizations worthy of mention are the Alcoholics Anonymous and the patronato. Although there were complaints from some of the women about husbands getting drunk on the weekends, alcoholism did not appear to be a major problem in the community. The problem was deemed serious enough, however, to warrant the establishment of a local ALANON chapter. The patronato is a community organization of household heads formed to undertake such projects as the installation of latrines and the construction of schools and roads. In fact the patronato has succeeded in bringing

water service to the village. The village also has a popularly elected official in the person of the village auxiliario, who is the representative of the government at the village level.

El Corinto is the smallest of the three communities with only fifteen houses within its limits. Most of the houses are of bajareque or estacon and are situated in clusters dispersed throughout the village. There are no other major structures.

El Corinto has even fewer services than Cacautare. There is no electricity as in Cacautare, but there is also no water system. Water is gathered from nearby wells and streams. Children from El Corinto attend the school in Cacautare, and like the residents of Cacautare, the villagers from El Corinto have to go elsewhere for medical attention. There are a couple of small shops that sell dry goods, spices, and medicines.

The farmers from El Corinto also belong to the grain storage cooperative in Cacautare. The Amas de Casa club in Cacautare includes women from El Corinto among its membership roll. In addition, the feeding center accommodates children from El Corinto as well. Although it is a separate community, El Corinto and Cacautare share many services, and in many ways El Corinto is merely an extension of Cacautare.

The same, however, cannot be said of El Naranjito, the third community in our sample. The hamlet is located two kilometers to the south of Cacautare and is situated in the foothills. The road leading to El Naranjito is very rocky and steep and is barely passable by car. The entrance to the village is marked by the presence of a waterfall, which empties into a stream lined with mango trees. This setting gives the village a very attractive and almost rustic appearance. Once past the stream, the village is only accessible by mule and foot. Rocky and steep paths lead to the houses, which are scattered over the hillsides. Because of the steep terrain, the hamlet is sometimes plagued by rockslides when the rains are heavy and frequent.

There are a total of 42 households in El Naranjito. Not as much variation of construction types is observable as in Cacautare. All houses are constructed of wood in either the bajareque or estacon style. Most roofs are constructed of tile, but quite a

few are thatched, a characteristic peculiar to El Naranjito that adds a certain charm to its appearance. Other major structures include a school and a meeting house that adjoins the school.

The hamlet has no electricity or water system. Water is gathered from streams found throughout the hamlet. Again, as in Cacautare and El Corinto, villagers have to seek medical services in Pespire or one of the larger towns. There are a few small shops, which stock assorted goods, or villagers make the trip down to the pulperias in Cacautare. Weekly shopping is conducted in Pespire. The school in El Naranjito is smaller than that in Cacautare. There is only one teacher for the 68 pupils, and only grades one through three are taught. For grades four through six, children must make the trip down the mountain to Cacautare.

As in Cacautare, the local farmers have organized themselves and formed a grain storage cooperative. In fact, the cooperative in El Naranjito has been somewhat more successful than the one in Cacautare. There is no Amas de Casa club, and the women of El Naranjito do not belong to the chapter in Cacautare. Some informants reported that at one time there was a women's club in El Naranjito, but it disbanded.

Honduras suffers from a lack of passable roads, and El Naranjito is no different. The lack of a fairly passable road has made the hamlet somewhat inaccessible. At the time of the research, a project sponsored by the German government was underway to build a road from Cacautare to El Naranjito and thus make the community more accessible. The project provides food for work. Men received provisions in exchange for working on the road. Although the provisions were used as an incentive to work, all of the men in the community were involved in building the road and its future completion was a source of community pride.

#### Survey Sample

Several procedures were followed in order to generate a sample for survey. Initial estimations of the number of households in the community that were from maps obtained from the census bureau in Tegucigalpa proved to be inaccurate. The maps had been drawn for a 1970 census and were found to be incorrect. Lists of

households obtained from key informants were also incomplete. In order to obtain a more complete list, and as we were interested in interviewing households with young children present, we obtained the names of children there in the past year from the Health Center that serves the communities in question. This same procedure was followed at the Feeding Center in San Cristobal. These sources provided us with a more complete listing of households. Names of additional households were added as the interviewing proceeded.

One of the constraints on the selection of the sample households was the need for households to contain children five years of age and under because one of the components of the research project involved assessing the nutritional needs and status of young children in the community. A further restriction was the need to interview men who had cultivated land during the past year. Those males who had other occupations or worked outside the community were excluded from the sample.

A one-half random sample of all female household heads was the objective. The sample was not completely random, however, because of the problems encountered in obtaining a complete list of household heads. Also, some women refused to talk to us because of their belief that we were "comunistas." Due to the political climate at the time, this was not altogether surprising, but nevertheless unfortunate. The final sample consisted of 52 households for which interviews with male and female household heads were obtained and an additional 16 households for which only interviews with females were obtained. Of these 16 households, five households had no adult men, while in 11, male household heads could not be contacted for interviewing.

#### Development of Research Tools

Interview schedules for both male and female household heads were developed. A detailed questionnaire concerning agricultural practices and economic strategies was administered to male household heads. The interview schedule administered to female household heads covered a number of topics. The first section contained questions designed to determine socioeconomic status, questions concerning travel outside the community, and affiliation with voluntary associations.

Section two asked for information concerning family composition, while the section three focused on economic resources and strategies. The fourth and fifth sections contained questions concerning diet and health-related practices and beliefs. The final section asked for a recall of the day's activities for the 24 hour period preceding the interview. The interviews were administered by the research staff and a Honduran research assistant. In most cases, males and females were interviewed separately.

Because of the focus of this research, it was important to obtain an accurate description of women's work roles. Several indices were developed to measure labor allocation. One of the methods by which participation may be measured is in terms of who usually is charged with performing an activity. Respondents were given a list of tasks and asked who usually performed the tasks in their household, adults or children, male or female. The list included a full range of tasks associated with daily maintenance, and household and agricultural production. In another section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked who usually performed specific tasks involved in gardening and animal care. This method yields an "ideal" version of task allocation, and as numerous researchers have pointed out, there is often a great difference between what people say they do and what is done in actual practice. This ideal version, however, provides valuable insight into the beliefs concerning appropriate roles and behavior for women in the community. Direct observation of the women as they went through their daily activities provided a cross-check for the culturally held "ideal" version given in the interview.

Task allocation may also be measured through a time use study that details what a person does, when it is done and how much time it takes to accomplish the task (Gillespie 1979). There are various methods by which this data can be collected: informant-dependent methods in which data are supplied by informants through self-report or some type of recall instrument such as a time budget diary. The other method requires direct observation or random spot checks of informants by the researcher (see, for example, Jonnson 1975). Both methods have advantages and disadvantages.

The recall method is efficient of research time but presupposes a population with high access to information about the time of day and for which this

information is culturally relevant (Deere and Leal 1979; Swanson 1980). In addition, an informant's memory tends to be selective; some types of activities are more easily remembered than others. For example, informants often do not report routine aspects of daily activities or secondary activities such as child care (Minge-Klevana 1980). The researcher dependent method, while it yields a great deal of detail, necessarily can deal with only a small sample and requires the devotion of a great deal of research time. Once a sample is selected, the researcher is then confronted with the problem of whose activity in the household is to be recorded. The researcher, unless there are unlimited research funds with which to hire numerous assistants, is faced with the problem of being a single observer confronted with numerous household members (see Swanson 1980).

In a sample survey to be carried out only once within a limited research period, collection of time allocation data in order to be efficient of research time and personnel must necessarily be based on recall. It was decided to record the daily activities of adult males and females. Respondents were asked to recall the day's activities for the 24-hour period preceding the interview. We also asked which household members were present when the activity was performed. This provided us with an idea of the activity pattern of different household members and also helped to counter the problem of underreporting of secondary activities such as child care. The 24-hour recall also served as a cross-check for the "ideal" version of task allocation given.

Respondents were also asked about income-generating activities engaged in during the past year in order to obtain data on all aspects of women's economic roles. The combination of these indices produced a complete set of data that would not have resulted from the use of one method alone.

### Basic Characteristics of the Sample

The sample on which this research is based consisted of 68 households. Table 1 presents the distribution of household types in the three communities. The majority of households, 63%, are nuclear. Sixteen per cent are nuclear families with grandchildren also residing in the household. These

households in some cases consist of an unmarried daughter and her children. In other cases, reflecting the practice of fosterage, the household is composed of the grandchildren and the grandparents.

Table 1. Household Composition.

Type Family	% of Households
Nuclear family	63%
Nuclear families + grandchildren	16
Other forms:	21
joint families	
nuclear family & grandparent	
single member	
single female + children	

Average family size: 6.5 persons

The remaining 21% reflect a variety of household types. Some are joint families; others are nuclear families plus a single grandparent living with married children or with single adult children. There are a total of five female-headed households. A widowed woman living alone accounts for the only occurrence of a single member household. Significantly, there are no households without a female present.

