Gender and the flower industry in Ecuador.

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GENDER AND THE FLOWER INDUSTRY IN ECUADOR

by
Nicole Noël

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research through the Department of Sociology and Anthropology in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at the University of Windsor

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1980s many countries in Latin America have attempted to deal with debt and economic crises through a variety of measures. One of these has been the promotion of non-traditional agricultural exports. In Ecuador the most dynamic of these crops in terms of growth has been fresh cut flowers.

The flower plantations which have sprung up mainly in the highlands near Quito employ thousands of people, the majority of them women. This thesis looks at the effects this employment has had on a small number of women in El Rosario, an indigenous rural community near Cayambe, Ecuador. The focus is on the changing gender, household and community relations of the women employed in this industry. Through an analysis which views the household as the location from which the individual is linked to the community and the larger economy we see how households are restructured according to the demands and conditions of its members. Through case studies I show the ambivalent relationship of the community of El Rosario towards the flower industry and those it employs; the change in women's domestic work; and, the commodification of the countryside and its effects on women's roles. All of these factors will be examined in light of their vulnerability as women workers in a global economy.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iv

**PART I: Rural Ecuador and Capitalist Development**

1 Introduction 1

*An Introduction to Ecuador* 2

*Theoretical Approach* 8

*Methodology* 16

2 The Flower Industry in Ecuador 21

**PART II: Change and Strategies for Survival in El Rosario**

3 Changes in the Community of El Rosario 38

*Highland Agriculture* 42

*Community Organization* 47

*Plantation Work and Community Obligations* 50

4 The Household 59

5 Women's Work, Women's Lives: Empowerment and Vulnerability 73

*Gender Relations in El Rosario: The Question of Empowerment* 73

*The Problem of Economic Vulnerability* 83

6 Conclusion 99

*Looking Back, Looking Ahead* 99

**APPENDIX** 105

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** 106

**VITA AUCTORIS** 112
PART I: Rural Ecuador and Capitalist Development

Chapter One

Introduction

Marisol and her brother wake up at about 6:00 every morning to get ready for their workday which begins at 7:00am on nearby flower plantations.¹ They work six days a week -- seven when the demand for flowers increases. Their widowed mother, Azucena, prepares their breakfast and after they leave for work she also starts her chores: washing clothes, taking care of her animals or working for others in the community in exchange for food (either some of the peas she picks or the chickens she plucks) or cash. Marisol often works until 9:00pm, her brother usually finishes a little earlier and then bakes bread for his compadres small store; this he does as a favour to them and for some bread for his family's breakfasts.

Marisol is 21 years old and has spent the last three years working at the same plantation. She is one of thousands of young women working in the cut-flower for export industry in the highlands of northern Ecuador. Since flower plantations started springing up in the Cayambe region in the mid-1980s many rural people who previously migrated

¹The names of people, places and companies have been changed throughout this thesis. Please refer to the Appendix for a list of all participants referred to in this thesis.
to work in the cities have found work close to home and often at higher wages than they
experienced in the past. However, for those who work in the flower industry, particularly
mothers, new challenges arise for fulfilling household and community obligations. These
challenges will be examined in this thesis along with the changes that women who work
in this industry are experiencing with respect to relations within their households,
community and workplaces as well as the adaptations made within these communities
and households to the rapid expansion of flower plantations. Case studies which tell the
experiences of individual women will illustrate the ways in which women workers,
households and the community adapt to these changes.

An Introduction to Ecuador

Ecuador is a small country located in the Andes of western South America. There
are three distinct geographical regions: the Pacific Coast; the Andean Highlands (Sierra);
and the eastern rainforest (Oriente). The coastal region is populated by mestizos, people
of mixed Spanish and indigenous background, native people and Afro-Ecuadorians. The
economy is export oriented and is predominantly agricultural with cattle, bananas, palm,
rice, sugar and coffee grown.

The highlands are the home of the capital city, Quito, and to 46 percent of
Ecuador's population (Corkill and Cubitt, 1987: ix). The population of the highlands is
about half mestizo and half indigenous. In contrast to the coast, Sierran agriculture has
traditionally been undertaken for domestic consumption.
The Oriente is where Ecuador's oil is found and its discovery has dramatically changed the landscape of this rainforest region. Colonization into the area and the development of the oil industry in the last 30 years have had a devastating effect on the environment and the indigenous tribes inhabiting the region.

In early colonial times Ecuador was an active exporter, particularly of textiles, but also of livestock and gold to Colombia and Peru. By the end of the 18th century cocoa emerged as Ecuador's major export and the coast, and its principal port Guayaquil, became the centre of the Ecuadorian economy.

While the coast had a money economy and was integrated with the world market, in the highlands servile relations and subsistence agriculture persisted well into the 20th century. Highland agriculture was traditionally geared to the domestic market. It is only within recent years with the growth of non-traditional agricultural exports that land devoted to domestic food crops has been geared to the world market. It is in the highlands, in a rural indigenous community located in the province of Pichincha called El Rosario, where the research for this thesis was carried out.

The two months (February and March 1997) I spent in the area for this research were very busy for the workers and for the Ecuadorian population in general. Flower plantation employees were working seven days a week until late at night while the industry prepared for the high demand for roses on Valentine's Day around the world (both February 14 and Russian Valentine's Day a week later). As well, most activities in the country came to a stop on February 5 and 6 due to nation-wide anti-government protests.
When I arrived in Ecuador in January of 1997 the president of the country was a flamboyant former lawyer from Guayaquil named Abdalá Bucaram who was elected in May of 1996. Not even a year after his election he had become one of the most unpopular elected leaders in the history of the country. On February 5, 1997 millions of people in the streets of every city in the country protested against Bucaram and his government. Peasants gathered on all major roads and highways bringing all transportation to a halt. According to polls, nine out of ten Ecuadorians supported the strike.

It began principally with native groups and labour who opposed the government's policy of neo-liberalism and the reductions in subsidies and privatization that it entailed. Subsidies were reduced on the tanks of gas which people use to fuel their stoves, on public transportation, telephone service, gasoline, milk and other basic necessities. In a country where the minimum wage is about $40 per month, and many make less than that, such increases were devastating to many poor Ecuadorians. Increases in the cost of transporting goods caused a drastic increase in inflation during the month of January when the rate jumped from about one and a half percent to almost six percent per month.

On January 29 the US Ambassador to Ecuador brought corruption to the forefront of political debate in the country when he said that customs officials as well as others in state and private enterprises were thoroughly corrupt and that they were tarnishing the country's reputation for financial investment. Promptly Chambers of Commerce and other business interests joined the action against the government.

This vast social movement against the government contained very diverse visions and interests. Some protested against the government's economic programme; others,
protested against nepotism in the government where the family name Bucaram was ubiquitous; and others voiced concerns about corruption.

The community council of El Rosario, where I conducted this research, decided it was imperative that all members of the community be present at the protest. In fact, those that did not attend were fined. Just as attendance is mandatory at *mingas*, participation in the protest of February 5, 1997 was the duty of all good *comuneros* because it was seen as being for the benefit of the community. When Bucaram eventually fled the country and was replaced, bringing some calm and stability back to the country, many in El Rosario expressed to me that they were empowered by the experience of February 5 and 6. Many said to me "We may have lost a day's work taking care of our crops and animals but Bucaram is gone; we achieved our goal."

The union representing workers in one flower plantation also obliged its members to attend the protest and were excused by the community council from participating with them. However, many people could not participate in the marches. Those who worked in the non-unionised flower plantations had to be at work on that day, even though there was no transportation on that day. With Valentine's Day just around the corner many plantation owners were in a rush to get flowers ready for export. One nearby plantation sent cases of roses to the airport in Quito by helicopter on that day as all ground transportation was halted by the protestors on February 5 and 6. That this could occur illustrates quite vividly the power and reach of globalization. Even with the strike as an

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2 *Mingas* are weekly, mandatory communal work projects. *Comuneros* are members of the community council. They are discussed in further detail in chapter three.
obstacle to normal transportation flows there are few places too remote to produce for foreign markets when there is a demand.

The protests of February 5 and 6, 1997 are the result of prolonged economic crises in Ecuador as well as the measures taken by the government to combat these crises. The crises that hit most of the world in the 1970s and 1980s hit Ecuador hard as well. At a time when oil production was expanding in the country the oil crisis hit. This was after the 1970s when the country was riding high on exports, particularly oil but also bananas, cocoa and coffee. Unlike in the past when the state was less active economically, the revenues from petroleum which went directly to the state permitted it to take a more active role with less fear of opposition from the traditional economic elites (Corkill and Cubitt, 1988: 21). It was during this time of economic growth that the country began to borrow more and follow an unsuccessful policy of import substitution (Economist Intelligence Unit, 1991: 6). The state telephone company was created and the government invested heavily in the electricity corporation, the national airline, banks, industry and other institutions (Corkill and Cubitt: 30).

The effects of the debt were exacerbated by an increase in interest rates in the late 1970s and early 1980s as well as the dollar debts that became harder to pay off with a cheaper sucre. It was within the context of the debt crisis that neo-liberal policies were put into effect first under the presidency of Febres Cordero and then under Borja although to a lesser extent, and more vigorously under Durán Ballén and Bucaram.

In 1992 a minority right-wing government took power under the leadership of Sixto Durán Ballén and his vice-president, Alberto Dahik. This government made some
serious attempts at structural reform despite opposition in Congress and from popular sectors, and despite other crises which developed in the country such as the border conflict with Peru. Privatization has occurred in Ecuador since then. Some notable examples are the selling of the state airline *Ecuatoriana de Aviación* in 1994. Also in that same year the government sold *Cemento Nacional*. More recently 35 percent of the national telecommunications company EMETEL was to be sold after it was split into two regional companies.

As for the oil industry, the Ecuadorian state has not applied its austerity measures to its most important mineral resource. In fact, greater nationalization of the industry has occurred in the 1990s with Petroecuador taking over more of the production process. In 1992 Ecuador pulled out of OPEC due to the restraints of production quotas imposed by the organization. However it is noted that Petroecuador is lagging behind its production targets and with government budget restraints will likely have to look abroad for new investment (Economic Intelligence Unit, 1994-1995: 20).

Ecuador has long been attempting to exploit its "comparative advantage" in world trade. It is the world's largest producer of bananas and is the largest producer of shrimp in the Americas. Coffee and cocoa are also major food export crops for the country. Productivity varies depending on weather and diseases but a "restructuring of the cocoa producing sector" was introduced to improve yields (Economist Intelligence Unit, 1995: 15-17). This appears to have meant a move from growing cocoa on small plots of land on the coast to large plantations in the southern sierra. This implies that control of cocoa production has been concentrated in the hands of a few.
If one combines export receipts for oil, shrimp, coffee and cocoa for the period 1985-1989, 89.3 per cent of exports would be accounted for (Economist Intelligence Unit, 1991: 29). According to trends in exports, Ecuador is trying to decrease its dependence on these five commodities. Its future comparative advantage appears to be in the production of non-traditional agricultural commodities for export. This area of the economy has been growing rapidly in the last five years.

One of these crops is cut flowers, particularly roses for export to northern countries, most notably the US. According to trade statistics, annual earnings for cut flowers has grown from $526,000 in 1985 to $29.1 million in 1993 (Economist Intelligence Unit, 1995: 16).

Theoretical Approach

Any visitor to the Cayambe region cannot miss the greenhouses located all along the highways in and out of town. I certainly could not when I first visited the area in 1993. When I returned in 1997 to the same area I found that even more land was being used to grow flowers.

In 1994 I spent over two months in the Cayambe region of Ecuador. While I was not at that time studying the flower industry, and in fact I wasn't even aware of its existence before I arrived, I met many young women who were working in these flower plantations. Everywhere I went that was accessible to a plantation I could find someone who was working, or had worked, in the cut-flower industry. Many of the women I talked
to said that they were pleased with their wages but that the plantations were unhealthy places to work. Many had not expected to work more than two years there. The reason. they told me, was the health problems that resulted from their work. These problems they attributed to fumigation and pesticides, the hot and cold temperatures of the greenhouses and refrigerated storage units, the cuts to their hands they received when pruning, and being on their feet all day, often on a wet floor.

At first I took what they said about health problems at face value. Later though, during that stay in 1994, I realized that women who were working in other contexts were also working for only a few years and that in reality what often occurred in these communities was that women worked until they married, at which time they dedicated themselves to taking care of children, their homes, and often a small parcel of land. While many of these women are indeed made sick from their plantation work it appeared that something else may have been influencing their decisions to leave their jobs. For this reason I became interested in what was going on in the households of these workers. What motivated women to work in the industry? Was it a strategy of the household in order to survive, or do women have personal reasons for undertaking such employment including expectations for their own futures? How are their personal reasons shaped by household relations? I also wanted to know what their goals might be once their employment in the plantations was over.

It is useful to situate these questions within the literature on women and development because of the increased attention paid by researchers in recent years to women. Until recently the mainstream in social sciences in Latin America has been
biased towards what Jelin (1991) calls the "grand" subjects: economic development, political stability, population growth, urbanization" (Jelin, 1991: 1). Concerns with the micro-social level in the analysis of social, economic and political process in regions have developed in the last two decades. This is due to a variety of factors: there has been a movement away from linear ideas of development due to the crisis in the developmentalist paradigm which came about in the 1960s; the recognition of the household -- owing much to anthropological research in family and kinship -- as an intermediate point between the individual and society; and, the role of feminist research in drawing attention to women's invisible labour in the "private" sphere and women's unequal access and position in the "public" sphere of wage work. Since the early 1970s development organizations and institutions have shown a particular interest in women, especially with the beginning of the UN conference on women in Mexico in 1975. During this time, women in North and Latin America have organized at local, national and international levels and have increased their political participation in development issues. Women's studies programs, particularly in the North, have been created in many universities and research on women has increased. Much of this research has focused on women's work and roles in and out of the household, particularly the sexual division of labour within the household and the division of labour in subsistence and wage labour (Babb 1986; Benería and Roldán, 1987; Deere and León, 1987). However, with the increased interest in research on women the 1970s proved difficult for feminist scholars trying to find a connection between understanding and changing women's subordination and Marxist analysis. Ultimately Marxism was considered too economistic and feminism
too eurocentric, such that the "women and development" paradigm tended to generalize about all women (Kate Young, et al., 1981).

Research on the household has varied. In feminist analysis the household is viewed as a site of domination which contrasts with earlier studies that understood it as a place of cooperation and generosity. Recently there has been a shift away from viewing the household as a discrete category, an autonomous unit collectively engaged in a single form of production, to one that recognizes the importance of connecting social relations within the household to the development and intensification of commodity relations (Sage, 1993: 243). This view contrasts with both neo-classical and Marxian paradigms which tend to ignore the fact that households have internal hierarchies linked to external relations and that members are differentiated by gender and age (Folbre, 1988: 250-1).

The household must therefore be seen as a "locus for supporting simultaneous involvement in various complementary or non-articulated spheres of production." (Sage, 1993: 244) These spheres of production can include agricultural or non-agricultural activities and can occur in varying degrees depending on the level of commodity relations, their impact on the household and resources such as land, livestock, capital and labour (Sage, 1993: 244).

Jane Collins (1986) notes that the household has become an important unit of analysis in the last few decades: "Researchers have shown that in many contexts, both rural and urban, the household is the locus of important productive processes." It is in the household where important decisions are made about productive and reproductive strategies for survival in Latin America (1986: 651).
However, as Collins points out, many researchers have come to analyse the household from a Eurocentric perception of it, that is, viewing the household as an easily identified and static unit with very specific boundaries. This bias may also put too much focus on the household, a practice which has been particularly common in studies of the Andean household. She argues that such a view of the household ignores how integration into commodity markets is transforming the household. By participating in wage and commodity markets nonhousehold relations are weakened and emphasis is put on the nuclear family. However in some Andean communities it is the extrahousehold relationships that are more important than those within the household (ibid. 1986: 53). These relations may be with the community, with extended kinship networks, or within the workplace.