Most households, 67%, range in size from six to ten. The average family size of the population is 6.5 persons. At least one person 50 years or older is included in 44% of the households. Seventy-five per cent have teenagers from ages 10 to 19 years, and 87% include children under 10 years of age. The age range for the total sample is as follows:

154 adults (over 18 years old) - 35% of population  
 122 teenagers (10 to 18 years) - 28% of population  
 166 children (under 10 years old) - 37% of population

For female household heads, the ages range from 17 years into the 70s, with the following distribution:

under 30 years old	28% of female household heads
30 - 39 years	31% of female household heads
40 - 49 years	22% of female household heads
50 years old or more	19% of female household heads

The mean years of education for female household heads is 2.6 years. Twenty-one percent have no formal education; however, the number of years of formal education appears to be increasing. The average years of education is 4.3 for women 17 to 29, while for women 40 and older, the average is fewer than 2 years. Only two women had received higher than a sixth grade education.

This chapter has described the general location and ethnographic background of the research communities. In the final section, particular attention is given to describing the sampling strategy and the methodology used to determine women's social and economic roles. The following chapters present the data collected concerning women's time and task allocation and a discussion of women's coping strategies.

## CHAPTER III

### WOMEN'S WORK: TIME AND TASK ALLOCATION

This chapter will focus on the analysis of the data collected on women's work roles and time use. The first section presents data on the allocation of tasks. The second section looks at women's time use. The final section examines women's income generating activities.

#### Task Allocation

Figure 2 summarizes the results of the task inventory administered to female respondents. A list of 24 tasks was presented. Respondents were asked who usually performed the task, adults or children, males or females? Poor response was received regarding two of the tasks. Those questions have been deleted, and, thus 22 of the original 24 tasks appear in the figure. The figure also includes a question concerning task allocation, which appeared in another section of the interview schedule. A total of 23 tasks appear in Figure 2.

Figure 2 indicates the predominance of males or females in the performance of each task. Of the 23 tasks listed only one was said to be performed exclusively by members of one sex. The fact that there is only one task identified as such suggests that the sexual division of labor is not strictly dichotomous. In other words, there are very few tasks that will not be performed by members of both sexes at some time. While the sexual division of labor does not appear to be strictly dichotomous, there are definite patterns that emerge.

Women exclusively are the mealmakers. This is the one task said to be performed only by females. The results from the data on food preparation also bear this out. When asked who prepared the meals in their home, all of the respondents indicated that they or some other female family member carried out this job. Moreover, due to their central role as mealmakers, women are those principally responsible for the processing of food for consumption. The grinding and rinsing of corn and the rinsing of sorghum, all food processing activities, are listed as being predominantly a female task, although the grinding of corn is less so.



Women are also responsible for daily maintenance activities such as doing the laundry and cleaning the house. Perhaps, again because of their role as meal-makers, women are more likely than other family members to light the fire in the hearth. It appears to be the task of the males in the household, however, to provide the household with firewood. Women, on the other hand, are charged with supplying the household with water.

Both men and women share in the care of the animals. Pigs and chickens are seen as predominantly the responsibility of women and as we will see later, women also control the economic gains. However, the herding tasks associated with cattle are the responsibility of males. Women process the by-products for home consumption and sale. In addition to the cattle, males are also charged with the care of the horses, burros, and goats.

Participation in agricultural production is traditionally measured in terms of the performance of tasks associated with work in the fields. However, in considering the role of women, it is important to broaden the measurement and consider the constituent operations. In addition to field work, the production of crops involves the transformation and processing of agricultural goods; the provision of agricultural services such as cooking for field hands; the transportation, storage, and marketing of the final product; and the tasks associated with decision making in production (Deere and Leon de Leal 1981).

The results of the task inventory indicate that field work including the planting, weeding, and harvesting is the responsibility of males. In the total sample of 68 women, only one reported working in the field, spending the morning in the milpa with her husband and attending to domestic duties in the afternoon. Threshing and winnowing seem to be operations in which females are more likely to participate. If we look even more closely, we see that women's participation may depend not only on the operation considered but also the crop. It appears that women will be more likely to help with the threshing and winnowing of corn rather than sorghum. One reason given for this by male farmers was that sorghum "se pica" (it irritates) when threshed because of its small chaff. As discussed above, women are involved in the processing of agricultural products for home consumption and sale and, as we shall see later, in the marketing of agricultural products.

House gardens represent another important source of food crop production. Secondary crops such as sweet peppers, hot peppers, radishes, tomatoes, beans, and ayote - squash are cultivated. These crops are used almost exclusively for household consumption and are an important contribution to dietary diversity (Thompson, K. DeWalt and B. DeWalt 1985). About half (48.5%) of our respondents reported maintaining a garden. For seven households, this was the only land cultivated with secondary crops.

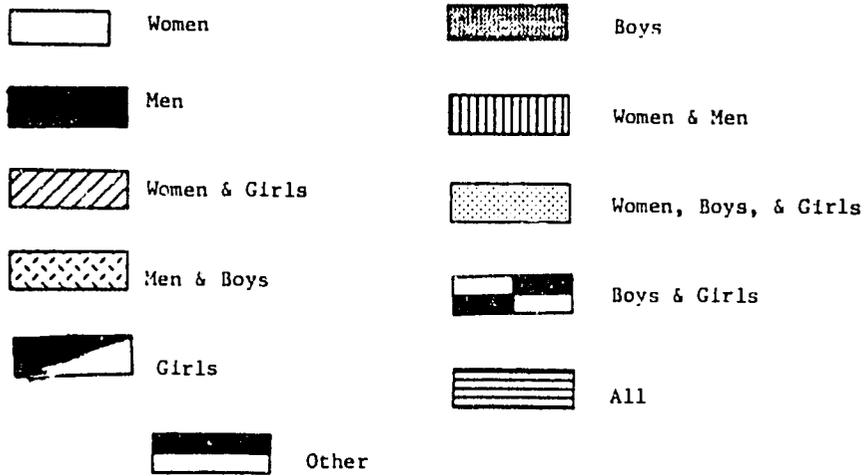
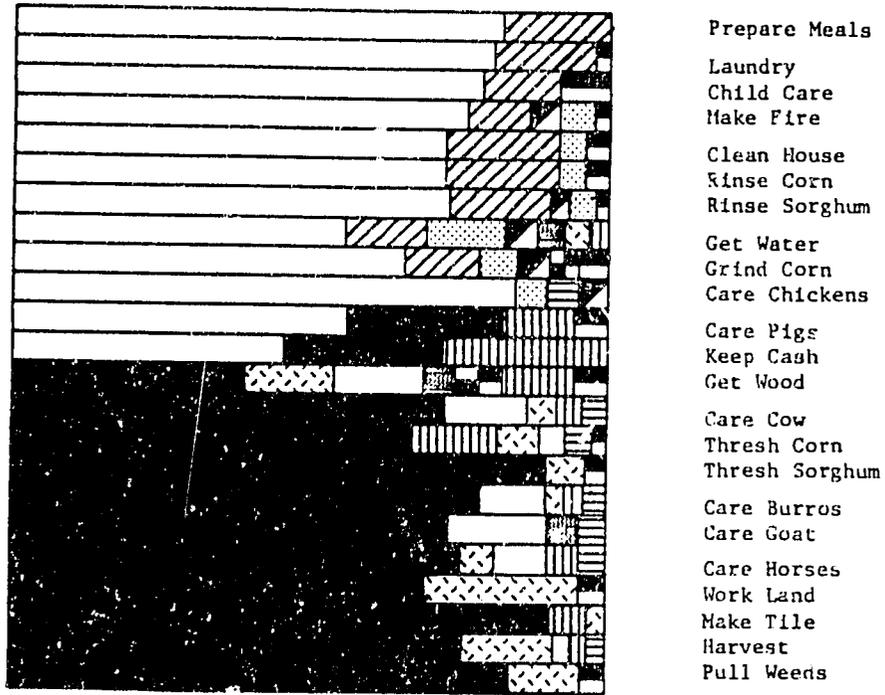
Respondents were asked who was responsible for attending to the garden. Again, we differentiated the tasks involved. In general, women's participation in the maintenance of the house gardens is high. Plowing and planting are predominantly male tasks but, a number of women reported that they alone performed these operations. Women are just as likely as men to harvest the garden. Very few respondents watered their gardens: most relied on the rains. Those who did water their garden, however, reported that it was primarily a task performed by women and children in the household.

Age is another primary determinant of task allocation. Figure 3 presents the distribution by age and sex of the tasks listed in Figure 2. The data indicate that children's work roles are quite extensive. Of the 23 tasks listed, only one task was said not to be performed by children. Not surprisingly, control of the family finances is clearly the responsibility of the adult family members. In the allocation of other tasks, however, children figure prominently.

Girls' participation is high in the predominantly female tasks identified in Figure 2. Boys, however, perform quite a number of these tasks as well as those that are predominantly male tasks. It appears that female children have to satisfy labor demands from the adult female family members, whereas male children have to satisfy the demands on their labor from both male and female adult family members.

The data in Figure 3, however, are not disaggregated by ages of children. It is the younger boys, particularly those below school age, as opposed to adolescent boys, who perform these "female" tasks. Children below school age spend their time at home with their mothers. Both boys and girls alike are utilized to carry out tedious and time-consuming domestic chores

Figure 3. Distribution of Task Allocation by Sex and Adults and Children.



such as hauling water for the household and grinding the grain for the daily preparation of tortillas. The latter in particular is a task that women eagerly pass on to children. This suggests that tasks that are considered inappropriate for an adult member of the sex may be performed by a younger member of the sex as evidenced by boys' performance of female tasks. In such cases, labor requirements take precedence over considerations of gender appropriateness of tasks.