The household is usually defined as a residential unit whose members share domestic activities. Although this implies that there is a level of interaction within the household unit one can not assume that this interaction involves the equality of individual members. There is a large body of literature on households which show that in reality there are often considerable inequalities in input, benefits and activities within households and the critical variables of inequality within the household are age and sex (Folbre, 1986; Ong, 1987; Phillips, 1989; Sage, 1993). In El Rosario, as in other rural communities in the Andes, access to land, livestock and capital and involvement in non-agricultural activities varies between households. Within households there are tensions between members who struggle for greater control over labour power and distribution of resources. Besides the resources of the household and its level of commodification, other
variables which may cause tensions in households are the values placed on education and social networks. Such networks can lead to the expansion of the household. Members of a household do not always share residence nor do they necessarily share consumption. Membership is not necessarily determined by either affinal or consanguineal relations. *Compadrazgo*, a relationship through godparenting, may develop in which others become 'fictive' kin and hence members of the household. Ossio (1984) describes *compadrazgo* as:

> a mediating institution between individuals and between groups and that its legitimacy derives from its collective dimension, which...proclaims the symmetrical or equilibrated value of this relationship (143).

*Compadrazgo*, in this study, is shown to be an important strategy of survival for people in El Rosario, as in much of Latin America, and is an important part of household structure. Moreover, in households there are often other relations involving the pooling of resources, cooking and eating, and reciprocal exchange of goods and labour between kin who may not reside under the same roof. It is where these relations of production and reproduction, labour, and resources meet that the household is located (Brydon and Chant, 1989: 9-10).

It is with this understanding of the household as the location from which the individual is linked to the community, workplace and the larger economy that we can proceed with a study of a rural community where levels of commodity relations vary. As levels of commodity relations become greater, as in El Rosario where peasants are entering the wage labour force, ties between households and to the community as a whole are transformed. At the same time, relations within the household also change as
members struggle over control of labour power, particularly the labour power of women.

In many societies women are responsible for the activities associated with human reproduction. These include the reproduction of labour on a daily basis through domestic work and maintenance such as cooking, cleaning and washing clothes as well as the reproduction of labour over time which includes biological reproduction and the socialization of children. In the highlands of Ecuador women's participation in agricultural production is also very important, particularly in peasant households (Hamilton, 1992). In peasant societies these two spheres, production and reproduction, are interconnected. Many household domestic-based activities act as a form of saving or budgeting therefore it is difficult to draw a clear line between production and reproduction, particularly in a rural context (Brydon and Chant, 1989). The products of a household's subsistence agriculture are processed and consumed within the home (production for use), and in times of surplus, may in part become production for exchange. Men, women and children take part in these productive activities, often under the command of the father. According to Wendy A. Weiss in her study of land tenure in Cotopaxi, Ecuador, "it was [the father] who organized family labour, drawing on help from the mother...but the division of labour was such that the father seemed to control many of the decisions concerning who should work, and how the products and any surplus were to be used." (1985: 473) However, Sarah Hamilton (1992) has found that in Chimborazo women do a wide range of household and agricultural tasks and that they make important production decisions with respect to land use and expenditures. Although questions of control over subsistence agricultural production were not thoroughly
addressed due to the limited time and scope of this research, it appears that in El Rosario decision making control varies between households, depending on gender attitudes within the household and the land, labour and capital resources available. However, with increasing commodity relations, production occurs outside the home and the women who manage these households become more dependent on wages. Women cannot control these wages, nor can they decrease their dependency on wages by economizing at home since there is little time for this after their long working hours in flower plantations. As members of households earn a wage and more production occurs outside of the household women become managers of consumption (Cole, 1991; Weismantel, 1988). This separation of productive and reproductive work creates two work places for women -- in the plantation and in the house -- what is called the double day of work. When economic production is managed by the household, as in peasant households that participate in subsistence agriculture, women are able to combine their reproductive and productive work. The conflict between productive and reproductive work for women requires negotiations within households. Women have to face the challenge of deciding how reproductive work is delegated within the household, what work is done at home and what is purchased, and how the demand for household labour is met.

The cases presented in this thesis will demonstrate the importance of viewing the household as a unit of production, reproduction and consumption which is socially and culturally constructed. With such a perspective in mind, the household is shown to be a unit which is continually transforming itself due to the various, and changing, interests of its members as well as the global processes of commodification and accumulation.
Methodology

Field work is an important aspect of doing research in the social sciences, particularly in anthropological studies of foreign cultures. The field work carried out as a part of this research took place in a rural community in Ecuador during February and March of 1997. For this field work, two principal methods were used to gather data: interviews and participant observation. Both formal and informal interviews were conducted with men and women employed in the industry, community leaders and people who no longer or have never worked in the industry. Much information about the community and those who work in the industry was also gathered by living with a family where two members worked in a plantation as well as by socializing and participating in mingas\(^3\) and other community activities. I also spent time with the local women's group assisting the women in their activities (income generating or not), particularly with their store.

Through both informal and semi-structured interviews as well as participant observation I was given glimpses into many aspects of women's lives more so than I could with a survey questionnaire. These approaches also give the researcher a more holistic view of the lives of those studied. Through interviews and participant observation

\(^3\)A minga is communal work which often takes place on Saturday mornings in indigenous communities in Ecuador. In Peru (see G. Smith 1989 and B.J. Isbell 1979) this public labour exchange is called a *faena* and private reciprocal exchanges are called *minkas*. From my observations in the Cayambe region public work as well as private exchanges are called *mingas*.
I was able to learn details of their complex lives in a very limited amount of time. In acquiring such knowledge I was able to gain something of an insider's view of life and work in the area. It should be noted here that I had previously spent a year in Ecuador with more than two months of that time in a nearby village. Therefore knowing Spanish already as well as the local nuances of the language and culture expedited contact and facilitated communication with members of the community.

It is important when doing research on women to develop theory from empirical research (Kirby and McKenna, 1989). In this way, women's voices are given importance even when what they say may seem contradictory or when it does not fit into a certain orientation dear to the researcher. Personal accounts are important to remind researchers that decisions are made by individuals who often have a sense of autonomous control over their own lives. This does pose challenges however to the feminist researcher who, while attempting to give importance to women's lives "in their own words", recognize that women's voices are not "pure" and untainted by patriarchal, capitalist ideologies. Therefore while as researchers we must recognize and draw attention to the economic conditions of the research subjects, we can expect variations in their appearance because humans are both products of such conditions as well as historical agents (Hedley, 1981). With the recognition of the importance of analysing "empirically given circumstances" (Marx, 1972: 792) one can proceed with a study that incorporates analysis of relations of production and reproduction as well as the variations that occur in these relations based on different empirical circumstances. Interviews and participant observation provide the means to understanding these different relations of production and reproduction based on
a variety of factors such as the personal aspirations of individuals and gender and kinship relations.

I gained access to El Rosario, an indigenous, peasant community, through a women's development organization based in Cayambe that I had worked with a few years ago.\(^4\) I was told that of all the communities where this NGO worked, El Rosario had the highest number of flower-plantation workers. I visited El Rosario's women's group and explained to them that I wanted to live in the community and conduct interviews with women workers. The people with the NGO in Cayambe did not agree with my plan to live in the community saying that I would do better to stay in Cayambe and travel during the day to El Rosario and other communities. The stated reason for this was that they believed people would try to borrow money from me without always paying me back, especially since my time would be limited in the area. I told them it had never been a problem for me before and that I would take my chances.

Speaking with the women's group of El Rosario about my proposed stay there I was told that they could not take such a decision and that I should return for the community meeting at the end of the month. I agreed and made arrangements for transportation as there is no regular public transportation to and from El Rosario.

Representatives from most of the community's families were present at the meeting. There, one of the leaders read a letter I had written to the community council

\(^4\) The *Proyecto de Mujeres-Cayambe* is an NGO in the area which gives credits and other non-monetary assistance to women's groups in indigenous communities within the canton of Cayambe. I spent two and a half months in one of these communities in 1994 as a student in the Trent-in-Ecuador programme.
explaining my reasons for being there. I spoke briefly, answered a few questions and they decided consensually to accept me into the community. Then they proceeded to go around the room to find out who had a room for me. Alberto was suggested. He left to bring his wife Rosalía to the meeting. They chatted privately and then she came over to talk with me briefly and see when I would move in. They were both my age and were long time employees of a nearby flower plantation. Although I was prepared to accept any lodgings in El Rosario I was pleased to be living with a local family involved in the industry since it gave me an opportunity to observe their daily lives and thus obtain information that I would not necessarily get from a limited number of interview questions.

The first two weeks were mainly spent getting to know the family I was staying with, their extended kinship network and the women involved with the women's store. After some socializing I asked individual women if I could interview them. I would then ask if they could introduce me to friends who also worked in the flower industry. I continued to partake in community activities throughout my stay in El Rosario. Through socializing I met people who do not work in the industry and spoke with them about their opinions of it and their lives as non-flower plantation workers.

This thesis is arranged into two parts. Part I provides a macro view of Ecuador and the cut-flower for export industry while Part II provides a micro view of the impact of this industry in a small rural community. Chapter two of Part I provides background information on the cut-flower industry in Ecuador and elsewhere as well as the global flower trade and the economic conditions that have provided for its growth in Ecuador.
Part II deals with the impact of this industry on the community of El Rosario, the households of flower plantation workers in El Rosario and finally the individual women who work there. We see how obligations to the community and household are negotiated by women workers and how, through these negotiations, the community and household are restructured. With the uncertainties of the global market and the health hazards involved in their work, women strategize to secure their futures through a variety of measures personally, within the household and at a community level.
Chapter Two

The Flower Industry in Ecuador

In this chapter I present some of the reasons for the rapid growth of the flower industry in Ecuador. Beginning with a macro level view, I discuss the globalization of the flower industry which had previously been centred in the Netherlands and more recently has seen Colombia take a large share of the global market for fresh cut flowers. We see how neo-liberalism and the policy of structural adjustment promote the export of non-traditional agricultural products such as fresh cut flowers. Moving to the micro level I discuss the everyday work of those employed in this industry.

Since the early to mid 1970s neo-liberalism as an ideology of development has gained greater acceptance around the world. The dominant world discourse no longer is the Keynesian one of government involvement in the economy. Rather it is believed by many that the solution to the economic crises of the last two decades is to have as little government involvement in the economy as possible. The state is now viewed as ineffective and inefficient (Petras and Vieux, 1992).

Perhaps neo-liberalism's strongest proponent has been the International Monetary Fund. The IMF was never meant to be an aid organization. As a bank, its purpose is to provide short-term funds for countries with immediate economic problems. When countries overdraw, they are obliged to submit to IMF conditions. These conditions go beyond the normal requirements of banking and will be outlined below. The goal of the
IMF therefore is a singular, short-sighted one -- that countries take the means necessary to pay back their loans. It is through the IMF that western capitalist countries ensure that Third World debtors subscribe to the neo-liberal ideology. It is in effect through the IMF that rich nations dictate economic policy in the Third World (Harris, 1995; Petras and Vieux, 1992, Weeks, 1995).

The conditions of the IMF are known as structural adjustment. According to Schuurman (1993) this policy means a liberalization of the economy through: (1) privatization; (2) devaluation; (3) deregulation of prices and (4) emphasis on export-led industrialization (Schuurman, 1993). With the adoption of the neo-liberal ideology and its practice of structural adjustment policies has come an opening of markets and the promotion of exports around the world. Such policies are aimed at giving incentives to the export of products that are based on a country's comparative advantages, in the case of Ecuador its cheap unskilled labour and its natural resources. One of these strategies has been the promotion of nontraditional exports particularly of agricultural products known as NTAEs or NTAXs (Barham, et al., 1992: 43). In Ecuador this has meant an expansion in the production of non-native crops grown mainly for export such as fresh flowers, asparagus, artichokes, melons and strawberries. Between 1990 and 1993 earnings from these nontraditional agricultural products together with new light manufacturing exports, grew by 154 percent and their share of total exports rose from 6.8 percent to 16.2 percent

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5The term non-traditional agricultural exports (NTAEs) is used to describe products which were previously not produced or exported in a country (Barham, et al. 1992; Thrupp, 1995).
(EIU Country Profile - Ecuador 1994-1995: 30). Despite the rapid growth in this sector of the economy, the demand for rural waged labour has actually decreased particularly in the banana industry where capital intensive technologies has lessened the demand for workers (Larrea, 1996: 73). One notable exception to this is in the Cayambe region where there is a high demand for labour and lower unemployment due to the rapid growth of the flower industry which is labour intensive while at the same time that it uses some technology. So far, efforts at increased mechanization have been relatively unsuccessful due to the delicate nature of the product which requires more sensitive handling than machines have been able to provide.

International agencies and development agencies, particularly the US Agency for International Development (USAID) support the growth of NTAEs by requiring developing countries to establish structural adjustment and trade-liberalization policies in order to reduce their external debt and increase exports and investment (Thrupp, 1995: 20). For these development agencies and for governments adopting NTAE policies, the purpose of NTAE promotion policies is to generate foreign exchange, create jobs, diversify exports and thereby reduce dependence on a few traditional crops and to

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6 Although cut-flower plantations in Ecuador are fairly small in size they require a very high capital investment in technology, marketing and operating. According to Thrupp (1995) the average initial investment is $200,000 per hectare.

7 This information was provided to me by a supervisor in one plantation which I toured. I was shown a large machine which was built to sort flowers. I was told it was no longer used because it damaged the flowers so sorting is done by hand by women in post-harvest.
stimulate economic growth. In Latin America financial support for the NTAE strategy has come mainly from USAID. In Ecuador, USAID provided $12.5 million US from 1984 to 1994 to the Programme for the Export of Non-traditional Agriculture (PROEXANT). Such programs supported by USAID include aggressive advertising campaigns to attract investors (ibid, 1995: 20). The Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC) dedicated $10 million for NTAEs, the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB) approved a loan of $1 million, the German government provided technical assistance and the Canadian government is providing support for NTAE transport (ibid, 1995: 24). The Ecuadorian government has promoted NTAE development by making investment easier by simplifying procedures for exporting and, in cooperation with international agencies, by providing credit to some of the larger NTAE entrepreneurs (ibid, 1995: 31).

The centre of the international cut-flower industry has long been, and continues to be, Holland. Starting in the late 1960s Holland began to face competition from the South (Maharaj and Dorren, 1995: 14). Now, one of its biggest competitors is Colombia, a country which began producing flowers only about 30 years ago. Colombia's advantages in this industry -- the longer growing season, cheap and available land and low labour costs -- are obvious. The growth of flower exports from Colombia has been steady since

8There has been a major decline globally in prices for traditional agricultural exports such as coffee, bananas, sugar and basic grains in the 1980s (Thrupp, 1995: 27).

9All figures in this paragraph are from Thrupp, 1995.
its inception, hitting the 100,000 tons mark in 1991, with a value of $267 million US (ibid, 1995: 15). Some of the countries that have entered the market in the last three decades are Kenya, Thailand, Zimbabwe, India, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Mexico and Brazil. At first, flower producing countries in the south took a significant market share of carnations from Holland, but now it seems the battle for market share is over roses (ibid, 1995: 17).

The Colombian flower industry has a twenty year head start on Ecuador. Far more has been written on the experience of its employees than in Ecuador.

The majority of the flower production in Colombia occurs in the highlands of the Sabana of Bogotá. Cut flowers for export have been produced on the plains of Bogotá since the mid-1960s. As of 1995 there were 450 flower-producing companies in the country which had in total 4,200 hectares under cultivation (Rangel, et al., 1995: 56). The industry employs about 135,000 people in Colombia of which 60 percent are women. It ranks third for non-traditional exports in Colombia and the industry continues to grow there (ibid: 56). The industry's growth was rapid early on with exports increasing over 500 percent between 1967 and 1974 from $113 million to $678 million. By 1980 Colombia became the world's second largest flower exporter, after the Netherlands (Thrupp, 1995: 18). Women work in mostly the low-paid, so-called unskilled jobs. Men have jobs as supervisors, fumigators or have managerial positions. Despite their inferior

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10 Actual export figures are difficult to determine since it is estimated that profits from drug trafficking are laundered by the flower industry in Colombia (Maharaj and Dorren, 1995: 54).
position in the workplace many women are sole income providers for their households and do work that does entail a great amount of skill. Recognizing crop pests at an early stage and classifying flowers requires experience and know-how on the part of the workers.