The figure also suggests that whether age or sex is the primary determinant in the allocation of tasks depends on the task itself. There are some tasks in which sex is the prime determinant. For example, harvesting, working the land, and the threshing of sorghum are tasks for which responsibility falls first to adult and adolescent males and then to female adults and other family members. There are other tasks for which age is the primary determinant. The threshing of corn and care of the cows, horses, burros, and goats are tasks for which responsibility falls to both the male and female adult members of the household and then to male adolescents.

### Time Allocation

In order to get some sense of time allocation, a 24-hour recall of daily activities was administered to female household heads. Respondents were asked to report the previous day's activities from the time they awoke until retiring for the evening. The following descriptive account and the results of the quantitative analysis presented in Tables 2 through 5 summarize the findings of the 24-hour recall.

Most women regularly begin the day between 4:00 and 5:00 in the morning. Almost reflexively, upon arising, the fire is lit and a pot of coffee put on to brew. If the house does not have water piped in, as is uniformly the case in El Naranjito, then a trip must be made to the nearest well.

When these tasks have been attended, attention is immediately focused on preparation of the morning meal. The mainstay of this as well as other meals is tortillas. The grain for the tortillas, usually soaked overnight, must be ground and the various other operations involved in tortilla making performed. From start to finish, the process takes between an hour and a half to two hours.

By this time, the other household members have begun to stir. If the male household head is going to the milpa, he will usually have a cup of coffee and leave at daybreak, carrying breakfast with him. The other household members will breakfast later, at around 7:00 a.m. School age children must report to class by 8:30.

Left alone, or with the younger children, another round of chores begins. The breakfast dishes must be cleared and the house tidied. There are always clothes that have to be washed, and if water is not piped in, this requires another trip to the well. Animals, if there are any, also must be tended. Around 11:00 a.m., mothers in Caucautare may get an hour's respite from their preschoolers. Preschool children may be sent to the Feeding Center to receive a snack and to play games. Some mothers accompany their children, while others will send them alone. By 11:00 a.m. it is time to begin preparing the midday meal. A pot of beans may have been put on to cook earlier in the morning. Again, tortillas are the mainstay, and with some slight variations, the actions of the morning are repeated.

The midday meal is usually taken between 12:00 and 1:00 p.m. Family members begin to gravitate towards the solar as time for the midday meal approaches. School breaks for lunch at 11:30 a.m., and children scatter home. Oftentimes, men working in the milpa will not return home and instead a child will be sent to the milpa with the meal. After lunch, the household again disperses. Children must return to school by 1:30 p.m., and if the men have come home for lunch they are back in the fields shortly after 1:00 p.m.

A break may be taken after the midday meal. By 2:00 p.m., afternoon chores are begun. Expenditures for clothing are costly, and so they must be maintained. An hour or so in the afternoon will probably be devoted to repairing rips and tears. Some women use this time to iron or to wash clothing. Firewood or water may also need to be collected.

By 4:00 p.m., it is time to start preparing the evening meal, and the family again begins to reassemble. Men usually return from the milpa between 3:00 and 4:00 in the afternoon. Children return from school around 4:30 p.m. The evening meal is eaten between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

After dinner, the dishes are cleared and washed. Taking advantage of the extra labor, this task is often left to the other female household members. Grain for the morning's tortillas may be put to soak, but after these tasks are completed, women are free of household demands. The family may gather together and listen to the radio and catch up on the day's events. Alternatively, the men may go off for a short game of cards. Women may take the time to visit with a neighbor or relax with the children. As there is no electricity, bedtime comes with the end of daylight, shortly after dusk. By 7:00 or 8:00 p.m. most have retired for the evening.

For those women who engage in income-earning activities full time, time spent in house maintenance activities is much less. For example, the seamstresses in our sample reported that they spend the day filling their orders, beginning their workday shortly after breakfast and breaking only for lunch and dinner. Also the time spent cooking and cleaning may be lessened for those women who have teenage daughters living at home. Most families cannot afford schooling beyond the primary grades. Sons may join their fathers in farming while, the young women then help their mothers with the running of the household full time.

Formal interviews were not conducted on Saturdays and Sundays. Instead, we made informal queries as to the usual weekend activities. Informants reported that on Saturdays they usually make the trip to Pespire to purchase foodstuffs for the household. Men are just as likely to do the shopping as women. In fact, during the formal interviews we were quite surprised at the number of women who reported that their husbands did the weekly grocery shopping. On Saturdays it was quite common to see these men shopping in the pulperias in Pespire and passing through the streets on horseback or on foot with the provisions for the house. Sunday the women reported was a day of rest and relaxation. The men may go to play soccer or to fish or perhaps go drinking in the pulperias. Sunday is also the day for visiting with family members in other caserios.

The size of the local population usually increases during the weekends as relatives working in the city return home. Quite a number of women reported that their husbands worked in Tegucigalpa during the week. Indicative perhaps of the magnitude of this temporary migration, one woman plaintively commented, "todos somos solas aqui", (we [women] are all alone here).

Table 2. Time Allocations of Female Household Heads (n = 68).

Activity	Average Time Allocated (in minutes)
<u>A. Animal Husbandry</u>	<u>9.26</u>
<u>B. Child Care</u>	<u>35.74</u>
<u>C. Food Processing</u>	<u>232.33</u>
Make cheese	1.32
Prepare meals	148.38
Grind corn, sorghum	46.02
Wash corn, sorghum	9.04
Make tortillas	18.97
Make <u>cuajada</u>	1.32
Cook maize	8.60
<u>D. Food and Cash Crop Production</u>	<u>6.62</u>
Tend the garden	3.53
Work in <u>milpa</u>	3.09
<u>E. Household Maintenance</u>	<u>165.64</u>
Cleaning	39.93
Ironing	5.07
Mending clothes	11.69
Shopping (for foodstuffs)	3.09
Wash clothes	63.13
Wash dishes	32.71
Make fire	4.34
Take food to workers	6.18
<u>F. Fuel Supply</u>	<u>1.18</u>
<u>G. Water Supply</u>	<u>21.62</u>
<u>H. Eating</u>	<u>88.32</u>
<u>I. Bathing</u>	<u>3.09</u>
<u>J. Free Time</u>	<u>119.99</u>
Resting	97.06
Visiting	11.47
Listen to radio	.88
Pray	1.76
Reading the Bible	1.76
Religious Services	7.06
Total Work Time (A through G)	<u>472.39</u>
Total Personal Needs and Free Time (H, I, J)	<u>211.90</u>

In order to examine overall patterns of time use, the data were also subjected to quantitative analysis. The 24-hour recall method does not lend itself easily to such analysis. Because people did not use precise estimates in many instances, we made "guesstimates" as to the actual amount of time spent in an activity. For that reason, the reader should not view the following as exact measures but, rather, as approximations.

Table 2 indicates the average time in minutes allocated to each activity. Similar activities are grouped together under general headings indicative of the nature of the task. Table 3 aggregates the data and presents only those activities included in calculations of the total work time. It appears that food-processing tasks are the most demanding of labor time, accounting for nearly 50% of the total work time. Although the table does not fully reflect it, the operations involved in making tortillas absorb the greatest share of food-processing time. On the average, it takes between an hour and a half to two hours to prepare a batch of tortillas. This will probably be most true for the first meal of the day. Subsequent preparations will most likely not require as much time. However, if this task is repeated two to three times per day, it still adds up to quite a chunk of time.

Household maintenance tasks also absorb a great deal of labor time. They account for 35% of women's total work time. Doing the family's laundry, house-cleaning, and washing dishes are the most time-consuming tasks among the group.

Hauling water for household needs is a task that will most likely be repeated several times during the day. Here it represents approximately 5% of total work time. Given differences in the availability of services among the three villages, we might expect to see differences in the amount of time allocated to this task. A village-by-village breakdown does reveal such differences. Among the three groups, women in El Naranjito expend the greatest amount of time in this activity, an average of 34.2 minutes; while women in Caucautare expend the least, an average of 13.5 minutes. The greater amount of time spent gathering water by women in El Naranjito reflects the fact that there is no central water system. Water is gathered from various wells scattered throughout the village. In Caucautare however, most households have water piped

to their homes. Women in Corinto fall squarely in the middle with an average of 21.4 minutes.

The collection of firewood accounts for very little of women's work time. Again, there are some discernable differences by village. Women in Caucautare spent an average of 1.62 minutes and those in El Naranjito an average of .83 minutes. Although the difference between the two groups is very small, one factor that may be kept in mind is that Caucautare is much more nucleated than El Naranjito, which means that the residents of Caucautare would have to travel farther to collect wood. Another factor that may account for the small amount of time allocated to this task is that children are often given this task to perform. This was particularly evident in El Naranjito. Around 12:30 or 1:00 p.m. it was a very common sight to see boys and girls, usually preschool age, playfully making their way up the mountain after delivering lunch to their fathers or brothers working on the road crew. The little boys would usually be carrying a stack of firewood on their backs and a lunch pail in their hands. Female respondents in El Corinto did not report any time allocated to this task.