In a case study of flower workers near Bogotá, Colombia, Diana Medrano (1982) shows the problems of women who participate in the work force. Using a Marxist-feminist perspective she shows that, despite entering the workforce and receiving a wage, women's situation in society and in the family are not transformed and it is patriarchy and capitalism which are responsible for their inferior position at home and in the workplace. She focuses on a gender ideology in the workplace which specifies the work for which women are most suited. Managers claim that women are more appropriate for delicate and repetitive work than are men because "they don't have as much in their heads as men." (51) Medrano recognizes many changes in the lives of women who work in the flower industry, particularly access to a stable job with regular hours and a basic minimum wage. However, according to Medrano, despite the wages being received by women in this industry, there has not been a significant improvement in standards of living. She notes that their wages are sufficient for just the basic necessities.

An important finding for this research is that in her case study Medrano found that single women turn over between a third to one half of their salaries to the family for the purchase of basic goods; the rest goes to help brothers and sisters, especially with their studies (54). This was not found to be the case among the young, single women workers I interviewed in El Rosario. They did help their parents and siblings but it was mainly at
their own discretion and not turned over completely.

León and Viveros (1982) discuss the wide variety of work done by women in the rural areas of Colombia in the household and on the land. These jobs include work on flower and coffee plantations as well as in craft and textile factories. They also show how the work of men and women differs, particularly in processing work where women do the low paid, labour-intensive work and where men, as the overseers, are better paid and have more job security. The study also looks specifically at the flower industry. Half the workers interviewed suffer from occupational illness. Additionally, if women do take outside employment their household obligations do not decrease. At the same time, however, the authors recognize that this employment represents an improvement for many women whose alternatives might be out-migration and domestic service.

Most recently flower companies in Colombia have increased the vulnerability of women workers, an indication of what may be in store for women workers in the Ecuadorian flower industry. Rangel et al. (1995) look at a new feature of the flower industry in Colombia, that of "contracting out" work. Contracting out reflects capital's preference for "flexibility" in the labour market and emphasises the vulnerability of workers to job loss and relocation. In the case of Colombia, to improve flexibility the government, under pressure from corporations and the IMF, has legalized the operation of temporary service companies (Law 50) which supply flower plantations with temporary workers. This point suggests that there is now greater job instability than what was evident in earlier research. It is also noteworthy that labour contracting has grown considerably in the last few years in the flower-export industry in Colombia (Rangel et al.
1995). Cut-flower companies will employ only the number of workers needed for the year-round operation of the company and will subcontract others during the peak seasons around Valentine's Day and Mother's Day. Rangel et al. note that one of the main reasons for subcontracting is to prevent unionization in the plantations. It was also found in this study that the temporary service companies take a percentage of the worker's wages leaving the workers with a wage around the minimum legal wage in Colombia. Law 50 also means that workers hired under the terms of these contracts have no right to social security and their employment can be terminated at any time with no reason given (Maharaj and Dorren, 1995: 57).

Although there is nothing in the literature that explains why many Colombian plantation owners set up shop in Ecuador in the mid to late 1980s, people I spoke with in Ecuador had a variety of explanations. Some say it was because the soil was exhausted and heavily contaminated from years of flower production in Colombia. Others say a disease struck the Colombian flowers. Still others believe it was because of the growth of unions in the Colombian flower industry and the cheaper labour available at the time in Ecuador.\footnote{Now, however, wages are not lower in Ecuador than in Colombia. Workers in Colombia make about $120 US per month (Maharaj and Dorren, 1995: 55) while the women from my sample averaged $250 US per month.} Whatever the reason(s) may be, the industry has had phenomenal growth in Ecuador in the last fifteen years. Annual earnings rose from just $526,000 US (Economist Intelligence Unit 1995: 16) to $106 million in 1996 and projected earnings for 1997 of $130 million US (La Hora, 1997: 9). Despite political instability in the country caused by
the border conflict with Peru and the removal of Bucaram as President in early 1997 there continues to be a great deal of foreign investment in this industry with many of the plantations owned by both foreigners and Ecuadorians.

Of the flowers produced in the country 90 percent are for export and 76 percent come from the province of Pichincha where the field work for this study was carried out. Of those, fifty percent go to the US and the rest to markets in Europe, Russia and Canada. The majority of those flowers are roses (60 percent). The flowers that remain for the domestic market are generally of poorer quality (El Comercio, 1997: B3).

In the canton of Cayambe there are 30 flower enterprises which occupy 700 hectares and employ more than 8,000 people directly and 36,000 indirectly (El Comercio, 1997: B3; Vistazo, 1997: WWW). The growth in this industry has also caused a population surge in the area with the canton of Cayambe growing from 30,000 in 1990 to 55,000 in 1997. At least half of the workers in this industry are from other parts of the country (Vistazo, 1997: WWW).

The wages in the flower industry are the highest in the agricultural sector. However, the cost of living is exceptionally high in the area, particularly rent which can be double what one would pay in any other city of comparable size in Ecuador. Workers interviewed for this study made anywhere from $150 CDN to just over $300 per month depending on the company, seniority, amount of overtime and the presence or absence of a union. Minimum wage in the country is just over $40 per month. Many received bonuses at Christmas time and at the beginning of the school year so they can buy school supplies for their children. Lunch is often supplied for the workers at the work site, which
is usually discounted from their pay. Providing lunch to the workers benefits the
employers because the workers can be given just a half hour for lunch instead of an hour
or more for the workers to go home, particularly since many workers live far from the
plantations. It also sustains the workers through their often very long work days. Because
the company can buy ingredients in bulk, meals can be prepared more cheaply than the
workers could at home. Perhaps more importantly however is that workers demand it. In
the highlands, it is very common to feed people in exchange for favours or work,
particularly for rural people. According to one woman named Rosálía who works in the
post-harvest section of El Rosal the women workers, through their union, demanded a hot
drink in the morning because of the cold environment in which they had to work. The
company gave in to their demands and at 9:00 every morning they have a ten minute
break for a hot drink and bread. At El Rosal the company gives money to the union and
the union buys the food for the cafeteria. At Florencia where another young woman from
El Rosario Noemí works, the company has the workers work Saturdays in exchange for
their lunches for the week. Workers start the day at 7:00am and leave at 2:30pm from
Monday to Friday. Saturdays they work from 7:00am to 3:00pm. The company charges
them a half hour of work for each lunch that they provide for the workers. Noemí and her
coworkers used to work until three every day of the week and Saturdays just until noon;
the extra half hour was to pay for the lunches they are supplied with at the plantation.
However they often had to work overtime on Saturdays to keep up with production and
demand so the company decided that instead of having to pay them for overtime on
Saturdays they would have them work for their lunch on Saturday and then they would
leave at 2:30 during the week, thus saving the company money.

In the plantations most workers either work in the greenhouses (*cultivo*) or in the post-harvest sorting and packing area (*post-cosecha*). Those who work in cultivation in the greenhouses, both men and women, plant, take care of, cut and send the flowers to the cold post-harvest rooms. After being sorted, classified and packed, the flowers are then sent to the airport in Quito and flown to their markets around the world. Typically it is men who irrigate and fumigate. All of these employees are paid the same but they do not work the same amount of hours. Those in post-harvest, usually women, will work more hours particularly at peak times of the year. Many women prefer working in post-harvest to working in the greenhouses. According to Gladys, a 17 year old single woman who works in the post-harvest section of a plantation near to El Rosario: "It's good in post-harvest. In the greenhouses we have to do all sorts of jobs, (*le da a uno de hacer todo tipo de trabajo*) clean the aisles, rake, sweep, make the rose beds, prune and harvest and we have to do this in one week (*debemos alcanzarnos en una semana eso*), whereas in post-harvest everyday we just put the flowers in bunches, process them and make sure that the flower doesn't have any diseases (*hay que ver que la flor está sin enfermedades*)." The engineers, supervisors and managers are usually men and some are foreigners. At the beginning many were Colombians who previously worked in the flower industry there. According to an article from El Comercio in 1996, a daily newspaper from Quito, in another region of the country, where roses are also grown for export, management and skilled workers have an expression "Skill and women produce the most beautiful roses (*Técnica y mujeres dan las rosas más bellas*)." According to a director of production in
one enterprise the women are more responsible workers than men because they bring all of their wage to the household, learn faster, are more suited to this delicate work and are not as easily bored. Such statements illustrate the commonly held stereotypes about women in Ecuador.

When the plantations first opened, the vast majority of those employed were young single women from the surrounding rural communities. Most of the workers in Ecuador's flower industry, about 60 percent, are women. This again must be seen against a background of global restructuring and the emergence of export oriented manufacturing which finds young women to be particularly diligent, obedient, low cost workers (Fröbel, Heinrichs and Kreye, 1977; Mies 1986). In Latin America the emergence of such industries is most widely documented in relation to workers in maquiladoras particularly in Mexico and the Caribbean (see: Fernandez, 1982; Kopinak, 1996).

Much of the literature on women workers in the Third World has characterised such gender attitudes as the norm. Safa has noted in her studies on women workers in Puerto Rico that management prefers younger single women. It is argued that these women are better educated and less burdened with household or child care responsibilities. Therefore there is less absenteeism and the women have more energy to put into their jobs. They are less likely to complain about their jobs because they are more concerned with money than with job security (Safa, 1986). According to Arizpe and Aranda (1986) young peasant women learn obedience, docility and service toward others at home, qualities that make them an appealing work force (177). However, the female labour force in the flower industry is more heterogeneous. Herrera (1991) found that
"there is no determining relationship between women's reproductive cycle and the decision to sell their labour (no hay una relación determinante del ciclo reproductivo de la mujer sobre la decisión de vender su fuerza de trabajo)." (233) She found being a wife and mother was not an obstacle to their employment in the industry but rather a characteristic of more than half the workers she surveyed. This heterogeneity of the female work force may not continue however. It was found in El Rosario that despite the view that women are a cheap and obedient labour force, a new, and somewhat unexpected employment policy has begun in some of the plantations around Cayambe. Women are slowly being replaced by male workers, particularly in the greenhouses. In some plantations men outnumber women by far in the greenhouses while they are slowly replacing women, who remain the majority, in packing. Workers had a variety of explanations for this, saying that men took better care of the plants in the greenhouse, that women prefer the cooler temperature in the packing plants and that the work is more suited to them. However by far the most common reason that workers gave for this policy was that women were more problematic for their employers. Under the Ecuadorian Labour code it is prohibited for women to work during the two weeks leading up to and the ten weeks after birth. Women also have the right to a fifteen minute paid break every three hours to breastfeed their newborn babies. There are no laws which recognize the male worker as a father such as paternity leave or the right to time off if a child is gravely sick (Dirección Nacional de la Mujer, 1996: 17). Because women miss work, with pay, for maternity and lactation in plantations they are much more expensive employees than men where these laws are enforced. Now that rural women have moved into the formal
sector and have legislation that guarantees them certain protections (i.e. paid maternity leave and reduced work time with full pay for breastfeeding) they are viewed as too costly by their employers and are being pushed out. Also, because labour legislation prohibits anyone under 18 to be employed it is more difficult to find young, single women. Many plantations ignore this law however and hire teenage women. With the rapid growth of the industry there has been a general shortage of workers so that despite this policy of replacing women workers many women were still able to find jobs in the new plantations that start up every year. Noemí says that where she works, Florencia, they try not to hire women ("tratan de no coger, en lo posible") but if they need to, for lack of male candidates, they hire women. They have also said they will not hire any more workers under the legal age but, again, they still hire a few workers younger than 18. Now where she works, it is common to get a job through an acquaintance who already works there ("por medio de alguna palanca") and management prefers to get new workers who are recommended by the better employees.

In the plantation where Miriam works, El Rosal, there is a company union. There are more male workers than female workers, despite the industry average of 60 percent female workforce. According to Miriam, women and men work equally hard and are paid the same according to their collective agreement. Only three women work in cultivation in the greenhouses. In post-harvest there are only female workers and a few women work in the kitchen and in maintenance. She says "in the collective agreement we women are better protected than the men. We have more rights according to the labour code." The collective agreement gives them three months maternity leave and 18 months of reduced
hours for lactation but according to Miriam, "management does not like this." On March 8, for International Women's Day, as well as each time they have a baby, women workers are given bonuses. Their maternity leave is paid 75 percent by their social security and 25 percent by the company. For these reasons Miriam says "they don't want more women in the company. They prefer male workers because [according to the collective agreement] they only get three days off paternity leave and a bonus....We've asked the company to create a daycare on the plantation so that we can have our children close by but they don't want that." Gradually women are being replaced by men. "We used to be 40 women on the plantation now we are only 25."

I asked Miriam if the company tried other ways of limiting workers' fertility by promoting contraception and she said that the social security office sends condoms to the clinic on the plantation. The workers can ask for them in the clinic if they want. Where Noemi works the doctor used to give out condoms to all the workers and spoke to the women workers about the importance of contraception and how to use them.

They tried to keep women from getting pregnant because it's also a risk for the woman, for the company and for the woman to be in so many chemicals. (Trataban de que las mujeres no se embaracen porque también es riesgo como para la mujer, para la empresa y para la mujer ¿no? por estar en tanto quimico.)

According to Noemi, contraception is important for flower plantation workers because their contact with chemicals on the job can make it risky to have children. It is also important for the company so that women take less time off from work.

Miriam feels that the company is trying to get rid of its organized workforce. She says that as people leave the plantation they are not replaced so the work load for those
remaining is increasing. The company justifies this to the workers by saying that the company is in difficulties and near bankruptcy and that everyone must do their part. She says that some of the union leaders who accept this could be getting money from the company because they do not fight for the workers. According to other El Rosal workers, the company tried to break up the union by splitting the plantation into two, one unionized the other not, but this proved to be inefficient so they went back to the way it was before with just one plantation and one unionized work force.

In spite of Miriam's complaints about the company and the union she recognizes that as workers they are much better off than workers in other plantations where there are no unions, even though theirs is a company union. Of the approximately 30 flower companies in the area only three are unionized and she says that the union of El Rosal, where she works, is the strongest. However she says that she has noticed lately that wages in non-unionized plantations have caught up. Where the unionized employees are better off is in bonuses and certain worker protections and generally their jobs are more secure because the workers can defend themselves through their union. She says that their manager is good but the owner, a Colombian, is very demanding.

Few of the flower plantation workforces in Ecuador are unionized and those that are have company unions. Despite this fact most people I spoke to from one of these plantations felt they were better off with a company union than with no union. They considered the manager who started the union to be truly on the side of the workers and generally a very good person. However some workers, such as Miriam, question the loyalties and effectiveness of their union representatives.
Many countries around the world have strict standards for the fresh cut flowers they import. Many demand that the flowers be free of insects and to insure this the plants are sprayed with a variety of chemicals. At some plantations the plants are sprayed after-hours when the majority of the workers are no longer at work; at others, workers leave the greenhouse for a period of an hour after spraying. Some workers have told me that at some plantations the plants are sprayed while the workers are still in the greenhouse.

Workplaces often provide uniforms for the workers. These uniforms usually consist of jogging pants, t-shirts, a smock and often a baseball cap. The companies also throw parties for workers as do the unions. At these parties workers and managers eat and drink together and often dance.

The most common reason that flower plantation workers give for working there is the money. As Teresa put it, "Its very profitable to work on the plantations. Its not necessary to go to school and study for years and years to make money." There are many reasons women work in the industry, and continue to work there even with the perceived risk this employment will have to their health. However the employment the cut-flower industry provides to women of El Rosario also has an impact on their community, their households and their personal lives. A discussion of this impact follows in the next part of this thesis.
PART II: Change and Strategies for Survival in El Rosario

Chapter Three

Changes in the Community of El Rosario

This chapter deals with the relationship between the community of El Rosario and the cut-flowers for export industry and the negotiations that flower plantation workers make with respect to community involvement and participation. After a description of the community and its organizations I show how the community adapts to the changes brought about by this growing industry and the increased participation of its population in it.