With the best of methods, the measurement of time allocated to child care can be elusive. Very often child care is a secondary activity or in many instances the mother is not the primary caretaker (Minge-Kalman 1980). According to the results of the quantitative analysis, approximately 7.5% of women's work time is devoted to caring for children. Surprisingly, these results are not very different from those obtained in more rigorously controlled time allocation studies. In a study of a group of horticulturalists in Peru, Johnson (1975) made random spot checks. He found that during a 13-hour day, adult married women devoted 8.8% (1.1 hour) of their total labor time to child-rearing activities. In a study of rural women in Upper Volta, time budgets of all activities in the first 14 waking hours were prepared based on direct observation (McSweeney 1979). Child care tasks accounted for 3.06% (18 minutes) of total work time.

We may expect to find differences in the amount of time allocated to child care given the age of the child. Table 4 displays the time allocated to child care by age of child. The breakdown indicates, not unexpectedly, that the younger the child, the more time is demanded of the mother.

Table 3. Time Allocations of Female Household Heads  
Expressed As Percent of Total Work Time (n=68).

Activity	Average Time Allocated (in minutes)	% of Total Work Time
Animal Husbandry	9.26	1.96%
Child Care	35.74	7.57
Food Processing	232.33	49.18
Food & Cash Crop Production	6.62	1.40
Household Maintenance	165.64	35.06
Fuel Supply	1.18	.25
Water Supply	21.62	4.58

Table 4. Time Allocated to Child care by Age of Child.

Age of Child	Average Time Allocated (in minutes)
0 - 12 months (n = 19)	63.7
13 months - 3 yrs (n = 38)	42.4
4 - 6 yrs. (n = 40)	39.8
7 - 12 yrs. (n = 70)	24.65
13 - 19 yrs. (n = 51)	15.85
19+ yrs. (n = 21)	15.4

Table 5. Comparison of Time Allocated to Child Care by Presence of Child.

Age of Child	Average Time Allocated (in minutes)	
	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
0 - 12 mos. (n = 19)	63.7	24.9
13 mos. - 3 yrs. (n = 38)	42.4	27.3
4 - 6 yrs. (n = 40)	39.8	30.0
7 - 12 yrs. (n = 70)	24.65	47.4
13 - 19 yrs. (n = 51)	15.85	48.75
19+ yrs. (n = 21)	15.4	39.25

We also compared the average amount of time allocated for those who had children present in the household and those who did not, again broken down by age of child. Table 5 presents the results. It was expected that, of course, child care time would be greatest for those who have children present in the household. As the table indicates, this holds true for ages 0-3 years. However, the average time allocated to child care levels off with the 4-6 age group, and then the trend reverses. One possibility for this reversal is that we may be seeing the effects of sibling care-taking. As discussed in Chapter I, children are introduced quite early to the world of work. By age 11 or 12, both boys and girls can fulfill adult work roles. It is with this age group that we begin to see a reversal between the two groups in the average time allocated to child care.

Among the other activities listed in Table 3, food and cash crop production absorb a small share, 1.4%, of women's labor time. Animal husbandry, particularly the care of chickens and pigs, accounts for a little more, 1.9%.

#### Formal and Informal Employment for Cash Income

Table 6 lists the principal occupations reported by female household heads. If we were to rely on this information alone, we would mistakenly assume that the majority of women are involved only in homemaking. Women nearly always reported homemaking as their principal occupation, even those who were the sole head of household. In order to elicit information on income-generating activities, female household heads were also asked if they had engaged in any activity to produce income during the previous year. Table 7 lists the income-generating activities reported by women.

The activity most commonly reported is selling processed foods. This is an activity that can be entered into very easily as it requires little capital, simple technology, and can be performed at home without neglecting other household duties. Snacks such as tamales, rosquillas, and rosquetas 2 are sold to neighbors. Preparation of these latter two requires access to an oven, not a very common item. A few women did have ovens and reported that they often lent or rented their ovens for use to others (Thompson, DeWalt and DeWalt 1985). Some women engaged in cheese-making

Table 6. Occupations Reported by Female Household Heads  
(n =68).

Occupation	Number of Cases	% of Sample
Housewife	60	88.24%
Seamstress	3	4.41
Teacher	2	2.94
Merchant	2	2.94
Housewife/ Florist	1	1.47

Table 7. Types of Income-Generating Activities Reported By Women (n = 36).

Activity	Number of Cases	% of Subsample
Florist	1	2.8
Small-Scale Sales <sup>1</sup>	23	63.8
Large-Scale Sales <sup>2</sup>	3	8.3
Raffle	2	5.6
Seamstress	4	11.1
Teacher	2	5.6
Injectionist/Small Scale Sales	1	2.8

This refers to such activities as selling snacks, fruits and vegetables, or farm products.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to such activities as operating a trucha or pulperia.

to earn cash income. This requires ownership of a cow or purchasing the necessary ingredients. In addition to these processed foods produced at home, many women buy and then resell items such as candy and bread. Still others sell farm products such as milk, eggs, and produce.

The return on investment in these activities can represent a considerable contribution to the household income. One informant reported that she earned four to five lempiras (\$2.00-\$2.50) a day by selling small snacks such as rosquillos and tamales. The usual wage for farm laborers was \$2.00 per day in 1981. Sales during holidays and sports events were reported as especially good.

With the profits gained from these petty trading activities, some women manage to expand their operations and set up small stores called truchas. These enterprises usually occupy one room of the house. A variety of goods is stocked including rice, sugar, beans, canned juices, cigarettes, matches, candy, gum, medicines, lard, sardines, and coffee. A few of the owners were even able to invest in a gas-powered refrigerator that enabled them to offer cold beverages, a very welcome commodity, for sale.

Some shopowners work on consignment for the larger stores in Pespire and obtain their goods in this manner. Others purchased their goods directly. For example, one shopkeeper who had recently opened a trucha obtained her goods by buying them wholesale in Tegucigalpa. They were then transported to Pespire by the owner at which point she hired a car at the cost of 10 lempiras (\$5.00) to transport the goods to Cacautare.

There were quite a number of truchas in operations. Five of the six truchas in the village of Cacautare were owned by women. When asked whether the community was large enough to enable this many stores to make a profit, informants pointed out that the truchas serve not only Cacautare but also the surrounding hamlet of Palo Grande as well.

Women may also gain cash income by sponsoring raffles. Items such as money, pots, dishes, or clothing are raffled. Two of the women in our sample were supporting their families through these efforts.

Other remunerative activities reported by women included those of seamstress, teacher, and injectionist. This last activity deserves comment. The health care system in Honduras is such that individuals can routinely obtain medicines that in the U.S. are strictly controlled. Some of these medications may require administration by injection in which cases the services of an injectionist are sought. We know of at least two women in the villages studied, one of whom was included in our sample, who were able to perform this service. It appears that the system of instruction is rather haphazard. One of the women reported that she had acquired the skill through a special course in San Lorenzo. The other woman reported that a friend had taught her how to give injections. This injectionist received thirty centavos (\$.15) per injection. It was not very clear if it was also the responsibility of the injectionist to obtain the required medication. In one case, the individual brought all the necessary items; however, in another case, the injectionist had obtained all the necessary materials.

Thirteen of the women surveyed owned sewing machines, but only four reported that they earned money as seamstresses. The extension agent in Pespire conducted a sewing class but none of the women reported that she had learned through this program. Two of the women, one of whom is the principal, are teachers in the local school. There are a total of three teachers in the school.

Permanent and temporary migration for wage labor is a common strategy pursued by men but the literature on migration in Latin America indicates that women migrate to urban areas to a greater extent than men (Jelin 1977). In our sample, 12 women (18%) reported that they had at one time or another migrated to other areas in search of work. One woman reported having traveled to Tegucigalpa as recently as the previous week in order to work as a street vendor. Most typically, women migrate to the capital or the North Coast, where, with little or no education or skills to sell, they join the growing ranks of domestic servants. Occupations listed for nonresident migrant females included petty trader, merchant, waitress, teacher, factory worker, store clerk, nursery school attendant, seamstress, and domestic servant.

## Conclusions

This chapter has presented data on women's time and task allocation. The major findings are:

- (1) The sexual division of labor is fairly fluid. Most tasks can be performed by both sexes. Tasks in which women predominate are food processing, household maintenance, and child care. Men predominate in the tasks associated with field work including the planting, weeding, and harvesting.
- (2) Children's work roles are extensive.
- (3) Women spend most of their time in food preparation and household maintenance tasks. Child care accounts for relatively little of women's time.
- (4) Women engage in several income-generating activities with most women concentrated in small scale petty trade.

In the following chapter, a number of case studies focusing on women's coping strategies will be presented.

### Footnotes

- (1) One question asked who cared for the animals, the question was posed too broadly. The other question asked for task allocation concerning the making of pottery. The task was culturally inappropriate for the area.
- (2) These latter two are hard cookie-like pastries made of maize or sorghum and other ingredients. Rosquillas are made with cuajada, while rosquetas are not.

## CHAPTER IV

### STAYING AFLOAT: WOMEN'S COPING STRATEGIES

The previous chapter sought to uncover and document women's economic roles. In this chapter, we would like to focus on women's coping strategies. Case studies will be presented to illustrate women's tactics for coping. The discussion is organized as follows: the first section identifies and discusses the various strategies; the second presents case studies of seven women, representative of different household types and socioeconomic status; the third and final section of this chapter relates the individual case studies to the strategies discussed in the first section.

#### Tactics for Survival

From our perspective, there are six strategies that women follow in attempting to cope with the circumstances in which they find themselves. Although we will discuss these as separate strategies, most women use several of these strategies; that is, they combine strategies in various combinations in order to continue coping with their social and natural environment.

1. The "ideal" strategy;
2. Participation in income-generating activity;
3. Wage labor;
4. Contributions from non-resident migrant workers;
5. Incorporation of older children into the household; and
6. Contributions from other sources - i.e. parents, siblings, men.

Ideal strategy. Drawing on the ethnographic data, the first strategy identified is what we will refer to as the "ideal" strategy. In peasant society, the family is the unit through which individuals seek to satisfy their needs. The Honduran cultural ideal as concerns the family economy is that the male provides the subsistence base, while women's contributions to the economic unit are made as private household workers. The subsistence base for most families is provided by farming. In such instances women contribute not only as

private household workers, but they may also serve as unpaid agricultural laborers.

Participation in income-generating activity. In an agrarian economy such as this, access to land is the most important productive resource. As discussed in earlier sections of this work, access to land in Southern Honduras is limited. Moreover, as the rural economy has become more monetized, subsistence production alone cannot fully maintain the domestic unit. In response to such realities, many women have expanded their role as private household workers and have begun to participate in income-generating activities. Of the 68 women interviewed, 52% reported engaging in some income-generating activity. The majority are concentrated in trading activities, with most engaged in small-scale petty sales.

Wage labor. Women, like men, may sell their labor power. However, their employment opportunities are much more limited than those of men. For example, while men may engage in casual labor as farm workers, this is not a viable option for women in this area. Instead, they are more likely to do such activities as take in laundry, hire themselves out for domestic work, or do other mostly domestically oriented jobs.

Contributions from non-resident family members. Permanent and temporary migration in search for wage labor is a strategy pursued by both men and women. The migration of these individuals does not always mean the severance of economic ties. These non-resident migrant workers may be depended upon to send money and/or provisions to their relatives who remain behind. Contributions from migrant family members represent an additional resource for the household.

Incorporation of older children into the household. Another strategy that may be utilized is the incorporation of older children into the household. They are an additional labor source to assist with the farming and/or a source of cash income. This is a strategy pursued most often by older female household heads with children to support (Kendall 1978).

Contributions from other sources. With marriage, women are removed from parents' authority and parents' responsibility to support them. However, in times of need, contributions from parents and also siblings are often solicited. In the case of single women with

children to support, contributions from men are often solicited. Much has been written in the literature on Caribbean domestic organization concerning the prevalence of female-headed matrifocally focused households. These households often have a high turnover of personnel and are characterized by female multiple-mating patterns and unstable unions. While earlier researchers regarded these households as deviant and in need of reform, opinion among more current researchers has been that multiple mating is a means by which women seek to cope with adverse socioeconomic conditions (Brown 1970).

In sum, there are a number of strategies that women may utilize in order to satisfy their needs and those of their families. The next section presents case studies of seven women, representative of different household types and socioeconomic status.

### Case Studies

The first three case studies are of women who are co-heads of households:

Eugenia. Eugenia and her family live in Caucautare. There are eight members in the household including Eugenia, 39, and her husband Javier, 43. The couple has four children, all of whom are still living at home. The eldest son, 22, helps his father with the farming. The elder daughter, also 22, is married. She, her husband, and their eight-months old child live with her parents. The son-in-law is a long distance bus driver. His job takes him away from Caucautare during the week, but he usually returns on the weekends to visit his family. The younger children, a boy and a girl, are ages 13 and 11, respectively. They are still in school.

The family occupies a large four-room wooden house. The house is less than a year old. Eight months prior to the time of the interview, the family moved from Corinto to this house in Caucautare. Both Eugenia and her husband were born and have lived in the aldea all their lives. Neither one reports ever having left to find work; only occasional excursions have been made for medical consultations.

Eugenia is very active in the Club Amas de Casa (Homemaker's Club). She holds the office of

vicepresident and is charged with the care of the club's pig. Her husband, Javier, once held the office of auxiliar. He is currently a member of the patronato. However, he is not a member of the grain storage cooperative.

The family owns 27 manzanas of land. The land was purchased two years ago for approximately 3,000 lempiras with money gained from the sale of some of the family's livestock. Before buying the land, the family had to rent land to cultivate. The crops grown include corn, sorghum, red beans, green beans, watermelon, and ayote. Animals owned include a cow, a horse, a burro, and some pigs. Like quite a few others in the community, the family lost their chickens to an epidemic that ran through the area the previous year. Last year Javier reported about 5,200 lempira gained from the sale of crops and livestock.

In addition to their farming activities, Eugenia and her husband had recently gone into business. Only a month prior to the interview, the couple opened a trucha. The store occupies one corner of their living room and stocks beans, rice sugar, juices, candy, sodas, bread, and toys. The goods for the store are bought on credit from one of the shopowners in Pespire who also brings the supplies to them in Caucautare. Eugenia explained that they bought the goods on consignment because their cash flow is such that they only have cash after the harvest. They had also invested in a gas-powered refrigerator so that they can now sell cold drinks.

Sarita. Sarita and her common-law husband, Manuel, also live in Caucautare. They are a relatively young couple. Sarita is 30, and her compañero Manuel is 34. They have six children, four boys and two girls, ranging in age from 2 to 12. The three eldest, ages 12, 10, and 7, attend the local school. The younger ones, ages 5, 4, and 2 remain at home with Sarita. The family lives in a one-room estacón type house. They own the home and have lived there for the past six years.

Sarita was born in the village of Esquimay but grew up in the neighboring hamlet of Palo Grande. Her compañero Manuel was born and raised in Caucautare. Sarita has never left the aldea to search for work. Manuel, on the other hand, has migrated in search of work quite a bit: he spent two years on the North Coast

in San Pedro Sula working on one of the sugar cane plantations, three years in Tegucigalpa working in a market there, a year in Choluteca working as an agricultural laborer, and a year in western Honduras working as a mason's helper. At the time of the interview he reported that he was planning to return to Tegucigalpa to become a bus driver.

Sarita is a member of Amas de Casa, but it does not appear that she is very active in the club. She expressed some dissatisfaction with the direction of the club's feeding program and charged that there was infighting among the members. Manuel is a member of the Federation's grain storage cooperative, and at one time he served as president.

Sarita does not engage in any income-earning activities. Manuel's principal occupation is farming. His mother owns 12 manzanas of land, seven of which he cultivated the previous year. He owns the one and a half manzanas surrounding the house. Crops grown include corn, sorghum, beans, yucca, and ayote. The family also has several fruit trees - mango, plum, orange, and lemon - which yield enough for the family's consumption as well as enough to market. They also own a number of pigs and chickens. The sale of their various agricultural products returned roughly 1,100 lempira.

Carmen. Carmen's husband Vicente is the largest landowner in our sample and one of the most successful farmers in the area. The family lives in El Naranjito. The household is quite large with ten members including Anna Maria, 49, and her husband, Vicente, 52. The couple has five children living at home. The eldest, a son, is 20. He helps Vicente with the farming and works as a guard at a transmission station located a few kilometers from El Naranjito. The four younger children are girls, ages 12, 10, 8, and 7. They all attend the local school. In addition to their own children, Carmen and Vicente had taken in three boys, ranging in age from 6 to 10. After their father died their mother was financially unable to care for them so Carmen and Vicente agreed to raise them. They did not indicate that the boys were any relation to them.

The couple also has four children living outside the home. One daughter is in El Naranjito and another in Caucautare. They are both married and have families

of their own. There are two sons living in San Pedro Sula. One has a small business selling a variety of "five and dime store" types of items, and the younger one works for him and goes to school at night. There is also another married daughter living in El Naranjito Sula. They do not contribute to the upkeep of their parents' household.

Carmen was born and grew up in the neighboring hamlet of Palo Grande. Her husband, Vicente, was born and raised in Caucautare. The family occupies a large wooden house situated at the very top of the hill, affording a quite picturesque view of El Naranjito and Caucautare in the valley below. The couple has lived in the house for thirty years. Vicente's father owned the land and requested that Vicente and his new bride move from Caucautare to El Naranjito because they were losing some of the fruit on the land. Carmen and Vicente also own another home further up the mountain.

The family owns 16 manzanas of land surrounding their home in El Naranjito. The land is filled with fruit trees of all description. In addition to these 16 manzanas, Carmen and her husband own 40 manzanas on which they grow corn, sorghum, rice, red beans, and several varieties of squash and melon. Twenty of the 40 manzanas were Carmen's inheritance from her father. Her father owned about 100 manzanas of land which he divided among his children, giving each about 20 manzanas. Vicente bought the other 20 manzanas.

They also have quite a large inventory of livestock. As a sideline, Vicente was experimenting with raising fish. The fish bed was quite large and had a filtering system which Vicente and his son installed. The fish were not yet large enough to eat. All in all, the family was quite self sufficient.

The following four case studies presented are female-headed households:

Maritza. Maritza, 42, lives in Caucautare with six of her children and one grandchild. The children range in ages from 1 to 24. The two older children, a son and a daughter, are from a previous union. The son, 24, is single. He moved from Tegucigalpa back to Caucautare six months ago because he could not find a job. He works as a sometime carpenter and bus driver and had managed to find some carpentering and painting jobs in

Caucautare. The elder daughter, 20, is also single. She has a one and a half year old daughter.