The research for this thesis was carried out in El Rosario, an indigenous community located in the canton of Cayambe, a centre for flower production in the northern highlands of Ecuador. This region was chosen because I was familiar with it from a previous year long stay in Ecuador. I had spent time in a nearby community and had many contacts in the region through a women's group based in the town of Cayambe.

The total population of the canton of Cayambe is 46,938 of which 29,848 (64 percent) are considered rural. According to a study published by UNICEF and the Frente Social of the Ecuadorian government 85.8 percent of the rural population of Cayambe lives in poverty (Larrea, et al., 1996: 40). That is to say that the household is unable to provide its members with basic necessities (ibid, 1996: 7-8).

The people of El Rosario self-identify as indigenous. Many have indigenous last
names but do not speak Quichua nor dress in a traditional manner, except for a few of the older women. The only Quichua that most residents know is from Catholic Church hymns. What makes them indigenous to an outsider would not be their speech or dress but their way of life as rural peasants. Although they may be proletarianized to some extent through their engagement in wage labour either through migration to the cities or by working in the flower plantations, they themselves identify with their fellow indigenous peasants. A well-known indigenous women's leader from a nearby community suggested to some women in the community that they were not really Indians in their lifestyle suggesting that because they live closer to the city and engage in money earning activities to a larger extent they were culturally mestizos. The women of El Rosario protested these remarks. "Just because we don't dress in traditional clothing and we have some money doesn't mean we stop being indigenous (indígenas)," was how Miriam, a member of the women's group replied to those remarks.

El Rosario is surrounded by flower plantations, none of which are owned or run by locals. The community is being closed in more and more by the expansion of the flower industry. Although many in the community are employed in the flower industry the community is protesting the expansion of this industry in their area. When land upstream of the community was to be used to build greenhouses for flowers the community members successfully blocked the roads leading to the area. They felt that this would mean encroaching onto the community's space and eventually the plantation would either contaminate or use up their water. When I asked Alberto, a flower plantation worker if he was worried what such contamination would do to his recently installed fish
farm he said he was taking precautions should more plantations be built in spite of their protests. He has two sources of water for the pools. One is the river and the other is from another source uphill and although much colder than the water in the river "it will have to suffice."

As is common for workers in this area, few people view the industry as absolutely beneficial to their lives and make extra investments for the harm it can do. Many who have the resources, such as Alberto make additional investments to protect themselves from any harm the industry might do to them as individuals, such as polluting their water. Chapters four and five will look at individual strategies to cope with the growth of this industry. At a community level many oppose the growth of this industry in the area because it has driven up the price of land beyond the reach of local people. In fact, in national newspapers land in the area is advertised for tens of thousands of US dollars per hectare. Therefore those families that wish to buy more land for subsistence crops or for their children cannot. Since the population of El Rosario is growing due to decreased out-migration and increased employment locally this implies that future generations will be more dependent on cash than land for survival, thus further increasing the level of commodification within the El Rosario.

El Rosario is an indigenous rural community with a population of about 342. It is located very close to several plantations which draw on locals for labour. The growing flower industry means that more outsiders are moving into the area to fill the labour demand not met within this area. Since this industry first came to the area thousands of people from other parts of Ecuador have come to the Cayambe region in search of work
in the flower plantations. They have come particularly from poorer areas of the country like the coast and the areas in the south devastated by recent droughts. People in El Rosario told me that ever since people started moving to the area, especially people from the coast, crime has increased. I was told many times that it was not as safe to walk to the highway as it once was because women had been raped. They also said that the rapists were not from the region but were from the coast. Costeños generally have a bad reputation in the highlands. They often find it very difficult to find jobs and rooms to rent in the area because of discrimination against them. One way that El Rosario is resisting penetration by outsiders of their community is by prohibiting all comuneros from renting homes or rooms to people from outside the community.

When I initially asked a few members of the community if I could stay in El Rosario and talk to people about this industry for two months they said that I would have to attend the community meeting and there they would decide. As Teresa, the vice-president of the council told me, "If someone is going to come and stay in our community this is not the decision of one person, the whole community must decide." After presenting my plans to the community I was accepted and arrangements were made for me to stay with a local family. Evidently my brief intrusion in the community was not viewed as being much of a threat.

For the community it is crucial to keep the industry at a "safe distance", close enough to provide income and employment but far enough away to keep out the unwanted aspects such as increasing land prices, crime and pollution. To comprehend why and how a community like El Rosario wishes to protect itself from certain outside
influences it is necessary to understand rural communities in the highlands of Ecuador and the state of small-holder agricultural production. The following discussion of highland agriculture provides information to help arrive at an understanding of the ambiguous relationship between communities and the industry.

*Highland Agriculture*

Through most of its history the economy of the parish in which El Rosario is located has been based on land ownership and agricultural activities (Estrella, 1991: 13). According to the agricultural census of 1954, 1.16 percent of large landholders in the highlands owned 63.9 percent of the land which signifies a great amount of control by the haciendas over the agricultural resources of the area. With the exception of a small group of landowners with 10 to 20 hectares the region was characterized by a latifundio-minifundio polarity (Velasco in Estrella, 1991: 13).

Unlike on the coast where agricultural products were exported, agriculture in the more isolated highlands had traditionally been food crops for the domestic market (Zamosc, 1994: 41). Much of this production came from haciendas which depended on an abundant source of rural labour to satisfy permanent and seasonal demands. *Huasipungueros* (indigenous tenants tied to the haciendas) worked most of the week for the *hacendado* in exchange for a small plot of land for growing their own subsistence crops and for access to pasture for grazing their animals. Agrarian reforms in the 1960s and 1970s attempted to modernize the old agrarian system. This was seen as necessary in
order to increase output and equity. Without feudalistic controls over land and labour it was believed that production could be made more efficient and would therefore increase (Commander and Peek, 1986: 81). Agrarian reform ended the servile relations between *hacendados* and *huasipungueros*: non-wage labour was prohibited and some hacienda lands were transferred to peasants. Some of the underutilized haciendas were converted into peasant cooperatives (Korovkin, 1997: 93). Many large landowners sold off parts of their land in order to avoid expropriation particularly in the dairy producing areas of the northern highlands. According to Zamosc (1994: 43) "once redefined as modern agricultural units, [haciendas] were automatically exempted from the threat of agrarian reform."

A major affect of land reform was a less concentrated ownership of land. However, the land that was distributed to the peasants was often insufficient. The majority of the rural population ended up with land that was at too high of an altitude, too dry, or otherwise infertile and they no longer had access to the pasture, forests and irrigation that they previously had on the haciendas (Suárez-Torres and López-Paredes, 1997: 88). In general in Ecuador today there are two systems of agricultural production that coexist. There are agribusinesses that are modern, profitable and have a high amount of capital investment. The second system is traditional peasant agriculture with little land and access to credit and small profits.

Zamosc (1994) recognizes two basic socioeconomic situations now found in the peasant sector of the Ecuadorian highlands. In one case, families have enough land to provide for their own consumption and to sell at the market as well. This often entails
some degree of specialization in one or more traditional crops. However Zamosc also points out that this situation is most common in rural areas inhabited by mestizos, people of mixed Spanish and indigenous ancestry.

The second socioeconomic situation involves families which lack sufficient land and must combine some subsistence farming with other activities. Such productive units coexist with medium and large scale farms. This second situation is the most common in the region of study. Most often, in this part of Ecuador, men have gone to the cities to work in construction, returning to their homes on weekends, and women have worked as domestic servants or seamstresses in Quito. In recent years, however, both men and women have sought employment closer to home in the flower industry.

As Zamosc points out, subsistence agricultural production in combination with other activities is most commonly carried out among the indigenous population. The mestizo population generally has greater access to land and therefore are more likely to be able to produce a surplus for exchange, making their production more market oriented within the agricultural system (Zamosc, 1994: 41-45). In fact, at the time of the last agricultural census, 60 percent of rural households still had less than five hectares of land (de Janvry et al., 1991a: 26). Since there has been no agrarian reform since that time we can expect that these statistics have not improved for the peasant population.

The oil boom of the 1970s improved conditions for many people living in urban areas. Economic growth was rapid and export earnings which were reinvested in the country led to policies of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) and agricultural modernization. Growth, however, favoured primarily the urban sectors. In rural areas
where land was still unevenly distributed despite agrarian reforms there were few employment opportunities. Much of the land, particularly in the Cayambe region, was used for nonlabour-intensive activities like cattle raising. Growth in the cities increased demands for foodstuffs (which benefitted large rural land owners), housing (which caused a construction boom and created work for migrant peasants) and for domestic servants (creating work for young rural women). This migration to the cities meant that land was no longer central to the identity of many people from rural areas and they were inserted into the wage labour market.

During the 1970s the Ecuadorian government occupied a large part of the Ecuadorian economy. Its main source of revenue was oil and it needed further revenue which came from foreign borrowing. In fact, according to deJanvry, et al. the economic boom of the 1970s was fuelled by oil and foreign debt. Therefore by the 1980s the Ecuadorian economy was extremely vulnerable to fluctuating oil prices and the cost and availability of foreign loans (deJanvry, et al., 1991a: 26). By 1982, Ecuador, along with most Latin American countries, entered a profound crisis. The extent of the debt crisis in these countries became most noticeable during the 1982 Mexican debt moratorium. Around the same time oil prices fell. With encouragement from the International Monetary Fund, the Ecuadorian state then implemented a strategy of structural adjustment and a change in its development model towards the diversification and promotion of exports. The goal of this strategy was to stabilize the economy and promote economic growth (Larrea, 1996: 72). This growth-oriented program implied stabilization and liberalization as had already occurred in the Southern Cone countries under authoritarian
regimes, and was implemented by the government elected in 1984 which was based on a coalition of coastal agroexporter interests (deJanvry, et al., 1991: 13). The latter was the only sector which, according to these authors, would benefit from such a policy. Import and price controls were removed, fuel and electricity rates were increased, and the sucre (the Ecuadorian currency) was devalued. Government subsidies and expenditures on social programs also decreased (ibid, 1981a: 48).

Agriculture remains the largest single employer in Ecuador. This sector employs between 50 and 60 percent of the male labour force yet only 16 percent of the female labour force (Faulkner and Lawson: 1991: 36). According to Faulkner and Lawson, women's increased entry into agriculture between 1974 and 1982 was into the lowest labour groups, that is, into unpaid agriculture, and therefore, outside of these statistics. The authors further conclude that this increase in women's unpaid participation in the workforce is not due to increased overall demand but due to male out-migration. This out-migration is largely due to the fact that individual land holdings are insufficient to support families and men must seek employment elsewhere. As in other parts of Latin America this leaves the women with the burden of subsistence farming. This trend is often termed the "feminization of agriculture."

With the crisis of the 1980s the peasant sector was particularly hard hit. With a decrease in construction and manufacturing the semi-proletarianized peasants lost their jobs in the cities and migration became less of a prospect. Another factor was the declining real wage rate which, accompanied by a rising cost of living, exacerbated the crisis for this sector of Ecuadorian society. As Korovkin (1997: 99) notes in her study of
rural indigenous communities near Otavalo, just north of Cayambe, migration "threatened communal solidarity and undermined the practice of family labour exchange..." Yet, as she argues, in her region of study permanent migration never developed into a major phenomenon since many who formerly migrated returned disillusioned because of economic crises and unemployment.

During the mid and late 1980s Colombian flower companies started to expand their operations in Ecuador. The industry has been quite prominent in the once hacienda-dominated area of Cayambe. This industry also has become a major employer for those living in Cayambe. As Korovkin noted, among a population in the Otavalo area, where many travel daily to work in the plantations of Cayambe, this employment permits them to retain access to their land and maintain family and community membership (Korovkin, 1997: 99) particularly for those who would have previously migrated to urban centres for work. For the relatively high wages and the ability to live at home, the introduction of this industry to the area, and the thousands of jobs it provides both directly and indirectly, was welcomed enthusiastically by many in the Cayambe area.

Community Organization

As a peasant community El Rosario's internal political structure is imposed by the Ministry of Agriculture. The community is headed by a democratically elected council which is headed by a president. This council organizes mingas, or communal work projects such as road and ditch maintenance and construction of public buildings such as
the day-care centre which also serves as a community centre. All such decisions are made by consensus. Permanent residents of El Rosario are called *comuneros*. These people have access to communal land and can run for or elect council members. *Comuneros* are also obliged to participate in community festivals and *mingas*. Failure to participate in *mingas* and to attend community meetings results in a fine. To have the legal status of a *comunero* one must be born in the community, marry into it or reside there for at least two years. To have the social status of a *comunero* one must participate in *mingas* and community festivals. This type of community structure is common in *comunidades indígenas* or *comunidades campesinas* throughout the Andes.

All families that belong to the community organization must have one member (if not the head of the household someone to replace him or her) at all *mingas*, community meetings and other events that the group decides must be attended by all. If someone does not attend without a reasonable excuse they are fined.

Today, the population of El Rosario is approximately 342. However not all of those people who are listed as belonging to the community actually live there. Some live in Quito where they work or study. Of the 54 heads of household that belong to the community organization 25 (46 percent) work in the flower industry, 11 (20 percent) work in the city, either Cayambe or Quito and most often as drivers, seamstresses, carpenters and mechanics, 10 (19 percent) work on their own land, seven (13 percent) work in a nearby hacienda, and one head of household is a domestic servant. The heads of households who are members of the community organization are generally the father of a nuclear family which is composed of parents and their dependent children living in the
same house. A small minority of heads of households are women.

Besides the community council there is another voluntary association in the community and that is the women's group. Miriam, a single mother and flower plantation worker is the president of the women's group. Many of those who are active in the women's group are not supportive of the president of the community council, Don Humberto. Miriam said "He is a machista who does not support anything we do because he does not think that what women do is important." She also complained that Don Humberto was more concerned with his own business interests than with the community as a whole. The president is not employed in the flower industry. It is unlikely that he could fulfil his role and duties to the community and undertake his business activities if he was. He owns a truck which he also uses to transport people and goods for a fee and he also has a small convenience store in El Rosario which was the first in the community. The women's group then started their own store creating competition for him. Miriam says he was reluctant to organize mingas to improve the daycare centre because he felt that was not something that belonged to the whole community but rather to the mothers who sent their children there. While I was in the community, however, a minga was organized to build a brick wall in front of a ditch because children in the daycare were falling in.

The women's store has been in operation off and on for only two years. The treasurer of the group runs the store six days a week and is paid S/125,000 ($50) per
month, just over the minimum wage. The store mainly sells soft drinks, and food and the women's group just started preparing various snack foods for sale in their store and another women's store in another community up the hill. According to Marisol who used to be a member of the women's group but stopped attending meetings when she started work at the plantation, they learned to knit, how to start a garden as well as how to get ahead ("como salir más o menos adelante") and have self-worth ("hacerse valer una").

The women's group has the goal of diversifying sources of income for women so that there would be other options to working in the flower plantations. However, with so many women in the group also working in the plantations their time to devote to the group is severely limited.

*Plantation Work and Community Obligations*

For many rural people the flower plantations are a welcomed source of income. These jobs are close to home which permits the workers to maintain community and kinship relations which working in the cities would not allow. However, being close to home does not mean they are able to fulfil all of their obligations to their community. Each worker negotiates between their work in the flower plantations and their lives in the community and in their households.

Teresa, vice-president of the community council, is a 26 year old university

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12 At the time of this research the exchange rate was 2500 sucres to one Canadian dollar.
student, unmarried and has never worked in a plantation. She is active in the indigenous 
organizations of the area and is very critical of the impact of this industry on community 
relations. According to her, "Now that they [flower workers] have money they don't care 
about others in the community. The community is less united now, less strong." She 
estimates that in every family in El Rosario there is someone who works in the flower 
industry and says this is because of the high salaries.

Community organizations and *mingas* are an important part of community life in 
rural Ecuador. *Mingas* are community work projects to which all member heads of 
households must contribute through either their own labour, substitute labour or by 
paying a fine. *Mingas* usually occur on Saturdays, a day which those who work in the 
flower industry are usually working. Since *mingas* are often community infrastructure 
projects that involve cleaning ditches, doing road repairs and the like, workers do not see 
an immediate benefit to themselves or their households by giving up the wages of missed 
work and attending the *minga*. When flower plantation employees who are also heads of 
households and members of the community miss a *minga*, they must send some other 
family member to work there, send food or pay a fine. Many women I spoke with said 
that even on their days off they would rather pay the fine than do the hard physical labour 
of a *minga*. The fines for not attending a *minga* are often around two to four dollars, a 
price that usually only flower plantation workers can afford. This has meant that *mingas* 
are usually attended by the elderly, the very young, and others who do not work in the 
flower plantations. Gavin Smith (1989) has described a similar situation in Peru where 
capitalized peasants also evade community labour exchanges:
Because the labour power to be foregone in the capitalized household is more productive than that of its neighbour, it can pay a "wage" to this neighbour to turn up for communal work in place of any member of the better-off household (165).

Therefore in El Rosario, decisions on what work the community does in the minga are usually made by those who are not working in the plantations and some of the workers complain that the projects done by the comuneros during the mingas is not for the benefit of flower plantation workers. Miriam, a single mother and flower plantation worker resents having to work on mingas that do not have a direct benefit to her household, such as cleaning irrigation canals and repairing roads which she does not use. "I only have this house... I have nothing (no tengo nada), but I have to contribute just the same (pero tengo que aportar igual)." However, the community actually benefits from the absences of comuneros working in the industry because of the much needed cash it brings to the council through the fines. Cash is used for fiestas as well as for purchasing supplies for mingas and other community projects.

Mingas in some parts of the Andes do not only include work but often food and drink as well so that during breaks people socialize and eat and drink. However, in El Rosario, at none of the mingas I participated in or observed were there breaks with food or beverages. This contrasts with what I observed a few years earlier in a community where no members worked in the flower industry, as well as with Korovkin's (1997) research in a nearby province and G. Smith's (1989) observations in highland Peru where chicha (a traditional drink of the Andes made from fermented grains), food and socializing abound. In El Rosario today, mingas are not considered to be social gatherings
centred on work-sharing but rather are seen as laborious and time-consuming obligations that are avoided by those that can afford to.

Other job-related commitments often interfere with minga participation. While I was in El Rosario in February of 1997 there was a nation-wide protest against the government of Abdalá Bucaram. The community council had decided that it was in the best interest of all residents in the community to attend the marches and blockades so it was decided that all those absent would pay a fine to the community council. One of the flower plantation unions also decided to do the same and took attendance of its members at the protests. While many comuneros set aside their agricultural chores for the day to participate with their community many plantation workers, especially non-unionized workers, were obliged to show up to work. Members of the community who were also union members joined the protests with their fellow unionized workers, not with their community.

In certain cases absences are allowed without the head of household having to pay a fine. According to Rosalía: "[On the day of the protests (February 5, 1997)] we had to attend with the union and the council understood this. We have permission not to attend the mingas because we have been building our fish farm, but when we are working in the plantation on Saturdays we have to pay S/5,000 ($2)." At one meeting I attended the executive decided to collect overdue fines and in one case, a single mother's fines were erased. The exemption for Alberto and his family implies a form on non-monetary support by the community for non-flower related activity that has income generating potential.
Relationships develop between flower plantation workers of different communities. This is a change particularly for women workers who, previous to working in plantations, would have had less contact socially with people of the same age and class outside their communities or outside their jobs as empleadas in the city. The women who arrive in the cities to work as empleadas from their rural communities work and live in their employers' households. This becomes much more than a job; it is where they have contact with and are socialized into city life, where they eat and are sheltered. It is also a workplace where they have very little autonomy and have high supervision. If they do not like their boss they cannot move to another department as they possibly could in a flower plantation. They also seldom have co-workers with whom to share their experiences and with whom to identify as a fellow worker. Now they have co-workers for the first time who are both male and female, and many of them are from different parts of the canton and from as far away as the coast and southern Ecuador. Not only do women in El Rosario work with these "strangers" they also attend parties thrown by the flower companies or unions with them. At the plantation where Marisol works, La Floresta, there are sometimes parties for the workers. They have food, beer for the men and soft drinks for the women and dancing. She likes the dancing more than anything. I asked Marisol if co-workers ever fall in love at work. She said "Yes, many, and there are problems because of it....Women don't know that the men they like are married and the men lie and say they're single. The women believe them.... The men come from far away... other parts of the country. Then the wife appears. There are separations." Some of the things she has noticed at the plantations and in the community is that there are a lot of single mothers.
Marisol also says that some women neglect their children because of their work and this causes problems with the children and their husbands. There is also a lot of gossip among the workers and this sometimes leads to misunderstandings. Many in the community view this as problematic for young single women. Now young women have friends in other communities whom they visit and they also meet young men from elsewhere. I was told that in the community there is an increase in the amount of single mothers because men come from other parts of the country to work in the plantations who have no intention of marrying these women.

In El Rosario, the six single mothers met the fathers of their children in the plantations. According to Miriam, a single mother of four working with others from other communities, other provinces and even Colombia, one learns other ways of acting and behaving. She says in the workplace however "We are all equal (Somos todos iguales)."

Fanny added "We are one family (una sola familia)" They work together, eat together, gossip together, such that activities and interactions which were traditionally occurring at household and community levels are, with the proliferation of flower plantations, occurring within the workplace. Unlike in the hacienda system of the area which drew on local communities for labour, these workplace interactions in the flower plantations are between people from various parts of the country. According to Marisol, work in plantations changes a lot of people. For many workers it is their first time leaving their homes. They are far from their families and lose contact with them and create friendships with "bad people (mala gente)". They learn different ways of behaving there and become more distanced from their families. In the plantations people fall in love, there are many
single mothers; fights break out and many couples separate.

While on a personal level many women told me that they now have more friends outside of the community than inside, the community as a whole feels threatened by outsiders. This new sphere of socialization means a loss of control by the communities and households over the young women who live there. The community regulates such behaviours through gossip and sends individuals a message through its anti-outsider restrictions on residence.

On the other hand, it should be noted that involvement in community activities is not always a burden, something that obliges its members to work on their days off for nothing in return to women workers. In fact, there are many advantages to participation. As mentioned above, there is a daycare in the community which many workers rely on to watch their children while they are at work. The daycare, which the community attained thanks to the actions of the community council, is run by locals with funding from the community and a government agency. It also provides meals to the children. Of the mothers interviewed in this study all sent children to the daycare at one time. In this case, unlike in the case of *mingas*, there is a very obvious and immediate return to the parents who send their children to the day care and pay the monthly fee.

The flower companies encourage workers to identify themselves in relation to their workplace rather than with their communities. By having soccer matches between workers of different plantations women workers often spend their Sundays playing soccer while others in El Rosario go to the soccer matches of El Rosario's (male) soccer teams. Many of these female employees on these company teams would not have played soccer
in their communities or they would have been considered *carishinas*\(^\text{13}\) for playing a
"man's sport" and for dressing inappropriately in shorts, t-shirts and running shoes. Also.
through *fiestas* workers are encouraged to socialize with their fellow workers as well as
with their supervisors and managers.

In this analysis of community organization in El Rosario we have seen how the
insertion of *comuneros* into the wage-labour sector brings about two key changes in the
community. First, relations between flower plantation workers and the community as a
whole are transformed by their limited participation in community activities and secondly
the community's control of its members, particularly young single women, is weakened
when they are outside of their gaze, inside the plantations. We have seen some of the
ambiguities in the relationship between workers and the community. The community
feels threatened by the industry yet benefits from the high wages. Workers also need the
benefits of community membership yet they find that membership can also be a burden.
As Korovkin (1997) notes, the flower plantations allow those employed from the region
to maintain community membership. However, based on the observations presented here
we can say that membership is maintained but involvement, particularly in the form of
participation in *mingas*, meetings and protests, decreases as commodity relations -- the
purchase of goods, childcare and the paying of fines -- within the community increase.
We have also seen how the community positions itself vis à vis the rapid growth of the

\(^{13}\) *Carishina* is a widely used term in the highlands of Ecuador by mestizos and
indigenous people alike. *Cari* is the Quichua word for 'man' and *shina* means 'like'.
Basically it is a woman who behaves in a way that is not considered feminine according
to their standards. The standards vary among individuals and communities.
industry on neighbouring lands, welcoming the money it brings in yet wanting to keep "strangers" out of the community, whether they are renters, or men courting community women. In the next chapter we see how inter- and intra-household relations have changed with the increased insertion of their members into the wage-labour sector and how the "line between the domestic and nondomestic, once a very tenuous thing, is now being drawn in ever sharper and clearer lines" (Smith, 1989: 166).
Chapter Four

The Household

*Before a woman couldn't even leave the house, she had to spend all her time in the house, taking care of the children, taking care of the house, she couldn't go out to work. [It's changed now because] women realized they didn't have to be the slave of the house (esclava de la casa) she should be able to go out and enjoy herself (salir y distraerse)...*(Rosalía, a 26 year old mother of two and flower plantation worker of 10 years)*

In this chapter we will look at the changing relations within households where members work in the flower industry. First I describe the typical household structure in the community of El Rosario. I examine the traditional roles of family members and the relations of power between them. Then we see how the household is restructured to accommodate the changes experienced there due to increased participation in wage labour particularly by female members. Individual cases illustrate ways in which the household is restructured to fit the needs of flower plantation workers and how it is transformed into a place of production and consumption, where reproductive activities and productive activities are in synthesis, to a place of consumption, where productive and reproductive spheres are separated. These cases also show how relations between household members are changed when women work in this industry particularly through the control of these women's income. Finally this chapter considers the specific implications for women of the separation between productive and reproductive spheres within the domestic unit.

The average resident of El Rosario lives in a one-storey house in which there are typically two or three rooms including the kitchen and sleeping areas. Some homes have outhouses but many have no toilet facilities. Most of the houses, especially those that are
located closest to the centre of town (which is close to several flower plantations) have electricity and water. Houses often have fences around the property to mark the physical boundaries of the home and to keep domestic animals confined.

Household boundaries are very different in indigenous communities in Ecuador than in mestizo and North American households. Visitors usually do not enter homes nor knock on the door. They ask permission when entering the yard, which is considered household space, by shouting "¿Se puede?". Depending on the closeness of the guest to the household members the visitor may be met at the front yard or, if the person is a friend. compadre or comadre, or family, they will be invited inside. This contrasts with mestizos who are more likely to invite a visitor inside. While I was in El Rosario it was more common for me to meet people at the women's group's shop, mingas, soccer matches or on the street than to be invited to someone's house. Such an invitation into someone's home usually came after several meetings outside.

As is typical in rural Ecuador, women, particularly mothers, are responsible for house work. Their activities in this sphere often include cooking and cleaning, hand washing clothes, raising children, growing crops and preparing harvests for household consumption and in some cases, for sale. Women are traditionally in charge of expenditures within the home such as food and clothing while men traditionally are in charge of production. In the past many men have worked in the cities in construction or at home on their own land. In these cases they would be in charge of production and resources and exert great control over the members of the family through delegating work on the farm as well as some of the finances. However now, with the flower industry
requiring large amounts of local labour and the high wages and possibility of living at home, many men have entered the plantations, mostly as "unskilled" labourers.

Before the flower industry arrived to the area most women who had worked as seamstresses or empleadas would quit working outside the home after marriage. Now, many women continue to work in the plantations after marriage and many start working there after marriage as well. This means a double day of work for these women, and if we include community obligations as Moser (1989) does in her analyses of women in Ecuador, a triple role for women. Within the household, women flower workers either struggle to complete housework and subsistence agricultural work when they are not in the plantations or they negotiate ways of freeing up their own labour through delegating chores to others. Another way that women free up their labour is by purchasing the goods and services they would have made or done themselves if they were not working in the industry. This includes buying food in the market, in one of the four stores in El Rosario or from others in the community, buying clothes and sending children to daycare.

There is generally a strict sexual division of labour in the households of El Rosario. This division is reinforced at many levels of society including schools, where young girls sweep the floor and are taught to sew while the boys play soccer outside. Young working women however are often relieved of some housework responsibilities by their mothers, sisters or grandmothers. Older working women with children delegate much of their traditional tasks of cooking and cleaning to their daughters or, if their daughters are very young or they do not have daughters their mother or mother-in-law or some other family member or they themselves will do the housework. Miriam once
complained to me, "Since I don't have any daughters I have to do everything myself."
This illustrates the importance of having other female members in the household,
particularly daughters, to assist the plantation worker in her domestic chores.

When there is a lack of labour within the household to make up for the often
absent flower workers, families are extended to include non-resident kin. Most of the
households in El Rosario consist of nuclear families, that is, parents and their dependent
children. However, membership in a household is not strictly defined by rules of kinship.
An example to illustrate flexibility is the household of Alberto and Rosalia, a couple in
their late twenties who have worked in one of the few unionized flower plantations, El
Rosal, for ten years.

Alberto and Rosalia live in the newest house in El Rosario. It is noticeable by its
superior construction, bright colours and two storeys. They live with their two children
but are often joined by Marisol who, after years of working as a nanny for them, caring
for Alberto and Rosalia's daughter, is now their goddaughter and a nonresident member
of the household. This relationship between Marisol and Alberto's and Rosalia's family is
characterized by co-operation and a generalized reciprocity which is distinct from the
balanced reciprocity of many inter-household relations in El Rosario and Andean
communities in general.\textsuperscript{14} In households where working on the land is the main activity
such ties are often created through agricultural work or marketing produce. However, as
we shall see, since Rosalia and Alberto do not have agricultural land, the same types of

\textsuperscript{14}For further information on reciprocal exchanges in Andean communities see B.J.
relations are at work but they involve different activities.

Alberto is active in his union and he and his wife also have a bakery and store in their home and a trout farm which they have started with Alberto's brother upstream from their house. These ventures required a large investment which came from their salaries at El Rosal and credits from an NGO that provides support for local peasants. However with the two of them working full-time, Rosalía's frequent overtime and Alberto's union obligations, plus the fact that their two children are still young, little time is left over for other activities. As these investments in the fish farm and the store and bakery show, the household is often where flower workers plan strategies of survival for when they no longer work in the plantations. For Rosalía and Alberto their goddaughter and her family are important for the labour they provide for these investments. It should be noted that these strategies in this case do not include agriculture.

Marisol's mother, Azucena, cooks meals for the boy who takes care of their trout farm and Marisol's brother bakes bread in Alberto's and Rosalía's bakery. Because Marisol's family is not from El Rosario originally and does not have land to grow crops or build a home, when Rosalía and Alberto built their new home they gave the old one to Marisol's mother. They continue to pay the utilities while Marisol, Azucena and Eduardo live there.

As noted in chapter two, women working in flower plantations are not a homogeneous group. There are women of various ages from all over Ecuador that come to the Cayambe region to work. Most of the women interviewed for this research lived in El Rosario except for María who was from another indigenous community in a nearby
parish. Like their coworkers the women in El Rosario who work in this industry are of different ages and come from families of varying size and have different household obligations depending on their position in their households.

Traditionally on the haciendas in the sierra of Ecuador, male *huasipungueros* were paid for their labour but women often were not, as their work was considered supplemental. Women also worked on their own small plots of land which was also not remunerated. With women's work often being unpaid their work was considered to be of less value. One often sees in the Ecuadorian Andes that male heads of households are absent at *mingas*, replaced by their wives or children while they work their own fields (Bourque, 1997: 161). In El Rosario however, it is the old and very young who take part in the *mingas* as those of working age are often working in the flower plantations or would rather pay the fines than do hard physical labour on their days off. According to Hamilton, in rural communities in the highlands of Ecuador women still do much of the agricultural labour on the smaller land holdings today (Hamilton, 1992). Although women are doing a great deal of the agricultural labour this work is considered of less value. As noted previously, Faulkner and Lawson have found that women's unpaid participation in agriculture has been increasing.

The end of the *huasipungo* system and male out-migration have meant that women perform a variety of domestic chores based on the resources available to them as a survival strategy. The activities of men became oriented towards making money either through migration or agricultural production for the market. Women's work has been more often in the home with some agricultural activities (subsistence agriculture) which
have been viewed as an extension of their domestic duties (Phillips, 1987) making
reproductive and productive activities interconnected.