The four younger children are the product of a subsequent union. The father of the children also lives in Caucautare but in a separate residence. The children range in ages from 3 to 12. The three older ones attend the local school. The family lives in a one-room estacón type house with a dirt floor and tile roof. The house is located in the center of Caucautare, next door to the building that the Club Amas de Casa uses for its feeding program. Maritza owns her home.

Maritza also has three children living in the capital, Tegucigalpa. The eldest, a son, 22, is married and works in a gas station. He left home at 16 to look for work. He returns home about every four months to visit his mother. Another daughter, 18, is single and works in a nursery school. She left home at 13 to continue her education. The youngest, a son, 14, had left seven months prior, also to continue with his education.

Maritza is a member of Amas de Casa and the patronato. She was born in Orocuina, a town near Choluteca, but has lived in Caucautare in the same house for the past 24 years. She does not report ever having left the village to work elsewhere.

Maritza supports herself and her family through a combination of activities. She works as a milkmaid for one of the large farmers. In return for her services she receives a small wage and milk for her family. She also sells snacks such as enchiladas and tamales. Her efforts are supplemented by income gained from her son's odd jobs. In addition, the two older children living in Tegucigalpa send her money and provisions. Her elder daughter who still lives at home does not generate any income but assists her mother with the household tasks and the younger children.

Nivia. Nivia and her family live in El Naranjito. The household consists of Nivia, 43, and her six children who range in age from 5 to 20. The two older children, sons aged 20 and 18, have finished school and are now farming. A daughter, 13, attends school in Caucautare. The two younger girls, 11 and 10, attend school in El Naranjito. The youngest child, a boy, 5, has not begun school. He assists his mother with the

household chores while his brothers and sisters are working and away at school. Nivia has no children living elsewhere.

The family lives in a one-room wattle and daub house with a dirt floor and tile roof. Nivia owns the house and she and her children have lived there for 12 years. Nivia was born and raised in El Naranjito. Her mother and several sisters and brothers also live in El Naranjito. With the exception of a two-year absence during which she worked as a maid in a small town nearby, Nivia has lived all her life in El Naranjito. Nivia is single; her children are the product of a free union.

Nivia supports her family through a combination of her efforts and those of her sons. Nivia sells bread and candy. She has one small shelf stocked with these items in a corner of the house. The two older sons rent land to cultivate. The year before, they rented two manzanas of land on which they grew corn, sorghum, watermelon, ayote, and green beans. They harvested about 13 cargas (one carga is equivalent to 200 kilos) of corn and 10 cargas of sorghum. Neither of these products was sold; both were used for household consumption with the exception of two cargas of sorghum used for feed for the animals.

Alicia. Alicia is 32 and single. She lives with her four sons in Caucautare. The children range in ages from 1 to 12. The two older boys, ages 12 and 9, attend the local school. The two younger boys, ages 1 and 5, remain at home with Alicia. Alicia has no children living outside the home.

The family occupies a small two-room wooden house with a tile roof and dirt and cement floor. Alicia owns the house and she and her family have lived there for the past six years. She does not report ever having migrated in order to find work; however, she has traveled outside the aldea as her two eldest sons were born in towns located in the western part of Honduras. The two younger boys were born in Caucautare. The youngest is the product of an ongoing affair with one of the larger landowners in the area.

Alicia was born in the village. Her parents and several brothers and sisters live in Caucautare and Corinto. Alicia is a member of Amas de Casa, and her

children participate in the feeding program run by the club.

Alicia is the sole provider for the family. She supports herself and her four sons through a variety of activities. She sells fruits and vegetables, tortillas, and other processed foods. She is also an injectionist. Last year through her various activities she had managed to raise enough money to buy a field of sorghum in order to feed the family. She also has some live-stock - five pigs and two hens. Alicia's situation is somewhat better than one might expect, as the father of her youngest children is relatively well off and contributes to their support.

Mariluz. Mariluz is 33 and lives in Caucautare with her five children. The household consists of Mariluz, two daughters one aged 10 years and the other 15 months, and three sons, aged 8, 6, and 3 years, respectively. The three older children attend the local school. The six year old boy, suffers from some type of motor disfunction. He fell ill and was paralyzed at two years of age. Mariluz took him to the Health Center where they were unable to diagnose or cure his illness. Instead, Mariluz applied a series of folk remedies, which included burying the child in the ground up to his waist for several days and bathing him with agua de teja, water boiled with a piece of tile in it. The child began to walk again at three years of age, although his movements are labored.

The family lives in a small one-room estacón type house. Mariluz does not own the house; it is on loan to her. She and the children have lived there for eight months. Mariluz was born and has lived all of her life in Caucautare with the exception of a few months spent working in Tegucigalpa. Mariluz is a member of the Club Amas de Casa, and her children participate in the club's feeding program.

Mariluz has been the sole head of the household and the sole economic provider since the departure of her common-law husband following the birth of her last child. Her efforts to provide for herself and her children have been hampered recently due to a broken hand. She broke the hand some time back but complained that it had not healed properly and she was unable to use it. She supports her family by selling chances in a raffle, offering a prize of items such as clothing. Lillian's sisters also help out with gifts of food.

In the following section, the individual case studies will be related to the strategies discussed in the first section.

### Summary

Table 8 lists the marital status, size of household, number of wage earners, amount of land available and tenure, and strategy utilized for each of the case studies. The table also includes the household's rating on the Material Style of Life Scale (a Guttman scale of household goods) that was constructed to assess the relative economic well-being of families in the three communities (see Thompson, K.DeWalt and B.DeWalt 1985). The possible scores range from a low of one to a high of six.

As indicated in the table, three of the women presented in the case studies, Eugenia, Sarita, and Carmen, were pursuing the ideal strategy, each with varying degrees of success. Among the three, Carmen's household appears to be the most successful. There are however, several factors that work favorably for the household. The most significant among these is that the size of their landholdings; 56 manzanas, far exceeds the average of 5 manzanas for El Naranjito. The family also has other material resources such as a large Put inventory of livestock and fruit trees. In addition, one of the household members also engages in wage labor and contributes to the maintenance of the household.

Eugenia and her family also appear to be successful in their agricultural pursuits. Again, there are several factors that account for this. Although the size of the landholdings for Eugenia and her husband is half that of Carmen and her husband, the 27 manzanas that the family owns exceeds the community average of 7.4. The family also has other material resources such as livestock. In addition, their son-in-law contributes to the maintenance of the household. However, Eugenia's family does not rely solely on farming for its subsistence. Eugenia, in partnership with her husband, opened a trucha in their home. Unlike Carmen, Eugenia utilizes the "ideal" strategy as well as engages in an income-generating activity.

Sarita and her husband have not been as economically successful as the other two households. The family does not own land but does rent seven

Table 8. Summary of the Case Studies.

<u>CASE</u>	<u>MARITAL STATUS</u>	<u>NUMBER IN HOUSEHOLD</u>	<u>NUMBER OF WAGE EARNERS</u>	<u>LAND AVAILABLE</u>	<u>LAND TENURE</u>	<u>MSL</u>	<u>STRATEGY UTILIZED</u>
EUGENIA	Married	8	3	27 mas.	Own	4	"Ideal"; Income Generating Activity
SARITA	Free Union	8	1	7 mas.	Rent	4	"Ideal"
CARMEN	Married	10	2	56 mas.	Own	5	"Ideal"
MARITZA	Single	8	2	0 mas.	-	3	Income Generating Activity; Wage Labor; Nonresident Migrant Workers; Incorporation of Older Children
NIVIA	Single	7	3	2 mas.	Rent	3	Income Generating Activity; Incorporation of Older Children
ALICIA	Single	7	3	0 mas.	-	2	Income Generating Activity; "Multiple Mating"
MARILUZ	Single	6	1	0 mas.	-	1	Income Generating Activity; Contributions from siblings

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manzanas, about the average amount of land available for households in Caucautare. The household depends solely on farming for its subsistence. In contrast with Eugenia, Sarita's activities are restricted to those of private household worker. Moreover, Eugenia is the only one among the three women who participates in an income-generating activity.

Female household heads represent 11% of the households sampled. Economic circumstances are most onerous for those women who are the sole economic providers for their households. Not surprisingly, as Table 8 indicates, all of the single female household heads presented in the case studies are engaged in some type of remunerative activity as well as pursuing other strategies.

Maritza, for example, works as a milkmaid for which she receives a small wage and also sells processed food items. In addition, she has an older son present in the household who contributes to the maintenance of the household. Two of her children who have migrated to Tegucigalpa also contribute money and provisions to the household.

Nivia sells bread and candy and thereby raises money. Significantly, Nivia's is the only one among the women-headed households who has access to land. As discussed earlier, in an agrarian economy access to land is the most productive resource. However, due to cultural prescriptions, women do not work in the fields. If one wanted to farm and had the means to do so, one way of getting around this cultural prescription is to hire laborers to plant and harvest or to do as Nivia has done. Through the incorporation of her older sons into the household, she now has access to land.