Economic crisis has pushed more women towards wage labour from regions such
as El Rosario. As Rothstein (1995) found in her study of working women in rural
Mexico, due to their reliance on subsistence production, cooperation among kin, political
organization, the situation for many rural women is not so desperate that they must
engage in wage labour or if they do that this work must be long term. This appears to be
the case for many in El Rosario as well. It is also because of these factors that women are
freed from some household chores so that they can leave and work. In El Rosario the
community council, with help from a government agency, built a day care where many of
the children of plantation workers are left during the day. Many people have some land to
raise some food crops and/or animals which they themselves tend to when not working or
more often other family members or compadres take over these agricultural activities.

Marisol is single and does not have plans to marry in the future. She had a
boyfriend in the community when she was 16 but they broke up. Then she had a
boyfriend at work, a man from the coast, but she broke up with him because he drank a
lot and was a "mujeriego (womanizer)". "I asked him to change, but he wouldn't, so I
decided it was better not to be with him." She does hope to get married some day and
have three children or more, or less, depending on whether she can support them or not.
She plans to continue working at the plantation after getting married, particularly if her
"husband can't give me everything I want." From this quote it appears that she foresees a
future where she and her husband will also be dependent on the sale of their labour, and
not land for survival.

Noemí has not really thought about when she would marry, "Since I don't have anyone now." She says that times have changed. Her mother says that when she was young she married the first man she fell in love with but now people go out with one, then another. However, dating is not an option for Noemí, "I am different from most because I go to an evangelical church." Most families in El Rosario are Catholic. Most of Noemí's friends are from work; some live in El Rosario, some elsewhere. Her parents do not like the fact that she has so many friends, particularly that she has male friends.

Traditionally the household has been able to extend its control of female members through community control. By watching women and through gossip, the community can denounce certain behaviours. However, flower plantations are often outside the watchful gaze of household and communities which causes tensions in households. Young women often seek "freedom" from the household in their work while their families struggle to maintain some control over them. When Marisol was asked by some of her friends if she wanted to work in a flower plantation she asked them what it was like and "They said it was very nice and that I would have more freedom (libertad) than at home."

Younger women have fewer children or plan to have fewer children than previous generations. The reasons the women I spoke with gave for this decreasing fertility varied. Rosalía said she was afraid of what the chemicals accumulating in her body would do to any future children. Marisol said "with the life we lead (la vida que llevamos) nowadays it limits how many we can afford." However Marisol still hopes to have three or more children. Generally the single women were not very specific in their answers to my
question about how many children they plan to have. They often replied with "I don't know. (No sé.)" or "who knows? (¿quién sabe?)" seeming to leave such matters to chance, or forces beyond their control.

Generally older women in the community bear a heavier financial responsibility in the household than younger women. Often their entire wages are used for the basic needs of the family such as food. Their earnings are either turned over completely or given in part to the husband with the rest being used at their discretion in the household for the consumption of the family. They also have less control over how that money is spent. Single women living with their parents generally contributed less to the household in terms of necessities such as food and more towards luxury items for themselves and siblings. Unlike in households where joint productive activities occur (ie. in subsistence agriculture), in households where members work for a wage in the flower industry individual income is retained and either spent individually and/or pooled. This income is spent by the worker separately from that of the households (the income of the parents); however they do so in ways that may be complimentary to the household income. C.D. Deere (1990) found in her study of a rural indigenous community in Peru that,

[a] factor that undermined income pooling among poor peasant households was that a growing share of household income was being generated on an individualized basis, the result of the independent activities carried out by men and women in the labour market...(288)

The male head of the household is in greater command of the household economy where fewer or no members are engaged in wage work. Even when unmarried children earn a wage it is still the parents who are expected to provide for most of the family's needs. In
families which are poorer, more of the children's income goes to basic household consumption. Therefore it can be said that parents are responsible for the basic needs of the household and these resources are controlled by the father. The unmarried children have much greater control over their incomes than their mothers. In the case of single mothers they take on the traditional role of the father while continuing to have their traditional household obligations.

Noemí bought a radio, TV and VCR from her wages, the rest she gives to her father. She also bought all the school supplies for her brothers and sisters this year. She decides what to spend her money on but she always discusses it with her parents. They decided that the VCR would be a good idea to entertain the family on the weekends when her siblings return home from school in Quito. Marisol on the other hand, who comes from a poorer family with no land and just one brother working in the industry, buys most of the food and has also bought furniture and clothes.

As Deere found, and as appears to be the case in El Rosario, households that lack land and depend on wage labour tend to disintegrate as units of production and reproduction (Deere, 1990: 289). Women's work in plantations produces a tension between reproduction and production. Their wage-labour creates a sharper distinction between their productive labour outside their homes in the plantations and their reproductive labour inside the household. Traditionally in the sierra, as opposed to other regions of Ecuador and Latin America, rural women have had an important role in
productive activities as well as their traditional role in the domestic reproductive sphere.\(^{15}\)

As is typical in rural Ecuador, women in El Rosario are responsible for household cooking and cleaning, washing clothes by hand, raising children, growing crops and preparing these for household consumption. Women who work in the flower industry often have fewer children. and more goods and services (such as food and child care) are purchased rather than produced at home.

When I asked Rosalía what she does in the home and what Alberto does she replied,

I cook. he cooks sometimes. What does Alberto do? Yes, he helps me in the kitchen, sometimes he helps me wash clothes, sometimes we go to the trout farm together, sometimes we go to watch soccer, no we almost always go to the soccer games!

As this quote and the one at the beginning of this chapter show, for Rosalía, leisure is something enjoyed by her generation as something new for women. According to her, now that women do not have to be "slaves of the house" they can "go out and enjoy themselves" at soccer games. According to Marisol, working in the plantation has given her the freedom to go out without asking for permission because there are often chances to go to parties or into town with her work. Without working in the plantation "I would never get permission to go out of the house."

Work and leisure are highly differentiated for those working in the flower

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\(^{15}\)Phillips (1987) and Hamilton (1992) have shown that women in the rural highlands in Ecuador are responsible for a variety of productive work such as smallholder agricultural production and artisan work. This contrasts with studies of coastal Ecuador (Phillips, 1987) and tropical Colombia (Townsend, 1993) where there is a more rigid sexual division of labour.
industry. As was shown in the previous chapter, *mingas* are viewed as time-consuming and laborious as are many household chores. This characteristic coincides with the delineation between domestic and nondomestic spheres, the nuclear family and the community.

Alberto and Rosalía do not grow any crops nor do they raise animals. Rosalía washes the family's clothing except sometimes when her mother or Azucena washes them for her. She dislikes cooking which she does not consider herself very good at and she frequently refers to herself jokingly as a "carishina". This word is usually used pejoratively in Ecuador, particularly in indigenous communities but she seems to be almost proud to be one. It is her employment in the flower industry, the income it provides her which allows her to purchase goods and services that make it acceptable to be a carishina without shame. Rosalía prepares breakfast and dinner, usually rice with eggs or meat or a soup of potatoes and noodles, "and Alberto serves it." Her children eat lunch at Rosalía's mother's house. As for grocery shopping she said "Sometimes I go, sometimes Alberto and sometimes Marisol." She and Alberto shop for other things such as clothes and other necessities for the house. As for cleaning the house Rosalía said, "I do a little and my son does a little."

The health and well-being of women and their families must be negotiated on a daily basis by women who work in the flower plantations. Others in the community often view the children of these women as being neglected. As Teresa, who oversees the daycare for the community council told me, "The children of flower plantation workers who come to the daycare are well dressed in new clothes but are malnourished. The
children of mothers who do not work in flowers wear rags but eat the healthier food that their mothers grow and prepare." Women who work in the plantations often do not have time to plant crops. If there is no one else to tend their land -- if they have any -- they must purchase food in the market. This is often food that is highly processed such as white rice and noodles which take little time to prepare. Often meals are prepared by daughters who are less experienced in nutrition and food preparation. This type of food is also more similar to the food that they are served at work rather than what is traditional in the area. As Marisol put it, "The meals at work are very different, they're not as well made as the food we make at home. They don't use any of the better ingredients and it's always white rice [as opposed to quinoa (a grain native to the Andes), corn, barley, etc.]."

However workers often do develop a taste for what they eat at work. As Weismantel (1988) has indicated, food from the market is associated with *mestizos*, access to money and ties outside the community. Through the food they eat at home and in the work place, flower plantation workers are differentiated from others in the community who do not work in the flower industry and may have less money.

Flower plantation workers are often exposed to hazardous chemicals on the job. Although none of the women I interviewed said they had become ill from the pesticides and other chemicals sprayed on the flowers, they all know of cases of others who have. While I was in El Rosario one of Miriam's sons became very ill after playing with some of the plastic sheets which had been used to cover the greenhouses and that had been thrown away near his house. Miriam was certain that the cause of his sickness was the chemicals used in the greenhouses that had adhered to the plastic.
In this chapter I have discussed the changing household in El Rosario and the restructuring of domestic relationships through daily negotiations between workers and their families. Households where members are tied to the labour market are reconstituted to include non-fictive kin and to redistribute and delegate chores from the flower worker, whether it is a mother or daughter, to other females. In the next chapter I will show how individual women view their employment and its effects on their personal lives.
Chapter Five

Women's Work, Women's Lives: Empowerment and Vulnerability

The objective of this chapter is to provide a more detailed look at the effects of employment in the cut-flower industry on women workers. The discussion will focus on individual women in El Rosario, how the industry affects their lives and how they speak of their employment and personal lives. Through case studies of a small group of women we see how some women are more dependent for their survival on their employment in the flower industry than others. The potential and limitations of women worker's empowerment in a global economy will be addressed. We will look at how the vulnerability of women workers varies between types of households. Finally the greater vulnerability of some women is considered within the context of recent changes in the flower industry in Colombia.

Gender Relations in El Rosario: The Question of Empowerment

My contact with women workers began in several locations within the community. First, I drew upon the household where I took up residence I began to socialize with Alberto and Rosalía, their friends and relatives, and Marisol and her friends. The evenings were the best time for getting to know them and for making conversation since it was usually in the evenings when everyone was home from work
and when Eduardo, Marisol's brother, made bread for Alberto's and Rosalía's store. The rest of us would lend a hand or just sit in the warmth of the bakery while we exchanged questions about a variety of topics.

The days were quieter in El Rosario. Since flower plantation workers generally work from 7:00am to 3:00pm I would spend this time chatting with some of my older neighbours or I would go to the women's group's store and chat with the woman who runs it and anyone else who would drop by. After work many plantation workers would stop in to make purchases or to chat with whomever was around. Since this was also the meeting area for the women's group I was able to meet other flower plantation workers through the contacts I made with the group. I had two groups of contacts, one through Rosalía and the other through the women's group.

I carried out formal interviews with seven women who work in the flower industry and I had informal discussions with several others who never worked in the industry, have worked in the industry in the past or work there part-time. In the formal interviews I asked these women open-ended questions about their jobs, education levels, land, friendships, household chores, money, decision making, civil statuses and their plans for the future. Much valuable information was also gathered outside of the formal interview context, however -- at soccer matches, protest marches and at the women's group store.

The women workers in the flower industry interviewed for this research were of varying ages and civil status. Of them three are married (Rosalía, Fanny and María), one is a single mother (Miriam) and three are single women without children, living with their
parents and siblings (Noemi, Gladys, Marisol).

These women gave a variety of reasons for seeking employment in the industry. The most common reason was the money. According to Fanny, "Necessity forces us to work [in the plantations] because there are no other secure jobs. The work is close by. (La necesidad nos obliga trabajar porque no se tiene trabajo más seguro. El trabajo es más cerca.)" There are few employment opportunities for women in this area outside of the flower industry. Jobs with a similar level of pay for women with the same work experience and education are practically non-existent. It was common traditionally for young women to migrate to the cities to work as empleadas and return to their communities to marry and have children. However the plantations are now considered a more appealing option for many. Plantation work allows them to socialize with people from outside of the community. When I asked if they like their jobs the majority said "yes".

Male reactions to women working in the industry were mixed. When I asked Alberto and his coworker who is also his compadre how male greenhouse workers felt about their wives (working in the post-harvest section) making more money than they did, Alberto's compadre replied, "Dejamos el machismo a un lado." (We leave machismo aside.) In other words, this was not perceived to be a problem for them since women's earnings were viewed positively. Many workers, both male and female, consider women to be more responsible with their earnings because "everything a woman makes goes to the family," said one female worker. This view is shared by management as well, as I have shown in chapter two.
Men welcome the income that women bring into their homes but with reservations. In the case of income differentials they may leave their *machismo* aside but their *machismo* reappears when their wives are working away from the community's or household's supervision and when young women socialize with people, particularly men, from other communities. As we have seen in chapters three and four, when the household is unable to have sufficient control over women (usually through parental control), the community takes over in less overt ways to regulate women's behaviour by watching their co-workers from El Rosario in the workplace and through community gossip. Workers often talk about their fellow workers with others in the community, giving their opinions on the actions and behaviour of others.

Arizpe and Aranda (1986) have shown that the question of empowerment of women workers employed in agribusiness is complex. Women workers from rural communities often find "joy" in the experience of leaving the confines of their villages to go and work with other women (188, 192). The following cases will show how women in El Rosario seek *libertad* (freedom) and autonomy through their employment and how their families deal with their absence from the gaze of the household and community. These cases illustrate the complexity of interactions between women workers who seek *libertad* with their employment and their families who attempt to maintain control.

**Marisol** is 21 and she started working in the plantation when she was 19. Before starting work there she had studied to be a seamstress in a nearby town but the pay was just a fraction of what it is in the plantations so she gave up her studies to work there.
Some of her friends from the community had already been working at the plantation before her. In need of labour, their boss asked if they had any friends who would like to work in the plantation too. They asked Marisol. When she asked them what it was like to work there they told her it was very nice and that she would have more freedom working there than in her house "It's nice, I was told, and they have more freedom at work than at home. At home, they don't give us as much freedom as at work (Es bonito, me dijo y que tienen más libertad en el trabajo que como en la casa. En la casa no nos dan tanta libertad como en el trabajo)." I asked what she meant by freedom (libertad) and she replied, "Freedom to go around (andar)." At home if they don't give permission to go out, you don't go out. It's only because of work that we can go to Cayambe, to a dance...(Del trabajo no más se va a Cayambe, se puede ir a un baile....) [When I heard this] I told them I wanted to go to work." At work Marisol can socialize with many people from all over Ecuador every day. The company owners also have dances and parties at the plantation for Christmas and Valentine's Day. Going to and from work Marisol also has the opportunity to see other people on their way to and from work at other plantations. Often, when I was at the women's store in the afternoon, I would see large groups of young people, male and female, from El Rosario returning home from work. chatting and joking with each other. If these young women were not walking home from work it is doubtful that their parents would allow them to be out socializing with

\[\text{16} \text{ Andar means to walk, to go about, or travel. In El Rosario women's mobility is traditionally restricted to the home, community and market and it is men who are freer to "andar".}\]
young men. Marisol’s mother, Azucena, does maintain much control over her daughter however. Marisol still must ask for permission to go outside the home quite often but her work legitimizes many of her outings. Going to a disco late at night in Cayambe would not be allowed but going to a party at the plantation would be.

Marisol says she likes her job because she learns a lot about cultivating and processing flowers ("se aprende como se cultiva una flor, como se procesa..."). For her, learning something outside of the usual domestic chores is rewarding. However her favourite part of the job is the lunch break when she gets to socialize with other workers. She is very friendly and likes to talk a lot. She says that most of her friends are from work and not the community. Despite not being a comunera, Marisol has important compadrazgo relations which tie her to Rosalía’s household as well as to Rosalía’s and Alberto’s extended families.

Noemí, a young woman of 19 years old, has been working in the flower industry since she was 15. She is single and lives with her family in El Rosario. Her father is a construction contractor and works in various cities in the northern highlands. They previously lived in Quito where Noemí’s parents worked and she and her siblings studied there.

Noemí started working in the plantation during her summer vacation before her second to last year of high school. However her family fell on rough economic times after a failed attempt at growing roses on their own land. She says she would have liked to continue studying, particularly physics and computers, but because of her family’s
economic difficulties she has to work.

Her mother works in the same plantations but her parents will not allow any of their other children to work in the plantations. They insist that they study, whether they want to or not.

Noemi’s mother worked in another plantation but when there was an opening at Florencia, her husband encouraged her to go there because "There are more people from El Rosario at Florencia, and because my dad isn’t very trusting (es desconfiado) of his wife or daughters, he said it was better that she work where I am." In this way, Noemi’s father is able to exert control over his wife and daughter when they are away from his direct supervision. Mother and daughter watch out for each other and others from El Rosario who work in the plantation monitor them and can covertly regulate their behaviour through gossip both at work and in the community.

Most of Noemi’s friends are from work. Some of these friends, such as Marisol, live in El Rosario and others live elsewhere. Her parents do not like the fact that she has so many friends, particularly that she has male friends.

Fanny has been working at the same plantation as Rosalía and Miriam for just over three years. When Fanny started at the plantation she worked in cultivo in the greenhouse, now she works in post-harvest with Rosalía. She likes her job but says she works there out of necessity and will continue working there as long as she lasts.

She worked for two years as a housekeeper in Quito before getting married 17 years ago. She has seven children and does not plan to have more. She had two children
before starting work for the carnation company and the rest of her children were born after. When she was pregnant they gave her easier work. However she says few plantations care enough about their workers to do that. Her oldest son who is 16 works in maintenance in the same plantation. He was a bad student, she said, and left school after grade six. Her oldest daughter does want to study and is currently in high school. Her next oldest daughter did not want to study after grade six either and is now at home. Her youngest daughter goes to the daycare.

In the morning she wakes up her children at five in the morning. She and the daughter who is not in school take turns preparing breakfast for the children and her husband who leaves for work with the municipality in Cayambe at 6:25 every morning. At six they have breakfast and her children leave for school at 6:30. She starts work at 6:45.

Her eldest daughter who is not in school cleans the house and washes some of the clothes. Her daughters cook for themselves when they return from school. "My daughters are already old enough [to cook and wash their own clothes]" Their ages are 15, 14, 12, 10 and seven. During the peak season just before Valentine's Day she was starting work at 3:00am and finishing at 3:30pm.

Her husband works for the municipality in public works usually from Monday to Friday. When he's not at work he works on an addition to their house. They send one of their daughters to the mingas. However since this daughter who normally attends the mingas is now taking catechism classes every Saturday morning instead, the family is excused from attending the mingas.
Fanny's father was a *huasipunguero* and has some land about a 30 minute walk away. Her mother has land closer by and Fanny's family has just the small plot where their house is. They grow wheat and corn for their household consumption and also have a few pigs and chickens. In this way they do not depend completely on the market for their food.

With bonuses which they have negotiated in the collective agreement her salary is about S/500,000 ($200) per month. Overtime hours are paid at a rate of about S/3000 per hour. She worked previously in a non-unionized carnation plantation. She left because "the food was bad and so was the way they treated us. They also didn't pay us much. We suffered a lot (*siempre sufriamos bastante")."

According to Fanny, her husband wanted her to work in the flower industry to help him because, alone he could not pay for their children's studies, clothes, food, etc. "So I help him (*así le ayudo")." One important result of her employment at the plantation was that her husband no longer beats her. Evidently her economic contribution to the household has changed the relationship between the two. The fact that she earns money for the family has given her some respect.

**Gladys** is seventeen years old. Her father also works in a plantation (El Rosal), and her mother works in the home ("*trabaja en la casa"*). She studied until grade six ("*hasta sexto grado no más estudié yo"") and then spent three years in the house and then started working ("*pasé tres años en la casa y de allí salí a trabajar"*) in the flower industry.

Gladys works with Marisol and the two are very good friends. They often spend
their Sundays together socializing on the soccer field while El Rosario’s (male) soccer team plays against the teams of neighbouring communities. Others in the community told me that Gladys has a reputation for being an andariega, that is, someone who likes to go out. When used for women there is usually the negative connotation that the andariega is acting in a way not appropriate for a "good" woman. Women's role traditionally in El Rosario is to stay within the community except for work and shopping. She, however, likes to visit with friends and co-workers who do not live in El Rosario. In fact, she says that she has almost no friends in El Rosario and that most live in the neighbouring communities.

For women, particularly young women, working in the flower plantation provides them an opportunity to lessen parental control. As we have seen in previous chapters many women have greater control over finances now that they earn money on an individual basis and as these cases above show, women have more opportunities to meet people without being denied permission from their parents. Parents and husbands do not easily give up control of their daughters and wives, but their means of control are somewhat limited by the necessity of their income. In the case of Fanny, a married woman with seven children, her relationship with her husband has changed for the better. Women are also proud of their work in the plantations because they feel they are learning something. They would not have this knowledge of flower cultivation working in the home or as a empleadas.

Women may have a sense of greater autonomy and personal "empowerment" with
respect to social relations in the household and the community. Individual women are
negotiating power over their social relations while parents and the community exert
control over them. Moreover the companies they work for do attempt to enforce
discipline on their workers. Work days are strictly regulated in the plantations. Workers
have a schedule for starting work, taking breaks, lunch and their time to leave. At El
Rosal workers punch cards when they enter and leave work. At times workers are
forbidden from talking to each other in the workplace and managers have told workers to
keep their social lives outside the plantation. According to Marisol, they "don't want
workers to get into problems," with other workers in the plantation. In sum, it is
problematic to use the word "empowerment" to describe these women's experiences in
the wage labour force since there is a constant struggle for freedom and autonomy by the
workers. While these women struggle for "libertad" their families, community and the
companies they work for struggle for control over their lives. In spite of this unresolved
struggle, we can recognize a change in these women's lives.

The Problem of Economic Vulnerability

As we have seen in previous chapters, women have little time left over when their
workdays are finished for activities which might lessen their dependence on their wages.
However, some women do manage, through a variety of strategies to diversify sources of
income now and for the future when they may no longer work in the flower industry.
Those women that are most dependent on their wages for the survival of their families are
most vulnerable should they lose their plantation jobs.

This section looks at the dependence of women on their wages in the flower industry. Greater dependency on these wages puts some women in a more vulnerable position in case of job loss than others, while higher incomes and the diversification of subsistence and money-earning activities creates less vulnerability.

Of the women interviewed, Rosalía, Marisol and Miriam have no land under cultivation. When I asked Rosalía about farming she laughed and replied "We're really lazy (somos bien vagos)." By this response she may be recognizing that she is neglecting something that is expected of her and her household in El Rosario, that is, a connection to the land that is an important part of rural community life in Ecuador. She finds it easier to purchase food in the market than to grow and process it herself. However, Rosalía's family land is used for their trout farm. Because of the investments in the store and trout farm that Rosalía and her husband were able to make with their joint incomes from the flower industry they expect to retire after the union negotiates the next contract and to concentrate on these other ventures. Marisol has some security through her relationship with Rosalía's family in that her family has some access to their resources (land and house) by providing labour to Rosalía's household. Miriam presently has no other source of food or income other than the flower plantation and is therefore in a more vulnerable situation should she lose her job.

As we have seen, the community of El Rosario and individual flower workers have various strategies to minimize their dependence on the flower industry and to minimize the harmful effects of this industry such as water contamination and land price
increases. In chapter three we saw how the community resists the penetration of its boundaries by encroaching flower plantations as well as by people from outside the community and how the women's group and the community council support other economic initiatives as alternatives to employment in the flower industry. In the section that follows we look at how some individuals are better equipped to deal with the insecurities and hazards of working in the cut-flowers for export industry than others. These differences are often related to access to a variety of resources and level of commodification. To illustrate the differences in the worker's vulnerability five case studies are presented. The first case is Rosalía who is the least vulnerable should she lose her job at El Rosal. Noemi's family has some investments in agriculture and education and various sources of income. Maria plans to work in the industry temporarily. In the fourth case of Marisol she comes from a resource-poor household however her relationship with Rosalía and her family puts her in a somewhat better position. In the final case, Miriam, lacks both capital and human resources and is most dependent on a wage and therefore most vulnerable if she should lose her job.

Rosalía is 26 years old and has been working in the rose industry for ten years. She considers herself a veteran in the industry and is already thinking of her retirement because, she says, working in the plantation "is risky (es riesgoso)" for one's health.

All of the workers have a medical check-up [at the plantation] every six months. Those of us who work in post-harvest are always the sickest. It's because all of the flowers come into post-harvest so all of the chemicals that have accumulated on the plants converge there.
Rosalía is married to Alberto who has been working in the same plantation for 11 years. They have a store in their house where they sell soft drinks, beer, yoghurt and bread. Recently, thanks to their savings from their work in the plantation and with the aid of a local NGO in the form of credit and technical assistance, they built a trout farm. They presently have about 6,000 fish which they hope to sell within a year. This will coincide with what Rosalía hopes will be her and Alberto's retirement. They feel that the trout farm will be highly profitable because they already have a potential buyer for their trout at a nearby resort. The buyer for the resort was Alberto's coworker at El Rosal.

Rosalía finished the basic cycle (third year) of high school and worked for a tailor in Cayambe. She quit her job there when she got married and then later started working at the plantation. Her son was born a year before she started working at the plantation and her daughter was born a year after. She and her husband are afraid to have more children because they believe their bodies have probably been so contaminated over years of working in the plantation that if they had another child it would likely have severe health problems. However neither of them has experienced any serious illness as a result of their work to date.

Although their family is relatively small with just two school-age children, Rosalía and Alberto have extended it through compadrazgo relations by becoming godparents to their daughter's nanny. Marisol took care of their youngest daughter, for a wage as a nanny, while they worked in the plantation. This is very unusual in a peasant community which has traditionally sent many young women to the cities to work as such

\[17\] See chapter four.
and suggests a higher socio-economic status than is common in rural highland Ecuador.

I asked Rosalía if her wages support anyone else besides her own nuclear family and she said, "Sometimes I give money to my mother-in-law and sometimes to Marisol."

Rosalía is the most well-off of the women I interviewed. From her and her husband's wages, they have been able to diversify their income through investments in their store and trout farm. Through *compadrazgo* relations she is able to delegate housework to Marisol and her mother, Azucena, thus freeing her time for working in the plantation, store and trout farm and giving her some leisure time. Since she and Alberto are long time employees at El Rosal and he is a supervisor, their wages are relatively high. They are also guaranteed a large bonus when they retire. The case of Rosalía and her family is significant here because it shows how they have been able to diversify their income through their own savings and the labour of their extended household.

_Noemí_ makes S/470,000 ($188) per month, with overtime S/570,000 ($228) at Florencia. The company provides workers with uniforms once a year and at Christmas they throw a party for the workers and give toys for the children of the workers. There is no union in this plantation. Noemí likes the food that is prepared for them at work. When I asked Noemí what her favourite part of her job was she answered "Lunch hour. ...everyone converses, everyone is very sociable." What she likes least about her job is one of the engineers with whom she often has conflicts.

Noemí's mother has told her she should quit and finish high school; she would have to go to night school. She does not want to study science but rather something that
she can finish quickly because she told me, at age 19, "I'm already old now....If I meet someone and get married I would have to leave my studies unfinished."

About equal numbers of men and women work in this plantation. Men do the hardest work, but for the most part "men and women do the same jobs." Her supervisor is a woman. In the other greenhouses which belong to the same owners, there are more men than women. Although there is no union here, some labour legislation is enforced. Women do not work for 15 days before their baby is born, three months after the birth and then they work limited hours so they can nurse their children. During this entire time they receive their full salary.

"At the beginning...I always had headaches," but not anymore. There is a doctor at the plantation but "he doesn't always tell us the truth." Noemí recognizes that her employment and the bias of the company doctor may cause some danger to her health in the future.

Noemí's father got a loan from a peasant support group about five months ago, the same NGO that is financing Alberto's fish farm project, to start growing carnations. Noemi's father fumigates in the afternoons, her brothers and sisters work there on the weekends. She doesn't do any work with the carnations because she says "I work enough". Sometimes her grandmother waters the plants. Engineers from the peasant organization are researching markets for the carnations and they also come to check up on their progress and give them technical assistance. She says that carnations are much easier to grow than roses with less care and chemicals and can therefore be grown on a smaller scale than the large rose plantations.
During the week, her mother wakes up early and makes breakfast. They eat lunch at work and dinner she or her mother prepares. When her father is home her mother cooks for him. On the weekends when her brothers and sister come home from Quito her sister does the cooking. Her brothers watch videos or play sports. Her father usually works away from home; when he is home he works on the carnations. Noemi washes her own clothes. She buys her own clothes, and her parents buy clothes for her brothers and sister. They also buy food for her brothers and sister to take to Quito where they study.

Noemi's family belongs to the community organization. Her brothers work in the *mingas* every Saturday. She has never been a member of the women's group because she says she does not have time to attend the meetings.

Noemi's family's dependence on her wages is lowered by the household's diverse sources of actual and potential income. Her father's work as a construction contractor as well as her and her mother's income from the flower plantation have made investments in the children's education and the carnation farm possible. Their attempt at growing roses failed but they are more optimistic about their carnation venture. Whether this optimism is realistic remains to be seen. According to Maharaj and Dorren (1995) "[t]here is hardly any room at all for small [flower] farmers, who lack capital, timely information about demand and credibility in breeders' eyes." (106)

**María.** I arrived at María's house a half hour before our scheduled interview time, when her husband told me that she had to work late. It was a Saturday in early February, just days before Valentine's Day, the busiest time of the year for flower workers.
He told me to go to the carnation plantation where she worked and to ask for her there and that I would find her working in block 10. I was surprised that there was no guard or fence there and that I could just walk into the greenhouse from the road. Most greenhouses had high wire fences all around them with guards at the gates.

María was supervising three blocks (or about 760 beds of carnations) that afternoon. There were three women cleaning out the flower beds and straightening the carnation plants. It is the worst part of the job, she told me, as we sat on the edges of the flower beds during the interview.

María is 28 years old. She has two daughters aged eight and four. While she works and her husband does his carpentry work at home the youngest daughter stays with María's mother and the eight year old goes to school. María wakes up early to prepare lunch for her family and herself before she goes to work for seven o'clock in the morning. When she gets home she does the rest of the housework. Her husband does not help her in the house and they do not have any land under cultivation.

From Monday to Friday she works until 2:30 in the afternoon. Saturdays until noon, and when necessary Sundays too. They do not provide lunch at this farm so she brings it from home. She gets a half hour break for lunch. María's salary is S/520,000 ($208) per month without overtime and about S/620,000 ($248) with overtime. When she started working there she was making S/340,000. After one year she has two weeks paid vacation.

María's been working a year and four months at the plantation and says she loves her job. Originally her plan was to work for just one year, now she wants to quit after
three years and then start a business in her house. She is presently raising chickens in her home as a project with the women's group which she has been a part of for three years. She said "I used to participate in the meetings and protests but now I'm too busy with my job." I asked her what her husband thinks of her working in the carnation plantation. She said he is happy because of the money it brings into the household and besides that "I only work with women so he has nothing to worry about." In fact, she says that the company will only hire women to look after the flower beds. She does not know why.

María says she has never become ill from her job, even though she is not provided with masks or any other sort of protection from the fumigation of the plants. She says that when the men are fumigating they follow behind the women as they work so that they are not working on plants that have just been fumigated. She also says that carnations require less fumigation than roses so she is better off than most flower plantation workers.

One of the workers that María was supervising that day was only 16 years old. She travels from a nearby province, about 45 minutes away. (The legal age to work in Ecuador is 18 though this is seldom applied.) Another woman working there was in her forties. María told me that she is too old to keep up with the job. After the interview María went over to help her so they could go home. Sometimes when women cannot keep up with the work load, their husbands or other members of the family come and help them. This is not permitted by the company but it happens none the less.

According to María things have become more expensive in Cayambe since the plantations came because there are more people with more money living here now. She also said that this is a very good industry for the region because of the jobs it provides.
María was the only woman I interviewed who planned to work in the flower industry temporarily. For her it is a way of earning money to start her own business in her home. Based on this we can assume that her family is less dependent on this wage than in households where the workers plan to continue working indefinitely.