Alicia, on the other hand has a much younger family. Although all of her children are male, they are too young to engage in farming. In order to support her family, she does some petty trading and is also an injectionist. Moreover, she is the mistress of one of the large landowners in the area and he is the father of her youngest child. Children are highly valued in this culture both as an economic asset and as a sign of prestige. For female household heads who are the sole economic provider, liaisons such as Alicia's open up the possibility of aid from the father to the mother's household. Women take a risk, however, as this aid is

not a certainty; for contributions from the father will be made after obligations to his own household are met (Berleant-Schiller 1977).

Mariluz also has a young family but has much fewer resources at her disposal than Alicia. Hers is the least successful of the female-headed households; in fact, hers was the poorest among all the households sampled. In order to support the household, she generates income by selling chances in a raffle. She also receives aid from her sisters.

### Conclusions

As the case studies indicate, survival demands that women be both innovative and adaptive. The focus here has been on women as the individual actors and the decisions they make in gaining access to and utilizing resources and satisfying their needs and those of their families. Some women choose to become part of a consensual union, and, thus, their decisions are shaped within that context. Due to a variety of circumstances many women find themselves solely responsible for supplying the material needs of the family. The adjustments women make in both contexts may involve a number of strategies.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

This concluding chapter compares the results found in this study with those of similar studies done in other parts of the world. The purpose is to place the data from southern Honduras in a larger perspective. In addition, some of the theoretical issues raised in the first chapter will be reexamined in light of the findings of this study.

#### Women's Task and Time Allocation

The data from the communities under investigation indicated that the division of labor is fairly fluid. Only one of the 23 tasks identified in Figure 2 is said to be performed exclusively by members of one sex. While the allocation of tasks is not exclusive of one sex or the other, there are some general patterns that emerge.

Women are exclusively the mealmakers. Other predominantly female tasks include child care, household maintenance activities such as doing the laundry, cleaning the house, fire making, and food-processing activities such as rinsing and grinding the grain for tortillas. Gathering water for the household is also a task performed predominantly by women.

The tasks performed almost exclusively by males include gathering wood, threshing the corn, and making tile. Both men and women share in the care of the animals such as cows, burros, goats, and horses. Women care for the smaller "backyard" animals such as chickens and pigs. Another task that men and women share equally is the control of the family finances.

Women's participation in formal agriculture is limited. Female participation in fieldwork is largely nonexistent. Fieldwork, including the planting, weeding and harvesting, is primarily the responsibility of males. Threshing and winnowing are tasks in which women are more likely to participate, but even this depends on the crop involved. Women's participation in the maintenance of house gardens, however, is high.

The data also indicate that children play a very important role as workers. Girls' participation is high in the predominantly female tasks, and boys' participation is high in the predominantly male tasks. Preschool aged boys, however, are likely to perform female tasks as well as male tasks. In such cases, labor requirements take precedence over considerations of sex appropriateness of tasks. It also suggests that while boys may experience a change in work roles around the onset of adolescence, female work roles are likely to remain the same throughout their life cycle.

The findings from Southern Honduras are not dissimilar from those of other studies on household task allocation. In a study of household task allocation in a small community in Mexico called San Martin, Swanson (1980) also found that the division of labor was not strictly dichotomous. Of a total of 22 tasks, only three were observed to be performed by members of one sex. Fishing in this community was done only by males. Females, on the other hand, were the only ones observed doing the washing and ironing. In general, female activities in San Martin, like those in the communities in Southern Honduras, were concentrated in a core of domestic tasks such as cooking, washing, ironing, child care, and cleaning. Women in San Martin, however, had a more extensive role in agriculture than those in Southern Honduras. Only three of the agricultural tasks -- plowing, planting and irrigation -- were not performed by females; they did, however, assist with the harvesting and planting. The women in San Martin were also more involved in the care of large animals, as herding was one of the tasks which they performed. Unlike the women in Southern Honduras, women in San Martin were those primarily charged with gathering firewood.

As in Southern Honduras, children's roles as workers in San Martin were extensive. There were however, some differences in the content of male and female children's work roles in San Martin from those in Southern Honduras. On the whole, female children performed more household work than males. Swanson (1980) found that with the exception of agricultural work, female children could and did perform the same tasks as male children. However, the reverse was not true. There were tasks such as cooking and washing clothes that were performed by female children but not male children. Female children were more likely to be assigned a chore because they were more likely to be

around the house. Males in San Martin were given preference in education and thus were more likely to be away from home attending school or playing with their friends. Such was not the case in the communities in Southern Honduras. Education for both male and female children was valued. Children of both sexes were just as likely to be away attending school.

This study has also examined women's patterns of time use. The data from this study indicated that food processing was the activity most demanding of women's time. It accounted for nearly 50% of the total work time. The operations involved in making tortillas absorbed the greatest share of the food processing time. Household maintenance tasks such as washing clothes, washing dishes, and cleaning accounted for another major share of women's total work time - 35%. Child care absorbed relatively little of women's time - 7.7%. The amount of time depended on the age of the child, however; not surprisingly, the younger the child, the more was demanded of the mother's time.

Women were charged with gathering water for the household. This task accounted for nearly 5% of women's work time. Differences among the three villages in the amount of time allocated to this task were found. The differences were attributed to the availability of a central water system. Indicative of women's lesser participation in these tasks, animal husbandry, food and cash crop production, and gathering firewood accounted for less of women's time.

Comparison of the patterns of women's time use found in this study with those found in other studies reveals some similarities and differences. The studies are not strictly comparable due to differences in methods of collection and ethnographic details. They can point, however, to some general patterns and trends.

Johnson (1975) conducted a time allocation study among a group of horticultural/hunter gatherers in the Upper Amazon, Peru. Table 9 presents the results. "Non-work" activities -- eating, leisure, hygiene, visiting, and other -- account for 36.0% of women's time. The remainder is devoted to work activities. Among these, food preparation appears to be the most time consuming, as it is for the women in Southern Honduras. However, it accounts for relatively little, 18.1%, of their work time as compared to 50% for the women in this study.

Table 9. Division of Labor by Sex (married Adults)  
(Machiguenga study, Peru).

Activity (in percent)	Married Men (n = 15)	Married Women (n = 20)
<u>Eating</u>	<u>9.1</u>	<u>7.0</u>
* <u>Food Preparation</u>	<u>1.5</u>	<u>18.1</u>
* <u>Child Rearing</u>	<u>0.1</u>	<u>8.8</u>
* <u>Manufacture</u>	<u>10.4</u>	<u>15.9</u>
*Woodwork	6.7	0.6
*Cotton cloth	0.1	13.5
Other	3.6	1.8
* <u>Wild Foods</u>	<u>15.6</u>	<u>6.6</u>
Collecting	2.9	2.5
Fishing	5.7	2.3
*Hunting	5.7	0
Other	1.3	1.8
* <u>Garden Labor</u>	<u>18.5</u>	<u>6.6</u>
*Clearing, Burning Planting	3.7	0
*Weeding	5.8	0.3
Harvest	6.1	5.1
Other	2.9	1.2
<u>Idle</u>	<u>18.1</u>	<u>19.1</u>
<u>Hygiene</u>	<u>2.5</u>	<u>4.5</u>
<u>Visiting</u>	<u>8.0</u>	<u>5.8</u>
<u>Other</u>	<u>16.2</u>	<u>6.6</u>

\*Differences are significant at  $p < .01$  level (t-test).  
Source: Johnson 1975:308

Activity	Average Time Allocated (in minutes) <sup>a</sup>	
	Women	Men
<b>A. Production, supply, distribution</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>202</b>
1. Food and cash crop production	178	186
Sowing	69	4
Weeding, tilling	35	108
Harvesting	39	6
Travel between fields	30	19
Gathering wild crops	4	2
Other crop-production activities	1	47
2. Domestic food storage	4	1
3. Food processing	132	10
Grinding, pounding grain	108	0
Winnowing	8	0
Threshing	4	0
Other processing activities	12	10
4. Animal husbandry	4	3
5. Marketing	4	0
6. Brewing	1	0
7. Water supply	38	0
8. Fuel supply	6	2
<b>B. Crafts and other professions</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>156</b>
1. Straw work	0	111
2. Spinning cotton	2	0
3. Tailoring	2	10
4. Midwifery	41	0
5. Other crafts/professions (e.g., metal work, pottery, weaving cloth, beekeeping, etc.)		
<b>C. Community</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>91</b>
1. Community projects		
2. Other community projects		

Activity	Average Time Allocated (in minutes) <sup>a</sup>	
	Women	Men
<b>D. Household</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>4</b>
1. Rearing, initial care of children	18	0
2. Cooking, cleaning, washing	.30	1
3. House building	0	0
4. House repair	0	3
<b>E. Personal needs</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>269</b>
1. Rent, relaxing	117	233
2. Meals	21	29
3. Personal hygiene & other personal needs	20	7
<b>F. Free Time</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>118</b>
1. Religion	2	6
2. Educational activities (learning to read, attending a UNESCO meeting or class)	17	4
3. Media (radio, reading a book)	0	14
4. Conversation	14	69
5. Going visiting (including such social obligations as funerals)	43	19
6. Errands (including going to purchase personal consumption goods, such as koin, next door)	1	6
<b>G. Not specified<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>
Total work (A,B,C,D)	<b>587</b>	<b>453</b>
Total personal needs and free time (E,F)	<b>235</b>	<b>387</b>

Table 10. Comparison of Time Allocations to Rural Activities, by Sex (Upper Volta study).

<sup>a</sup>Based on time budgets prepared by direct observation.