Marisol was born in Quito and spent the first thirteen years of her life there with her widowed mother, Azucena, and brother, Eduardo. Her mother worked in restaurants until they moved to the region where Azucena began to work on farms as an agricultural labourer (peón). She is from the Otavalo region and has a distinct manner of dressing that is different from that of the indigenous people of Cayambe. Their family was quite poor when they came to this area without family, compadres, a house, or land of their own.

At the age of thirteen Marisol began working for Alberto and Rosalía, taking care of their preschool-age daughter while the two of them worked in the flower plantation. Rosalia said, "I had a couple of people taking care of my daughter until Marisol came, and she's been with us ever since."

In post-harvest Marisol classifies flowers by length, variety and straightness of the stem. Here she must make sure they are in the best condition possible for export. If not, the roses get sent back and the managers will tell her to do a better job. She then packages them in bunches of 25. Where she is employed with over time she can make S/600,000 ($240) per month. As a domestic servant she says the basic wage is just S/76,000 ($30.40) per month.

Marisol was baptized recently and she asked Alberto and Rosalía to become her
godparents. This has made her a part of the family and with that comes certain obligations on the part of both the godparents and the goddaughter. She often helps them around the house and with the children when she has time and they take her on the company vacation with them every year.

About a year ago Alberto and Rosalía built the house in which they live right in front of their previous home. They then invited Azucena, Marisol and her brother Eduardo to live in their old house. They do not charge them rent and they pay their utilities (water and electricity) as well.

Marisol’s brother Eduardo works at another plantation called Florencia. He works in the greenhouses where he takes care of the plants and fumigates. Because she works in processing where there is more overtime she makes more money. Eduardo previously worked in a bakery in Cayambe and now he also bakes bread for Rosalía and Alberto’s store about twice a week. In exchange for his labour they "give him some bread for their morning coffee (para su café)".

Marisol and Eduardo have asked their mother to stop working since she is not in good health and has difficulty walking due beatings, from her ex-husband, which have left her with a bad leg and hips. She says however that she does not like to depend on her children for everything so she works for various comuneros by helping milk cows, harvest crops or pluck chickens. She has some pigs but she shares them with Rosalía’s mother who provides her land for them to pasture. She also has some hens and guinea pigs and looks after other peoples’ cattle. Although this area has long been an area for milk production one must have a great deal of land or access to land through kinship or
other relations in order to raise cattle. Azucena also prepares lunch for the boy that looks after Rosalía's and Alberto's trout farm. Usually these meals are prepared in advance by Rosalía in the evenings after work or sometimes in the morning.

The case of Marisol and her family is significant in demonstrating the vulnerability of workers with limited land and capital. Marisol's family which has no land of its own is dependent on her and her brother's wages as well as on the goodwill of her godparents, Alberto and Rosalía. For Marisol, *compadrazgo* is an important means of decreasing her vulnerability as a worker in the flower industry but it is somewhat uncertain in that such a relationship is not between equals. She is subject to the will of her godparents.

Miriam is a single mother of four and has been working eleven years in the flower industry at one of the first plantations to open in Ecuador.

She grew up on a *huasipungo* with an abusive father, she said, treated her more as a slave than a daughter. Her chores began at one o'clock in the morning and continued until late in the evening. She worked at home making most of the family's meals and also worked on the hacienda.

She finished grade two when her father said that was "enough", that girls do not need to study to learn to serve their fathers and husbands. Frequent beatings discouraged her from arguing with him.

At 14 she ran away from home and went to work as a housekeeper in Quito. One family that she worked for gave her time off to go to school and Miriam finished grade
school and the first cycle of high school. She then took some sewing and nursing courses but could not continue the courses when she started to work for another family that would not give her time off.

Miriam's four sons have four different fathers. None has been a permanent partner. As a single mother who does not have any daughters, she is solely responsible for maintaining the household, "Since I only have sons I am responsible for the house." She has her own house where she lives with her sons. Having one's own home would not be possible for a single mother in this area, unless she were employed in the flower industry.

She began work at El Rosal when it opened in the mid-1980s. She spent eight years doing a variety of jobs within the plantation before getting her current position as the union representative in the infirmary. She says that working in the greenhouses made her very sick with "anaemia" so she applied for a transfer to work in the infirmary. At one time she was on the union's directory as its health secretary. At that time she had to make sure the infirmary was well stocked with medicine which was provided by the company and she had to represent sick workers when negotiating with the bosses. She also had to organize talks for the workers about health with the company doctors. Now she assists in basic first aid and monitors all reports filed in the clinic. The company's clinic is also staffed by a nurse and two doctors. Miriam says that the doctor is more on the side of the company than that of his patients and seldom blames working conditions for the worker's ailments. She is known by some other workers and management as a "trouble-maker" and there are rumours that she will be demoted to the greenhouses, a thought that scares her because of the danger to her health that she feels such work would pose. She says she
would rather quit than work inside the greenhouses again. Despite the fact that she is the union representative in the clinic, the company union does not want her to stir things up too much, by making "unreasonable" demands on the other clinic staff. She feels that since the doctors are contracted by the company, "it is important that a worker is always watching what the doctor is doing." She noticed that the nurse and the doctor would often go outside to talk so that Miriam could not hear what they were saying. She says that now she is always behind the nurse watching what she does and asking her what she is doing and why.

Miriam is also active in the women's group in the community although her attendance at meetings is often hindered by her job and household obligations. She pushes her sons to study and her eldest, who is 15, says he wants to become a lawyer. Her youngest son is still in daycare and the other two are in primary school. Because of her sons' studies she is highly dependent on a wage in order to pay for the costs of their education. In public schools in Ecuador no tuition is charged but parents do have to cover the costs of school supplies, textbooks, school meals, when available, and transportation. Parents in El Rosario pay S/25,000 ($10) per month per child for transportation to and from school. For large families this can be costly and can prohibit parents from sending their children to school.

Miriam has very little land, just the plot where her house is built, and a few pigs. In her free time she knits and she recently purchased a loom to do weaving. Until now the goods she made have been primarily for household consumption. Although she hopes to continue working in the plantation she is preparing with her children's education, the
purchase of the loom and improving her knitting for the day when she may no longer be able to.

As these cases show, women employed in the flower industry are vulnerable in a number of ways. As Noemí and others noted, their health is threatened by their employment. Also as we have seen in chapter two, employers are preferring male workers to female workers. Therefore if the industry stops expanding rapidly and the flower companies are able to meet labour demands without hiring women, indications are that they will stop hiring women. Women’s employment vulnerability is exacerbated by factors at home and in the community. As we have seen, Miriam lacks both land and labour in her household making her family completely dependent on her wage and her labour within the household. However, her purchase of a loom, investment in her sons’ education and her involvement in the women’s group are all strategies to diversify sources of income and decrease her family’s dependence on the flower industry. Rosalía is less dependent on her employment at El Rosal because of the investments she has been able to make with her and her husband’s combined income, which is relatively high due to their seniority. Marisol’s strategy has been closely tied to Rosalía’s and Alberto’s since they became her godparents. With few resources of her own she and her family are dependent on her and her brother’s wages and their relations with Rosalía and Alberto.

As we saw in chapter two, there is a great deal of uncertainty for the future of the workers in the Colombian flower industry. The relevance this has for the Ecuadorian industry is that it shows how corporations will seek out lower production costs in any way
and any where they can. Whether it means pressuring governments to ease labour legislation or simply packing up and moving where the cost of labour is cheaper, flower companies have done it before and can do it again. Globalization has made it possible for flowers to be produced almost anywhere in the world where the conditions are beneficial to the company owners. Flowers produced in Colombia yesterday and in Ecuador today could be grown in India tomorrow and North American consumers will scarcely notice a difference. The future of the more vulnerable workers is certainly put at greater risk by the constant changes in the industry.
Chapter Six

Conclusion

Looking Back and Looking Ahead

Teresa is pessimistic about the durability of the flower industry and the vulnerable position of its workers.

Everything is a vicious circle.... People will buy something else [other than roses] that will emerge (que va a surgir) and there will be no market and they'll lay people off (reducir el personal). Then, here, the land [used for flower production] will soon become exhausted just like it did in Colombia (aquí, muy pronto las tierras se van a acabar, no aguantan mucho porque en Colombia ya pasó ese caso)...and it takes years of control to recover (recuperar) those lands but it's very expensive (costososísimo).... Then where will people go to work? (Y después ¿en qué se irán a trabajar?)

The fieldwork portion of this research was carried out in just two months. Given a chance to go back for a longer period of time there are many more questions I would like to ask, particularly given the uncertain future for women's employment in this industry. Where will these women be in two, five or ten years from now? If Teresa's prediction comes true, when will it happen and will there be other jobs for the people of El Rosario? Whom will these jobs be for?

It has been just over a year since I was in El Rosario. I have had a year to listen to the taped interviews over and over again, to read over field notes and to piece together memories of unrecorded conversations and observations. Listening to the interviews
again I hear questions in my mind that I now think should have logically followed at the time of the interview but did not. Perhaps I was not a good enough "listener", relying too heavily on the cassette recorder to pick up their words and silences while I thought about the next question. Or, perhaps it is because I now know more and knowing more leads to realizing that everything is more complex than it seems at first.

Based on a few very brief conversations with women flower workers in 1994, I planned for my field work with a few ideas about the industry and the women who work there. Since I had spent a few months in an indigenous rural community in the canton of Cayambe where the comuneros did not work in the industry I had some idea of women's work and household and community relations in the area.

At that time I thought work in the flower industry was a temporary job for young women, similar to working as empleadas in Quito. Reading about women workers in our globalized economy of restructuring and "flexibilization" and specifically about the Colombian flower industry gave me a more complex view of that industry and the women who work there. I wanted to find out if what was going on in Colombia was similar to the Ecuadorian situation. Since the industry has a much longer history in Colombia I wondered if some of the things that were occurring in Colombia, mainly the lowering wages and the emergence of short-term contracts, was starting to take place in Ecuador. Based on my early observations and the literature I could not find many positive aspects of the industry for women. Their health was damaged by the chemicals, they were poorly paid, they lacked legal protection in the form of labour legislation that was enforced and women's workdays became even longer, having to fulfil all their domestic and community
obligations in less time. I had to wonder, though, if their situation was so desperate that they felt they had no choice but to take these evidently horrible jobs. I doubted it was as simple as that.

I began to think of flower plantation work not as strictly good or bad for women but as something that was far more complex. Out of this complexity I hoped to show the positive and negative and the objective and the subjective dimensions of women's work and its affects on their households. This subjectivity needed to come across in my research. The best way to accomplish this, I thought, was to meet some of the women employed in the industry, ask them questions and preferably to tape record these interviews. By recording the interviews I could have a record of all of their words and silences, to listen to, to reflect on, to analyse, to translate into English as truthfully as possible and, perhaps most importantly, to include as many of their words as possible in the text of the thesis.

I did not always get the answers I wanted or expected to hear from the women I interviewed. I expected women to have far more negative opinions about working in the flower plantations and I thought they might have other goals in life than working there. I asked what their plans were for after their employment in the industry was over (continuing with the assumption I had made in 1994 that working outside the home was temporary) and I was surprised when many said they did not know what they would do after because they had no plans to leave. Again, when I asked the single women about marriage and children they did not give me any definite answers. Of the married women only Rosalía expressed to me her and her spouse's plans. I was originally frustrated by
their short, seemingly vague replies. It seemed by their answers that most of the women were leaving their futures to chance. I began to wonder if they did not believe they had some control over their futures.

Through further questioning I began to see that many women did indeed have strategies for their futures. These strategies varied from learning to knit sweaters to making more well-to-do neighbours their padrinos (godparents). The answers I was seeking were on the tapes, but I had to learn to listen and realize that they may not be conceptualizing their everyday experiences and strategies in the ways that I had hoped, in order to make my work easier. I am still learning to listen.

This thesis has dealt with three main issues. First we saw the ambivalent relationship which the community has with the flower industry. Second, we saw how women's reproductive and productive labour, once seemingly boundaryless is now highly differentiated. Third, I showed how increased commodity relations has changed the countryside and brought about changes to community, household and gender relations in El Rosario. We have seen how mothers negotiate on a daily basis to fulfil household and community obligations and how single women attempt to limit parental and community control over their lives. In the long run, given the uncertain future of this industry it is hard to say how the community will be affected.

Women are in many ways "liberated" by their employment, however their "empowerment" remains more questionable. Often women are freed from domestic chores, the hard work of mingas, and many, especially single women are now free(er) to socialize outside of the household and community context. Although women are
dependent on their wages, as well as on kinship relations and their husbands. the fact that
most told me they liked their jobs cannot be ignored. That Marisol says she has more
libertad and Rosalía says that women do not have to be the slave of the house anymore
are important subjective dimensions of their employment that indicate a potential for
individual empowerment.

Objectively, as Teresa suggested above, these workers are highly vulnerable in a
global economy where tastes for such things as roses are fickle and where companies can
pick up and move out quickly and easily. As we saw in chapter five there are variations in
vulnerability among households in El Rosario as well. The vulnerability of these
households is exacerbated by the threats to the health of workers and the uncertainty of
the future of the cut-flower industry.

For the proponents of neo-liberalism the cut-flowers for export industry in
Ecuador is a success story. It has provided thousands of relatively well-paid jobs for
marginalized sectors of the Ecuadorian population (women, native, peasants) in a
traditionally low-wage sector and is a model of the comparative advantage approach
which promotes the exploitation of local resources such as climate and cheap labour.

This industry has provided much needed jobs in a region previously dominated by
dairy farms with limited labour demand. In lieu of an effective agrarian reform program
that would reduce the concentration of land ownership discussed in chapter three, the
Ecuadorian government’s development strategy of neo-liberalism and its promotion of
NTAEs has forced many peasants to become dependent on a wage and to obtain
commercialized goods and services. These goods often consist of food with little
nutritional value such as noodles and pop thus having a potentially negative impact on health. Poor diet, combined with an often unhealthy work environment and contaminated air, soil and water from the industry could lead to health and environmental problems in the future for residents of El Rosario. Such questions were beyond the scope of this research and could not have been addressed in such a short period. However any future studies of this industry will benefit from an analysis of the flower industry's impact on health and the environment. Through an approach which incorporates an objective analysis of women and globalization, and the subjective words of the women experiencing "economic development" we gain a holistic view of women's material and ideological conditions. Moreover, this approach helps us to understand the struggles of these women to negotiate relations within their households and communities which permit them to enter the flower plantations. By examining the local impact of non-traditional export industries like the cut-flower business on individuals, households and communities, we can see how neo-liberal policies put profits before women's lives.
APPENDIX

Participants Identified in the Study

Alberto is Rosalía's husband. He is active in the union at El Rosal Inc.

Azucena is Eduardo's and Marisol's mother. She prepares meals for the young boy who takes care of Alberto's trout farm.

Eduardo is Marisol's brother. He works in Florencia and in Alberto's and Rosalía's bakery.

Fanny works at El Rosal Inc.

Gladys (18) is also a friend of Marisol's. She is secretary of the women's group and works in La Floresta.

María (28) works in a carnation plantation and lives in San Miguel.

Marisol (21) is single, goddaughter of Alberto and Rosalía, daughter of Azucena. She works in La Floresta.

Miriam is a single mother of four and is also president of the women's group. She works in El Rosal Inc.

Noemí (19) is Rosalía's cousin and a friend of Marisol. She works in Florencia.

Rosalía (26) is the wife of Alberto and godmother to Marisol. She works in El Rosal Inc., a unionized flower plantation.

Teresa (26) does not work in a plantation. She is vice-president of the community council and a university student.
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Nicole Noël was born in 1970 in Windsor, Ontario. She graduated from St. Anne Secondary School in Tecumseh, Ontario in 1989. In 1995 she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Honour's Latin American Studies from the University of Windsor. She is currently a candidate for the Master of Arts degree in Sociology at the University of Windsor and will begin Doctoral studies in Anthropology in September 1998.