<sup>b</sup>When observation did not last the full 14 hours.

Source: McSweeney 1979:381

Table 11. Comparison of Women's Time Allocation for Southern Honduras, Upper Volta, and Peru.

Activity	Percent of Total Work Time		
	Southern Honduras	Upper Volta	Peru
Food Processing	49.18	22.5	7.0
Household Maintenance	35.06	25.2	-
Food and Cash Crop Production	1.40	30.3	13.2
Animal Husbandry	9.26	.68	-
Fuel Supply	.25	1.02	-
Water Supply	4.58	6.5	-
Child Care	7.57	3.06	8.8

Another difference is that the manufacture of items for the household accounts for a large share of women's time in the Upper Amazon study. Moreover, the women in Johnson's study are much more involved in subsistence-oriented activities such as garden labor and the gathering of wild foods, which account for 13.2% of women's work activity time. Like the women in Southern Honduras, however, child care accounts for relatively little of their time, 8.8% or 1.1 hours per day. In sum, women's time use in this study was concentrated in the areas of food preparation, food production, and manufacturing. Unfortunately, the study does not include information on time allocated to domestic chores such as doing the laundry, gathering water or firewood.

In a study of women's time allocation in several agricultural communities in Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), the full range of women's activities was included. The data were gathered through direct observation of women in the first 14 waking hours. Researchers recorded in minutes when the activity began and ended, a description of the technique or technology used, and any assistance in carrying out the activity. Time budgets for each of the women were prepared (McSweeney 1979). Table 10 presents the results.

The researchers divide women's work activities into four categories: production, supply, and distribution; household crafts and other professions; and community oriented tasks. Table 13 compares the three groups in time allocated to several specific tasks. Looking at some of the specific tasks in comparison with the data from Southern Honduras, certain patterns emerge.

For the women in Upper Volta, most of their work time is expended in the areas of food processing, household maintenance, and food and cash crop production. The women in Upper Volta are much more involved in food and cash crop production than the women in Southern Honduras. This absorbs 30% of the total work time for the women in the Upper Volta as compared to 1.4% for women in Southern Honduras (see Table 11). Time spent in household maintenance tasks, however, is not that different for the two groups. Food processing takes half as much time for the women in Upper Volta as it does for the women in the communities in this study. If we look, however, at the constituent tasks included in this category (see Table 10), we see that for both

groups the operations involved in processing grains absorb the greatest share of the food-processing time. Food preparation was also the most time-consuming task for the women in Johnson's (1975) Upper Amazon study. It appears to be an activity that absorbs a great share of women's time in most parts of the world.

Interestingly, women in Southern Honduras are more involved in the care of animals than women in Upper Volta. In Southern Honduras it accounts for 9.26% of women's labor time as compared with .68% for women in the Upper Volta study. For both groups, little time is spent gathering firewood. However, for both groups of women gathering water absorbs a share of their work time - 6.5% of total work time for women in Upper Volta, 4.5% for women in Southern Honduras. Child care accounts for relatively little of women's time for both groups, but for women in Southern Honduras it absorbs more of their work time.

#### Economic Contribution of Women to the Household and the Wider Community

In this section and the following, we would like to consider the remaining areas of concern that this work has sought to address. One of these issues was the growing awareness within the development field of the need to recognize and document the contribution women make to the economic well-being of their families.

First, the role that women play as household workers is important to the functioning of the household. This role is often considered of secondary importance to those more directly involved with subsistence. However, in agricultural societies such as those in Southern Honduras, the two spheres of production, domestic and nondomestic are highly integrated. Thus, domestic work for women in this study extends to such activities as providing the fuel and water supply for the household, maintaining the house garden, and sharing in the care of the farm animals. Second, some women take on the role of unpaid agricultural laborers. Finally, some women, in order to expand the resource base of their households, engage in income-generating activities.

For the women in Southern Honduras, income-generating activities are concentrated in entrepreneurial ventures. Importantly, women's entrepreneurial

role has an impact not only on their household but also on the community level.

Intervillage commerce is largely in the hands of women. The shops, truchas, operated primarily by women, are a major source of purchased goods in the community. Some shopkeepers buy and sell maize and sorghum and act as middle people for the distribution of grains (DeWalt and Fordham 1983). In sum, women take on a variety of economic roles that have an impact on both their households and the community.

### Accounting for Women's Work

As discussed in Chapter I, a number of theoretical propositions have been advanced concerning the allocation of labor by sex and the nature of women's work. It would now be useful to reexamine these theoretical approaches in light of the empirical data from Southern Honduras.

Those advancing the primacy of biological factors in determining task allocation focus on factors arising from basic anatomical differences between the sexes, principal among these being women's role in child-bearing and childrearing. It is suggested that the demands of child care act as a general cross-cultural constraint on the extent and nature of women's participation in economic activities. While the present study did not test this theoretical approach directly, the data from Southern Honduras do provide some insight into the issue.

An examination of women's pattern of time use indicated that the activity most demanding of women's time was food processing. It accounted for almost 50% of the total work time. Household maintenance activities such as washing dishes and doing the laundry followed and accounted for 35% of women's total work time. In comparison, child care absorbed relatively little, 7.7%, of women's work time. Moreover, the data from Southern Honduras are comparable with the results of time allocation studies conducted in Peru (Johnson 1975) and Upper Volta (McSweeney 1979). The data from Southern Honduras, as well as those from Peru and Upper Volta, then, do not lend support to the position that it is the demands of child care that act as the major determinant of women's work roles.

Burton, Brudner, and White's (1977) theory of the sexual division of labor in production also emphasizes the same determinants - the constraints of child care and nursing - advanced by the biological approach. The model has other components revolving around economies of effort in the performance of tasks within the same production sequence, but the model, on the whole, does not prove powerful enough to explain the data from Southern Honduras.

A different approach to the issue is offered by those who argue for the priority of sociocultural systems in determining male and female work roles. These theorists concern themselves with economic, ecological, and environmental factors. Within this framework, much attention has been given to the effect of different subsistence production systems on the allocation of tasks by sex.

In the case of agrarian societies, such as the one considered here, Boserup's pioneering work and subsequent studies have shown that the degree of female participation in agriculture varies. For example, in Africa, women often have complete responsibility for all cropping activities, while Asia and Latin America are generally characterized by the lesser involvement of women in agricultural production. The data from Southern Honduras seem to fit into this general pattern of female participation in agriculture in Latin America, for, as we have seen, women's involvement in formal agriculture is limited.

Boserup's analysis, for the most part, approached agricultural production as an undifferentiated whole. More recent theorists, such as Deere and Leon de Leal (1981), have urged that the constituent tasks involved in agricultural production be examined. Indeed, the data from Southern Honduras indicate that while women's participation in fieldwork was largely nonexistent, they were involved in other agricultural work such as threshing, winnowing, and caring for the farm animals.

Deere and Leon de Leal also draw attention to the effect that the degree of capitalist development has on women's agricultural participation. The authors conducted a study of three regions, each characterized by differing degrees of capitalist development. They found that the sexual division of labor as related to agricultural production was most rigid in the region characterized by purely subsistence production.

However, in the regions more oriented to commodity production, the sexual division of labor was more fluid. Deere and Leone de Leal conclude that the region, the specific task, the form of labor procurement, and the household's class position all have an effect on the sexual division of labor in peasant agricultural production (Deere and Leon de Leal 1981:359).

While their viewpoints may differ, the studies cited above for the most part have focused on women's roles in production. Feminist theorists have argued that attention must also be given to the role of reproduction in shaping women's work and the sexual division of labor. Reproduction in this sense refers to biological reproduction as well as social reproduction, or the perpetuation of social systems, and daily maintenance (Beneria and Sen 1981). Proponents of this approach maintain that analysis must focus on the areas of production and reproduction and the interaction between them. The authors cite a study conducted by Maria Mies of women lacemakers in India as an example of this approach. Mies (1982) found that women's participation in nonhousehold production, in this case lacemaking, was very much determined by and, in Mies's estimation, exploited the institution of seclusion.

The data from Southern Honduras indicate the core of women's activities is concentrated in daily maintenance of the household. Women are, however, involved in nonhousehold production. The homebased and informal nature of the most commonly reported activity, small scale trade activities, was very much shaped by, and thus compatible with, the demands of their daily maintenance activities.

#### Notes Towards a Synthetic Theory

As stated above, feminist theorists have called attention to the need to consider both the spheres of production and reproduction in assessing women's economic roles. This study has attempted to consider both the productive and reproductive aspects of women's work. In conducting this analysis, we found that a great deal of research time and effort has been devoted to women's roles in production, however, there has been very little investigation of women's roles in the sphere of reproduction. Moreover, while theorists have not discounted the value of women's reproductive

activities, there is still a tendency to generalize about these activities instead of systematically examining them. If the relation between production and reproduction is to be fully understood, equal attention and systematic investigation of women's reproductive tasks must begin.

### Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine women's roles in the local rural economy. The focus of this work has been on women as economic producers. The study was undertaken as part of a broader agricultural development project. Studies such as this are important but become even more crucial in situations of planned change and intervention. The inattention traditionally given to women as economic producers has resulted in ineffective and inequitable development projects. Only by documenting the economic activities of women and by assessing how women are affected by processes of change can we hope to ensure that women become effective participants in development.

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